

[Reminiscences, Early Days on French Prairie]

W9626

[????]

Accession no.

[9626?]

Date received

10/10/40

Consignment no.

1

Shipped from

Wash. Office

Label

Amount 8p [Incl. forms A-D?]

WPA L. C. PROJECT Writers' Unit

Form [md]3

Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Reminiscences, early days on French prairie, Aurora colony , etc.

Library of Congress

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 5/12/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date May 12, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Reminiscences early days on French Prairie — Aurora Colony, etc.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Ida Graves Macksburg, Oregon

Date and time of interview May 11, 1939. Late in afternoon.

Place of interview Home of informant at Macksburg, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Unknown person met while interviewing another

Library of Congress

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Large two-story farmhouse, painted white, of about eight rooms, big and high-ceilinged, probably built in early 80's. Living-room in which interview took place heated with brick fireplace, on the mantel of which was an old-fashioned weight clock. The floor was covered with a rag carpet, the walls hung with pictures, including many enlarged photographs of another period. Fairly comfortable furniture; several rocking chairs and an organ filled the room. Incongruously, an up-to-date radio occupied a prominent place on a center table. Of chief interest to the interviewer was a framed "family tree" engraving, showing the marriage date of the informant, her age and that of her husband and a few other items set forth in the ornate penmanship of the travelling agent or peddler 2 from whom it had been purchased. Clasped hands and other emblematic tokens of a sentimental nature were pictured and along the right and left borders were the names of those purporting to be ancestors, but which in this case were possibly names suggested by the salesman. The informant said they were all the names she could remember. Without rhyme or reason Pulaski, Kosciuski, Hamilton, Washington and some two score of other equally historic names, stood bravely forth. Asked if these were her ancestors the informant replied. "Those were all the names I could remember." It is possible they were placed there merely for ornamental purposes.

Mrs. Graves farmhouse was somewhat remote, with big fields back of it, and a large yard, filled with flowers, surrounded the house. The various rooms, most of them carpeted with rag carpets, were neat as the proverbial pin. At the rear end off from the kitchen was a big open room, connecting with the water tower, which was comfortably furnished with rawhide-seated kitchen chairs and a rocker or two.

Form B

Library of Congress

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date May 12, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early days on French Prairie — Aurora Colony

Name and address of informant Mrs. Ida Graves Macksburg, Oregon

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities

Library of Congress

9. Description of informant

10. Other points gained in interview

1. Father, R. L. Milster: Mother, Fanny Hinke German descent

2. Oregon, Mount Angel, March 13, 1856

3. Husband deceased: Children: Sons, Roy Graves D. W. Graves Wm. Edw. Graves, deceased

Daughters, Jenny Graves, deceased Ivy Tueloo Eva May Dunkelberg

4. Always in Marion County, Oregon.

5. District school.

6. Housewife.

7. Interested in almost everything.

8. Rebecca Lodge: Not member of any church; "No use for 'em."

2

9. Small and weatherbeaten. Dark gray hair, cut in short crop around neck. Small, shrewd, piercing gray eyes, sunken mouth, with hairs growing on chin. Calico dress with apron, and wearing high, button shoes. Sleeves short and hands and arms rough and toil-worn. Hard-worked and independent as they make 'em.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Library of Congress

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date May 12, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Early days on French Prairie — Aurora Colony.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Ida Graves Macksburg, Oregon.

Text:

Wh'd ya say? Yeh, I'm Mrs, Graves. [Wa'd?] ya want? Well, come in. Take this chair here. I'll set awhile. Wouldn't mind gettin' a rest. I'm tired. It's no fun runnin' a farm when ye get my age.

Yeh, I was born in this country, right in Marion County. Lived here all my life. Married an' had my children here, had fun an' worked hard. See this finger, well I didn't lose that workin'. I was out playin' with a little kid cousin, an' he had an axe, tryin' to chop chips, an' I was holdin' the chips, an' bang! dawn come the axe an' off went the top o' my finger at first joint. Pa took care o' my hand; he wuz good doin' things like that. He tuk a rag an' tied it up, but some way he tied the rag 'round the top so it sort o' split the stump. It tuk a' awful long time gettin' well, an' for a while it wuz black as coal an' hard - so hard you culd whittle it jest like a stick, an' then one day it cum off clear down to the second joint, an' we tuk it out, my cousin an' me, buried it in a hole. After that the rest o' the finger got well.

My father wuz awful good at doctorin' folks. They cum from all over. Once Gran'father Graves most cut his foot off with a broadaxe, an' pa fixed that.

Library of Congress

2

He wuz good at fixin' teeth too. Most everybody come to him to get their teeth pulled. He made some faucets (forceps) hisself. They wuz kind o' rough, but they did the bizness. Pa al'ays got the tooth: they never broke. Once Pa took my brother to a real dentist. My brother sed pa wuz the best dentist; he never hed to push a tooth back to git a hold. We never had no doctor. I never hed a doctor with all my six children when they wuz born, not even no midwife, as they call 'em.

I don't know much about Aurora folks. They wuz all good people. The colony broke up about '83. I guess they wuz too hard on the young folks, wantin' to tell them jist what to do an' who to marry an' all that. I guess there's more old maids and bachelors around Aurora then any place in the country. Mebbe they wuz afraid if everybody got married the population w'ud grow too fast an' they wou'n't be able to make 'em do jest what they wanted. But they wuz good folks, an' looked after one 'other an' their neighbors' children.

Sure we had a good time back in the early days. Sure, we danced — quadrilles and waltzes. We went to the dances in wagons mostly. I guess only two people 'round here hed hacks. Everybody hed jest wagons an' cattle. They talk about oxen now, but I never heard 'em say anythin' but cattle in them days. Father got shet o' all his cattle when I wuz jest a little girl; he hed four yoke, an' he traded 'em for bacon an' sich like to take to the mines in Eastern Oregon.

Yes, we danced, but we worked hard too. Us kids al'ays busy. Seems like children did more than they do now, an' they wuz quieter too. You wuzn't to jump in an' talk when grown folks wuz around, when I wuz little. Mother made all our clothes — spun the wool an' got somebody else to weave it. They called it linsey. When the sheep wuz sheared mother wu'd wash the wool all nice, an' then 3 roll it, an' keep it to spin for blankets an' dresses an' pants for the men.

Library of Congress

Sure I hed beaux. I mind me, once there wuz two young fellows come to our house, an' my sister an' me we set 'em to work at somethin', some little thing I don't recollect jest what, an' when they wuz good an' busy, we slipped out an' got on their horses, an' away we went lickity-split. We c'u'd jest ride anything, an' we hed a good long ride, an' when we got back those two boys wuz stared half to death. My God they wuz scared. They sed they expected to hev to go out an' find us on the road some'eres all jammed up. Well, I don't hev that kind o' good times no more, but I enjoy life. I work hard — I jest been out overseein' the men shearin' my sheep — but I hev my radio an' I read. I read a lot — mostly trash too, if you ask me, but that's all right. I figger I'm so fur through the woods now nothin' I read wouldn't hurt me any. I bin alone now fer sixteen years, an' I guess I'm entitled to anything I c'n git.

Yes, o' course I knew Homer Davenport. He wuz a great artist. The way he got started, his father wuz goin' some place one day, an' Homer wanted to go with him, an' he made him stay home, an' Homer wuz kind o' mad, an' he drew his father's picture on the barn door with a little piece o' charcoal. A funny picture it wuz, but it wuz good. Enybody 'ud know it wuz the ol' man. That wuz the first enybody knew Homer c'ud draw. He wuz jest ten years old then. He's buried over here at Silverton. Some o' the Portland papers had a lot to say about Silverton not hevin' eny hearse when Homer wuz buried, but this is the way it wuz. Homer al'ays hed a lot of fun in the Davenports' ol' hack, ridin' around in it, an' all, when he cum home from Nu York, so when he wuz brought home to be buried his sister tuk that ol' hack an' jest covered it with roses, wheels an' all, an' they carried Homer in his coffin in that to the graveyard, cause he wuz so fond of it.

4

You want to know if I got eny funny stories. Mebbe this isn't very funny, I don' know, but you can put it in if you want to. It wuz when we wuz goin' to school. One day three boys — they wuz big boys too, almost young man — an' they wuz sent to get water for drinkin' at grandfather's. An' what did they do but stick their heads in the bucket o' water an' wash

Library of Congress

themselves, an' then they took the water to the schoolhouse fer us to drink. Course they couldn't keep still. They told about it, an' after that us kids wuz told to bring a bottle of water to school every day.

You goin' now? Well, I'm sure glad you cum. I got good an' rested.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date May 12, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Reminiscences early days on French Prairie - Aurora Colony

Name and address of informant Mrs. Ida Graves [Macjsburg?], Marion Co., Oregon.

Comment:

Mrs. Graves and her surroundings had all the quality of real folklore, lessened in no wise by her truly vernacular speech. The occasional profanity in which she indulged was revealing as a part of the man's part she had long occupied in running her farm, rather than the profanity of the moderne. Her cussing was in tone as well as speech.