

## [Early Reminiscences--Chinese]

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Beliefs & Customs - Folkstuff

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Title Early reminiscences - Chinese Old [Wasco?] County

Place of origin Portland[, ?] Oregon Date 2/13/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn.

Project editor

Remarks L

Form A

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Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration Reminiscences

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland Oregon.

Subject Early Reminiscences - Chinese - Old Wasco County[. ?]

Name and address of informant A. L. Veazie 612 Corbett Building, Portland, Oregon.

Date and time of interview February 9, 1939- 11:00 A. M. to 12:15 P.M.

Place of interview Above address, office of above.

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

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you [md]

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The typical consulting office of a successful attorney, the walls lined with lawbooks, with a few good prints on the wall spaces; good, substantial furniture and a heavy rug on the floor. The office is one of a suite, on the fifth floor of a prominent, downtown office building.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

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### OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Early reminiscences - Chinese - Old Wasco County incidents.

Name and address of informant A. J. Veazie 612 Corbett Building, Portland, 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
9. Description of informant

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### 10. Other points gained in interview

1. Scotch-English-Irish.

2. Oregon; 1868.

3. Father, Edmond F. Veazie; mother, Harriet Lyle Veazie. He has three daughters, and one son.

4. Always lived in Oregon.

5. Public schools; University of Oregon.

6. Lawyer "and married man".

7. Law and history, with particular reference to Oregon history.

8. Director Y.M.C.A. for many years; Deacon First Baptist Church of Portland; Trustee, Linfield College at McMinnville.

9. Medium sized blond man, of genial appearance, smooth face, blue eyes and white hair. Neatly, but not "sprucely" dressed.

10. Of an old pioneer family of Polk County, Mr. Veazie is well acquainted not only with Oregon history, but with all the great and near-great of Oregon. Interested in the State's history, and something of a writer, his history of Crook County in the early days of the '80s and '70s, was published in the December number of the Oregon Historical Quarterly of 1938. This perhaps accounts for the limited number of folklore stories he was able to furnish offhand.

Form C

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Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 13, 1939.

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early reminiscences - Chinese - Old Wasco County.

Name and address of informant A. J. Veazie 612 Corbett Building, Portland, Oregon.

Text:

You ask me, among other subjects, if I can tell you anything of the early Chinese laborers here in Oregon, and their life as it touched our own people. I can remember, when a boy in Polk County, in the '70s there was nearly always a gang of Chinese coolies working somewhere about, either on our farm, grubbing the scrub oak, or grading with shovels on the railroad construction. Chinese coolies [md] most of them from China's southern provinces [md] were brought to the Pacific Coast by the thousands in those early construction days, when our steamshovels of today were yet unheard of. They were industrious laborers, as a whole, but, contrary to the tradition of today, they were not always the tractable, gentle workmen for which time gives them credit. While each small unit had its Chinese boss, the entire gang would be under the [supervision?] of a white man, and he sometimes had to take rather severe measures. For one thing, they were cruel, almost without exception. By that I mean they seemed to have little sense of kindness toward dumb animals, or even, indeed to one 2 of their own. An animal hurt or in

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pain seemed to furnish them amusement, and they never made a move toward helping a fellow workman no matter how badly injured. On the contrary, they usually jeered at him.

I remember once, when there was a road gang near our home, we boys were going down to watch them one day, when we met one of the bosses. He told us to stay away. The coolies had been acting ugly for several days and they were getting uglier all the time. Something had happened in some of their Tongs, I suppose. They were all handled, in their contracts, through the big Tongs at San Francisco. Well something did happen all right, and that very day too. The coolies suddenly quit work, and when the white boss ordered them back on the job, they jumped him. Luckily he was armed, or, as he afterwards said, there would have been nothing left of him but hacked up pieces, for every manjack of them was coming at him with pick or shovel or whatever tool they happened to have in their hands. As it was, when he drew his six-shooter and began firing [md] without much regard as to direction [md] the coolies fell back and he was soon in control of the situation. And I've known of Chinese cooks, out on the big ranches in Eastern Oregon, that, when full of hop or bad whiskey, would chase everybody with a big butcher knife that came near their kitchens. The house servants were always, as a rule, pretty faithful and honest, and they were fine cooks. All of the Chinese seemed to be very fond of children, and whether pick-and-shovel laborers or house servants, they seldom failed to remember missy with embroidered silk handkerchiefs, and the small folk with [chee?]-chee nuts, during Chinese New Year. lee?/

Now for an Indian story of not so many years ago. It was in 1914 I think. One of the Warm Springs Indians was indicted for the murder of an Indian policeman, and while awaiting trial was held in the [federal?] prison here at Portland. He was a quiet, well-behaved sort of fellow, and, as it turned out, he was the victim of a put-up job and had nothing to do with the murder. He was exonerated by the Grand Jury, and, pending his departure on the evening train for home, was put in charge of a young fellow, who was given strict orders to see that his redskin got no firewater and in every other way behaved himself with decorum. The young man, not knowing just what to do with his charge, asked him if he

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would like to go to a show. No, he didn't want to see any show. "Well, what would you like to do, we have a whole day to put in" he was asked. The Indian looked at him solemnly, as he answered, "let's get a lot of newspapers and go and sit in the park and read them."

Here is an early branding story that may be of interest. It's a true story all right, and as some of the participants may still be living in this section of the country, I'll mention no names. The gist of it is that a young chap was arrested for stealing a calf and killing it. As soon as they got him in jail, a deputy sheriff got astride his horse and rode out to where the butchered calf lay. It was still unskinned, so, taking out his knife, he cut out the brand to be used as evidence, an irregular piece of the skin as it proved. Then he galloped back to town, his bit of evidence safely in his pocket for delivery to the prosecuting attorney. What he had done was tipped off to a friend of the accused. "Quick!" he told a mutual cowboy friend "Get on that cayuse of yours as fast as you can, ride hell-bent to that dead calf, and cut a circle out of it where the brand was." Well, of course, the brand evidence didn't amount to much, when it was found it didn't fit the circle, and the accused went free. As I remember, this too, was an instance of a put-up game.

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4

Old Eastern Oregon [md] I don't know what it is like these days [md] was a typical country of dry cowboy humor and jokes, of which the following is a somewhat imperfect sample: A man I knew stopped at the gate of an old acquaintance of his for a drink of water, one hot, summer day. He was horseback, and the old acquaintance, whom he hadn't seen for a long time, was holding a big, fat baby in his arms. The visitor commented on the fine-looking baby.

"Boy, is it?"

"Yep, a boy."

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“Named him yet?”

“Yep, he's named.”

“What do you call him?”

“I can't think.”

“What! you can't remember what you named him?”

“Naw [md] now what the heck is it anyway?”

“Why, that's the strangest thing I ever heard of [md]”

“Aw [md] now I rekollect [md] his name's Bill.”

This story shows the audacity and nerve that brought some of our young fellows east of the mountains into prominence in some manner or other. There wasn't much opportunity in those wide open spaces for a young man who was ambitions to become something other than a cowboy or sheepherder. This fellow had a keen, quick mind, and he had a pleasant personality. He could get away with just about anything, and he just about did. If he hadn't been quite so smart, he probably would have gone a long way. Charlie Cartwright, one of our big sheep man in the '80s, came in to my uncle, Al Lyle's house, one day, just about laughing his head off. “It's about Ralph R[md],” he said. “He's been asking me question after question as to how to grade wool, every fool thing about it there is to know, until finally I said, 'What are all these questions about, Ralph, what do you want to know so much about grading wool for?' And what do you suppose that crazy loon answered? “I've got a job grading wool,' says he, 'I'm starting on the work tomorrow morning.”

5

Just one more story, to show how hospitable the folks used to be. It was when we were little tads, my brother Clarence and I. Mother was out with us on the ranch in Eastern

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Oregon, and it was pretty lonesome for her, so one day she took the two of us on a horse and rode over to a neighbor, several miles distant. When she reached there, half a dozen big, long-eared hounds rushed out, barking savagely. Naturally she was frightened, and we two kids were yelling lustily, as we tried to hide behind her, for, unfortunately, she had dismounted. The noise we made soon brought out our neighbor, but, instead of calling off the dogs, as anyone might expect, he shouted, between spouts of tobacco juice, "Kick 'em, Mrs. Veazie, kick 'em!" Ever since then when any of our family gets in a jam, we tell them to "Kick 'em, Mrs. Veazie, kick 'em!"

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 13, 1939.

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Reminiscences - Chinese labor - Crook [Co.?] Life

Name and address of informant A. J. Veazie 612 Corbett Bldg., Portland, Oregon.

Comment:

Mr. Veazie, very much interested in the preserving of Oregon history and folklore, was busy when the interviewer called. Nevertheless he gave her a cordial reception and took

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an hour or more off to relate the foregoing yarns, dealing with life in Oregon in the '70s and '80s.