

## [Col. John Hartje]

[?] [??] DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview.

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. Lincoln.

DATE SUBJECT American Folklore stuff

1. Name and address of informant. Col. John Hartje, Roca, Nebraska.
2. Date and time of interview. Jan. 3, 1939. 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Jan. 4, 1939. 10 a.m. to 4.10 p.m.
3. Place of interview. YMCA, Lincoln, Nebr. Home of informant, Roca, Nebr.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. Charley Huyck, RFD I—Lincoln, Nebr.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None.
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. The original family Farm Home of informant, 12 miles south of 13th & O St. Lincoln, Nebr. address Roca, Nebr. Comfortable lime stone (native) dwelling, built years ago, cozy rooms, well furnished, neat, clean, and shows the touch of an excellent house keeper, in this case Mrs. John Hartje. Yard clean and orderly, stone barn, and several frame buildings, including an old shed which has stood for 40 years and served as a "Barn Dance" hall for 20 years. It is deteriorating now. In the center, suspended from the rafters hangs an antique lamp 75 years old, which has hung in that spot for 39 years. The metal bowl, trimmings and fret work has long since turned green with corrosion. The shade is still intact. It lighted many a gay festive

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gathering of Old Style dancers and folks on pleasure bent, parties, bees and neighborhood meetings. C.12 Neb.

The dwelling and surroundings reflect the characteristics of their long time occupants, dating back over 65 years, orderly efficiency high moral, cleanliness, and a social community spirit.

### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE Jan. 4, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Col. John Hartje—Roca, Nebraska.

1. Ancestry. American English
2. Place and date of birth. Farm home Roca, Nebr., July 7, 1861.
3. Family. Wife living, no children
4. Places lived in with dates. Roca, Nebr. Old family home 1881 to date.
5. Education, with dates. Country school, Near Roca, Nebr. 1867-1895.
6. Occupations and accomplishments. Farming, stock raising, 1896 to date. Auctioneer—Dance caller—Violin player 1900 to date.
7. Special skills and interests. Auctioneering dance calling, violin playing are main interests. These afford keen pleasure to Mr. Hartje.
8. Community and religious activities. Methodist church—Sunday school. Neighborly community work. School activities.

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9. Description of informant. Large of stature, regular pleasing features. Powerfully built, very energetic and is practically self taught in his three professions.

10. Other points gained in interview. Socially inclined, good imagination, tireless worker, a typical son of Nebraska who has, through unusual perserverance won out. Is aggressive but not in the least overbearing. Pleasing personality, enthusiastic and a forceful interesting talker.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE Jan. 4, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT. Col. John Hartje, Roca, Nebraska

I was born on this farm in 1881 and have lived here practicall all my life except 1 1/2 year, during which time, I kept the farm going. As a kid, I used to jigg for pennies when neighbors and friends came in. This led to my desire to deal with people and I took up auctioneering thirty years ago. Instead of attending auction school, I started selling boxes at box socials and got along fine. It always seemed to me that an auctioneer is born with the qualifications rather than made. Also he has to have the 'spark' or ability to feel people out and get their reaction and the limit of their interest and extent, to which they will go.

My first sale was 30 years ago. It was a box social at a school house and was given by the "School Ma'm. The proceeds were to go to the school for new equipment lamps etc. The Sale itself followed a program of entertainment.

After I had cried a few of these box sales I began to get a good gib and the sales became more numerous, though I never asked pay for my part. At one of these earlier sales, I got a little confused one Saturday night and started running the bids backward. Some one

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started a box at 75¢ and I began “I've got 75¢ who'll give me 50—75 now 60—75—now 50 U-U-T who give me 50. Some one near called to me in an undertone and said: “Go the other way, you've already got 75¢. Ask 2 for a dollar. The crowd must've thought it was part of my spiel for they showed no signs of catching on to the blunder.

At one box social, the school [Ma'ms's?] best fellow came with her and of course he knew which was her box. Three of the local boys saw a chance to have lots of fun and make him sweat and shell out plenty. [+?] They didn't want the box but felt sure he wouldn't let them get it and his girl's company included.

He didn't either but it cost him \$10.00 to finally bid the box in. It is the custom for the lady to have supper with the man who buys her box, but he doesn't accompany her home unless he came with her or made the arrangements during the supper.

Some of the boys would often ask me to signal them when a certain box was put up but I never did this. Sometimes the girls' best fellows wouldn't buy their boxes because the bids ran too high. They probably had to smooth this over later.

My first farm sale was for one of our neighbors. He had a lot of junk to sell and so was none too particular, but I managed a pretty good job. The Second sale really went into big money. I sold a span of mules for \$425.00 when the sale bills were prepared for this, I acquired the title of ‘Colonel.’ The printer put it on the bill. Why auctioneers are called Colonels, I never did know. Sometimes people ask me why. I just explain that ‘Every nut has a kernel (Colonel) and all auctioneers are nuts. Farm auctions and community auctions are not so cold blooded as the big city market auctions.

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They are really good natured neighborly ‘get to gathers.’ The people are friendly and have a sense of humor.

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Of course people go to auctions for several reasons. Some want to buy certain things and buy them as cheap as possible. Others go with nothing definite in mind, just hoping to pick up a good bargain. Many just go for entertainment or from force of habit. They are the 'Auction Hounds'. When the weather is bad on a sale day, we naturally don't expect so good a crowd. But often everybody thinks the same way and they reason that since there won't be so many there, the stuff will sell cheaper and they will get some mighty good bargains. As a result the crowd is apt to be bigger than ever. A good sale should start in the morning, with a free lunch and be finished by 4 p.m. as the crowd dwindles away about that time. A good auctioneer keeps the people livened up with jokes and good natured joshing. They bid better.

I used to carry 100 tin cups with me so that the people could get their free coffee with the lunch. Now they carry their own if there ever happens to be a sale with free lunch. Some people won't bid on the first article put up at a sale while others think it is good luck to buy the first thing offered. During the free lunch hour at a sale I joined a bunch of men who were eating and talking, as I found out about thrashing machines. In this crowd was one man, who rarely ever smiled but was really well fixed and a good bidder if he felt in the humor. Some one remarked that "John" over there, meaning me, could tell them about threshing machines.

So I decided to accommodate them. I told about pitching bundles, 4 stacking straw and hauling water for the engine.

I bragged about a span of mules which I used for this and which weighed about 400 pounds each.

For a moment the crowd took it in and then this man, who never laughed choked on his coffee. He was laughing at me and my 400 pound mules.

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Sometimes when the sale is on and the tobacco chewing bidders aim is getting good in my direction I just stop and joke them a little about the auctioneer, who was drowned, that way at a sale one time.

The funniest thing I ever sold at an auction was a ladies corset and it was not intended to be sold. A man bid on it.

Auctioneers raise the bids. Sometimes themselves, but I never did this and never will.

Sometimes an auctioneer 'gets out on a limb' with this business and has to cover up. In that case he will point out some one who is supposed to have made the fictitious bid. The man or woman may be so surprised they will agree and pay for the article. If they don't the auctioneer falls back on the next highest legitimate bid. If he then backs out they go back and start from the bottom again.

The owner of the items up for sale often has a by bidder or 'spiker' on the ground to protect his price. The auctioneer has nothing to do with this arrangement and usually does not even know about it. Haulers and Dealers will occasionally buy something at one sale and take it to another to sell at a profit if possible. Ordinarily if they are 5 not known they will join the crowd and 'spike' their own bids to protest the price. An auctioneer nearly always suggests an opening bid, higher than he hopes to get, but it automatically raises the value in the mind of the bidder. Then if this bid starts much lower and works up, the successful bidder is satisfied, he got a good bargain and does not worry himself by thinking he could have bought it a lot cheaper.

'spikers,' 'by bidders' or 'scalpers' are all phoney bidders, who are there to hike the bid on their own stuff or some friends. When this is done these 'spikers' must be able to judge pretty well just how much further the legitimate bidder is likely to go. Or else they will be caught with the goods on their hands.

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An old scrubby cow or horse is sometimes called a 'diamond in the rought.'

In calling for a small raise sometimes the crier says 'We'll let you in easy, or 'I believe I would' or 'Come now you're the judge and jury,' 'It's on the bargain block now' 'Your wife wont like you if you pass this one.'

Sometimes the crier pauses and says, 'Folks this isn't right, this thing is worth five times the bid.'

When I was practicing auctioneering I used to sell the cows I was milking or the horses I was driving in the field to imaginary buyers. The result of these make believe sales was always something to write home about and I got some mighty fancy prices even though they were a product of my own imagination.

My busiest time in life was 3 sales and 3 dances in 3 days besides 6 the chores and farm work. As I finished a sale in the afternoon it was close to 'cow time' and then change clothes and on to the dance.

The Dance.

Scovy Seidell was my violin teacher. He played dances for 50 years or more. I fiddled for him for nothing for the fun of the thing and to learn.

People really knew how to dance then 'the Minuet,' 'Polka,' 'schottische,' 'Virginia Reel,' 'sylvan Glide,' 'Waltz oxfords,' 'the Hacket,' 'Combus,' 'the Flora Dora,' 'the Flying Dutchman,' 'the Finger Polka.' Many of these are still danced and all are expressive of certain moods and people. The 'versuviana' was a popular dance also the 'Carlyle.' The Barn Dance was a favorite to the accompaniment of 'mornin Si.' "Howdy Si——— 'Geminy Crickets,' or 'Gosh Darn Silas' or "Gee By Golly" But you're lookin' spry, and so on.

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'the Quadrille' First four forward and back Forward again and right and left Forward and back Ladies change. Change right back. Half promenade Balance all and swing Allaman left Grand right and left Till you meet your partner.

(Side 4) Repeat once more.

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Second Change Balance all and swing your partner First couple round the outside In the center and six hands around To your place and swing your partner. (Repeat to 4th couple) Third change. Balance all and swing First couple, face out. Sache' right, sache left. Ladies to the right Gents to the left. Forward and back Forward again and Swing your partner to your place.

Second couple (Repeat as above)

Third couple (Repeat as above)

Fourth couple (Repeat as above)

THE LANCERS. First four forward and back Forward again turn opposite partner Back to your place. Swing on the corner And back to your place And swing your own partner. (Repeat above 3 more times) 8 Second change

First four forward and back. Forward again and salute Back to your place Ladies change Change right back. (Repeat 3 more times) Third change Head couple lead to the right and salute Lead to the left and salute Back to your place And all salute. (Side couples repeat) Fourth change Right hand to your partner and Grand right and left. First couple face out Sache' forward (Sachay) Sashay back Lady to the right Gent to the left Forward and back Swing your partner to your place. (Repeat 3 more times. This Lancers is one of the most beautiful and graceful dances when properly executed. Most of my life I have worked here on the farm and carried on this outside work. I never hired a man to do chores. Now,

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if it could be, 9 I would sell out and give all my time to auctioneering and playing and calling for dances. That is the work I really enjoy. I like the crowds, the excitement and seeing people mixing together healthy and happy. Supplementary Mr. Hartje plays every Thursday night and calls for the Nebr. State Hospital dance. He is a good violin player and an excellent dance caller. His auction work is expert in the lines he knows best, farm equipment, live stock and commodities. Being a native Nebraskan and residing most of the time in one neighborhood, he is well versed in the customs and character of the people about him. His work has, naturally, offered an opportunity to see and study group habits and basic human nature. In the sale he sees one side, the business or trading instinct and at the dance, the social activities and contacts, which bring out the behavior of man during play and the romance of life and its general pattern.