

[The house that my uncles owned in Ireland]

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Subject: The Shoe Laster of Lynn

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“The house that ma(my) uncles owned in Ireland wuz not as old as it maigha bin, fir my mother's people wuz a livin' in o'Marge fir a couple a hundred a years enyways.

“But the house that ma great grandfather built wuz not the one I growed up in. It was this [wiyay?]. Ma great grandfather wanted ta build his house under the forte that was in the part a Ireland. An' it wuz claimed that all naight long while he had the intention a buildin' his house there the fairies played music. So he knowed it wuz all reight ta build there.

“But in the tame of a ma grandfather, the gentleman who had a castle near by, him that collected the taxes and got rint (rent) from us, wanted this house that ma great / grandfather had built fir the min that warked at his castle firther [awiyay?] in the woods. So ma grandfather hed ta move. It wuz about three males (miles) but the land wuz good an' the turf wuz faine (fine). Mass. [1938-9?]

“We lived in a mud wall house. They wuz faine houses all raight an' if they wuz made raight they lasted fir two three hundred years sometames. A course ya hadda hedda thatch 'em ivery two three years though. Ya'd use corn that had bin put in stukes ta dry, ta thatch 'em with.”

“ ‘ Corn “ ‘ was really wheat or oats straw as corn was not grown in Ireland. Corn meal was a complete stranger to the Irish diet until the potato famine when it was sent over from this country.

“ ‘ Stukes [“?] ‘ according to Mr. Hughes, was what are ordinarily called chocks shocks in this country. 2 “ The walls of a mud wall house were made by plastering layers of clay and straw together.

“Ya hadda let it dry good, ivery tame ya put on a layer a mud an' straw. For thet raison ya couldn't maike (make) a mud wall house in the winter tame because it wuz sa rainy. Ya [hedda?] maike it in the summer.

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“The walls ‘ould sometames ba(be) two fate (feet) thick. It wuz warm in winter an' cool in summer. The inside ‘ould ba white-washed, an the outside ‘ould have rough pibles (pebbles) spread on it laike, and thin whitewashed. It was rale pratty, a mud wall house, whin it wuz maide (made) raight.

“Ya maighta seen the same theng at the Lynn Bache (beach) house. A mud wall house looked laike thet on the outside.

“The rooms inside ‘ould ba large. The windows ‘ould ‘ould ba laike thim we heve here only not sa large, the casin' ‘ould ba the same. An' the doors ‘ould ba put on the casin' the same wiaiy.

“Most a the mud wall houses ‘ould jest ba one story, but the stone an' slated houses ‘ould ba two stories.

“But the mud walls houses wuz rale pratty. They'd ba all kands a flowers, bag rose bushes, an' apple an' pear trees in the yard (yard).

“Some a the rich paople ‘ould make a nice giarden (garden). They maight use as much as a half acre a land. Thier'd ba [gooseberries?] an wild strawberries. Din't they tiaste lovely, thim strawberries thet growed in the white thrown in the white thrown ditches? The white thorn ditches, ya know, wuz the fences aroun' mosta the fields.

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“They wuz elegant. thim strawberries. An' wuz their plinty a blackberries. But ya know neither us or iny other body would iver tiaste thim in thim diays because it wuz claimed the Divil shook his club foot on thim. That wuz a superstition a the people thin. They blaved (believed) it too.

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"I seen the blackberries sa thick. What beautiful jam thier coulda bin made of 'em. But ya know the paople only tried ta get rid a all the briars. Taday they ship the berries ta Angland, but thin. they wuzn't thought no good atall.

"Ivery house in the country thier had a buttery. Thet wuz a little room walled off batwan (between) the rooms ta kape (keep) the butter an' the milk in.

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More About Ghosts

"I read in the paper about another ghost thet wuz seen in Ireland jest awhile ago.

"A young girl, it sames, wuz carryin' in a basket a turf fir the naight whin she happined ta look up a hill an' saw a laight thier batwan two rocks. She called hir folks an' they said a ghost put it thiere. It come back the next naight too an' miny naights after thet. Paople come from all over Ireland ta see it.

"I oftin heard other stories too. It's claimed thet whin St. Patrick wuz buildin' his first church there usta ba a bull ta tear down his wirk ivery naight. But St. Patrick couldn't ketch him. So one naight he set up watchin' fir him with a Bishop's staff an' whin the bull come he give him sech a whack thet he knocked him fieve males (miles). An thier, fieve males from the place where St. Patrick knocked him, ya kin still see the miarks a the bull's knees where he fell on a rock. I seen 'em once maself whin I wuz thier.

"An did ya iver know why roosters niver crow in three townlands in County Down in Ireland? Thet's an antristin' (interesting) tale. It sames thet St. Patrick usta go from towland townland (village of from twenty to thirty farm homes) ta townland, sorta laike a pilgrim. Whin he found some one ta welcome him at naights he'd spind (spend) the naight thier. But he alwais got up an' wint away at the first crow a the cock. Thet wuz usually aroun' twelve a' clock.

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“Well, one naight he couldn't find no place ta spind the naight. He went to two diffrent townlands an' no one asked him ta staiy the naight. Whin he come ta the thrid townland, some one there asked him, but they didn't raely want him, fir they sint thier cioy bioy ta roost with the cocks an' told his ta crow bafore twelve a'clocksa as St. Patrick 'ould lave (leave) early.

“Well, St. Patrick, whin he heard thet crow sa early, prayed thet the cok cock thet crowed before twelve a'clock'ould fall an' break his neck, an' he priayed too thet their niver 'would another cock crow in thim three townlands.

“Well, the bioy fell an' broke his neck, jest accordin' ta St. Patrick's priayer, an' ta this diay thier never has bin a cock crowed in thim three townlands. If ya go their aven today, enybody'll tell ya about thet.

- - - - - 1 Worker: Jane K. Leary Informant: James Hughes, 57 Johnson St. Lynn
Subject: Shoe Laster of Lynn 4/28/39 Section #2

More About Ireland.

“In Ireland the firms(farms) wuz more apairt (apart) than they aire (are), an thet 'ould make it awful diark (dark) of a naight (night). But we usta go of a naight from one house to another ta dance. It wuz nice.

“There wuz the four point reels an' the three point reels, and the polkas. Fir music some one er another 'ould play the violin, the accordion, the concertina, the flute er the fife. It wuz nice, I laiked music but no, I niver plaiyed (played) it maself.

“When I wuz twinty years and six months it was Sherry (his brother-in-law some years later) who made me taike (take the notion ta come ta America. After I come here, I got homesick fir a tame, but I soon got over it.

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"It wuz Sherry's uncle, P.P. Sherry, that give me a job larnin' ta last, in his shop after I come here. It was him that fired us both though after a coupla years later, whin we joined the union fir as I told ya before, he wun't heve no union min in his shop. He aven fired his nephew fir joinin.

"He give me the job because a Sherry in the first place an' bacause he knew my uncle in Ireland. He come from the same place too, ya say (see)

"After I got fired from Sherry's shop I wint ta aborn an' there I wirked until I'd bin here five years and thin I wint home ta visit.

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"Whin I come back I wirked in diffrunt shops. I wuz at Donovans fir about five years an' at Little's fir about five years.

The Old Hand Lasters " In an old tame shoe shop where there wuz all hand lasters, there miaghta vin as miny as 100 lasters. Now thier'd only b[ama:] about 8 macnine lasters to do thet amount a wirk. They'd all be seated in a bag (big) circle, an' other min sated (seated) in the center 'ould lay the soles. They'd be all kands (kinds) a Anglish (English) spakin' ' paople. Some 'ould ba an' from Northampton Liecester, England. Others 'ould ba Irish American Scotchmen, er from Nova Scotia. There wuz only a few Jews whin I started workin'. " Whin I first stiated (started ta wirk in the shops, we wirked 10 hours a diay, fir fieve diays a wake (week), an' on Saturdiays we wirked 'till four a'clock. There wuz plinty (plenty a wirk in all the shops thin. An' if fir some raison ya din't laike yer wirk in one shop, all ya hed ta do, wuz ta go ta another the next diay. Fir all the shops 'ould heve a sign out in thim days, 'Lasters Wanted'. They wuz baggin' fir min in thim diays. " We usta pliy (play) a lotta jokes on ach (each) other in the shops. One in particular wuz ta put paiste (paste) under the toe a the shoe jack, and whin a fella'd come ta last a shoe he'd get his finger full a pa i ste. Some 'ould get as miad (mad) as the dickens over thet and thin a course, he get it done ta him oftin. (often).

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"If ya did wirk that wuzn't jest raight, ya'd have ta pay fir it if it wuz your fault. If it wuzn't ua wun't heve ta pay fir

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it. I aven got pay fir some once thet hedda be throwed out, because the vamps wuz stitched too close an' the skivin wuz too then (thin). That made 'em pull out whin we pulled 'em over the last. The boss told me to tirn (turn) in my tame on thet wirk.

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Special Occasions that all Shoeworkers Remember " There wuz a number a spacial tames in Lynn in the past that all a us old tame shoemakers well remimber. " One was the sootin' shootin' a the shoe boss, Landrigan, that I told ya about bafore. We all remimber thet, I guess bacause there wuzn't miny shootin's like ther is today. I often think that the raison there's sa much crime today is because ther's sa little fir a fella ta do. If mosta thim young fellas that takes ta crime / hadda hedda a good steady job, they wun't get inta so much trouble. " Another tame that we all remimber was thin whin the bioys wint off ta war. We'd git off from the shops ta see the parades and to cheer 'em. Myny come back ta the bench with a tear in his eye, spacially if he had a bioy agoin'. " Whin they come back there wuz great excitement all about. My, the parades, an' the bells aringin' and the hearts asingin' by thim thet had their bioys come back safe. Some a 'em was sad though, thim thet hedda gold star in their winda. Thet mint (meant) that a bioy had deiyed (died) in the war. " There wuz a lotta excitement whin we heard about the [Armistice?]. Down on Blossom St. where the Jews lived, some of thim old fellas was walkin' on a the strates (streets) with opin Bibles in their hands. All the shops wuz shet down. I niver seen the paople sa crazy. Paper thet [thim?] thin fine paper, confetti was aflying in all directions. Boston wuz crazy. A lotta us wint there. I'll niver forgit it. 5 " Another grate tame wuz whin Dewey came back to Boston after his victory. Paople lined the strates (streets) so ya coun't see nothin' Everytheng wuz goin'. " An' thin another grate tame thet we all remember wuz whin thet woman come ta Lynn from thet city a Lynn in England. That wuz whin Lynn wuz 300 years old. 1929 I think it wuz. (In 1929 July 1,2,3, and / 4, Lynn

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celebrated its [tercentenary?]. The guest of honor was the Most Honorable Marchioness Gwladys Townshend of Raynham, Mayor of King's Lynn, England, and her son, The Most Honorable Joseph George Patrick Dominick, Marquis of Townsend.)

"I wuz close to her as she wint up city hall steps one of thim diays. She was a faine woman all riaght. There was a big parade an' miny fiane doin's. Mayor Bauer wuz Mayor of Lynn thin.

"Yes, ther wuz lots a good tames, whin we wuz workin all the tame steady. " A lotta the min usta pliy cirds (cards) at noon in the shops. One a the best games wuzn Shoemaker's Lou. It wuz played with fieve (five) cirds (cards) an' four in the kitty. It wuz a fast game an' ya sure could lose a lot if ya din't watch out. An' if ya'd take the kitty and thin get lou'd fir all thet, ya'd sure lose a lot. " There hasn't bein much a thet played fir 35 years though. " Today they heve Christmas pairties in the shops ta entertzin entertain the wirkers but in my diay they din't. Folks din't make sa much a Christmas thin as they do now. Why in the rale (real) 6 old diays in Lynn before anybody but the Yankees wuz here, they din't celebrate Christmas atall. They thought it wuz wrong, I guess.

"In the old diays they usta celebrate St.Patrick's Diay in the shops. One tame old Billy Connery, him that wuz the father of Congressman Billy who deiyed (died) a couple years ago, come in the shop an' played the violin. Ther wuz dancin' an' refreshments.

" That wuz bafore Connery go ta b[ama;] Mayor. He wuz in the coal business, an' the kand (kind) a man he wuz, he would niver push anybody, so he din't make as much as he coulda. But iverbody loved him. He wuz a great temperance man. 7 The General Lockout
" Long about 1917 there wuz a gineral lockout in the shoe shops a Lynn. We wuz all locked out. " But the war stopped it. They wuz gonna freeze us down to nothin', wuz gonna freeze out the unions. But the war come along and that made a demand fir shoes and so they hedda opin their doors agin. " There wuz a lotta other strikes too, but we'd go out in

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diffrent bunches. First one 'ould go out and thin another, one at a tame. Most a thim strikes wuz lost though. 7 -7-a

He Nearly Became an Irish Farmer.

“About 33 years ago, my uncle, him that wuz the twin an' tol' me about the fiaries an' the devils in Ireland, wrote me that if I come back ta Ireland ta live, I could heve the firm for my own. He wuz close ta ninty thin, and he know he wuz goin' ta deiy (die) soon. He wuz the last alive of all of 'em.

“It wuz a nice firm all raight, but it wuz hiard wirk as I well remimber about whin I wuz a boiy there awirkin' on it. But I miaghta gone, but my wife din't want to. She growed up here, an' she wuz used ta this country. So we din't go.

“She deiyed (died) whin my youngest child wuz only a year an' a half. It was hiard wirk, ta bring 'em up myself, an' I hed ta board 'em out some. I hed to, but it hiarts (hurts) a man ta do thet. I usta taik 'em good fraish (fresh) aggs (eggs) though, oftim so they would heve plinty ta ate (eat).

“I married agin later though and she thet is my wife today brought 'em up faine. It wuz her brother, Mr. Sherry, that first give me the notion ta come ta America. He wuz here first, an' thin I come. After a while his sister come too an' his mother. She wuz an' old lady whin she come, an' a fiane woman she wuz too.”

My informant pointed out a large picture of a strong kind face, with severe middle part hair dress, that hung above the sofa where he sat. Testifying to the affection in which she was held in this family, was the fact that this was the only 8 picture in the room.

“Thiere she is,” he said.

More About Unions

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“After the Lasters Protective Union wuz disbanded, the lasters begun ta join the United Shoe Workers a America. An' after thet Union there wuz the Boot and Shoe Union and thin the Amalgamated Union.

“But the machinest had come in, and none of thim unions wuz strong enough too breng back the hand lasters ta most a the shops. It wuz niver the same as it wuz whin the Laster' Protective Union wuz sa strong.

“An' it took money ta balong. The Boot an' shoe wirkers Union had dues a thirty fieve cints (cents) a week.

“But taik ita all in all, there wuz pretty steady wirk before the war. We din't get war tame wages, jest between \$18-\$20 a week, but it wuz ragular. Durin' the war the prices wint way up, sometames as high as fiarty (forty) er fifty er sixty dollars a week. But whin the war wuz over an' the depression come, miny a us dint heve no wirk atall.

“We usta get up at 6 A.M. At least I did whin I lived at Wakefield, baccuse we hed to ba (be) at wirk at siven (seven I'd come in from Wakefield on the electric cars. I'd get a ten ride ticket fir fifty cints. Now it costs thirty cints to go ta Wakefield one way.