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## [Pioneer Life and Personal Dream Lore]

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Beliefs & Customs - [?]

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Form [md]3 Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Pioneer life and personal dream lore with attached article "Black magic among Indians & pioneers

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date [?]

Project worker Sarah B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks L Reminiscences

Form A

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Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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

Address 505 Elks Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Life and Personal Dream Lore, with attached article, "Black Magic Among Indians and Pioneers."

Name and address of informant Minerva Thessing Oatfield Oatfield Road, Oak Grove, Oregon.

Date and time of interview January 6, 1939

Place of interview Home of informant at above address.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Mrs. Truchot, Oswego, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None.

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Attractive, Comparatively modern home, located on portion of donation land claim purchased by her husband from the original holder, Capt. Orin Kellogg. The two-story dwelling sets back from the highway (Oatfield Road) same two hundred feet, in a pleasant garden, with vines climbing over the inviting verandah; a row of big, old cherry trees stand guard like soldiers along the walk. The

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surrounding acreage is farmland. A barn and outbuildings for domestic animals is at the rear.

Inside, the house was comfortably furnished in the usual better-type American manner, with a bright fire burning in the living room fireplace, before which a huge police dog and small Persian kitten stretched in cozy amity.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date December 8, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Life and Personal Dream Lore, with attached article, "Black Magic Among Indians and Pioneers."

Name and address of informant Minerva Thessing Oatfield Oatfield Road, Lake Grove, Oregon

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth

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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. Hanovarian German.
2. Yamhill County, Oregon, January 7, 1852.
3. Father, Johan Heinrich Thessing; Mother, Amanda Melvina Hardison.
4. Oregon always.
5. Public schools and home governess. Late 50's and early 60's.
6. Housewife, and as assistant to father, Dr. Thessing. Assisted in obstetric cases.
7. Fairly skilled as physician's assistant, though only training was that received from father. Interested in writing, with some achievement in short story fiction field some years since.

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8. Joined Episcopal Church, but liberal as to creed. Member of White Cross organization that was later merged into the Red Cross. Member of grange. Always interested in civic affairs.

9. Small and slight, with masses of dark gray hair. Somewhat frail in appearance, 2 with evidence of past beauty of delicate type. Evidence of considerable intellectuality, now slightly impaired by age.

10. A charming old lady, full of anecdotes of the past, whose daughter, Mrs. Hart, was most helpful in furnishing information of the kind sought.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date December 8, 1939

Address 505 Elks Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Life and Personal Dream Lore

Name and address of informant Minerva Thessing Oatfield Oatfield Road, Lake Grove, Oregon

Text: I was born in Yamhill County, but I remember when as a child my father, Dr. Thessing, sometimes brought me to Milwaukie (near Portland) on his business trips. Milwaukie then was only a pioneer post in the wilderness. There was the old flouring mill,

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two saloons, two churches, two stores, etc. Along what was Main Street hogs wallowed in the mud during the rainy season, and dried themselves by rubbing up against the houses along the sidewalks; while the tinkle of cowbells could be heard all night.

Many of the early foreign residents were opposed to spending money on civic improvements, so anyone forced to be out at night carried a lantern to avoid the holes in the planking and avert a broken leg. When Mrs. Seth Lewelling - of the famous cherry family — circulated a petition throughout the county, that horses, hogs, and cattle should be kept off the streets, she was severely censured for doing something considered as strictly a man's prerogative. Incidentally, among the farmers there was a tacit agreement that the result of the petition would in no way affect the highways outside the city limits, and none of their wives signed without their husbands' permission.

2

With the establishment of the Lewelling nurseries, Milwaukie began to develop a place in Oregon's early history. It became a gathering place of various cults and people of culture and progressive ideas, including those studying political issues.

Back of that, I remember, the law was largely Judge Lynch. A shooting scrape called for but three or four years' imprisonment, while horse thieves were promptly hung — if caught. Law suits were rare, and differences over line fences were often settled by a .44 Colt, where one at least of the participants usually lost permanent interest in corner stakes. (This is overstatement. Ed.)

Differences between man and wife were adjusted by calling in the preacher, thereby avoiding litigation, alimony and a lawyer's fee. If one wanted to talk to somebody in Portland, he or she took a day off and went there. With neither gas nor ether, if you had a tooth pulled you sat down on a wooden bench and yelled to high heaven from the time the pliers or “bullet mold” was inserted until the molar was out. I think my father brought the first dentist outfit into the country.

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I used to help my father. With no training in the present day sense, I knew as a young girl a lot about obstetrics. I've helped a lot of women through childbirth. The only baby that did not survive died because of pre-genital trouble, over which there was no human control. We had a big library, with, of course, many medical books, and I was hardly able to read before I was going through those, learning from both text and illustrations. Mother thought it was terrible, but father said if I was so interested and could keep my knowledge without prattling about it he saw no reason why I should not avail myself of his books. He might have been a modern father in his views.

The railroads came, and by and by the doctors, quack and otherwise. People who had been always well began to be sick. Those who could afford it went to hospitals and had whatever they could spare cut out or lopped off, as the case might be. Those who couldn't afford it are still alive.

3

At that time Portland was a wide-open town. One-third of the downtown buildings were said to be saloons, with accommodating rooms overhead. All these places paid tribute, with little effort made to enforce the law. Every once in a while a raid was made, and sometimes an old man or a Chinaman — too slow in reaching the back passage during the lengthy and benevolent rattling of the door handle by the police — were caught.

Men became rich and some became poorer. I knew Ben Holliday well, that “wonderful old buccaneer of the West,” whom Henry Villard describes as “coarse, illiterate, boastful and cunning.” He did not seem all those things to me. He was very fond of his family. His daughter, Jenny Lind Mary, was a great friend of mine. She had a \$600 gun, I remember, and I had a little old cheap thing, but I could hit anything I aimed at, and she couldn't hit a barn door. She wanted a title and her father bought her one, a little count from Paris. Then he gave her a house as a wedding gift. In the building, Tudor and Gothic plans of architecture were submitted, but Ben would have none of them. Tudor and Gothic might be all right, he said, but he didn't know the firm and they shouldn't have any of his money. Hull

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& Squire had built his house, and they should build his “dotter's.” Finally, however, he was influenced by Jenny Lind Mary and her husband and gave in on the type of her husband's ancestral home, but balked at the old tapestries. “Tear down those old rags on the wall; they are full of dust and they stink.” Only after the decorator had convinced him of their value in pounds sterling did he see beauty, bragging often afterward about the artist chaps who came to see his gal's house.

Old Oren Kellogg, from whom my husband bought the 640-acre donation land claim, of which all this about us is a part, was a character. He had an irascible temper. Once when he was sitting in front of our fireplace, examining his gun, and looking down the bore, the thing went off. By a miracle neither he nor anyone else was killed or even hurt. But how he swore! “Shoot, damn ye,” he shouted, “Shot your damned head off.” He never seemed to realize he no longer owned the place after selling, but would come out with a crowd of men to hunt over the land, 4 exclaiming and explaining as he led them about, “This is damn fine land. I let it go for nothing.” And to my husband, “These are damn fine men — brought 'em out to hunt and stay awhile — damn fine men all of 'em.” They struck me as a pretty rough lot, most of the time, and we certainly didn't enjoy his hospitality of our premises.

Ed Kellogg, a younger brother was a sleepwalker. One never knew where he might be encountered or what doing at night. Once he got up and in his night shirt went out to the barn and saddled and bridled his horse. Then, leaving it tied in the stall, he took his rifle and went down to the rail fence, a distance of some four city blocks. And there he was found the next morning, sitting on the fence, fast asleep.

That big kettle out there on the porch is one my husband's folks used in coming across the plains, in 1860. It had a cover and a big ladle, but those are gone. (The kettle is iron, about two feet in diameter and 18 inches deep, and rests on four short feet). They used it for every sort of cooking ever the campfire, including bread-baking.

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Yes, we used to dance a lot in early days. All square dances, and when we had nothing else to keep time to, we clapped our hands in rhythm. Often we used a comb with paper over it, in the manner of a Jews harp. If you were clever at it you could make fair dance music. The children were put to bed, and when they wakened and cried, the fathers and mothers took turns holding them, leaving the other one free to dance.

Riding was one of my chief pleasures. I always loved a horse. We used to have a stallion at home that was vicious about biting. A stable boy had prodded it once with a pitchfork and it never forgot nor forgave. But it would let me come in its stall and I would feed it a bit of my bread and syrup, keeping the tidbit on the flat of my hand, as father taught me, and it would take it up as gently as possible, with never a nip.

We used to attend revival meetings in the early days too. Probably we — some of us young folks — enjoyed them as much as the dances. Angelo and Peter Hardison were two scamps. They would act as solemn and pious - and maybe they would be scheming all sorts of deviltry. Once when they were sent to meet the preacher, and either set him on his way or bring him home [md] it doesn't matter much — they got him ahead, out of sight; then in the dark they chased him up a hill and pursued him, yelling for help, under the idea he was beset by highwaymen. Later, to all intents and purposes, they reappeared on the scene and rescued him.

When shouts of “Glory to God” and “Amen” were shouting from all over the room, and people were filing up to the mourner's bench, while the preacher was extolling everybody to “Come up and be saved”, those two rascals would hold the hymn book and sing the loudest of anybody, the gospel hymns of “Came to Jesus”, or “River of Jordan”. “River of Jordan” always seemed to be in the only available aisle, and everybody seemed to be wading down its length as they thronged to the mourner's bench.

The old McNary donation land claim is just down the road a short distance. The old house, the photograph of which I am lending you, was destroyed only a few years ago.

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In the early '60s a murder was committed there that scared the whole countryside. A woman named Mrs. Hager, two daughters and a son were living in the house. They were supposed to have quite a bit of money hidden away, at least the girls bragged about it. But as it transpired the son had taken whatever amount there was and invested it in a business elsewhere. Anyway, one day when the woman, Mrs. Hager, had been left alone, one of her girls came home and found her out in the yard in front of the house, with her head nearly cut off. I can see and hear that girl now, as she came shrieking down the road on her horse, screaming that her mother had been killed. It was an awful sight, and everything in the house had been turned inside out by the murderer as he hunted for the money. Even the feather beds were pulled to pieces and feathers were everywhere. A number of men were arrested, but it was years after, when a man was tried and condemned for another murder, that he confessed to six, among them that of Mrs. Hagar.

To go back to the Kelloggs, you may be interested to learn that Capt. Orin Kellogg, of the Kellogg donation land claim on which we are now, brought the first Masonic charter across the plains to Oregon. It hangs today in Lodge No. 1, at Oregon City. His first wife was an Indian woman — squaws, we called them then. They called her Old Lady Kellogg. She was quite religious. She died riding home from church — died sitting on her horse. It was said she must have been dead at least fifteen minutes when they found her, quite upright on her horse.

A number of the first Kelloggs were buried out here in a little family burial plot. Later they were moved, I think, to Lone Fir Cemetery. When the bodies were disinterred the ground was very wet and water dripped from the boxes that were placed in a farm wagon. It was a dismal sight — the loam-covered boxes and the water dripping from them down through the cracks of the wagon-box. I forget how many there were of the bodies. As the wagon behind its slow-moving team moved along the muddy road, it passed a stranger who asked for a ride. The men in charge were agreeable, telling him to climb in behind, which he did, and the sight of the boxes roused his curiosity. He asked what was in them. When

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the man told him he just gave one wild leap over the side of the wagon, and was gone. They didn't see hide nor hair of him again.

Yes, I knew most of the pioneers. I have been an ardent suffragist all my life, and all the women interested in that movement were friends of mine, among them Abigail Scott Duniway and Doctor Mary Thompson. Both of these women were pioneer workers in the suffragist movement. They worked hard too, but they neverm 7 got along together. Dr. Thompson was a very handsome woman. I remember once when a group of us were standing talking together at a Chautauqua meeting at Gladstone. Dr. Thompson was in the group. When Mrs. Duniway joined us, she — Dr. Thompson — immediately drew apart, and Mrs. Duniway, with her keen sense of satiric humor, murmured soto voce, “But she doesn't fail to turn her handsomest side.”

You ask about some of the oldtime homely duties of the housewife. I never settled down to many of them — if I could hire somebody else to do them. Of course there was the soap-making, but that is done even today, only they can buy the lye now, which was the slow part. First there was the hopper, a crude troughlike wooden affair, with a flat bottom, that could be of any size, and with a sort of spout leading from the bottom at one end. If soap were made in the winter, the hopper had a rude sort of top or roof, to keep out the rain. A mistlike rain would be all right, but a downpour would simply wash the ashes away, because this hopper was for the purpose of making the lye. In the bottom of the hoppers straw was laid and on that the ashes were thrown — always oak ashes. Then, if in summer, water was sprinkled on the ashes from time to time, and the residue, running from the spout into an iron kettle, created the lye. Anything but iron would be eaten by the heavy strong stuff. When it would eat a feather it was considered strong enough for the final process, the combining with grease — any sort of grease available — which was added from time to time as long as it was eaten by the lye. I remember hearing it said that the lye made in that manner would absorb just about anything but maggot skins. Some of the grease used, you see, had been waiting soap-making day a long time.

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In my long life of 87 years, I do not recall when I did not have premonitions. Not dreams, I was never fully asleep. Often they were more vivid when I was ailing, and often they were of no interest to me.

One day a sister, who had been with me during a severe illness, left for home. Her way led through a dense wood and my husband accompanied her. That night I saw her horse tied to a tree, as it whinnied repeatedly for its mate. A heavy rain was falling. These horses were not gentle, so I told of my dream. When my husband returned he said my sister had laid the reins on her horse's neck while she shook the oiled silk tied over her hat. Flapping out the silk scared her horse, which instantly reared and threw her. She would not remount and my husband tied the horse, leading his mount with her for the little distance that remained.

In the matter of the Hagar murder at the old McNary house. All the men of the neighborhood were out looking for the murderer, while the frightened women and children gathered at my house. Toward morning, tired out, I laid down to rest, and at once a picture rose before me — a framed picture of a rather good-looking, sandy-haired man. I spoke of this at the time to a friend, Mrs. Fanny Neal, who now lived in Portland. Some years afterward my husband came home, bringing the Weekly Oregonian. As he opened it I caught sight of the front page and exclaimed, "Why there is the picture of that man I saw in my dream the night after Mrs. Hagar was murdered!" He replied, "Never mind, I'm hungry (I was placing supper on the table). You are always seeing things." Presently he looked up and said: "Its the picture of a man who was hanged recently, who confessed, among other murders, that of old lady Hagar. His motive was robbery."

Another premonition is something I shall see as long as I live. One night I saw a great ship rent asunder, break up and go down. I saw Elbert Hubbard and his wife clasp hands and go to their cabin, but I did not hear what a survivor said of Hubbard's wife's remark, "Well.. there seems to be nothing to be done." It was the most awful scene imaginable. Just then my daughter called, "Wake up and turn over, you have nightmare again." I described my

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dream but slept no more that night. Next 9 morning the world was horrified by the tragic fate of the Lusitania.

Still another premonition, which I think saved my life, occurred in Portland at noon. One of my sons had married a second wife. I had never seen his wife. I was walking up Rhone street to my son's house. It was a hot day and my feet hurt, so I walked in the street near the curb. Suddenly, as if by an invisible hand, I was jerked up on the sidewalk just as an auto whirled over my path. I know the first wife's walk well, and the Presence kept step until we reached her late home, then I was alone. I returned to my own home to find my son and his lovely bride there. Afterwards I told this incident to the first wife's children and other relatives.

My father made a wide study of all physic forces. My mother, who chanced upon some of ny hidden poems and tragedies, pronounced me a little "queer", but my father told her I had a triune personality, which in the "evolution of the soul" completes the triangle connecting this world with the next.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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

Address 505 Elks Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Life and Personal Dream Lore.

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Name and address of informant Minerva Thessing Oatfield Oatfield Road, Oak Grove, Oregon.

Comment:

Mrs. Oatfield proved one of the most interesting informants this interviewer has yet encountered. An educated woman of educated parentage, and a woman whose avocation, if not her vocation, has been writing and jotting down the incidents of a long colorful life, she has much to divulge and relate. Due to her advanced age her mind wanders at times, skipping from one highlight to another — a handicap that was considerably lessened by the enthusiastic cooperation and aid given by her daughter, Mrs. Hart.

Practically a day was spent in securing the foregoing material. More is promised, whenever another visit can be arranged.

(See attached article "Black Magic Among Indians and Pioneers." Published in the Oregon City Enterprise, August 19, 1937.)

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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

Address 400 Elks Building, Portland.

## Library of Congress

Subject Black Magic Among Indians and Pioneers. (Published article.)

Name and address of informant Minerva Thessing Outfield Oatfield Road, Oak Grove, Oregon.

Text:

I have been asked to explain why, when hostilities broke out between the whites and Indians, that we were never molested, although others all about us were burned out, their stock taken and they were murdered.

Well, when the first drugs were brought to Oregon City, my father, Dr. Thessing at once bought up all the arsenic, strychnine and other poisons, besides leaving an order to let him know first if more came. This store sold the necessities of life, such as whiskey and tobacco and doctor's supplies, of course, such as quinine for use in this fever and ague district of dense timbered and undrained land, with the old-time accompaniment of podophlin and gambage, calomel with all its forms of mercurial treatments, for disease among the ignorant, tomato-red squaw calico, and yellow bandanas, beads, etc.

### POISON PUT OUT

On dark nights my father put poison in small bits of meat, scattering it in the forest near our home. In the morning, the usual hordes of Indians came about begging for a little Copie (coffee) or a bit of sugar or bread and molasses. While yet dark, he would go out throwing up scraps of white paper with scalps and ears of wolves scratched upon them, would repeat terrific German words which my mother said sounded like a 2 a witch's incantation, which he assured them it was, added that the same spell would kill anyone who displeased him, but that as he had come to live among his red brethern and loved them, that they need not fear him. Needless to say he did not share his secret with anyone.

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The chief of this tribe wished to make a peace pact with Dr. Osborne (see Frances Fuller Victor's "History of the Indian Wars") proposing marriage with his oldest son to the doctor's baby daughter, when old enough. This the doctor contemptuously refused.

### BETROTHED TO SAVAGE

The chief then made the same proposal to my father. My mother was horrified, but father, foreseeing retirement to the reservations in the future, consented on account of the risk in incurring the enmity of these resentful savages.

When the heir-apparent was brought over to look over we four little girls, two dark-skinned with jetty braids, two fair, with blue eyes and long golden curls, true Hanoverians, I fell to his choice.

The future bridegroom wore a necklace of bear claws, below a dirty face, with eagle feathers in his unkempt braids. My brunette sisters did not attract him, they were only squaws. So I was sternly taken in hand by my father as to my future behavior.

The bridegroom did not allow his little sisters to play with us, though they might look on. In hot weather these little boys were attired in the simple costume worn by our first parents in the Garden of Eden, but the little girls wore a bit of skirt of old calico or inner fibres of bark, all seams in Indian sewing being folded over and sewed down on the outside with thread made from deer sinews.

3

### NATURAL AS PIGS

These savages were as natural as little pigs, but I never heard or saw one do anything vulgar. This boy was called "Cub", as he was not yet old enough to retire into the mountains, there to fast until he dreamed of something that would determine his future name. He was about my own age of eight years, and one day we raced our ponies as fast

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as they could go, playing war and shooting into the trees we were circling, he with arrows and I with an old Colt with blank cartridges. He could shoot under his horse's belly with only a toe visible over its back — a feat I could never acquire, much to his derision.

This day he told me that when I was his squaw he would cut off my long golden hair to fringe his buckskin shirt and pants. Even at that early age I had advanced ideas of women's rights and promptly told him what I would do to him, fearless of the beating he promised me.

One day they came to play and my mother gave us each a piece of sorrel pie, and the young devil swallowed his whole, but offered to hold mine if I would run in and get him another one. This I did, but there was no more. He had gulped mine down.

### INDIAN BOY CLAWED

I flew into a rage and left the print of 10 claws on his face, pulled his hair and kicked him and pounded his face. He fought like a demon, with the disadvantage of being taken entirely by surprise. My mother and a hired man rushed out and separated us. They were much alarmed, knowing what the consequences might be, while my fiance went bellowing home. Indian boys never shed tears.

Soon my father came home and the chief and a following of braves appeared demanding to know why I had dared to lay sacrilegious hands upon the son of a chief. He was told the cause, and that I had been severely punished, and that white squaws did not know any better.

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My father hastily tendered the chief a bottle of the best bourbon (forbidden), and treated the others with a half mat of black island sugar, and a couple of loaves of home-made bread, thus the dawning difficulty was amicably adjusted.

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The fate of these and many others, although not by warfare, nor reservation, I shall write in a subsequent chapter.

(Published in the Oregon City Enterprise, August 19, 1937.)