

[Fred Librere]

Beliefs and customs - Folkstuff

GROUPS, GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(Section D. (Isolated Groups))

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview Copy - 1

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER SAUL LEVITT

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace, New York City

DATE October 18, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OUT OF LOCAL LIFE - Fred Librere

1. Date and time of interview

October 17, 1938

2. Place of interview West Farms Creek October 17, 1938

3. Name and address of informant

Fred Librere, West Farms Road

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4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

Harbor Police

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A green-painted barge moored to the bank of West Farms Creek about 30 feet from the roadway, (West Farms Road). West Farms Road is a traffic thoroughfare bordered by junkyards, auto-wrecking establishments, auto display lots, warehouses, and some ancient frame-houses. There are half a dozen squatters in barges and houses on the shore at this point (vicinity of 177th Street subway station IRT). Directly opposite "colony" on the other side of the Creek is the starlight Amusement Park, which has been shutdown for several years and is overrun with weeds and which gives an effect of a deserted city. At this point, the Creek is cleaner than it is father east where it approaches the East River; the water runs clearer; fall leaves off the trees in the deserted amusement park float down the stream. The barge on which informant lives is extremely clean and well-furnished - an equivalent of a lower middle-class dwelling.

2

It is divided into four rooms, a living room, kitchen and two bedrooms. There are several alcoves and closets. There is a stove and an electric cooker in kitchen. In the living room and one of the bedrooms there are bookcases. Electricity is used. The rooms are all small.

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NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace, New York City

DATE October 17, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OUT OF LOCAL LIFE: Fred Librere

1. Ancestry

Alsatian

2. Place and date of birth

New York City, 1908

3. Family

No family. Mother died a year ago.

4. Places lived in, with dates

Has lived in New York City all his life; on barge for last eight years.

5. Education, with dates

High school and courses in industrial chemistry at New York University.

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6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Generally capable along mechanical lines; worked for Edison Company in technical capacity some six years ago; housepainting, electrical work.

7. Special skills and interests

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant A thin, discouraged-looking young man with thinning dark hair; rather nervous. Was very cynical at beginning of interview but in a little while thawed out and wanted to talk a lot about himself. Informant is very lonely; no social life; like other dwellers on Creek shore and at Eastchester Bay his viewpoint, while confused, was one of protest against poor social and economic conditions.

10. Other Points gained in interview

GROUPS, GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

Section D. (Isolated Groups)

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER SAUL LEVITT

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace, New York City

Library of Congress

DATE October 17, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OUT OF LOCAL LIFE: Fred Librere

I talk straight from the shoulder. Those old fellas further down they're ready to break a pot yeah they like to talk but I don' wanna talk. I'm an Alsatian by background. What do I consider myself German or French? I'll tell you the truth I don' give a damn I'm an American if there was a war there'd be some prosperity here. Maybe it wouldn't last long but right now it would do something. Gee, I'm sick of this place no work nothin'. What can I do? Say, there isn't a thing I can't do. I studied industrial chemistry at NYU. Why do I talk this way? I don' know. I just talk straight that's all. You mean about the grammar and that stuff — I'm careless that way but it don' mean nothin'. I've read a lot of philosophy and all kinds of books. (Leads interviewer into living room and shows him bookshelf filled with encyclopedias, several volumes by Thoreau, Tom Paine, other titles). Say, I've read them all and — Thoreau? The fella that lived by himself up there heh just like me. But I'll tell you who I like. Have you ever read Tom Paine? That Tom Paine was a chip off the old block. I feel like Tom Paine. He talked straight from the shoulder no b..... I've told you there ain't any stories around here. Did I ever get scared living up here? Hey, what do you wanna know. You mean about the Creek now at night? Jeez, it ain't Africa. But I'll tell you this, when I first came up here, sounds you'd here, y'know, different sounds. Like the water washing up. It didn't scare me I never get nightmares or nothing like that no. There's no fishing here but 2 about fifteen years ago I hear they used to fish for eels up further. Hell, I'd get out tomorrow. When my mother was alive it was different she died a year ago. It makes a difference. I haven't got anybody now. Girls are fine but what can you do when you're broke. They'd like the view from the kitchen? Hah-hah. I pick up odd jobs these days. The day I get a job I'm getting out of here. It's too lonely nobody comes to see you. I'd live in a boarding house — no a hotel. I want service. I want to walk in and out and take in shows and have a good time. I listen to these guys over the radio. I'll tell you something. It's these silver tongues that I don't like. Yeah, they know how to talk. I don't

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like silver tongued guys. I want a job. Do I really want to see a war? I just want a job, see, but I don' want anybody killed. There's gonna be a war anyway. All those books I got and not a one of them tells you how to get a job. What's the good of all that philosophy. I just gotta read there's nothin' else to do.
