

[Louisa G. Dawe's Story]

Beliefs and Customs - Folk Stuff

These details about the Bronx a generation ago are interesting, but I doubt that they have sufficient merit to stand by themselves. L. Wood

Earl Bowman: "Louisa G. Dawe's Story"

Reminiscences recorded too sketchy for use. But references in copy indicate possible [?] fund of German [?] American material as well as material on horse-drawn trolley cars and the medicine show which remained in the neighborhood for three years. [D - Silver?] [Beliefs and CUSTOMS?] - Folk Stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK NY 1938 540 [9/9?]

FORM C

WORKER: EARL BOWMAN

86 West 12th St

New York City

DATE: August 29, 1938

SUBJECT: LOUISA G DAWE

[981?] Tinton Ave

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The Bronx, New York LOUISA G. DAWE's STORY!

“Yes, I was born in New York, on the lower East Side. When I was very young I went to Fletcher's School which was a very good training place and I received there a good education in German. Hours were from 4 to 6 in the afternoon and from 9 to 12 on Saturday mornings, so as not to conflict with public school hours.

“We always had our Christmas festival at Geib's Hall, on 170th Street and Third Avenue, studying hard to give a good performance. One one occasion one of the girls bowed backwards at the end of her recitation and made the audience laugh. She burst into tears when she realized her error.

“We moved from the Lower East Side to take charge of the hall and saloon owned by Mrs. Zeltner, and all the German Societies came “up to the country” on a Sunday to enjoy the “pot cheese” and sweet butter, fresh from the farms.

“Opposite us was an old-fashioned dry goods store owned and operated by Mrs. Dunn, the mother-in-law of Al Smith. Her daughter and I were playmates for a good many years. Many a good time we had playing with the Kerrigan boys, whose father 2 was manager of the Third Avenue surface car line. The car barns were only a block away, where they changed horses for the rest of the trip to Fordham.

“There was a skating pond at the rear of Zeltner's Brewery on Fulton Avenue. It wass was a lovely place, and crowds would come there every evening.

“Ruser's blacksmith shop stood at the northwest corner of 170th Street and Third Avenue. He was a robust man and was liked by all. He used to shoe lots of horses.

“At Jefferson Street and Boston Road, was Genez's Schnetzen Park where the German societies went for picnics and practise at shooting. The park had a rifle range about 200 feet long.

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“From Zeltner's we used to go down to Grove Hill Park at 161st Street and St. Ann's Avenue. It was a beautiful park built on terraces and with immense shade trees. On Sunday's the different societies would each occupy a terrace of their own and sometimes there were as many as four clubs on a single day.

“Then there was the Merry Circle [?] Bowling Club, all of whose members were prominent men and what pranks they were up to on their meeting nights!

“I remember when 161st Street was cut through. Prospect Avenue was beautiful with its large shade trees on each side of the street. Among the beautiful residences was Ebling's on the southwest corner of 163rd Street., with its sightly flower garden. On the northeast corner was their vegetable 3 garden which extended to Stebbins Avenue.

“Wakeling's Nursery was located an the east side of Tinton Avenue between 163rd and 165th Streets. He certainly had beautiful plants for sale.

“After he sold the place the empty lot was taken over by an Indian Show for three weeks...but it remained for two [?] years! It was popular and sold lots of medicine.

“Right opposite was an evangelical tent to which we would often go after having had a good laugh at the Indian Show!

“Things have changed in The Bronx since then, but we enjoyed ourselves and I'm not sure that it wouldn't be a happier place now if it was still like it used to be....”

WORKERS COMMENT:

Louisa G, Dawe is American born of German descent. She has lived at the house 981 Tinton Avenue for thirty-five years. A rather difficult person to interview. Her first reaction when told that I would like to hear some of memories of early New York days, was: “How

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much will I get paid for it?" A bit of explaining, however, induced her to forego the idea that it was a paid interview."

The most interesting bit in her interview seemed to me to be the reference to the Indian Shows (Medicine) and the nearness of the shows to the evangelical tent...giving the young people of that day rare opportunity to enjoy "worldly" amusement and "spiritual" exhilaration quite freely and inexpensively!

She could recall any of the songs sung either in the religious meetings, or the Indian show. This was rather disappointing to me, as that might have been a bit of real folklore.

However, she did the best she could.

—Bowman