

*New York*

# Folklore

*Quarterly*



AUTUMN 1952

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**NEW YORK FOLKLORE QUARTERLY**

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This handy book mark is for your reading convenience. The return card attached to be found in the back of this issue is for your convenience in entering a membership for someone whom you know will enjoy New York Folklore Quarterly as you do.

**F**OLK tales are frequently tall tales, but the story of the notable record made by the **NEW YORK FOLKLORE QUARTERLY** is not a tall tale. It is based on the appearance in the **QUARTERLY** of a wide variety of excellent articles of interest to all folklorists, teachers, musicians, and everyone else who finds pleasure in reading our oral traditions. Many different kinds of folklore, including ghost stories, proverbs, ballads, child lore, folk tales and folk songs have already appeared in the magazine.

**T**HE **QUARTERLY** has never pretended to be a scholarly journal, rather it has sought to give back to the people of this State something of their heritage so that it would not be lost in a noisy and discordant time. It seeks to help the general reader, teachers and students find in that heritage elements of interest and significance. It seeks to remind its readers that American culture today is composed of many facets, and to that end it has published the lore of the many races who are the Yankees of today. Its articles range over the rivers and valleys, the mountains and the villages and the cities of New York State.

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## *Editor's Page*

A YEAR ago, at our annual convention, Dr. Jagendorf presented to Miss Doret Meeker a prize offered for the best collection of the State's lore made in 1950-51 by a student in any New York college. During the intervening months, I have tried to select the most amusing and informing stories from her remarkable typescript of 212 pages, a complete copy of which may be seen at the headquarters of the Steuben County Historical Society, several of whose members are principal informants. This "southern-tier county" is an example of a post-Revolutionary pioneering settlement about which the rest of New York knows little except the wonderful glassworks at Corning and the romantic history of Bath. In making my selections then, I tried to include samples of old tales about Indians, wolves, schools, churches, "haunts," and eccentrics, with the best part of a section about folk-speech and with plenty of humor as a typical pioneering trait. If a few of the tales are familiar in other sections, attributed to other people (as, for example, the story about the borrowed white child, which I have heard in Oneida County), we may feel a little more sure that we are dealing with folklore.

News for teachers: any of them can get free, by writing to Dr. Elizabeth Pilant, Ball State Teachers College at Muncie, Indiana, a reliable selected bibliography called "It's Fun to Read Folklore," compiled by our contributor Dr. Eugenia Millard, Librarian of the Albany High School Annex. One index suggests stories by grades, from kindergarten to ninth year.

H. W. T.

## President's Page

**S**PEAKING of a proposed YORK STATE SONGSTER, as we were a couple of issues back, we should report to you that a number of our members have come forward with some pretty good suggestions and a few interesting questions. One proposal is that we publish the collection in the early American tradition, with old-time type, composition, cuts, and stock. The questions pertain to the contents. Should the songs be confined to those about New York State subjects or those known to have originated in the state, such as: *The Bright Mohawk Valley*, *The E-Ri-E Canal*, *The Capture of Burgoyne*, *Blue Mountain Lake*, *Henry G. Green*, etc.? Or should imported songs known to have been popular here be included, such as: *Springfield Mountain*, *Brave Wolfe*, *The Boston Burglar*, *The Frozen Girl*, *Lord Lovel*, etc.? Would you agree to a jury of "experts" making the decision? Again you are invited—nay, urged—to send in your nominations for songs to be included—and any other suggestions about the songster.

Every one with folklore leanings will rejoice in the publication of the first two volumes of the five-volume *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* (Duke University Press). Volume I contains Games, Speech, Customs, Proverbs, Riddles, and Tales, and is edited by Paul Brewster, Archer Taylor, Bartlett Whiting, George Wilson, and Stith Thompson. Volume II contains Folk Ballads and is edited by Henry Belden and Arthur Palmer Hudson. Dr. Brown collected avidly for over thirty years—from the mountains to the sea—and inspired hundreds of disciples (among whom we are proud to be numbered) to do likewise. This work is a monument to a great collector and scholar,

and also to another scholar, our friend, the late Newman I. White, the General Editor. Salute!

"Busy as a fiddler's elbow" describes pretty well the activities of the N.Y.F.S. so far this year—and there's more to come. The New York City meeting in February got us off to a very good start, and the Society's participation at the West Point Celebration was gratifying. The Seminars at Cooperstown (July 6-12) were the best yet. The class on Folk Heroes, led by Carl Carmer, Dr. Harold Thompson, Professor Marshall Fishwick, and your modest writer, came pretty close to hitting the nail on the head (with the possible exception of the last-named hammer). Long to be remembered was the big picnic in the carnival tent. Barbecued steer was the main attraction. (We hear Dr. Louis Jones shot the bull.) We *told* you not to miss the Seminars!

By the time you read this, the big doings at Plattsburgh, Redford, and Ticonderoga (August 14, 15, 16) will be over. Folklore will have passed into history. And *so*, Ladies and Gentlemen, we call your attention to the grand finale of the year—The Big Winter Meeting in New York City.

Carl Carmer heads the list of distinguished folklorists who are planning this event. Advance plans call for a week-long exhibit of folk art, folk craft, folk instruments, folklore books, folksong records, photographs of folk characters and folk scenes—this to be climaxed by an all-star evening program that should fill the hall. We hope it will be the kind of folklore rally that will give us new life, new understanding, new appreciation, and *new members*. Watch for the date and be there with bells on.

F. M. W.

# BACK TO THE BLANKET: LORE OF STEUBEN COUNTY

BY DORET MEEKER

## EARLY SETTLEMENTS:—

### *Painted Post*

**M**ANY tales are circulated to explain the origin of the name Painted Post. Some say a blood-painted post was placed over the grave of an Indian chieftain; others, that the tombstone post was dyed by the blood of tortured whites; others, that the post was an Indian war-post of the type commonly found among the villages. Another explanation is that the post, situated at the junction of five trails, was the "post office" for Indian messages.

(From Wilson Messer, Corning)

### *Savona*

The Moores came to Tyrone and then to Mud Creek from Vermont by ox cart in 1790. They lived in a one-room cabin with a loft reached by a poke or peg ladder. The fireplace was made of stone, and the floor was the bare ground.

When the MacOwees came to Mud Creek, Mrs. Houssah says, they drifted in on a raft. Realizing that they were living in Indian territory, the young couple decided that the best way to deal with their new neighbors was to grant them any favor they might ask.

All went smoothly between the settler and the Indians until the afternoon that an Indian woman came to Mrs. MacOwee's and pointed to her baby playing in the dooryard. Apparently, the "squaw" wanted to take the child with her. Mrs. MacOwee, uncertain of the behavior correct for the occasion, picked up the infant and gave him to the squaw. Deliberately, the squaw lifted the baby, turned, and walked into the woods. The young mother was frantic. She couldn't decide whether to run after the Indian or remain at home. The afternoon hours dragged by without signs of the squaw's return.

Toward sunset, the Indian emerged from the forest holding the white child. When she unwrapped his blankets, his mother had to smile. There was her young son dressed from head to toe in soft deerskin papoose-clothing.

My story-teller remarked at the close of this tale that, "Indians are a queer people. Now this don't do to say outright, but they're a good deal honester than white folks!"

A young lady from Tyrone by the name of Miss Kinney rode fifteen miles on horseback one day to see her brother, who was then living with the Moores. She followed a path marked only by ax-blazes on trees. As she rode up a hill, she saw four or five Indians clearing a field. When they saw her, they began yelling and dancing and carrying on so much that Miss Kinney was afraid to progress or retreat.

Pretending she didn't see them, she started to guide her horse past, when one wild "Indian" ran after her. It was one of the Moore boys. Later, she married Jack, the boy who had run after her.

When Miss Kinney married Jack Moore, she had to dress in the loft of the Moore home. Mrs. Moore and the other ladies present held the guests at the door so that the bride could descend the poke ladder without exposing her legs.

By 1793, Col. Williamson decided that Mud Creek was a likely spot for a tavern, and, therefore, subsidized this one. The future of Mud Creek, as a crossroads, at least, was thereby secured.

The settlement was quite sizable when, in 1857, the people decided that a more dignified name was in order. An Italian resident suggested the name from the Italian Riviera, and Savona it has always been.

(Early Savona—Mrs. Mary Wiley and Margaret Hewlitt, Savona; Mr. MacLaughlin, Savona; and Mrs. Horton Houssah, Campbell and Bath)

#### *Wayland*

The Zimmermans established a pioneer settlement in the Wayland district in 1807. A few years later, the Patchins moved in by ox-team. Coming over the rough patch, one of the oxen was injured and had to be shot. This was a serious handicap. Mr. Patchin asked Mr. Perkins, a settler, where another ox might be purchased. Mr. Patchin explained that he was a stranger and did not have ready money. Mr. Perkins picked up a chip of wood and scratched his initials on it. "Give this to Mr. Zimmerman and he'll accept it as a guarantee." This was Wayland's first check.

When the Genesee Canal went through, the people decided their settlement was important enough to deserve a name. The oldest settlers living, Hess and Patchin, journeyed to Albany for the purpose of proposing names to the state legislature. They first suggested the name Millville, but this, for various reasons, did not receive approval. Time in which to choose a name grew shorter and still the men could think of nothing to submit. Then Mr. Patchin began humming an old hymn tune.

"What's the name of that?" asked Mr. Hess.

"Oh, that's 'Wayland'," replied Mr. Patchin.

"Then that's the name of our town," exclaimed Mr. Hess happily. "Wayland!"

(Mr. F. Hoffman and Mr. A. Lehmann, Wayland)

### CHURCH AND SCHOOL

#### *Pews*

One money-raising plan, originated for the well-being of church affairs, was the sale of the deeds on the church pews. When the pews were built in the church, they were sold to families for life ownership at the cost of ninety dollars.

The father of an old Dutch family which was large not only in number but in the size of each member, could not understand why it should be necessary to have to buy a seat in the house of the Lord. On the first Sunday after the new pews had been built, the stubborn-minded Dutch family arrived for church, as usual, in its open wagon. Halting before the doors, the father and three sons jumped down, lifted out two benches, and carried them with solemn deliberation and due propriety to the back wall. The entire family then filed into the church and sat on the benches, where they remained quietly until the service was finished. Then the father and boys again removed the seats. This Sabbath-day procedure gradually became accepted by the congregation as a matter of course.

(Mr. Bert Wilson, Prattsburg)

#### *Call to the Ministry*

Once, before the lots on the eastside of Prattsburg's square had become settled, the acreage was used for the St. John orchard, cabbage patches, and stands for corn. Mr. St. John had several strong sons, but he had a hard time getting them to work because none of them wanted to grow up to be farmers. Ed St. John came downstairs one morning and told his father he would be unable

to work that day since, in his dream of the night before, he had had a vision of clouds in the sky forming the letters "P.C.," which he took to mean "Preach Christ."

"Well, I had a dream last night, too," replied his father, "and it had the very same vision, 'P.C.,' only it meant, 'Plow Cabbages!'" (Ed plowed. He also became a minister.)

(Mr. Waldo of Prattsburg)

### *Uncle High and the Bishop*

Over in the southwest corner of the county at Rexville lived "Uncle High Jimmy," so-called from the shiny high top-hat he invariably wore. He was the jolly innkeeper, an Irishman, a sincere Catholic churchman and a father of many fine sons. In the days when lawyers were few and pettifoggers were many, lawsuits were considered as entertaining as a circus. One of Uncle High's sons was known far around as "Pettifogger Jim." These were also the days when education was regarded as, well, a means of getting some people out of honest work.

When the new Catholic church was built, the Bishop and other church dignitaries came to Rexville for ceremonies involving the dedication. At one grand dinner Uncle High Jimmy was presiding as host when the Bishop turned to him saying:

"Uncle High, with all these fine sons of yours, surely one should have come to the church!"

Pointing to Pettifogger Jim, Uncle High replied,

"Laud, Father, and there's one right over there lazy enough for a bishop!"

(Mr. Kellogg of Greenwood)

### *A Pioneer Schoolmarm*

When Susan Bellows began to teach, it was at seventy-five cents a week. Once Susan decided she ought to have a new gown.

She saddled a horse, rode twelve miles to the nearest town, purchased the calico, which cost her seventy-five cents a yard, and returned home in time for school at 9:00 in the morning.

(Mrs. Saunders, Prattsburg)

*School Days at Caton*

"We farm boys went to school in winter, generally. When I was a little feller, I had to stand by the teacher, so I put a bent pin on her stool—the first thing I can remember.

"Another thing I recall was how the teacher had a stove in the middle of the floor and a hole in the floorboards for a poker. Once, two of us boys were under the floor and watched, ready with a water pistol till her heel came nearly over the opening. One watched, the other—fired! She pushed off that pretty quick. Of course, I wasn't to blame, you know. The other fellow got me into the mess. Well, we run to the woodshed and hid. The scholars said it come right out the back of her neck!

"When I got my new grammar, I pushed it under the blacksmith's shop and never had to study. The other fellers weren't much of scholars, either. Once the fellers had all gone swimming but one boy, who couldn't get away. The girls opened a window on their side of the room. This one feller asked the teacher if he could help one of the girls with a problem. When he crossed over, he slid out the window.

"This same feller sat in the seat behind mine, and somehow we got into a kind of discussion. This time we had a cuffing and tipped over the ink-well and he threw it at me, but I dodged and it hit the wall. The ink's still there. [Did you ever get a licking for that?]

"Once the preacher was a-hearing the young people's Bible Class and they were talking about Noah. One of the fellers said, 'My dad see that ark.' The leader said, 'What?' 'Yessir, my dad

see that ark, and he said it were made of chettum wood and the d--- stuff never will rot.' "

In the spring the game was baseball. The boys studied Jim White, their hero. He was the first player ever to throw a crooked or curved ball. One day a man from the Chicago White Sox came to Caton and signed him up in the league (1875). The boys remembered him for being able to stand on home base, throw up a ball almost out of sight, and catch it as it came straight down to him.

Will says that Jim showed him how to hit the ball so it would go into the field anywhere he wanted it. At one game between Sylvester and Caton, there was an apple tree in the right field. Will put the ball there five times. Jim had taught the boys that wherever there was a hole in the field, that was where they should put the ball.

(Mr. Mead, Woodhull)

## PEOPLE

### *An Oracle*

Although this village on the eastern borders of Steuben has disappeared, the story of Uncle Jeb and the fence-posts remains.

Men used to gather in Uncle Jeb's store on winter evenings to discuss. When their arguments seemed beyond any agreement, they referred decision to the aged storekeeper.

Jeb was old, all right. He had been tending the counter now long before most of the men were born. Their most blatant disputation failed to excite him.

Tonight the men were equally divided over the matter of fence-posts. Half of the men believed white oak fence-posts would last longer than chestnut posts. The other half believed just the

opposite. Finally, the men thought they'd like to settle the matter once for all and consult Uncle Jeb.

"Now, Unc," says Ben, "what we want to know is, which'll last the longest, white oak fence-posts or chestnut fence-posts?"

By and by, Jeb's rocker came to a standstill. Slowly his pipe came from his lips and he said, "Oak."

The chestnut men were silent.

At last Will spoke up. "Well, Uncle Jeb, if you say oak lasts longer, how much longer?"

Again everyone was quiet while Uncle Jeb stopped rocking. "About twenty minutes."

(Mr. J. Glenn of Penn Yan)

*An Eccentric*

No one knew whether Old Jim Day were really crazy or just partly. When they passed his shack and saw the huge scarecrow rigged out with a kettle head, an alarm clock, and an American flag, they wondered. But then, Jim didn't care what they thought, and in that way he was a little bit smarter than the rest of us.

Seeing Mrs. Gleason on the street one day, he tipped his hat and paused to give her a little confidential information. "Keep this under your hat," he said, "but who's the best teamster in town, did I hear you say? You're d--- right I am!" said he and posted off down the street.

Another time Jim came to borrow Gleason's new lawnmower for mowing his front yard.

"Why, you can't get it home, Jim," said Mr. Gleason. "You'd have to take it over a stony field!"

"I know," answered Jim; "I'm going to borrow your wheelbarrow."

(Mrs. McConnell, Prattsburg)

*A Gentleman*

Doc Kane was a gentleman. A gentleman meant more than wearing a collar and being devout. People said that if he'd had all the money he'd earned, he'd have been wealthy.

Doc's best friend was the teacher, John Andrews, whom he respected for his knowledge and penmanship. Doc's most valuable possession was a pen-and-ink drawing of himself by John, the margin of which was covered with the autographs of all the people whose cows and horses he had nursed through bad times. The picture still exists and is "available for inspection."

When Doc died, so much money was given for flowers that the folks decided to buy a red granite stone instead. The stone which they bought was placed at the head of his grave in the Catholic cemetery where it stands today bearing the simple inscription:

"He harmed no living thing."

(Mrs. McConnell, Prattsburg)

*The Whitmans*

The most cherished shrine in Prattsburg is the renovated girlhood home of Narcissa Prentiss, wife of Marcus Whitman, where now live a retired missionary couple from Oregon who preserve with care the memories of the past while keeping the home open for strangers and newcomers.

Narcissa had always been a conscientious girl. Her father, Judge Prentiss, sent her to the Emma Willard School for Girls and then to the Prattsburg Academy where she met Marcus Whitman and Henry Spaulding. In the years that followed, while Marcus became a doctor and Henry a minister, Narcissa kept a little nursery school at Bath.

Marcus returned from the West in order to advance his plans

for an Oregon mission. He wanted to marry Narcissa, whose religious tendencies had been evident, and to procure a parson. Preferably, the parson should be a married one whose wife could be a companion for Narcissa. Henry Spaulding was ready to answer the mission call. His intended wife, however, was of too delicate health to accompany him. Her love for him was so great that she excused him from his engagement. In a business-like way, Henry found for himself a more rugged partner in Eliza Hart of Utica. Not long after Henry had departed for his western trip, his former sweetheart died—it is believed, of a broken heart.

Prattsburg commemorates the marriage ceremony of Narcissa Prentiss and Marcus Whitman with a hymn, "My Native Land, I Love Thee," which was Narcissa's favorite song. When it is sung today, it is in her honor. Many friends were present at the marriage of Narcissa to Marcus in order to say final farewells to the courageous couple. Before parting, all rose to sing Narcissa's song. One by one, as their voices quavered, the people stopped singing. Only Narcissa's clear soprano remained steady enough to finish the song.

A minor detail, but one yet contested, concerns the exact site of the construction of the wagon which took the party across the Rockies. Most folks believe the honor belongs to Daboll's Corners, but, actually, since the party went by sleigh to Pittsburgh and by boat to St. Louis, the origin of the wagon that crossed the Rockies first may never be known.

Two of the sentences often quoted from Narcissa's diary are: "Tell the girls [her sisters] not to waste Ma's bread if you knew how well I would relish even the driest morsel," and at Wylatpo, "We felt as safe leaving clothing on the line all night as we did in Prattsburgh."

(Mrs. Waldo and Mrs. Hoag of Prattsburg)

## HA'NTS

*The Good Ghost at Wheeler*

Up above Wheeler in Mutton Hollow, there lived a crew of men who kept their mouths tight as to their own business. The neighbors began to whisper among themselves that these men were rustlers, and soon their suspicions proved true.

One summer the hired man at Mutton Hollow was severely burned. The rustlers refused to call a doctor, preferring to let the man die slowly. After this, no one passing through Mutton Hollow ever lingered! Should he linger, he inevitably heard the hoofbeats of a headless horse galloping after him. So far, no one knew why the headless-horse ghost was fated to haunt Mutton Hollow.

Then, one evening, a farmer starting his rig up the Hollow road saw the apparition of the hired man emerging from the woods, riding a headless horse! The farmer turned his own horses around in the field and whipped them back to Prattsburg.

There was no need to verify the farmer's story; no one cared to experience his adventure, especially after dark. It was decided by the people that night that the rider of the headless horse appeared in order to protect law-abiding citizens passing through the Hollow and to warn them of danger. He also had the duty of haunting the rustlers until they were forced to leave their hide-out.

Thereafter, after dusk, the Good Ghost appeared every few nights.

(Mrs. Mary Neff and Mrs. Susan Saunders of Prattsburg)

*Sherman Gang's Ghost*

The Sherman Gang of Canisteo had a regular "Doone-like"

habitation four miles beyond old Rowleyville. Here they lived unmolested but not unmolesting until after the Civil War.

At any rate, Vicky, a great-granddaughter of "Old Sherm" himself, managed to escape from the outfit and live in town—"respectable." Unfortunately, in a few years, Vicky became infatuated with one of the handsome members of the Sherman Gang.

On a wintry day the girl visited the Gang at the Sherman headquarters. At this time two years had elapsed since an Irish orphan boy, a cousin of Vicky's and an adopted handy boy of the Shermans', had disappeared. Not long after the disappearance, townsfolk had recognized the orphan's clothes on the bodies of the various Sherman children.

On the day of which we speak, the Sherman men were occupied in their usual way, and Vicky had been left alone by the kitchen fire. Suddenly, as though a door were unlatched, she felt a draft on the back of her neck. Turning around, Vicky saw the "ha'nt" of her little Irish cousin standing on the other side of the stove. The ha'nt, blue with cold, held his trembling fingers over the heat. His only garments were his little "red woolies."

"It's so cold down cellar in the grave," the child explained to her. The sudden sound of an approaching footstep caused the frightened ha'nt to melt through the cellar-door panels. He had gone before Vicky could speak a word!

Vicky was deathly sick. In a flash the wickedness of her infatuation became apparent to her. An inherent strain of slyness, however, came to her rescue. She would not accuse the Gang of murder. Instead, she would feign helplessness and sudden illness. When "Reg" came, she pleaded a severe case of chills and begged him to take her home. Like a very sly Sherman, she never saw "Reg" again.

(Mrs. Leora Drake of Canisteo)

*Peddlers*

Late one afternoon a pack peddler came to a fieldstone farmhouse near Strowbridge. The couple living there invited him to remain with them for the night. That was the end of the pack peddler, for he was never again seen. His pack, also, was never again seen. Proof that the devil's business was perpetrated on the night the pack peddler disappeared is the fact that on the rough-hewn plank at the kitchen threshold is a blood-stain which no amount of scrubbing will rub out. If this sounds unlikely, the same fieldstone farmhouse stands in the field beside Strowbridge—at this very minute!

When the good pack peddler innocently accepted treacherous hospitality, some sign or sound always warned him of the fate of his predecessor. Since the peddler was a friend to all, trickery practiced against him was an inexcusable crime.

One night a peddler passing through Canisteo accepted the hospitality of an evil-minded father and son. During the night he heard, after repeated intervals, a mysterious scraping, scraping, scraping. Undoubtedly it was his warning!

When dawn came, the weary peddler was still alive! Later he learned that the son had been dying during the night after having fallen over a hay rack. Punishment for his former crime had caught up with him. What the peddler wanted to know, and what he asked his host, was the cause of the constant scraping noises which he had heard on the previous night. He was told that he had heard the scraping of vines against the roof.

As soon as the peddler could give an excuse to leave the house, he made a quiet examination of the roof and walls. There was not one sprig of vine to be seen! The peddler wasted no time getting into the village where he had arrived before his sudden

departure had been noticed. The villagers assured him that his escape was miraculous!

Another pack peddler who passed through Canisteo was Jeduthan Loomis. Once, when night came, Jeduthan stopped at the cabin of three strapping men.

When the men were ready to retire, one said to Jeduthan, "You can have the loft, man, but leave your firearms below."

Jeduthan had no choice but to climb the ladder into the loft and—leave his firearms below. He noticed, however, that the third-from-the top rung of the ladder squeaked.

During the interminable minutes of the night Jeduthan pinched himself in order to remain awake. Each time the third rung creaked his sense would spring to life and Jeduthan would begin to groan.

At last morning came. Jeduthan crept past the exhausted bodies of the men. Around noon Jeduthan reached blessed safety.

(The Strowbridge Case—Mr. Carlton Kennedy, Prattsburg; Pack Peddlers at Canisteo—Mr. Will Jamison and Mrs. Leora Drake of Canisteo)

#### *Civil War Ghost*

One afternoon, perhaps 30 years ago, a Prattsburg lady and her two children were taking a walk in the vicinity of Lyon's Hollow. They had to stop eventually because the path led into the "wildest place ever seen." Her son explored for a while and came running back to tell his mother he had found an old house completely abandoned and partially furnished. At first his mother could remember the existence of no house where her son had been scouting. Then the story of the forgotten house came back to her.

When the Prattsburg lady had been a girl, an outside construction-man had been called in on a temporary job. He and his wife had lived in this house, which, though lonely, had been convenient.

On a warm summer evening, his wife was ironing in the parlor while she waited for his return. The front door was open to admit the cooling drafts of night. As she worked, Mrs. Cleccard heard a faint noise from the parlor behind her. It was almost imperceptible, like the unconscious muttering of someone to himself. Assuming a neighbor had seen her light and had come to visit her, she stepped to the doorway.

Dimly outlined against the opposite wall was a figure in a long grey dress. Its back was toward her and its arms were extended before it, palms resting on the wall.

The figure was whispering to the blank wall!

Mrs. Cleccard said nothing to the figure, as she assumed it belonged to some former resident who felt she had some urge, reasonable if explained, to express herself in this fashion.

When at last Mrs. Cleccard addressed the figure, it glided out the door into the night. Mrs. Cleccard returned to her ironing somewhat perplexed.

A while later, a neighbor lady came along the path and up the porch steps to pay her new neighbor a call. During their conversation Mrs. Cleccard asked her caller about the previous tenants and whether or not any of them were ever accustomed to return.

The caller replied that to her knowledge the house had been vacant for many years. Formerly, a man and his wife and daughter had lived there. The daughter had been engaged to a Civil War soldier who had never returned.

Then Mrs. Cleccard casually mentioned the quiet visitor that had paid her so unceremonious a call an hour or so before.

"I've never heard of such a person in this neighborhood," mused the caller. "Just where did she stand?"

The two ladies took the front-parlor lamp into the back sitting room where they examined the walls and floor carefully for any remaining evidence of the grey figure. On the wall opposite the doorway was an oval-shaped patch of wallpaper, cleaner than the rest, indicating the absence of a mirror or painting. The Cleccards had not had time as yet to repaper.

"What did the last family hang over there?" asked Mrs. Cleccard, passingly curious.

"Oh, that, why, yes, that's where the picture of the young Civil War soldier was hung!"

(Mrs. Carol McConnell of Prattsburg)

#### SOME FAVORITE STORIES

##### *Aunt Betsy Roberts*

The Roberts family came to the Corning area from New England after the "cold summer" of 1816. Elizabeth, the oldest daughter, took her mother's place when Mrs. Roberts died, and assumed the responsibilities of a large household.

After many years, the last child, Mary, had been married and had gone with her husband to his trading post in Wisconsin. By this time, Betsy was a spinster thirty years old and was too tired to raise a family of her own. Instead, she took her share of her father's inheritance, picked a remote lot and cabin, and became the friendly recluse known to the entire valley as "Aunty Betsy."

As the years went by, Betsy remained contentedly alone, picking up wild beechnuts and chestnuts, and keeping a tidy garden patch. Mary was in Wisconsin, raising a little family among the Indians. Then, one day, word came to the Erwin Settlement that both Mary and her husband had been killed, but that the three

children—seven, five, and four years of age—were living. No one knew what should be done about them.

For some time, no one missed Aunt Betsy.

Then, one fall day, three months later, to the wonder of all, this lone woman, uneducated, timid even among womenfolk, appeared in the village, leading two little children and carrying another!

Her heroic undertaking has been long remembered, not only because she had traveled through Indian territory unguided and unprotected, but also because she herself had never been known to wander from her cabin dooryard.

(Mr. Messer of Corning)

#### *Wolves*

This incident happened out Canisteo-way in Colonel Bill's Valley. Long ago, communities held what were called "meat rings." This meant that neighbors would arrange to butcher at various intervals so that the supply of fresh meat would be evenly distributed. Two little daughters were sent to a family nearby for fresh meat, and were instructed to start home, after play, before dark. In those days children had few opportunities to play with other children, and for this reason the two little girls started for home too late.

They hadn't gone far when the cry of the wolves was heard coming closer to them. They started running for the nearest deserted cabin, keeping the meat with them. If the wolves came too near, they planned to drop the meat and delay pursuit for a few moments.

The code of the woodsman has always been to leave as much wood supply as he has found in camps. By chance, a traveler had recently left a banked fire in the doorless cabin.

In panic, the children dropped the meat and arrived at the cabin in time to start a flame blazing. The wolves were temporarily held at bay by the fire and lurked at the doorway.

However, the wood supply was insufficient for the entire night, and the girls were unable to replenish it. They began with their bare hands to pull loose timber from the walls and gather leaves from the floor. As they fed the flame, they sang hymn songs to keep up their courage. When the leaves gave out, they ripped bark from the wall logs. Finally, as their strength became exhausted, dawn came. The wolves slunk off.

When the daylight had broadened, they started for home once more, this time blackened and bleeding and sobbing with relief. Their paralyzed mother managed to take the horn from its hook and call their father, who had spent the night searching for the children in another section of the woods.

The next story is about Colonel Bill's young son Billy. Billy Stephens had spent all day at a neighbor's home helping with the butchering. As he was returning home with his fresh meat, a particularly hungry pack of wolves came upon him. Throwing them his fresh meat, Billy was able to distract their attention from him for the few precious moments required to climb a tree. There, balanced on a high limb, he tied one of his arms to a branch nearby with his kerchief, so he would be able to check his fall long enough to regain his seat should he go to sleep. Morning finally came for Billy and with it the departure of the wolves. By-and-by, Billy slipped down from the tree and ran home.

(Mrs. Leora Drake of Canisteo)

*The Farmer Wins a Wife*

In Arkport lived a man with a beautiful daughter who had two suitable bids for marriage. Since the girl could not make up her mind which lad to choose, the father took matters into his own hands. His daughter, he concluded, would be given to the suitor who could carry a bushel of wheat ten miles, from the flats above South Dansville to Dansville. One suitor tried and fainted. The other suitor, the beautiful Victor Mature of the day, did the stunt and won the fair bride.

(Onalee Faulkner of Arkport)

*A Strong Man*

Feats of strength have always been admired in Steuben. Take George Rice, for example, the Prattsburg village blacksmith whom the community will never forget. He was a powerful man with a wrist as thick as a man's arm. They used to say he could pick out eyeteeth. Any hard job was put by until George could do it.

Every afternoon at 2:00 he'd pick up his anvil by the horn, march down to the Armstrong restaurant where in the early days there was a bar, put his anvil on the counter, and order a drink. Then, picking up his anvil very deliberately, and a second drink, he would march back to his shop. In other words, he was a man of strict habit. His regularity was jarred only on the rare occasions when he took too much drink and started reciting the poem, "I'll Paddle My Own Canoe."

Once, some travellers went past George's place while he was plowing with a walking plow, and asked him for directions. Not being familiar with George, they were astounded when he picked up the plow with one hand and pointed to the eastward with it, saying, "Over that way."

(Carlton Kennedy of Prattsburg)

*The Deacon and the Bread*

Deacon Niles was a regular martinet. For one thing, he didn't like salt-rising bread. He did not "approve" of salt-rising bread for himself or for his family. It never occurred to him that either Mrs. Niles or the four or five Niles children would even so much as dare like what they affectionately called "Stinkumpton's Bread."

Business took the Deacon away from Lyon's Hollow early one morning, and Mrs. Niles, who judged he wouldn't return until suppertime anyway, immediately bustled about mixing up a batch of the forbidden bread. She made an extra-large pan full and put it on a low stool in the parlor where it would be out of the way.

The story goes that the pious father of the Niles family finished his affairs in a business-like way and returned home a little sooner than he was expected. He entered the house by way of the parlor, and this wasn't expected either. Spying the stool, the pan, and the innocent bread, he took accurate aim with his right boot and raised the stool, "emptings" and all, to the ceiling. Mrs. Niles hearing the commotion, rushed to the front parlor.

"Gracious, what's happening!"

"Mahaley, that was your emptings a-rising."

(Mrs. McConnell of Prattsburg)

*Old Bray*

From Hornby Forks comes a story depicting the "adaptability of the average Yankee," as my story-teller said. When Mr. Messer was in Hornby Forks as a teacher one winter, he often heard the men in the store talking about vital concerns, past and present, such as free silver, slavery, trade, and always "Old Bray." Curious to know why "Old Bray" was so often mentioned, he asked the boys one day, and this is the story they told him:—

Andrew Brayton Dickinson started a little store on a corner of his father's farm. The Dickinson farm was known to Horace Greeley, who visited it in order to write features on "scientific farming" for his New York paper, but everyone in the community knew that Father Dickinson prepared his "scientific methods" just to keep Horace busy. Actually, the wood ashes he threw on the apple trees were thrown because of custom, habit, or convenience.

Anyway, as time went on, "Old Bray" became synonymous with the type of character raised among high, windy hills—bluff and square—a man who paid his men good wages. One of his schemes for raising money was to drive Ohio cattle eastward to Steuben in order to fatten them there for market. Pennsylvania farmers adopted his scheme, and Bray was compelled to obtain his cattle from Illinois. At Springfield he became good friends with "Old Abe."

The years went on and Old Abe went to Washington. Old Bray had made a decent living and now endeavored to try his hand at something new. The job of Marshall for the Port of New York was vacant. He took a notion to apply and wrote Old Abe a letter at the Capitol.

Abe received the letter during conference but was unable to read it. He passed it around to the various cabinet members until it reached a Secretary. "What does it say, Mr. Stanton?"

"Man wants to be minister to Nicaragua."

"Well, well, appoint him then. We don't have anybody there and he's a good man."

Accordingly, Old Bray found himself in Washington with a little better than three weeks in which to learn Spanish. In his hotel room before sailing, his tutor and he worked on the language day and night.

At Nicaragua, he took his office seriously, treating the men there as he had the farmers at Hornby Forks—as equals. One day he saw bales of cotton on the wharves. As the Southerners had blocked all their own cotton shipments, the Northerners were deprived of their cotton supply. At once Old Bray arranged for shipments of Nicaraguan cotton to be sent to the North in exchange for importation of sewing machines, clocks, and other useful items.

In fact, Old Bray was such a success that President Johnson offered him an appointment in Spain, but the Nicaraguans were so alarmed, they offered to raise from their slim exchequer the difference in the salary he would be given as the Spanish minister. But Old Bray wasn't working for pay, and refused the Nicaraguan money as well as the Spanish post. He remained with the Nicaraguans until the day of his death. It is said that if you go to Nicaragua, you can see a monument which the natives placed there in his memory.

(Mr. Messer of Corning)

#### "WHIMS"

Nearly every farmer had cider in the cellar for his "hired hands." Boiled cider was used in minced pies. After two years, cider became vinegar. The morning after cider had been boiled, applesauce and apple-butter making began, said Miss Anna Pratt, 97, who died the week following my visit with her. Mrs. Burt Merritt says her mother always called using boiled cider in pies, giving them a "sweet, puckery smack." Around Prattsburg the folks sometimes say, "Ap' sass is best sass, 'tis 'tall" after words of a little handyman who would do any errand if he could have a meal of applesauce on someone's doorstep.

(Mrs. Bert Wilson of Prattsburg)

Soups and breads were ever-present foods at meals. Vegetable soup was "great pot." Thin soup with meat was "spoonmeat." Thick soup or stew was "hotch-pot." Baked bread in fireplace coals was called "black bread." "Spoon bread" was wet corn-meal bread baked in a "spider." "Canal" was similar to graham and was used to start "emptings" bread. (Mrs. Drake of Canisteo) Bread was kneaded till it "shone like a schoolmarm's heel."

Other terms used out Canisteo-way were: "candlewood" for pine knots, and "pompions" for pumpkins. A bride's "setting out" always included a bread "peel" or board on which to cut bread. Women often saved "sitting work" for times when they could meet. Such work would be the picking of goose feathers, at which occasions they covered their arms with stockings to protect themselves against quills.

Many saying or "whims" helped the people in the planting of their food. Some have been quite helpful and are still used.

If the bear sees his shadow on February 2, we will have six weeks of sleighing in March. (Minnie VanAmburg of Prattsburg)

Sun-dogs are a sure sign of severe cold weather. (Same)

Half your corn, half your hay on Candlemas Day. (This means that at this time your winter supply of fodder should be only half consumed.)

Corn is planted when hickory leaf is as big as a squirrel's ear. (Mr. W. Jamison of Canisteo)

Plant corn when the white oak leaf is as big as the red squirrel's ear. (Same)

Swarm of bees in May  
Is worth a load of hay.  
Swarm of bees in July  
Ain't worth a fly.

(Mr. Tuck Prentiss)

Plant cucumbers before sunrise on the Fourth of July in your shirt tail. (Same)

Cucumber seed must be planted in the old of the moon or you will have lots of blossoms but no cucumbers. (Mrs. Van Amburg)

When the chestnut blossoms begin to brown  
It's time that buckwheat is in the ground.

(Same)

Sow peas and beans in the wane of the moon,  
(Whoever soweth them sooner, he soweth too soon,  
That they with the planet may rest and rise  
And flourish with bearing most plentifulwise.

(Mrs. Drake of Canisteo)

Thunder in the fall,  
No winter at all.

(Mrs. VanAmburg)

If it rains July 15 (St. Swithin's Day), it will rain for forty days.

Sayings with which the moon and sun are involved:

If the moon is cradle-shaped, and will hold rain, there will be dry weather. If the moon is tipped and will not hold rain, the weather will be wet.

If the moon has a ring, count the number of stars within it to know how many days will elapse before rain.

If the sun rises and goes under a cloud when it has shone but a few minutes, it will storm before night.

If the sun rises clear, there will be rain before night.

Sayings in which winds and rain are involved:

A mackerel sky means no longer dry.

A winter's fog will freeze a dog.

Never set a hen when the wind is in the east.

## Love sayings:

It takes two New England wives to raise one New England family.

Love laughs at a locksmith.

Old age is honorable,  
But old maids are abominable.  
(Mr. Fred Lewis of Pulteney)

One (wild) turkey—sorrow.  
Two turkeys, joy,  
Three turkeys, marriage,  
Four turkeys, boy.

(Now "crows" are substituted for turkeys.  
Mrs. C. Kennedy of Prattsburg)

## Cynical comment:

He's a good preacher, but he rakes with the teeth upward.

Woeful waste makes rueful want.

Speak of angels and you will hear the flutter of their wings.

Back to the blanket. (Back to primitive ways.)

This house was so small you had to go outdoors to change your mind.

If you harness up a jack-ass in a silver-plated harness, his ears will stick through somewhere. (Mr. Charles Smith of Avoca)

## Industry, thrift:

Never hire a man who whistles a slow tune.

## Caution:

Sneeze on Monday, sneeze for danger;  
Sneeze on Tuesday, sneeze for a stranger,  
Sneeze on Wednesday, sneeze for a letter;  
Sneeze on Thursday, sneeze for something better;  
Sneeze on Friday, sneeze for sorrow;  
Sneeze on Saturday, see your sweetheart tomorrow.

Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations

If you get through March, you're good for the rest of the year.  
(Advice given old folks.)

Miscellaneous saying:

When Adam was a rag doll. (This indicated a long time ago.)

Retorts for special occasions:

When given vague directions: "Who told you how to do that?"—"Why, nobody; I just sucked it out of my thumb."

When asked the source from which an object was procured, a man might say, "Oh, I stole eggs and bought it."

Other terminology included calling dips in the roadways "fiddler's elbows." Marshes were called "peepersvilles."

Gone are the days when rooms were lighted and heated by the fireplace. Gone are the "bed-sinks" or wall beds. Gone are the "field beds" or straw tickings. Gone are the days of the wild turkeys, when these fowl were taken to market in flocks that fed and roosted themselves along the way. In other words, the events and circumstances which gave rise to sayings have been forgotten, but many of the sayings themselves have remained. #

# STREET-CRIES OF AMERICAN CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS

BY GEORGE L. PHILLIPS

**J**UST as the early American colonists, while following the English practice of having their chimneys swept by men in the seventeenth century and then by boys almost to the twentieth, initiated at the same time various methods to regulate the trade of chimney-sweeping; so the master chimney-sweepers and their apprentices, the climbing-boys, while carrying on the English tradition of "calling the streets" for employment, composed some cries as distinctly American as Boston baked beans and New Orleans shrimp gumbo. Through neglect of our historians many of these distinctive calls have been lost with the passing from the American scene of the sweep-boys and of the old fashioned master sweeps who are being supplanted by the mechanized flunomists who without even needing to look up a chimney can vacuum out the soot.

Long before the Boston selectmen in 1655 directed Robert Wyatt and William Lane, duly appointed chimney-sweepers, "to cry aboutt streetes that they may be knowne"<sup>1</sup> or Mayor Barnard of New York in 1686 ordered Chimney-Sweeper William Butler "to passe through all the Streetes Lanes and Passages . . . with such noise or Cry as may Discover yow to the inhabitants thereof,"<sup>2</sup> the custom for chimney-sweepers to call the streets had become established in England. For example, in *Deuteromelia*

(1609) the voice of the sweep soliciting work apparently was as welcome to householders with dirty chimneys as the cuckoo in spring:

The chimney-sweeper all the long day,  
He singeth and sweepeth the soote away.<sup>3</sup>

His simple but arresting cry, "Chimney-sweep," or the more elaborate "Maids, shall I sweep your chimnies high?" or the longer

I sweep your Chimnies clean O,  
Sweep your Chimney clean O!<sup>4</sup>

informed the public that for a few pence he would stand inside the cavernous chimneys and brush down the soot by vigorously wielding his bunch of furze tied to the top of a long pole.

As soon as narrow flues early in the eighteenth century began to become popular with Englishmen who desired more heating comfort than their ancestors had enjoyed, master sweeps, unable or unwilling to inch their bodies through the soot-filled tortuous funnels that would not, because of right-angle elbows, admit their poles, began the wicked practice of forcing, by blows and beguilements, their apprentices to serve as human brushes. These poor waifs, taken from almshouses or bought from starving parents, began their daily toil by rising before daybreak from their soot-heaps in the cellars and calling the streets. Jonathan Swift, irritated by their shrill matutinal cries, complained in 1712:

The small-coal man was heard with cadence deep,  
Till drown'd in shriller notes of chimney-sweep.<sup>5</sup>

And a century later another London inhabitant exclaimed:

Dear me! what a squalling and bawling,  
 What noise, and what a bustle in London pervades;  
 People of all sorts shouting and calling,  
 London's a mart, sure, for men of all trades.  
 The *chummy* so black, sir, with bag on his back, sir,  
 Commences the noise with the cry of "sweep, sweep!"<sup>6</sup>

Like the early chimney-sweepers, the little climbing-boys expanded their monotonous "Sweep, sweep" or "Sweep for the soot, oh!" into such chants as:

Sweep, chimney sweep,  
 Is the common cry I keep,  
 If you rightly understand me;  
 With my brush, broom, and my rake,  
 Such cleanly work I make,  
 There's few can go beyond me.

or the less boastful and more pathetic:

Sweep soot ho.  
 Comfort from my toil you reap,  
 Then pray employ a little sweep.<sup>7</sup>

What Wyatt and Lane shouted in Boston or Butler in New York is not recorded, but presumably they and their followers in the eighteenth century followed the fashions of the English sweeps. Though boys were climbing colonial chimneys in 1742, perhaps earlier,<sup>8</sup> their first pipings to be jotted down, early in the nineteenth century, are direct and informative: "Sweep, oh! Sweep, oh!"; or "Sweep! Sweep! O" to arouse the slumbering burghers of Philadelphia and New York, the eerie wailing of "O weep, wee-e-p, wee-e-e-p, weep, O" for Charleston householders, and "Ro-mi-nay," the Creole version of the French *ramoneur*, for the good people of New Orleans.

By 1812, however, in New York the climbing-boys, usually

Negroes, were promising to transform themselves into scouring brushes to remove soot:

"Sweep. O - O - O - O - O.  
From the bottom to the top,  
Without a ladder or a rope,  
Sweep, O - O - O - O - O."<sup>9</sup>

With the invention of chimney-sweeping machines to supersede the nefarious employment of sweep-boys, master sweeps without boys exhorted on both sides of the Atlantic publics generally apathetic to the sufferings of bruised and battered little apprentices to try out the cane rods and whalebone bristles rather than bleeding flesh. In England, where the humanitarian societies were helping to abolish the use of climbing-boys, the master sweep would plead:

Some wooden tubes, a brush, and rope,  
Are all you need employ;  
Pray order, maids, the Scandiscope,  
And not the climbing boy.<sup>10</sup>

In America, where no philanthropists exerted themselves to free the little serfs of the flues, the sweep's appeal was directed mainly to the practical utility of machinery:

*"Sweep O! Patent Sweep! Here's your Patent Sweeps!*  
Sweep, for the soot, ho,  
I am the man,  
That your chimney will clean,  
If any one can."<sup>11</sup>

Our chimney-sweepers, unlike the English, often embellished their cries by adding snatches of popular songs. "Home Sweet Home" apparently was one of their favorites. James K. Paulding heard three sooty men rendering it in 1829,<sup>12</sup> and over fifty years later Ann A. Rikeman noted that work-seeking sweeps

in New York were still fond of it.<sup>13</sup> Slunkey Norton, popular St. Paul chimney-sweeper for many years, took advantage of this custom for advertising purposes during the craze for *Down Went McGinty to the Bottom of the Sea*. Disguising his assistant with false nose, glasses, and patched suit, he paraded the poor scarecrow up and down the streets while he shouted in stentorian tones, "Slunkey Norton has found McGinty."<sup>14</sup>

New Orleans has contributed more colorful chimney-sweeper cries than any other American community. Its Negroes, as in most southern cities and in many northern ones, have been the guardians of the chimneys. In their traditional costume of worn frock coat and bruised silk hat, with a duster in cool weather, they have sauntered about the streets, shouldering ropes, palmetto branches, and soot-sacks. Sometimes they tease the cooks by intimating a knowledge of why cakes won't rise:

Rom - a - nay, Rom - a - nay, Rom - a - nay,  
 Lady, I know why yo' chim - ly won' draw,  
 Stove won' bake an' yuh can't make no cake,  
 An' I know why yo' chim - ly won' draw.<sup>15</sup>

and

Chim - ney Sweep - er, sweep out yo' chim - ney,  
 Chim - ney Sweep - er, know why yo' chim - ney won' draw.  
 Chim - ney Sweep - er, clean out yo' ov - en,  
 Chim - ney Sweep - er know why yo' ov - en don' draw.  
 Chim - ney Sweep - er, he sho' can make  
 Yo' ov - en, bake, bake, bake a might - y fine cake.<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes a pair of sweeps chant in "gumbo" French:

1st Sweep: *Ramenez la chimnée . . . Rrrrrramenez la cheminée!*

2nd Sweep: *Valsez; valseur, valsez pour célébrer la S'te Marie*

Summoned to work, a sweep will sing as he cleans ou the soot by manipulating his palmetto leaves in the chimney:

*Valsez, Valseur,  
Val-sez, pour cé-lé-brer  
La S'te Marie.  
Dieu sait si l'annee prochaine  
Nous célébrerons la S'te Marie!*<sup>18</sup>

Another work-song, which served to advise pedestrians to beware of soot falling from the chimney-top, was composed by Willie Hall and Albert Hutchins in the early 1930's:

Here's yo' chimney sweeps,  
We goes up to the roofs,  
Sweep the smokestacks down right now,  
Don't care for soot, anyhow.  
Rami - neau! Rami - neau! Rami - neau!  
Sweep 'em clean! Sweep 'em clean!  
Save the firemen lots of work,  
We hate soot, we never shirk,  
Sweep 'em clean! Sweep 'em clean!<sup>19</sup>

The shrill treble voices of our sweep-boys annoyed many light sleepers in the grey morning. A Philadelphian described them as "shrill" and "piercing," "a succession of strange inarticulate shrieks, modulated into a sort of tune...always recognized as the song of the Chimney Sweep."<sup>20</sup> A New Yorker grumbled about the "unpleasant and unnecessary bawling of those sooty boys."<sup>21</sup> In his *Salmagundi Papers*, James K. Paulding complained that he had been "waked by a bloody chimney-sweep under window—black as a little bob-tailed devil."<sup>22</sup>

Ostensibly to placate a public vexed with these young sweeps' cries but actually to force from their city their impecunious competitors, the well-established master chimney-sweepers of New

York began in 1809 to petition the mayor and aldermen to pass an ordinance to prohibit all sweeps, large and small, from calling the streets. After seven years of trying to undo the strict injunction of Mayor Barnard to William Butler, the sweeps were successful. In early fall, 1816, it was decreed that any master or apprentice found guilty of "crying aloud or singing in the public streets for the purpose of attracting the notice of the public, such master Sweep shall forfeit his license."<sup>23</sup> At once the peripatetic sweeps, who did not have orders from steady customers to relieve them from the necessity of sending their apprentices out to look for work, sent protest after protest to the mayor and common council for redress of the wrong they felt had been placed upon them. So strong was their denunciation of the unfair gagging act that within three months the ban was lifted and their boys were again shrilling "Sweep, Ho!"<sup>24</sup>

In New Orleans chimney-sweepers did not need a city ordinance to learn that their early morning shouts grated harshly upon the senses of householders. John Simms, who was sweeping flues there fifteen years ago, explained why he stayed at home until people had had their coffee: "I went hollerin' under a politician's window one mornin'. ROOAP...ROO...AP...ROOO...OAP. CHIMNEY SWEEPER...RO...ROOAP...REEE...REE...REE...ROOAP...CHIMNEY! Man, the politician poked his head out of his window and told me, 'Say, you black bastard, if you don't get the hell away from here I'm comin' out there and rope your damn neck to one of them trees...' Man, did I leave from away from there! That's why we don't go out early in the mornin' no mo'."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing the Boston Records from 1634 to 1660*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1675 to 1776*, I, 184.

- <sup>3</sup> Charles Hindley, *A History of the Cries of London, Ancient and Modern*, 2nd ed. (London, ca. 1884), p. 70.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 252.
- <sup>5</sup> Jonathan Swift, "Description of the Morning," *The Select Works of Jonathan Swift* (London, 1823), IV, 68.
- <sup>6</sup> Hindley, p. 231.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 358.
- <sup>8</sup> On February 9, 1742, a Boston jack-maker, John Johnson, successfully petitioned the selectmen for his Negro boy to sweep the public's chimneys. *Bos. Rec. Com.*, 1742 to 1753, p. 5.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Cries of New-York* (New York, 1812), p. 38.
- <sup>10</sup> William Hone, *The Every-Day Book* (London, 1827), II, 618.
- <sup>11</sup> *New-York Cries, in Rhyme* (New York, [1825]), p. 22.
- <sup>12</sup> James K. Paulding, "The Yankee Roué," *Tales of the Good Woman* (New York, 1829), p. 46.
- <sup>13</sup> *American Notes and Queries*, V (October, 1945), 110.
- <sup>14</sup> *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (June 19, 1944).
- <sup>15</sup> R. Emmet Kennedy, *Mellows A Chronicle of Unknown Singers* (New York, ca. 1925), p. 22. Similar versions may be found in Elie Siegmeister's "Chimney Sweep," *American Street Cries* (New York 1940) and in *Gumbo Ya-Ya. A Collection of Louisiana Folk Tales* (Boston, 1945).
- <sup>16</sup> J. Rosamond Johnson, "Chimney Sweeper," *Rolling Along in Song A Chronological Survey of Negro Folk Music* (New York, 1937), p. 189.
- <sup>17</sup> *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, p. 40.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- <sup>20</sup> George S. Appleton, *City Cries* (Philadelphia, 1850), p. 17.
- <sup>21</sup> *Cries of New York* (1812), p. 39.
- <sup>22</sup> James K. Paulding, *Salmagundi*, Second Series (New York [1835]), II, 68.
- <sup>23</sup> *N.Y.M.C.C.*, 1784 to 1831, V, 673; VIII, 620.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 718, 724. According to the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 15, 1947, Negro climbing-boys with their master were calling the streets of Philadelphia between 1886-1888.
- <sup>25</sup> *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, pp. 494-495. #

## ON RUMPUS HILL

By MARTHA ANNE PARKER

**O**UTSIDE Naples, New York, a road goes up the hill on which Sam Parrish had his sheep pasture; the road is Parrish Hill Road. The hill is not Parrish Hill; its name on a map is West Italy Hill. There was a time when no one called it that; no one even knew where West Italy Hill was, except the people who lived there.

West Italy Hill was not known, but Rumpus Hill was. It was not a place folks went unless they absolutely had to go. The hill dwellers were wild and dangerous people and were to be avoided at all times. The Rumpussers were feared, and for good reason. There was terror in the valley when the hill folks came to town. No one dared say rumpus, or hill-billy; one hardly dared say anything. Villagers kept their doors locked and their children off the streets, especially on Saturday. The hill-billies had the habit of getting drunk on Saturdays. Instead of going home like decent drunks, they would wander into any unlocked house and go to sleep on the floor. When that happened, the endangered household would call on the neighbors for the night. If too many doors were locked, the tired hill-billies would sleep on the best porch they could find. No one ventured from the house in the morning until the unwelcome guest had gone to find his horses and started home.

The Rumpussers were big men and mighty fighters. They could knock a man down with one blow. No man dared stand

up to fight against them alone. Occasionally a group of town men would get the better of a very drunken hill man. They would tie him up tight and wrap him in burlap; then they would find his wagon and take him home.

All the hill people were not Rumpussers. The peaceful, law-abiding citizens on the hill lived in even more fear than the townspeople. A word spoken out of turn, a complaint to the authorities, a misinterpreted action,—any of these, might mean that soon there would be one less house on the hill. The Rumpussers had the custom of burning down the houses of people who offended them. There were four men who were the most active trouble-makers. Their reputation was so bad that nearly all burnings and thefts were blamed on them. Other people misbehaved, the chief Rumpussers were blamed, and no proof was ever found.

There is one story on the hill about the smallest Rumpusser of them all. Mrs. Annabelle was a slight, little thing, not even five feet tall; she weighed less than a hundred pounds. She was a very fortunate woman, she thought. She had married a gentleman who could read and write, and she didn't even know the alphabet. She was bound she would keep her man too. She was very jealous and wouldn't let him out of the house. He wasn't even allowed to work the farm. This gentleman's fortunate wife walked to town every day to work. At night she walked the four miles home, carrying whatever supplies she had been able to earn. When she got home, she did work around the house and her baking.

One trouble with working in town was that she couldn't watch her husband. He might go out of the house. As she was coming home one night, she heard that he had been across the road to the neighbor's house. That night the little woman finished her baking and went across the road. No one in the

neighbor house was awake, but she didn't want to visit. A few minutes later the house was in flames.

The newspaper over in the county seat, Penn Yan, used to print the happenings on West Italy Hill, and usually there was some editorial comment. The editor had some reaction one day when he got a letter from the hill. The letter said in effect that the editor had better leave West Italy news out of his paper, or he wouldn't have any paper.

The hill had more than Rumpussers to discourage visitors. One of the houses was haunted. The town cobbler found out about the ghosts by first-hand experience. He was a Swiss, and he wanted a farm where he could raise grapes. One of the prosperous farmers outside of town heard about it and offered Sam the old Harrington place. Sam had five hundred dollars, not enough to buy a farm, but he used it for a down payment. The seller, who boasted he was a "fair dealer," took the mortgage for the rest. Sam got together a few things and walked up the road to his new farm. The house needed a little repair, but that would come.

The next morning Sam was pounding on "Fair Deal" Truman's door. "I can't live in that place! It's haunted. They kept me awake all night rattling their chains and dragging bones around. When the wind blew, I could hear the people banging around on the gates of hell trying to get out."

Truman calmed the cobbler the best he could. Then he said, "Sam, I'll buy back the place if you want me to."

Sam couldn't say anything by that time, but he nodded his head.

"But since you say the place has 'hants,' it isn't worth so much. I'll buy it back; don't worry about that. But the price is just five hundred less than you paid for it."

The great Yellow Barn Farm, that went from the valley to

the top of the hill, had trouble with the Rumpussers. The granddaughters who ran the farm never spoke of the trouble very much. It was a queer sort of situation. Through the years of summers the faithful hired man took salt to the sheep in the hilltop-pastures. Once or twice each summer he would find a sheepskin lying in the grass, the sign of a marauder. This was no four-footed thief. The sheep had always been taken clean out of their skins—not a trace of meat or bone left.

Dogs in the sheep bark, and the sound is heard all across the valley, echoing from the hills. Dogs leave most of the carcass. Dogs kill a bunch of sheep, and don't skin them. Dogs don't carry knives.

The early 1930's brought a strange new people to the hills. They were foreigners. City folks. They thought they were smart with their big cars and their money and all. They bought tumble-down houses. They liked the view, they said. Same old view that's been there for as long as folks can remember, and those "feriners" buy an old house so's they can look at the view. More than that, all they know is what they been told, and nobody told them about the Rumpussers.

The first "feriner" on Rumpus hill bought the old Harrington place. Ghosts? "How nice, always wanted to live in a haunted house." A seasoned Rumpusser came to call and just mentioned that the people didn't like foreigners. Houses burned in the night, all very mysterious-like. "It would be nice if the house got burned; then the insurance money could build a new one." Rumpussers aren't ones to do favors like that, and the house stood. The ghosts would do the trick. But when the "feriners" set traps and nailed up the holes in the side of the house, mice and squirrels and the ghosts were left outside. When the barn was

fixed and the boards nailed down, people stopped banging on hell's gates.

The queer thing about it was that during the week the man went away, and the woman was left with a little girl and a young nurse. Alf, the champion Rumpusser, stopped in to see about it one day. The first thing the woman said was: "You can't come in here. I just painted the floor."

Alf stood in the door. "You know me? No? Have a drink." He took a jug from his shoulder, spit tobacco juice, and took a long draw. The jug was extended.

"I don't drink."

Alf looked puzzled. "Where's your man?"

"Rochester."

"You all right here?"

"Doing fine as long as the paint holds out."

Alf grunted and went back to his wagon. It was drawn by a team of splendid oxen. The little girl followed him and stood looking at the team. The Rumpusser said, "You going home with me?"

"Not today, I guess. Good by." They waved and he was gone.

The next time Alf came, the man was home. The greeting was the same: "You know me? Have a drink."

"You're Alf. Yes, we know you. No, thanks. I don't drink."

Alf always insisted people drink with him so they could be friends. No one had ever refused that tobacco-stained jug before. This city fellow seemed like a good neighbor even without the drinking ceremony. "I hear you be a science teacher. You heard about my meteorite? Well, one day I was out in the field. A big wind come up and the sky got dark. Next thing, the whole sky was lit. The ground shook all around. After awhile I went in the next field and there was this-here stone all hot. I couldn't go near

it for a week and then even the team couldn't stir it. You want to buy the meteorite mebbe?"

Generally people bought the meteorite sight unseen, and then couldn't move it. The city man said he'd go look at it some day. Alf went back to his wagon shaking his head. The city folks did go look at the great stone from the sky, but decided it was so big they wouldn't know what to do with it. There was no sense in inviting disaster by telling Alf he was a big fake. That stone rode down to the field on the back of a glacier.

Alf had a brother, John; they both said they were the elder, but neither knew his age. John was a blacksmith, and he also played the fiddle. People said he got in a saloon fight one night, beat up a little traveling musician, and made off with his fiddle. John heard the city folks had a piano, and he came down the hill one day to play a few tunes. The woman was alone, but she let him in without a fuss. She didn't know the tunes very well, but she played some things for John and he played some for her. When it began to get mealtime, she asked him to stay. He didn't feel that he should; his horses needed feeding too.

John was not an active Rumpusser by the time the city folks came. There were few people left on the hill. He loved his dog, his spirited horses, and his fiddle. One day he came down the hill shouting that some crazy fellow wanted his fiddle and would pay him fifty dollars for it. It was a real Stradivarius. The city folks told John to see if the fellow wouldn't pay more. Soon after, John sold the fiddle for four hundred dollars cash money. It turned out to be something he never heard of, a Cremona.

The violin was gone; and not long after, the four hundred dollars was gone. John wouldn't go to the poorhouse, because he would have to give up his dog and his horses to do that. He was old, nearly blind and nearly deaf. His daughter took him down to the "holler" to live with her. The dog couldn't come in the

house; she was going to sell the horses, but John made such a fuss that she changed her mind. John didn't like it in the "holler"; he wanted to go home. One night in the winter, he hitched up his team, called his dog, and started for home.

The team stood out in front of the old shack, but John wasn't there. The dog came running up and tugged on the pant-legs of the people who had set out to find the old man. They found him, where the dog led them, lying in a ditch half-way up the hill. They took him back to the house in the "holler," and he died the next day. The doctor said it was pneumonia and acute alcoholism. Everybody on the hill and in the "holler" knew that John died of a broken heart because he couldn't go home.

The little Rumpusser, Mrs. Annabelle, raised her three sons well. She did everything she possibly could so that the "boys" wouldn't have to work. They were gentleman's sons. The family was poor, but the "boys" were not allowed to ask for anything from friends or strangers; they must never let themselves be "beholden" to anybody. The "boys" worked occasionally, they never had much money at any one time, but they got along.

In the late summer, folks in town would order cordwood from the "boys." The "boys" would solemnly promise early delivery. When the cool fall nights came, many a householder would fret and scold and look anxiously for the lazy "boys." Then one morning the villager would look out to see a neat stack of wood by his back door. The "boys" would be forgiven; it was hard to stay angry with them when they had worked into the night to deliver wood.

One thing the villagers didn't know. On the "boys'" land, there was no woodlot. #

## “STEAL NOT THIS BOOK”

By JAMES TAYLOR DUNN

WHEN in our earlier years we scribbled on the fly-leaves of well-thumbed school books this claim to ownership,

If this book should chance to roam  
Give it a kick and send it home,

it of course hardly occurred to us that we were following an age-old tradition which reaches back to, and perhaps even beyond, such 12th-century Latin anathemas as, “If anyone pilfers it, may he die the death, be boiled in a cauldron; may epilepsy and fever overtake him, may he be broken on the wheel and hanged.” Nor would what we thought was our own great originality have been too much deflated if someone had told us that when we “composed” a quatrain like:

Steal not this book,  
My honest friend,  
For fear the gallows  
Will be your end,

we were not only walking in the footsteps of our grandparents when they wrote similar rimes in their *Lightning Calculator or Accountant's Assistant*, but that our forebears in the old country also had penned exactly the same imprecation, adding to it:

And when you die the Lord will say,  
And wares the Book you stole away.

Our parents' or our own versions of these last two lines, however, might have taken on a somewhat more personal tone:

And I will say on judgment day,  
 "Where is that book you stole away?"

Such dire threats of hanging have been the favorite curse of book-owners for many centuries. Abbot Whethamstede of St. Albans inscribed on one of Duke Humphrey's manuscripts now at the Bodleian Library: "If any one steals this book may he come to the gallows or the rope of Judas." In later days John W. Webb of Otsego County added to his 1854 *Elementary Arithmetic*:

Up the ladder  
 And down the rope  
 And there you'll hang  
 Until you choke.

Many and varied are the versions of the "Steal not this Book" type. Flora H. Dann in the winter 1951 issue of *NEW YORK FOLKLORE QUARTERLY* quoted one. On July 15, 1823, Joseph Fleming admonished,

Steal not this Book for fear of Shame  
 For Above Stands the Owners Name  
 The first is J a letter Bright  
 The next is F in all men's Sight.

Another common method, which many of us certainly remember using, was to confuse as much as possible any person who might borrow the book. The owner could follow the 1862 tactics of Orland B. Wheeler and write on the flyleaf,

If you don't believe this book is mine  
 Turn over the pages to 99.

Then he had the choice either to place his name on the mentioned page, or, better yet, to jump from back to front within the book, tantalizing the searcher with variations of,

If here my name you do not see  
Turn on to page 203.

Back in 1869, a Delaware County girl, in her copy of *New Elementary Algebra*, ended up the lengthy search in a completely confusing manner:

If my name you cannot find  
Shut the book and never mind.

The ten-cent counter of any second-hand bookstore will produce an infinite variety of homemade exlibris poems. The field is practically unexplored, though Lillian Morrison has included a few in her compilation from autograph albums, *Yours Till Niagara Falls* (N. Y., 1950). For example, she gives a more urbane version of what a Rockland County wheelwright wrote in his 1835 account book:

If you steel this book of knowledge  
You will surely go to singsing coledge.

I also rather like the appealing finality in Clarissa Carney's claim of one hundred and twenty-seven years ago:

The grass is green, the rose is red,  
This book is mine till I am dead.

But of the numerous verses and inscriptions of ownership which I have gathered together my favorites were found in one small volume. In 1812, Consider Jacobs purchased a copy of *The New and Complete Universal Letter Writer*. Perhaps remembering past experiences, and wanting to make sure this book didn't stray, he completely covered both the front flyleaves with his name and with the following three admonitions:

If I to you this book do lend  
And you the same do borrow  
Pray read it through today  
And bring it home tomorrow.

Do remember what you see  
And return this book to me  
If after it I have to go  
When you ask again I shall say No!

It has been gone a year or more  
Verry dirty and badly tore  
And in my wrath I swore  
It never should go there no more.

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## SOME "CHARACTERS" OF THE MOHAWK VALLEY

BY DOROTHY DeANGELIS

**F**AMOUS chiefly for its historical legends, the Mohawk Valley has always had its "characters." My uncle George Beck of Fort Plain is not an old man, but his family has lived in Fort Plain from before the Revolution. Two of his favorite characters were Wells Grant and Winnie (last name unknown) who were fast friends as long as they lived and were finally buried next to each other. What made their companionship distinctive was their physical appearances. Wells was 28 inches high and in love with every big woman in town. Winnie, on the other hand, was 7 feet 6 inches tall, and his greatest joy was his dogs. Too shy with women, he took delight in the first fire company, which his townsmen honored him by naming the Winnie Hose Company. Winnie and Wells led all the parades in town as long as they lived.

Another character in this town of characters was John Baxter, whose favorite pastime was watching the boats on the canal. Fired with enthusiasm one day, John decided to build his own boat. Working all winter in his cellar, he made a steam runabout which, of course, was too big to remove from the cellar. But Baxter remained undaunted, and tore the cellar apart to get his beloved boat out. She was finally launched in the canal with crowds of people gathered around to watch. Baxter checked all his equipment, blew his whistle, and called to his proud mother on the bank, "Here I go, Ma." And go he did, right to the bottom of the canal. He never built another boat, but he never forgot the first one he had built. Until the day he died, the children would run after him shouting, "Toot, toot, here I go, Ma," and old John would chase them with his cane.

My second informant was Douglas Ayers, Jr., also of Fort Plain, but employed as high school science teacher in Canajoharie. Mr. Ayers is a big man, whose hair has disappeared long ago, leaving a bright red fringe of what used to be. He is the source of all information on outdoor life for miles around, but he is best known for his collection of dogs. People do not have dogs "done away with" in our town; they give them to Doug Ayers, who can somehow find a home for the most homely-looking stray. Mr. Ayers' stories come from his father, who for thirty years was the only doctor in the country region.

One day while on a trip with his father to a country farmhouse, young Doug asked the old Dutch farmer about the little wooden shoes pointed away from the house. "Well, you see, son, that's so the witch will be going out when she thinks she's coming in." #

# FIDDLE-TUNES FROM ORANGE COUNTY, NEW YORK

BY LETTIE OSBORN

Editor's Note: At the Cooperstown seminars in July 1952, Miss Elizabeth Burchenal of New York gave a delightful talk about American folk-dances, showed movies of her pupils dancing, and then conducted a "square-dance" for members of the audience. The famous scholar observed that though New England was largely populated by the English in colonial days, the dance-tunes used in that section were and are mostly Irish and Scottish. The following article is published partly to answer Miss Burchenal's inquiry regarding New York's favorite tunes. I have simply used part of the best report upon the subject which I have ever received from a college student—a report written at the Albany State College in the 1930's by a girl who was herself an accomplished fiddler. Lettie wrote out the music for all these tunes; if you wish a copy of any one of them, I shall be glad to accommodate you. Of course, we could not afford to have 59 tunes engraved for the *Quarterly*.

**F**IDDLERS, more so than callers, seem fated to their profession. They are not, as the movies and fiction picture them, old men with flowing beards. The oldest I ever knew couldn't have been more than fifty years old, and I fiddled for dances when I was fifteen. Fiddlers have a good ear for a tune, and they just can't help fiddling. They learn tunes anyhow, anywhere, and naturally play. As the callers learn their calls, so the fiddlers learn their tunes from hearing them at dances and by getting other players to fiddle for them. They seldom can read music at all; the few that can, have learned long after they began to fiddle, and read very slowly and painfully at best. They all believe that a person who plays by note is not half so good a

musician as he who plays by ear. As to the modern dance tunes which they are called upon to play, if they have learned to pick out notes, they then have a distinct advantage over their colleagues who get records or turn on the radio to learn the new tunes. Some fiddlers sit down, feet on the floor or cocked on the rungs of the chair, legs crossed or with one foot perched on another chair; some stand up, leaning against the wall or the piano, or erect; some hold their fiddles against their chests, against their upper arms, under their chins, with the neck resting on their knee if they sit down, or against their wrists. However they may hold their fiddles, they manage to saw out some fine dance tunes. The pianist plays chords in the three major changes—just oom-pah, oom-pah; the caller plunks away at his banjo; and they all pound their feet to keep time. The caller can sometimes substitute for the fiddler who goes under, but he doesn't like to take on the extra work. A saxophone and drum occasionally augment the band, for the sake of the modern dances which work their way in between square sets.

The tunes are either jigs— $\frac{3}{4}$  time—or reels— $\frac{2}{4}$  time. Constant repetition of the theme and marked, though monotonous, rhythm are the main characteristics. Most of the ones I have recorded as most common are of Irish origin or are native productions, with a few Scotch tunes scattered among them. I have some tunes which have left earlier dances along the way. These are *Durang's Hornpipe*, *Fisher's Hornpipe*, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, *Money Musk*, *Soldier's Joy*, *St. Patrick's Day in the Morning*, *Speed the Plow*, *Virginia Reel*. These tunes used to have their own figures, but now they are played with almost any change. The figures are printed in Elizabeth Burchenal's *American Country Dances*. Some of my tunes are thought to be native. These are: *Money Musk*, *Pop Goes the Weasel*, *Speed the Plow*, *Soldier's Joy*, *Devil's Dream*, *Lamplighter's Hornpipe*, *Arkansas*

*Traveller, Delaware Hornpipe, Golden Slippers, Kingdom Coming, Marching Through Georgia, Oh, Susanna, Turkey in the Straw, Ta Ra-Ra-Ra Boom De Ay, and Virginia Reel.* Most of the others are of British origin.

Most fiddlers, and callers likewise, have one favorite tune, by which, as if they were theme-songs, they are known. One fiddler liked particularly *Kingdom Coming*; another, *Golden Slippers*. One caller liked *Marching Through Georgia*, and another, *Ta Ra-Ra-Ra Boom De Ay*. When I was fiddling for dances, *Turkey in the Straw* was always my favorite.

I can give a little advice, the result of my experience, to anyone who is going to try to fiddle. Get a comfortable position and keep it. During each dance, stare at someone. This habit helps, but I don't know why. Keep some part of your body moving in time to the music. You can play only a little while without tapping. Above all, after you have learned a tune, do not think about it. Play it, but do not try to remember what is coming next, or your fingers will get all tangled up. Take it easy, or you will be tired by the end of one set, for fiddling is hard work. Also from experience, I can testify that it is much more fun to dance than to play for dancing. Fiddlers and callers make a business of their music. If you see one of them at a square dance on an evening off, you can be sure it is not a case of a taxi-driver going for a joy-ride. He is there to learn more tunes, more calls, newer figures, or easier ways of handling a dance.

#### Names of Tunes

Arkansas Traveller  
 Bonnie Dundee  
 Captain Jinks  
 Coming Through the Field  
 Delaware Hornpipe  
 Devil's Dream

Dick Sand's Hornpipe  
Durang's Hornpipe  
Emerald Isle  
Emigrant's Reel  
First Two Gents  
Fisher's Hornpipe  
Flogging Reel  
Flower of Donnybrook  
Flower of Edinburgh  
Galway Reel  
Garry Owen  
Girl I Left Behind Me  
Golden Slippers  
Highland Fling  
Irishman's Heart to the Ladies  
Irish Washerwoman  
Kerry Dance  
Kingdom Coming  
Lamplighter  
Larry O'Gaff  
Little Brown Jug  
Liverpool Hornpipe  
Low-Back Car  
Marching Through Georgia  
McDonald's Reel  
Miss McLeod's Reel  
Money Musk  
Moonlight Clog  
My Love is but a Lassie Yet  
New Century Hornpipe  
Oh Susanna  
Old Crow  
Old Rosin the Bow (Beau)  
Opera  
Paddy Whack  
Pop Goes the Weasel  
Praties Are Dug  
Rakes of Mallow  
Rickett's Hornpipe  
Rory O'Moore  
Sailor's Hornpipe  
Soldier's Joy

Speed the Plough  
St. Patrick's Day in the Morning  
Ta-Ra-Ra-Ra Boom De Ay  
Top of Cork Road  
Turkey in the Straw  
Unknown Titles (3 tunes)  
Virginia Reel  
White Cockade  
Wind that Shakes the Barley

#

## DAVID HANNUM OF HOMER

By SHIRLEY J. WILLIAMS

**L**OVERS of *David Harum* may be interested in two tales about the original of this character, David Hannum of Homer, near Cortland. At about the time when Westcott's book became popular, there was published, evidently for promotion of the city of Cortland, *Grip's Historical Souvenir of Cortland* (1899), containing stories by one of David's contemporaries.

Strangely enough, David Hannum, the man who so shrewdly exploited the Cardiff giant, was in his later life ruined by speculating in farm land. The story has it that he was nearly destitute in his old age, but to the last he retained his shrewdness.

Toward the last when he had to live on the lining of an empty purse, he now and then found an expedient to turn away a creditor. A \$100 bill, to which he tenaciously clung, was often returned unbroken by a dunning creditor who couldn't change it. And it finally

became a rare joke which Dave's cronies hugely enjoyed. But, alas! One day that \$100 certificate suddenly, to Dave's chagrin and amazement, exchanged ownership. The change, something like \$98 in small silver coin, was poured out of a shot-bag and counted out piece by piece—and one creditor went away satisfied. The shout that went up from the crowd sunning themselves in front of the Mansion House found quick response in Dave's invitation to step inside and have something.

The saddest of all misfortunes to Hannum, the horse-trader, was to see his horses sold for debt. He managed to save his last pair by a clever bit of strategy involving his driver, Ike Finn, of Cortland.

Ike drove (them) out of the stable at midnight after Dave had locked up for the night and left (them) turned loose out of reach of the sheriff. Dave finally sold the pair and they were placed in a Cortland livery stable where Dave often visited them out of the real love he bore them. #

## "EMBALMED ALIVE": A DEVELOPING URBAN GHOST TALE

By J. RUSSELL REAVER

**T**ALES from city folk form a valuable but rather neglected part of folk-literature. The following versions of a ghostly tale from New York City and Cincinnati may serve to illustrate one aspect of folklore in the twentieth-century metropolis. They also help reveal something of the process of a folk-tale in the making. As the title I have given this tale indicates, the horrible constantly fascinates the popular imagination.

The first version belongs to Bennett Cerf's present crop of ghost stories told him in the last few years; the second is a variant I recall being told me during my undergraduate days at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, about forty miles north of Cincinnati. It circulated among the students at least from 1933 to 1937 and, for all I know, may perhaps still be heard there. Until I recently read Mr. Cerf's version, I must admit that I had accepted my story as the only one of its variety in American folklore. So far I have been unable to find other parallels. Do any readers happen to know different versions of this tale existing in American oral tradition?

(Variant A, Bennett Cerf)

"A favorite story of New York literary circles a few years ago concerned the beautiful young girl in the white satin dress. It

was one of those anecdotes that everybody swore had actually happened to his first cousin or next-door neighbor, and several narrators got very testy when they were informed that several other people's cousins had evidently undergone the same experience a few weeks before.

"At any rate, the legend maintained that a very lovely but poverty-stricken damsel was invited to a formal dance. It was her chance to enter a brand-new world. Who knew but what some rich young man would fall in love with her and lift her out of her life in a box factory? The catch in the matter was that she had no suitable dress to wear for such a great occasion. 'Why don't you rent a costume for the evening?' suggested a friend. She did. She went to a pawnshop near her little flat and for a surprisingly reasonable sum rented a beautiful white satin evening gown with all the accessories to match. Miraculously, it fit her like a glove, and she looked so radiant when she arrived at the party that she created a minor sensation. She was cut in on again and again, and as she whirled happily around the floor, she felt that her luck indeed had changed for good.

"Then she began to feel faint and nauseated. She fought against a growing discomfort as long as she could, but finally she stole out of the house and had just sufficient strength to stagger into a cab and creep up the stairs to her room. She threw herself onto her bed, broken-hearted, and it was then, possibly in her delirium, that she heard a woman's voice whispering into her ear. It was harsh and bitter. 'Give me back my dress,' she said. 'Give me back my dress! It belongs to the dead....'

"The next morning the lifeless body of the young girl was found stretched out on her bed. The unusual circumstances led the coroner to order an autopsy. The girl had been poisoned by embalming fluid, which had entered her pores when she grew

overheated from dancing. The pawnbroker was reluctant to admit that he knew where the dress came from, but spoke out when he heard that the District Attorney's office was involved. It had been sold him by an undertaker's assistant, who had taken it from the body of a dead girl just before the casket was nailed down for the last time."

(Variant B, J. Russell Reaver)

This story was first told me by a fellow college student, who was from Cincinnati, in a dormitory "bull session." Fantastic as its central motif is, college students accepted it at the time as fact.

In Cincinnati there was a pretty girl who had just been engaged to be married. To look her best at a country-club dance to be given shortly after the engagement had been announced, she bought a beautiful white satin gown at one of the leading department stores. On the night of the dance she and her fiancé were much admired. She was very happy because of her popularity and her approaching wedding. Although the evening was a warm one in summer, she never missed a dance and, of course, was happiest when dancing in the arms of her lover.

After a couple of hours, however, she began to feel faint but could not resist the excitement of the dance. Suddenly she collapsed unconscious in her fiancé's arms. When a doctor arrived, he found her dead. The autopsy showed that she had been strangely poisoned by an embalming fluid that somehow had entered her body. Small traces of the fluid were discovered in the girl's white satin gown, from which it must have penetrated her skin during the heat and exertion of the dance.

When the officials of the store where she had bought the dress were threatened with the police, they finally admitted they had allowed a wealthy family to rent the dress for the funeral of their

daughter, after which it had been returned to the store and sold. The lingering fluid from the dead body had embalmed alive the happy girl who had proudly worn her white satin gown.

Variant A is reprinted from *Famous Ghost Stories*, New York, Random House, Inc., c. 1944, pp. 359-360, with the permission of Mr. Bennett Cerf and the Modern Library. #

# PROVERBS: PROVERB LORE IN AMERICAN LIFE AND SPEECH

BY MARGARET M. BRYANT

**P**ROVERBIAL lore plays a significant role in American life and speech. One way to understand the environment and patterns of thought of our people is to study American proverbs and folk sayings. Through these we can gain an idea of the national mind, of the American character.

To the average person the word *proverb* suggests a short, apt, epigrammatic statement setting forth an accepted elementary truth; in other words, a wise saying. If we look at the origin of the word itself, we find that it comes by way of Old French from the Latin *proverbium*—*pro*, "for," plus *verbum*, "word," signifying the use of a figurative expression for the plain word. In Greek the equivalent is "alongside" plus "way," "road," or "alongside the way," denoting a common roadside saying, one which comes from the folk, thus folk saying.

Those who try to reach the millions know the value of a proverb, for they realize the appeal of well-known sayings. All that one has to do is to turn on the radio and listen to the commercials to hear the use of them. The other morning I heard Tex in advertising Rheingold beer on the Tex and Jinx program say that "Imitation is the sincerest sort of flattery," for every one was drinking Rheingold. Similarly at one time Jinx in speaking of Broadcast Brand Corn Beef Hash began her commercial with "You can tell a lot about people by the

company they keep." Dick recently on the Dorothy and Dick program started talking about Fannie Farmer's Candies with Shakespeare's "Sweets to the sweet," which has become a part of our present-day speech. The advertisements for the various medicines that we hear about often include the tried and true saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," or the shortened form, "an ounce of prevention," now so familiar that one fills in the rest of the saying. Proverbs are employed in all forms of advertising: radio, television, and printed media: newspapers, billboards, advertisements in subways, street cars, and busses.

It is interesting to see how proverbial sayings are born. Take, for instance, "The \$64 question." As you know, it was made famous on Phil Baker's radio quiz program where the first question, if answered correctly, paid one dollar; the second, two dollars; the third, four dollars; and by geometric progression to the last question, which paid \$64. This expression became associated in the minds of the radio audience with the most important, the most vital, the most crucial question. This has been carried over into accepted speech as applicable to personal, national, and international questions of vital importance. One hears it on all sides. Not long ago a newspaper which writes for the ordinary person printed a cartoon based on the meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Churchill, showing the two men overshadowed by a gigantic question mark, and the comment:

"The 64-billion Dollar Question:  
Who got what and from whom?"

Here we see a pictorial summary of the question in everybody's mind about what passed at the conference emphasized by a variation of the newly developed proverbial expression "The \$64 question." This phrase, "The \$64 question," has been used

as the heading for cartoons, editorials, articles, even in the most staid newspapers, and by commentators, speakers, statesmen, and more especially by the average person. This expression has been born in the present generation. Ordinarily it would have taken years for it to become current and be so popular, but because of the faster media of communication it has become a well-known phrase in America.

New York as the center of the entertainment world has been the source for popularizing many proverbial sayings, for creating new ones. For example, Jimmy Durante's observation, "Everybody wants to get into the act," has become so popular and is so frequently used by the average person that it may soon become a maxim meaning "everybody wants to join in some activity in order to get credit for its success even though he is not needed." It will be interesting to note in the near future whether these striking words become entirely dissociated from Jimmy Durante, just as the phrase "The \$64 question" is no longer associated solely with Phil Baker. "The \$64 question" is now in the popular and public domain. It meets all the requirements for a proverb or proverbial saying. In most cases the originator of an expression is lost as it is repeated by the multitude, as it becomes a part of popular speech.

Another statement which has the essence and the pithiness of a proverb has often been employed by Arthur "Bugs" Baer and may some day become a proverb. It is "There is no such thing like a little bit of garlic." You know how the essence of garlic will pervade any food or will stay on one's breath. We see how appropriate this comparison is when applied to recent internal-revenue corruption. There is no such thing as a little bit of corruption. Any corruption is bad. The application of this remark to people in various situations is unlimited.

However, this expression has not as yet gained such public appeal as to be listed as proverbial, but it may.

Other proverbs have undergone some change from rural to urban life, as in the case of "To bark up the wrong tree," which has become in New York "To bark up the wrong alley." Some have been altered or added to for the purpose of humor or satire. For instance, "absence makes the heart grow fonder" has been changed by an addition, so that one sometimes says humorously or cynically "absence makes the heart grow fonder of somebody else." It has also been changed as a pun to "Absinthe makes the heart grow fonder." Likewise, "He eats like a bird," signifying a small amount, has been changed to "He eats like a bird—a vulture." Judge Anna Kross of the Home Term Magistrate's Court in a recent interview emphasized family problems by changing "It's a wise child that knows its own father" to "It's a wise child who knows how to choose its parents." (*Herald Tribune Magazine Section*, January 6, 1952.) We all know the old familiar "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" and its sequel "An onion a day keeps everybody away." Others which have been urbanized are "Go sit on a tack," an expression of annoyance; "To be a shrewd article"; "To know all the answers"; "To twist one's arm"; "A silly question gets a silly answer"; "A man is the only animal that can get skinned more than once"; "Do unto others before they do it to you," from the Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Then there are "It pays to advertise"; "To be a ham" or "a ham actor"; "Caught in the act"; and "To be caught red-handed." The lawyers and doctors are fond of this remark: "Free advice is worth what you pay for it—nothing." They undoubtedly also like the rhymed "Good advice is beyond price."

The modern world has given us humorous and rhymed sayings like "Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker"; "The three

fastest means of communication are: telephone, telegraph, and tell a woman" (This is folklore spread by men.); "A ring on the finger is worth two on the 'phone" (A modern adaptation of "A bird in the hand is worth two in the 'bush"); "One kiss on the lips is better than a million in a letter."

Some of these have been perverted or twisted around for the purpose of humor alone. Others are humorous but are used for a serious purpose. For example, the Hat Union in encouraging people to wear hats warns them that if they don't wear hats it will be "Hair today, gone tomorrow" from "Here today, gone tomorrow."

The entertainment world has also long known the value of aphorisms for selling its wares, especially the motion picture industry. The titles of motion pictures are the drawing cards of the films. Since many see pictures on the basis of the title alone, the captions are selected for their simplicity, brevity, and familiarity. Of the 2,000 titles for 1936-1946 about twenty per cent can be classified under the heading of folk sayings: proverbs, proverbial expressions, sententious sayings, slang expressions. Well-known quotations of all sorts make good motion-picture titles. Titles are part of the advertising process, and the use of folk sayings is warranted by the fact that something which is familiar will meet with success. Some that may be mentioned are "Finders Keepers," "Fit for a King," "Fool and His Money," "For Better, for Worse," "Greased Lightning," "Honesty—the Best Policy," "Mills of the Gods," "Marry in Haste," "Some Pun'kins," "There's One Born Every Minute," "To Be or Not to Be," "Where There's a Will," and the current Bette Davis picture, "Another Man's Poison," from the proverb "One man's meat is another man's poison."

Proper names have also become proverbial. "Annie Oakley" for instance, has come to mean a complimentary ticket, a free

pass. This expression is derived from the famous markswoman of Buffalo Bill's show who shot holes in tossed-up playing cards. Hence a punched theatrical pass came to be called an "Annie Oakley." "To do a Brodie" means "to take a chance," derived from the name "Steve Brodie," an American celebrity of the saloons and dance halls of New York City who was reputed to have jumped from Brooklyn Bridge in 1886. "To be a Houdini" is "to be a wonder," similar to the famous American magician, Harry Houdini (1874-1926), who was especially known for his ability to extricate himself from handcuffs and sealed containers. "A Booner" is a new term in the entertainment field, meaning a talent scout, one who searches for talent for radio, television, or the theatre. This term takes its name from Daniel Boone, the famous scout. At times reference is made to a man who is all arms and legs as an "Ichabod Crane," the character made famous by Washington Irving in his "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

It is a phenomenon of our times that these new phrases become part of popular speech within a comparatively short time, through the many rapid means of communication: radio, television, talking pictures, pictorial art, books, newspapers, and magazines of various kinds. The historian and linguist of the future will be able to judge the standard of education, civilization, and culture of our time from the contributions to language and proverbial expressions of this period. #

# NEIGHBORS: A ROUTE OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, PENNSYLVANIA AND NEW YORK

By WILLIAM McKINNON

FINDING someone around Williamsport that could give me some information of the stop in the Underground Railroad that had existed in this area was not easy. In a section known as "Nigger Hollow," now changed to "Freedom Road," I found two sources.

Part of this information was given to me by a lovely old lady by the name of Mrs. M. Berry, and the rest by a Mr. David Sweating, both of Williamsport.

Mrs. Berry is approximately 80 years old. Her parents were farm hands in the South, but because they never were bought or sold, she did not consider them slaves. She left the South soon after she was married and moved to Ohio; from there she came to Williamsport.

Mr. Sweating is a son-in-law of a Mr. Robert Hughes. Mr. Hughes was at one time in charge of the stop in the Railroad in Williamsport. Therefore, all the information that Mr. Sweating had was given to him by his wife or father-in-law. Two years ago, Mr. Sweating and his wife were interviewed by Henrietta Henkle, author of the popular book, *Let My People Go*.

Leaving Muncy, Pennsylvania, the next stop was Williams-

port, Pennsylvania. This station was in a hollow or dale on the northeast side of Williamsport at the extreme end of what is now known as Market Street. From Williamsport the escaping slaves went north to Trout Run and Jobs Corners, Pennsylvania, then to Elmira, New York. According to Mr. Sweating, the roughest part of the entire journey was the seventy-five miles from Williamsport to Elmira. This, I believe, was due to the fact that New York State was the Free Line and every effort put forth to recapture the slaves was enacted just before they reached the border.

Williamsport as a stop for the slaves was one eagerly awaited. Dan Hughes, along with his son Robert, had built quite a unique "station." In the hollow directly behind the Hughes' log cabin, they dug a cave in the side of the hill in which they placed beds, tables, and chairs to accommodate the runaways. The entrance was constructed so that it could be camouflaged easily and quickly from the men who might be chasing. After the Negroes had had a few days' rest from their hazardous journey from Muncy, the men were loaded into wagons at night and were taken to Trout Run, Pennsylvania. If they succeeded in getting safely there, the wives and children were allowed to follow. These movements of human cargo were done with the utmost secrecy and, as I mentioned before, were always run off at night.

Mr. Sweating showed me where the mouth of the cave was located and a chair that had originally been in it. The chair was made from solid maple and had numerous names and initials carved on the seat of it. He also mentioned that the cave still has furniture in it and in time, provided he has the funds, he would like to re-open it for the public.

With the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, there were many slave families that stayed and settled in this hollow. That is how the place was given the name of "Nigger Hollow."

The men were at first able to find work in a brick factory that was there, but with its passing the many colored families also moved on. The name was changed from "Nigger Hollow" to "Freedom Road," and at the present time there are only five colored families living there. #

FOLKLORE IN THE SCHOOLS.  
THESES ON FOLKLORE, ALBANY  
STATE COLLEGE AND CORNELL  
UNIVERSITY

COMPILED BY THE EDITOR

SOME of the most valuable studies of folklore, collections from New York State and elsewhere, are to be found in the libraries of Albany State Teachers College and Cornell University. In the following lists you will find titles of various bound "theses" or "essays" which may be borrowed on inter-library loans. These lists are by no means complete: I mention those works of which I happen to have copies in my own private library. Masters' theses directed by Professor Louis C. Jones at Albany in the 1940's may be described in a supplementary article; also theses from other colleges and universities.

Explanation must be given of the fact that at Cornell candidates for the M. A. degree submit either a "thesis" or an "essay." The distinction is based upon the fact that various Deans of the Graduate School have justified their gloomy existence by devising rules to be administered by pert and underpaid clerks. For some years, theses were written by candidates for the Master's degree who hoped to proceed to further advanced study. "Essays" were written by candidates for the same degree under "Plan B," devised for high school teachers and others who expected to leave the university as soon as they became Masters of Arts. These essays were not deposited in the university

library unless the director of such a study made a special request, as I often did. The Masters' essays in folklore are as scholarly and lengthy as the theses; but if you wish to have your own library borrow for you an essay, you should specify that it is a Master's *essay*. In all cases you should tell the date.

As for doctoral theses (or dissertations, as they are sometimes called), the list is probably complete for Cornell, so far as those manuscripts were prepared under my own direction. Until 1952, the Albany State College did not give the Doctor's degree, but its Master's theses were often as important as doctoral dissertations to be found elsewhere. It should be added that parts of some studies listed below have appeared in our *QUARTERLY*.

#### I MASTERS' THESES, ALBANY

- Allen, Dorothy E. *The Negro's Gift to American Literature*. 1934. 153 pp.
- Burke, Mrs. Mary Barnett. *The Use of American Folk-Literature in the Elementary and Junior High Schools*. 1937. 335 pp.
- Flanagan, Margaret. *History and Folklore of Allegany County*. 1939. 120 pp.
- Gridley, Lou Ella E. *Folklore of Chenango County*. 1938. 212 pp.
- Maloney, Winifred C. *A Study of Folklore in Two Regions of New York State [Western and Central N.Y.]*. 1938. 126 pp.
- Millard, Eugenia L. *Some Folk Games with Rhymes Current Among the Children of New York State [with a few tunes]*. 1935. 92 pp.
- Neal, Janice C. *Folklore of Otsego County*. 1938.
- Shapiro, Cecelia. *Folklore Collected Among the Jews in New York State*. 1938. 173 pp.
- Sickles, Ruth A. *The Folklore of Columbia County*. 1938. 138 pp.
- Snow, Dorothy E. *Early Cayuga Days: Folklore and Local History of a New York County*. 1940. 188 pp.
- Wend, Mrs. Elizabeth Scudder. *The Culture of the Iroquois Indians: Its Value for the Schools of New York State*. 1935 (?). 180 pp.

#### II MASTERS' THESES AND ESSAYS, CORNELL

- Bartlett, Rinda M. *The Lore of Warren County, N. Y.* 1943. 54 pp. *Essay*.
- Benner, Dorothea O. *Patch by Patch, Lore of Wayne County, Pa.* 238 pp. *Essay*.
- Callenius, Helen M. *A Study of S. V. Benet's John Brown's Body*. [Chapter on use of folklore.] 1947. 123 pp. *Essay*.

- Curts, Patricia D. *Munchausen Tales in America*. 1946. 99 pp. Thesis.
- Cutting, Edith E. *The Douglass Manuscript*. 1945. Ms of songs sung in Western N.Y. about 1840; no music. Miss Cutting has published an article in *N. Y. FOLKLORE QUARTERLY* about this MS; Mr. Douglass, the owner, has also contributed an article.
- Hazen, George A. *Tompkins County [N. Y.] Folklore*. 1950. 120 pp. Essay.
- Hoffman, Mrs. Lily Marker. *Lore of Cattaraugus County, N.Y.* 1947. 96 pp. Essay.
- Kennelly, Alice E. *Kentucky, Land of Mountains and Bluegrass*. 1947. 140 pp. Essay.
- Li, Lienfung. *Chinese Folklore of the Lower Yangtze Region*. 1946. 171 pp. Essay.
- Link, Beverly C. *Lore of Rensselaer County, N.Y.* 1947. 187 pp. Essay.
- Lynch, Muriel. *The Lore of Tioga County, N.Y.* 1948. 125 pp. Essay.
- MacNamara, Marie F. *The Lore of Chemung County, N.Y.* 1946. 152 pp. Essay.
- McTiernan, Ellen M. *Irish Ballads and Songs in America*. 1945. 96 pp. Essay.
- Meeker, Doret. *Folklore of Steuben County, N.Y.* 1951. 212 pp. Essay.
- Newton, Mrs. Hilah Foote. *Four Interpretations of New York State's Indians*. [Writings of Colden, Heckewelder, Schoolcraft, Morgan.] 1944. 96 pp. Essay.
- Peterson, Rowena B. *The Lore of Jefferson County, N.Y.* 1946. 232 pp. Essay.
- Poe, Mary E. *Lore of Franklin County, Pa.* 1948. 162 pp. Essay.
- Rieppel, Anna M. *The Lore of Tioga County, Pa.* 1946. 139 pp. Essay.

### III DOCTORAL THESES, CORNELL

- Brookes, Mrs. Stella Brewer. *Folklore in the Writings of Joel Chandler Harris*. 1946. 269 pp. Published in revised form as *Joel Chandler Harris, Folklorist* (Univ. of Georgia Press, 1950).
- Galvin, Mrs. Emma Corinne Brown. *The Lore of the Negro in Central New York State*. 1945. 170 pp. Parts published in *N. Y. FOLKLORE QUARTERLY*.
- Lindsay, Crawford B. *The Cornell University Special Collection on Slavery: American Publications Through 1840*. 1949. Not much folklore.
- Millard, Eugenia L. *Children's Rhyming Games and Other Verses in New York State*. 1951. X, 604 pp.
- Walker, Warren. *Folk Elements in the Novels of James Fenimore Cooper*. 1951. IV, 213 pp. #

# UPSTATE, DOWNSTATE

## FOLKLORE NEWS AND NOTES

BY B. A. BOTKIN AND WILLIAM G. TYRRELL

### READING AND WRITING

OUT OF THE EAST. In May my postman delivered the first communication addressed to me as "Registrar of Marks & Brands." If his curiosity was piqued thereby, it could have been further aroused, and perhaps satisfied, by the return address: "The Westerners, New York Posse." In case you have forgotten, the Westerners is an organization of Western-history enthusiasts founded in Chicago in 1944. The parent group and its offspring, the Denver Posse and the Los Angeles Corral, publish monthly and annual *Brand Books* (somewhat confusing to the bibliographer) containing club papers, many of them of interest to students of Western folklore and folk-literature.

The New York posse (formally organized on May 5) grew out of a party to celebrate the publication of Homer Croy's biography of "Hanging Judge" Parker, *He Hanged Them High*. Two meetings have been held at the Weehawken home of Jim Horan, author of *Desperate Men* and the forthcoming *Desperate Women*. At the May meeting the following temporary officers were elected by unanimous vote of the eighteen members present: Sylvester L. Vigilante (of the New York Public Library American History Room, moving and guiding spirit of the group), Sheriff; Jim Horan, Deputy Sheriff; Melvin J. Nichols, Tally Man; your correspondent, Registrar of Marks & Brands; Henry M. Kapenstein, Roundup Foreman; and Barbara Boothe, Chuck Wrangler. With the admission of the latter (whose title is definitely an Eastern, not a Western, word modeled on "dough-wrangler") and Mari (*Old Jules*) Sandoz, the New York Posse shattered precedent, refusing to be bound by the "stag" rule of other chapters.

At the meeting on June 9, "Uncle" Martin Garretson, the savior of the American bison and a storyteller from away back, reminisced about Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, and other frontier characters, and his own Western experiences. Besides playing host to old-timers and visiting firemen from the West, the New York Posse has a function to perform as a national center of historians,

writers, librarians, and bibliophiles representing not just one but all of the regions of the West. As "Westerner" and Western Americana specialist Pete Decker put it, "There are more Westerners in New York than in the West." Or, at least, more ex-Westerners. Those interested should communicate with Henry Kapenstein, 1818 Avenue U, Brooklyn 29, N.Y.

"WAGONS WEST" (WEST OF BROADWAY). The cult of the West (frequently commented on in these pages) has reached the Broadway stage in the form of a lively and reasonably lifelike musical of the Gold Rush, *Paint Your Wagon*. Since all musicals since *Oklahoma* have had to stand comparison with it, if they are not actually reminiscent of it, I am pleased to report (with apologies to our "eye and ear" specialist, Bill Tyrrell) that *Paint Your Wagon* successfully passes the test, both of comparison and reminiscence (the latter being unavoidable in view of the Agnes de Mille choreography). For me the mining West of California is here recaptured with more authentic folklore flavor and accent than the ranching West of Oklahoma. Other musicals employing folklore have either failed (as in the case of *Sing Out, Sweet Land* and *Dark of the Moon*) or (like *Finian's Rainbow* and *Brigadoon*) succeeded because they invented more than they recreated. Two of the outstanding folklore bits in the latest Alan Jay Lerner-Frederick Loewe collaboration (they also wrote *Brigadoon*) are the opening scene of the "cemetery find," in which a miner's burial service is interrupted by the discovery of "color" in the dirt, and the take-off on Roy Bean's court and his famous sentence. Other folklore touches are the Gold Lake legend and the miners paying to hold the baby. Replacing the raucous James Barton as Ben Rumson, the founder and "mayor" of the boom-and-ghost town of Rumson, Eddie Dowling brings a wistful Will-Rogerish touch to the role. This may well be the first of a number of musical comedy excursions into American folklore, for which *Porgy and Bess* (now being revived) and the forgotten *Ballet Ballads* helped to pave the way with more than good intentions.

OF THEE I SING. Those who followed the Republican convention on radio and TV will cherish tidbits of folklore like the state and territorial boosting heard during the roll call for presidential nominations: "The wonderful state of Wyoming passes," "Hawaii, the 49th state, paradise of the Pacific, passes," "The beautiful state of Puerto Rico passes." Rhode Island kept bobbing up, traditionally, as "Little Rhody," which Bob Hope wisecracked that the Texas delegation wanted to take home as a souvenir.

Add national symbols: "Once we hailed the eagle with outstretched wings as the symbol of freedom, strength, and faith. Today mink is the hallmark of the new moral climate." (Senator Everett M. Dirksen in his speech nominating Senator Robert A. Taft.) "I do not propose that we retreat into our shell like a turtle. I do propose the deadly reprisal strategy of a rattlesnake." (Former President Herbert Hoover.)

**BATTLE OF THE BOOKS.** Definitions and brickbats continue to fly in the war of the folklorists. In his presidential address, "Conflict and Promise in Folklore" (*Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 65, April-June, 1952, No. 256, pp. 111-119), Francis Lee Utley (now completing his study of *Noah, His Wife, and the Devil* on a Guggenheim renewal) bravely enters the lists armed with definitions. His analysis and summary of the conflicts ("between the literary folklorists and the anthropologists, between the poets and the scientists, between the researchers and the popularizers, and between the regionalists, the nationalists, and the internationalists") may not resolve them but will do much to clarify the issues involved. Most encouraging for the "promise" of American folklore study and utilization is the "human relations" plane of his discussion, which, without eliminating competition, insists also on co-operation.

Likewise eminently fair in tone and sound in standards is Herbert Halpert's critique of "Folktales in Children's Books: Some Notes and Reviews," in *Midwest Folklore* (Vol. II, Spring, 1952, No. 1, pp. 59-71). Of particular interest to Yorkers are his remarks on Moritz Jagendorf's *The Marvelous Adventures of Johnny Caesar Cicero Darling*, with which, in the main, I am sure the author will agree, since they are based on his own statement that "he is a 'folk-story writer' rather than a folklorist."

**BUSY AS . . . .** As busy as a cranberry merchant the day before Thanksgiving (to borrow a phrase from his "More Proverbial Comparisons from West Tennessee," in *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, March, 1952, No. 1, pp. 15-21) is ex-New Yorker Herbert Halpert, who writes me from Murray State College, Murray, Kentucky, that he is "making real headway on" his New Jersey folk-song book. This in addition to his "building up a local archive and seeing how good you can make student collectors"; his duties as review editor of *Midwest Folklore*; his numerous short articles, notes, and reviews (see his "List of Publications, May, 1952"); and the reading of papers like "The Folk Art" [of Music] at the conference on "Music in Contemporary American Civilization," sponsored by

the American Council of Learned Societies' Committee on Musicology, at the Library of Congress, December 13-14, 1951.

TO A LADY, EIGHTY YEARS YOUNG. On June 30, Louise Pound celebrated her eightieth birthday; and as one of her large circle of students and admirers, we could not let the occasion pass, and we cannot let it go here, without a tribute:

Tell me, O venerable and sage  
LP, the secret of your age.

Did you first pick a pioneer stock  
As strong and close to the ground as a rock,

A rock that is no rolling stone,  
Yet with no moss is overgrown?

Did you increase your natural power  
With the double nurture that brings to flower

*Mens sana in corpore sano,*  
As spring brings the swallows to Capistrano?

I know that, without a quibble,  
At basketball you learned to dribble,

And at golf and tennis, most of all,  
You learned to keep your eye on the ball.

Was it meat or was it salad  
That made you traditional like a ballad

(Though for dating you there is no valid  
Test like yours for dating a ballad)?

Is it only learning that makes one sage,  
And living that brings one to a ripe old age?

As to what keeps you young, LP,  
I'll be asking you in '53.

B. A. B.

## SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

THE ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC is the most comprehensive collection to come from a commercial producer. Next to the recordings from the Archive of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress, the 12 sides in this three-volume release from Folkways Records and Service Corp. (117 W. 46th St., N.Y. 19) constitute the most significant compilation of recorded examples of our musical heritage. Re-recorded from early commercial recordings, the material is a distinguished cross section of folk music prior to the impact of phonographs and radios. Although commercially produced, the recordings feature performers who were in close contact with the traditional styles and subjects of folk music. The 84 titles in the volumes (FP-251, -2, -3) represent folk ballads, songs, dances, and religious music. They have been scholarly described and edited, with detailed notes and references. This survey of the subject, in an early stage of its investigation, will long be regarded as a basic source of information about traditional American music.

Enthusiasm prevails in the 84 titles. There is liveliness and good-naturedness in even the most woeful of the tragic ballads. These performers captured a freshness and vitality that is not often present in their successors. Moreover, the skilled playing of the guitar, banjo, violin, and other accompanying instruments is worthy of careful listening.

Here are selections, both traditional and composed, in characteristic folk expression, by once-famous recording stars. The originals for the anthology, collected by architect Harry Smith, were issued in pressings of limited size for specialized regional markets, and have in them subtle variations in style and technique from area to area. The market for this music, as well as the source of it, was located in the south and southeastern sections of the country. If this collector, or one as diligent, can produce a similar survey for other sections, we will be provided with unmatched evidence for studying American folk developments.

YOUNG FOLK FANS have a rich mine of materials in the recordings of songs from *New Music Horizons*. These Columbia recordings, in two series, each consisting of six albums made up of two 10" 78rpm records (MJV-76 to MJV-81 and MJV-132 to MJV-137), are progressively planned to stimulate musical interests from kindergarten through junior high school. Extensive use is made of traditional music to capture the attention of listeners and to provide an understanding of the differences between American and foreign folk compositions. The large number of such selections is further indication

of the musical value and appealing qualities in the folk expression. Here, of course, the teaching merits of music are emphasized. With straightforward arrangements by competent performers, the sets are admirable for contributing to the musical development of school children.

FOR THE KINDERGARTEN SET, Columbia has prepared a separate album of *Music for Early Childhood* (MJV-141). It also draws on folk melodies to meet the musical needs of pre-school youngsters. Like the sets for later years this music is as useful for providing training through rhythmic exercises, dramatizations, and other activities as for teaching class singing. The quality of the music is also first-rate but is not so unadorned as is customary for this age-group. It is interesting to observe, nevertheless, that two of the American folk tunes included here were also used by Kurt Weill in his folk operetta, *Down in the Valley*. *Music Time*, a Folkways recording (FP-7) featuring Charity Bailey, is another valuable teaching record. It depends on folk music and on Miss Bailey's skillful use of folk melodies for creating musical enthusiasm and understanding.

MOTHER GOOSE RHYMES in their familiar musical settings are available from Mercury-Childcraft Records (Field Enterprises, 35 E. Wacker Dr., Chicago). With 52 individual titles on the 12 sides, these are new and pleasant versions of the childhood classics. The same producer also distributes a selection of *Folk Songs of Our Land* (No. 9) and *Folk Songs of Other Lands* (No. 10). Both are well designed to give young listeners musical experiences in a delightful and melodious manner.

AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC examples have recently turned up in unusual places. From the Folkways concern, and its astute supervisor of production, M. Asch, come long-playing records from two out-of-the-way sources of folk songs. *The Unquiet Grave and Other Tragic Ballads* (FP-64) is a collection of less familiar melodies that are a large and important part of Anglo-American balladry. Andrew Rowan Summers gives a satisfying rendition in his expert style. The Folkways recording of *Mormon Folk Songs* (FP-36) taps another rare portion of our musical heritage. L. M. Hilton sings the songs without accompaniment, but with a knowledge and appreciation that comes from his intimate contact with the materials.

Frank Warner's latest authentic contributions are two discs that The Record Loft (189 W. 10th St., N.Y. 14) will distribute for Stratford Records. Anyone who has heard the stirring Warner vocals will rejoice over the release of "Keep Your Hand on the Plow" and "Days of '49." Watch for Frank's versions of "Tom Dooley" and "Lord

Lovell," also from Stratford. *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'*, featuring the Voices of Walter Schumann and solos by Jester Hairston, is a Capitol program (LP-316) of Negro spirituals in a facile, concert style.

POPULARIZED VERSIONS of traditional tunes have also appeared in quantity from the major record companies. These spectacular, if not convincing, versions are being promoted currently by Doris Day, the popular songstress whose harmonizing of folk-singer Oscar Brand's folk-like "A Guy is a Guy" was a spring hit-list item. Paired with Guy Mitchell, Miss Day recorded for Columbia the romantically haunting "Gently Johnny." In a duet with Frankie Laine, she turned to the Josef Marais and Miranda find, "How Lovely Cooks the Meat." Another Columbia singing star, Jo Stafford, contributed her version of a traditional street cry, "Raminay!" made famous by New Orleans chimney-sweeps. "The Day of Jubilo" appeared in dance tempo for Columbia.

The Weavers, seeking a formula to match their earlier successes for Decca, came up with "Old Paint"; tried a pop tune stemming from the folk lingo of the railroad section-hand, "The Gandy Dancers Ball"; turned to a Marais and Miranda number "Around the Corner"; and tried out an old standby in new format, "Hard, Ain't it Hard." Victor's Henry Belafont contributed the chantey, "A-Rovin'," while Capitol waxed Bob Eberly and Les Baxter in the fine old favorite, "Green Grow the Lilacs," and the Normanares played around with "Casey Jones" for Imperial Crown.

KEN GOLDSTEIN (200 Vernon Ave., Brooklyn 6), an enthusiastic collector of folk recordings, is attempting to accumulate copies of every known commercial example. If you are seeking any rare or obscure pressing, Ken is the man who probably has it or can assist you in locating it. By allowing him to copy those little-known varieties folk fans can help him in becoming even more useful as a source of information and clearing-house of recorded folklore.

THE SEMINAR SPOTLIGHT, at the New York State Historical Association's annual program at Cooperstown last July, was focussed on a variety of folk activities. Your Society's President, Frank Warner, had the whole seminar "right in his hand" for a typical Warner program of songs and stories. The Dean of New York State Folklorists and QUARTERLY editor, Harold Thompson, regaled folklore students with his extensive knowledge of his state's folk heroines. A Virginia folklorist, Washington and Lee history professor Marshall Fishwick, elec-

trified many of the same students with his witty and fascinating interpretations of folk heroes. Carl Carmer revealed some of the secrets of his success in a preview of portions of his forthcoming account of *The Susquehanna*. Folk dance authority Elizabeth Burchenal expounded on the contribution of the Scotch-Irish to folk dancing and illustrated her discourse with motion pictures of folk dancers in Germany, Scotland, and Boston University. Barbara Walker, this QUARTERLY's energetic editorial assistant, charmingly depicted to folk fans the advantages of subscribing to the magazine and of zooming its circulation to new heights. Folklore Society officers scrutinized plans for the joint meeting with the Vermont Folklore Society in connection with the August meeting of Champlain Valley historians and the annual Indian festival of The Green Corn. New England folk art authority Nina Fletcher Little provided a comprehensive and knowing analysis of the Historical Association's folk art collection in Fenimore House. While Cooperstown was the focus of all this interest in folk materials, some misguided persons fed nickels to juke boxes, blaring forth with the spurious "folk" music known to the record trade as "western" or "country style" music.

W. G. T.

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## *Contributors*

DORET MEEKER graduated from the Groton, N. Y., High School, took her A.B. at Keuka College and her A.M. at Cornell, taught at Prattsburg (Steuben County) where her parents live, and later in Binghamton. Since her article went to press, she has married P. P. A. Burnett and has moved to Stroughton, Wis.

GEORGE L. PHILLIPS, who has published several articles about chimney-sweepers, lives in San Diego, California.

MARTHA ANNE PARKER, daughter of the famous archaeologist-folklorist Arthur C. Parker, lives at Naples, N.Y., in summers and has been teaching in Schoharie County since her graduation from Cornell.

JAMES TAYLOR DUNN, a graduate of Hamilton College, is Librarian of the N. Y. Historical Association in Cooperstown.

LETTIE OSBORN (Mrs. Harold J. Clark) was a senior at the Albany State College in 1934 when she listed the tunes which she had fiddled in Orange County.

J. RUSSELL REAVER teaches English at the Florida State University in Tallahassee.

SHIRLEY J. WILLIAMS of Cortland is a graduate of Cornell University, in 1951, where she was a classmate of DOROTHY DE-ANGELIS of Canajoharie and of WILLIAM MCKINNON of Williamsport, Pa.

PROFESSOR MARGARET M. BRYANT, an authority on the proverb, teaches English and Folklore at Brooklyn College.