

[An Avenue of Walnuts]

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Beliefs and customs - sketches

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Folklore Collection (or Type)

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Title An avenue of walnuts and the earring twins

Place of origin Portland, Oregon, Date 2/13/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Federal Writers' Project

Circumstances of Interview

Work Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject An Avenue of Walnuts and the Earring Twins.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Clyde B. Huntley 2825 N. W. Raleigh St., Portland Oregon.

Date and time of interview February 7, 1939; 1:30 - 3:15 P. M.

Place of interview Above address — home of informant.

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

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Mrs. George Streeter, Decorator, between Yamhill and Morrison Streets, on West Park, Portland, Oregon

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

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Luxuriously furnished living rooms some 20 by 25 feet in dimension. A fireplace, with cheery fire at one end. Handsome oriental rugs covered the floor. Among the various pieces of furniture were some fine examples of early American mahogany and walnut workmanship. The house, of some ten rooms, is of the well-to-do type of ten or twelve years ago, with a small formal garden in front, and a flower garden at the rear of informal landscaping. All in a well-to-do neighborhood.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

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 An Avenue of Walnuts and the Earring Twins. Early "Twin" story.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Clyde B. Huntley 2825 N. W. Raleigh St., Portland, Oregon.

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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
 10. Other points gained in interview
1. Scotch.
 2. Oregon City, Oregon; January 16, 1875.
 3. Father, Thos. McDonough; Mother, Marian Wallace Allen. Has one married daughter.
 4. Oregon City, 1875 to 1920; Portland, Oregon, 1920 to date.
 5. Public Schools, Oregon City.
 6. Housewife only.

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7. Flowers and early Americana in the way of furniture, glassware, etc.
8. Portland Garden Club, McLaughlin Association, various civic clubs; Member of Episcopal Church.
9. Slender, blue-eyed and white-haired woman of delicate type. Very attractive personality.
10. A descendant of early Oregon pioneers, Mrs. Huntley, intelligent and "genteel", is one of those persons, socially active, whose roots are well planted.

Form C

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 An Avenue of Walnuts and the Earring Twins

Name and address of informant Mrs. Clyde B. Huntley 2825 N. W. Raleigh St., Portland, Oregon.

Text: I think it shows how well worth while is the work you are doing, when we of the third generation here in Oregon can remember so little of the stories we must have heard our grandmothers tell. I've been more interested than the average. I believe, yet only a few incidents can I relate, aside from what has been already related in some of the histories of

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the State. Everybody knows, for instance, about my great-grandfather, Samuel Kimbrough Barlow, his building of the Barlow Trail, and all that sort of thing. But perhaps this story of his burial place may not be so well-known. It seems to me it well reflects the character of the man. When he died, in 1867, he was buried in the small burial plot, in one corner of his farm. Here also his wife was buried, and some members of the family of Bowers, adjoining neighbors. The little burial ground was fenced off and over the graves of my great-grandfather and great-grandmother a tombstone was erected. On the tombstone is this inscription: "Do not disturb the repose of the dead; Behold the pure spirit has arisen and fled! Nor linger, in sadness, around the dark tomb, But go, where flowers forever will bloom."

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The inscription was composed by great-grandfather, who directed that it should be placed on his tombstone, with full directions also as to where and how he should be buried.

In later years, Colonel Rinehart, who had married a great-aunt of mine, and was brother-in-law of my grandfather, William Barlow, wished, or rather my great-aunt wished, to move the remains of great-grandfather and great-grandmother to Seattle, where they were living, and had a family burial plot; but the inscription halted them, and the graves were not disturbed. Aunt Mollie Barlow Wilkins was similarly influenced, when, on visiting the graves, she found the tombstone deteriorating from time and weather, and the surrounding fence falling into decay. She felt that it was, perhaps, the wish of great-grandfather that his dust should be absorbed by Mother Nature and be forgotten. But I am not so sure. I am going up some day soon, and see what I can do about it. The D.A.R. Chapter at Oregon City is, as you perhaps know, named for great-grandmother Susannah _____ Barlow.

Now, as to that avenue of great walnut trees that runs from the front gate to the entrance of the big house up at Barlow Station. That was planted by my grandfather, William Barlow, following the erection of his first house, which was built in the style of an old southern plantation mansion. Southern Colonial houses I think they were called. It had

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sixteen or eighteen rooms, a low sloping roof, and a wide, double gallery, with large pillars, in the true southern manner. I can remember it faintly. The grounds were beautiful in my recollection, with a fountain in front of the entrance, and flower-beds stretching in every direction, set off by brick parterres. Grandfather had the pleasant habit of presenting grandmother with a handsome present every time she presented 3 [?]

him with a new son or daughter. Aunt Mollie, if I am correct, was the cause for a very grand new carriage. Back in my memory are the highlights of one Christmas in that lovely old home, of bells and horses, candles and a huge Christmas tree that we children peeked at through always-closing doors, and all the excitement attending a big house full of people, big and little. And no little glamour was added to all this by the presence of the two darkies grandmother had brought with her from the south — old Rose and Peter, who stayed with her to the end. I was always horror-stricken at the sight of mother kissing Ol' Rose, who had nursed her from babyhood, but whose black skin was too alien to me for such affectionate demonstration. This southern house was burned in '82 or '83, after which the house which still stands was built. With the exception of the big front verandah, added a few years ago, it looks very much as it did originally.

But it was when the first house was talked about that grandmother, having in mind the magnolia and other avenues of the southern plantations, insisted that there should be an avenue to her house in Oregon, and grandfather said, all right, as soon as someone went east that he could entrust with the mission, he would send for the seeds. Grandfather's only stipulation was that the trees of the avenue should be walnut — black walnuts from his native State of Indiana. You see he had his memories too. Finally the seed nuts were sent for — to Bridgeport, Indiana, where the nut trees grew wild. A Mr. Dement was going to Washington, D. C., and the plan was to send the nuts to him there, but for some reason he did not return to Oregon, and it resulted in the nuts being entrusted to Senator Thurston. Senator Thurston, you will remember, died at Acapulco, Panama, on his way back home in 1851. He actually died at sea, where the superstitious sailors wanted to bury him, but the ship put in to port, and he was buried ashore. Two years later Oregon

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Territory 4 appropriated money for bringing the Senator's remains to Oregon, and they were buried in Salem. Upon his death, however, all his effects, including grandfather's walnuts, were taken in charge by the ship's captain. There were 665 walnuts and 100 butternuts, and they were held in custody at San Francisco for eight months, when grandfather went down and eventually secured possession of them after paying \$65.00 freight and storage. He brought them home, and after saving out one for each of his large family, he planted the rest in boxes filled with sand and fertilizer. These boxes he buried in the ground, where the nuts would germinate. When spring came they began to open. Seven hundred and sixty little trees came up, the roots sometimes longer than the tops. There were some that had roots three feet long. It was then grandmother's avenue came into being. It was 400 feet long, with fifty trees on either side. Of the trees that remained, grandfather sold many for \$1.50 each, cleaning up, in all, \$500.00 on his sprouts. The black walnut trees of Salem, Independence and Portland, all came from that shipment for grandmother's avenue.

When the railroad went through, in later years, some of the avenue trees had to be taken out, but Ben Holladay refused to have them sacrificed, moving them, on two flat cars, to Portland. One of these trees still stands at the old Cunningham home, in Holladay Addition, the branches of which are said to have a spread of some 240 feet.

EARRING STORY

What has come down in our family as the "Earring Story", should probably be called a Twin Story. My grandmother, whose maiden name in full was Martha Ann Partlow, had a twin sister, Mary. They were born in Virginia, and they were so exactly alike that, for identification purposes great-grandmother put earrings of a different design on them at a very early age. Here, tied in the scrapbook, is one of the earrings that grandmother wore from the time she became a young lady.

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It is one of the earrings too, that took part in the incident I am relating. You see, she had this pair on in this daguerreotype. Eventually great-aunt Mary married a Colonel White, and moved with her husband to Fort Worth, Texas, after which, it is said, grandmother pined and grew so puny that great-aunt Mary sent for her to join her in her new home. Now, this isn't a part of the story, but, in case you are ever bitten by a Black Widow spider, you may find it interesting. Grandmother had barely reached Fort Worth when she was bitten by a spider, and she swelled and suffered so they despaired of her life. Then the niggers took her in hand; they buried her in mud up to her neck, and it cured her, or at least she recovered. While grandmother was at Fort Worth she met and married a young lieutenant, named Tull. They were transferred to Missouri, where they heard much about, and became interested in Oregon, but within seven months grandmother's husband died, and her first child was born fatherless. Sometime later she met a Doctor William Allen, from Kentucky. He was a widower, with three young children. He, too, it seems, wanted to come to Oregon, and eventually they arrived here, but it appears nobody was sick in the Oregon country, and, to make a living, he turned to teaching dancing. Then, very suddenly, he died from a heart attack. Grandmother had two children by him, so his death left her practically penniless with six children to support. There was one thing grandmother knew about, and that was good food. I forgot to mention that two of the old family darkies, Peter and Ol' Rose, had joined her. So they were on her hands too.

Canemah, at that time, was a point where all the Willamette River boats discharged both supplies and passengers. It was a fairly lively little place, and here my grandmother, with the help of her two darkies, put on big suppers for dances and other gala affairs. Meantime grandmother's twin, great-aunt Mary and her husband had come to Oregon. Great-aunt Mary was much concerned about her twin.

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While grandmother was doing very well for herself, her six children and her two darkies, great-aunt Mary looked on the enterprise with little favor. Grandmother was still a young

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and comely woman and great-aunt Mary thought she should be picking out a husband from the many prosperous and otherwise eligible men about. Among these was a young man by the name of William Barlow. Great-aunt Mary selected him as her future brother-in-law. He was not only personable, but he was a money-maker. He owned a lot of land, for all of which he paid cash; never, strange as it may seem, filing on government land. But grandmother was shy, despite the fact that she was twice a widow, and no widow is supposed to be bashful. Nevertheless, grandmother was unequal to the plan suggested by her twin; she declared she couldn't "make up" to any man, and that was that. Great-aunt Mary went into action. There was to be a big dance at Canemah one night, and grandmother was going to give the usual supper. She had been in Oregon City where great-aunt Mary lived. William Barlow, it was learned, was going to Canemah also. This was a Providence-sent opportunity, in great-aunt Mary's opinion. If grandmother wouldn't make the best of it, she would. She prevailed on grandmother to exchange earrings with her, and off she went on the same boat with the handsome young farmer. She contrived an introduction, and flirted with him to such effect that she won his interest and affection on the spot — a combination that she shortly turned over, with a second exchange of earrings, to the widowed sister and her six orphans. And all of them, with the children that came along later, lived happily ever after.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Name and address of informant Mrs. Clyde B. Huntley 2825 N. W. Raleigh St., Portland, Oregon

Comment:

As a descendant of the Barlow family, Mrs. Huntley's story of the avenue of walnuts on the old Barlow farm at the railroad station of that name (Clackamas County), may be considered absolutely authentic. To all travelers, whether by highway or rail, the avenue is a well-known landmark.

Mrs. Huntley's husband, Clyde B., was for many years collector of customs, at Portland, Oregon.

Canemah, where the story of the earrings is located, was, at one time, an important boat-landing, not far south of Oregon City. Here the steamer "Gazelle" was destroyed by explosion, in the early '50s.