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[The '70s in Lake County]

[Beliefs?] and customs - SKETCHES

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Title The '70s in Lake county ...

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Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 3/27/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 27, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject The '70s in Lake County [md] Cowboys [md] Cattle Stampede

Name and address of informant Gus Schroeder 1315 S. W. 10th Ave., Portland, Oregon

Date and time of interview March 23, 1939[,?] p.m.

Place of interview Sitting on a bench in the Park Blocks vicinity of Park and Jefferson streets

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

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you [md]

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Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

On a bench of one of the park blocks mentioned above, where the people of the neighborhood sit and sun themselves and visit on pleasant days.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 27, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject The '70s in Lake County [md]Cowboys [md] Cattle Stampede

Name and address of informant Gus Schroeder 1315 S. W. 10th Ave., Portland, Oregon

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates

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6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates

7. Special skills and interests

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

10. Other points gained in interview

1. Father, Wm. Bernard Schroeder; Mother, Elizabeth Gossett Schroeder; German and Scotch stock

2. Red Bluff, California, March 3, 1865.

3. Divorced from second wife. Three sons: James, A. B. and H. F. Two daughters: Mrs. Neva Warner Mrs. Veva Long

4. California and Oregon. Came to Oregon in 1878.

5. District schools.

6. Stockman, handling cattle until past ten years.

7. Riding a horse and throwing a lasso.

8. Member of Odd Fellows Lodge. No church affiliations.

9. Fine looking man, large, smooth faced with brown eyes, and meticulous in his dress.

10. A man who reflects something of the tragedy of his life. Members of his family were destroyed in the Christmas tree fire at Silver Lake, Lake County, in 1894. Later, a prosperous cattleman, he lost everything, and for the past ten years has done what he

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could, to provide for himself here in Portland. But his heart is on the ranges in the big outdoors.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date Mar 27, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject The '70s in Lake County [md] Cowboys [md] Cattle Stampede [md] Buckaroos

Name and address of informant Gus Schroeder 1315 S. W. 10th Ave., Portland, Oregon

Text:

Lake County was a wonderful stock country when I went there in '78. There was lots of game too [md] just about everything there was; an' houses was few an' far between. What there was was log houses. They was perty rough, with plenty of corrals about. The logs was hauled from Mt. Hagar, seven or eight miles away. Once a week we got the mail, brought out to Silver Lake by team an' buckboard. Paisley was the nearest town. It was sixty miles to Paisley and it had only about 200 people, but it had saloons. When the boys wanted them a time they went to Paisley. They was great on playin' jokes on each other, specially when they got a few drinks under their belts. Once there was a bunch of us at Paisley. We was watchin' a big card game in the saloon. There was quite a lot of chips passin' hands, an' everybody was watchin'. So Joe Bush he slips out and he gets a candle,

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an' he rolls it in brown paper, an' then he lights it, an' then he come in an' threw it in among the bunch. It looked jest exactly like a lit stick o' dynamite. An' Criminy! how them fellers skedaddled! They was goin' in every direction for Sunday, an' chips was flyin' every which way. The boys was all so mad when they see what it was they chased Joe out, an' he lit out for home. He didn't show up there for some spell.

2

'Nother time a joke was played was once when Sam Hadley got drunk an' we laid him out on a billiard table an' covered him with a cloth. It must have bin an old tablecloth or somethin', cause it was white. An' then Minor Wallace he was a preacher's son and he knew jest what to say [md] he preached a funeral sermon over Sam. Gosh Almighty! but that Minor Wallace could talk. He sure would of made a good preacher. While he was preachin' Sam's funeral oration, Sam come to out of his sleep. An' of all the cussin' you ever hear! Sam was good at that. He was good lookin', too. Once when he was drunk I took a cork an' stuck it full of matches. I fast'n'd the cork to a little stick, split at one end, then I put the split and on Sam's nose an' lit the matches and hollered "Fire!" It didn't burn him any, too far away from his face for that, but it did black him aplenty. Sam was mad at me a long time for doin' that.

Course we had lots o' buckin' contests. They was the real thing too. Nothin' made up about them like these rodeos today. An' the saddles didn't have places to put your knees under to help hang on. The saddle them days was a seat with mighty little curve an' a pommel for your lass' rope, an' that was all. Not a lot of contraptions like now. Burrell Conger was about the best on a horse I ever saw. I never see him get thrown, an' he'd ride 'em just for fun. The boys'd go out an run in a wild horse, then they'd work it into the "chute" (narrow, railed-in addition to a corral, where, the horse has no room to move), throw a saddle on an' cinch it. Then Burrell would jump in the saddle. The boys would open the chute an' away they'd go out in the open, an' there'd be some fun. Mebbe that cayuse 'd try ev'ry damn fool buck there was! Twisters, stiff-legged, whirlin', rearin', everythin'. But he wouldn't get that boy Conger off. An' mind yuh, he wouldn't 3 even have a bridle. Shucks, what 'as the

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use? The ol' cayuse wouldn't know what it meant. By an' by, when he was all give out [md] the horse I mean [md] the boys'd chase him back in the corral an' the chute, an' Burrell'd climb off, chipper as you please. There was one boy, a halfbreed named Walt Sibley, ridin' for John Jackson of Goose Lake Valley. He rode a mustang till he got to bleedin' at the lungs. The boys had to lass' the pony an' take him off. He jes' about died.

I've seen some perty fine ropin' in my day. One feller I knew was about the best I ever seen. He could lass' underhand an' overhand. Ive seen him throw a calf 30 feet away, catchin' both hine feet. He us'd a big loop. He'd throw the lass' agin' the shoulder so it 'uld lop under the belly, an' then he'd jerk it up quick so it 'uld catch both feet. I seen him do that eight times out a' ten over 'n over agin. I wasn't no mean roper myself. Once a feller named Duncan and me was ridin' up in the mountain range. We seen some mountain sheep, an' we took after 'em. Finally I lass'd one. Mountain sheep's stupid an' stubborn, jest like other sheep. This 'un was scairt an' it wouldn't budge no way. I tied my riata to my saddle horn an' pulled, but I couldn't do [anything?] with it. So Duncan an' I tied its legs an' tried to pack it on our horses. That didn't work neither, so we got tired an' turned it loose.

'Bout the most excitin' thing I remember was a cattle stampede back in the early '90s. There was 12 or 14 riders of us and we was takin' 2,000 steers out to the Sycon country. They'd been bought an' taken in small bunches out to Cold Springs, an' that was where we picked 'em up. On from there it was a 120 mile drive. 'Course we had to ride herd at night, doin' it in two shifts. I was boss of the first shift. It was midnight. We'd bin singin, 4 an' I was jest startin' to go after the boys for the second shift, when one o' my boys [md] Johnny Parker it was [md] started brayin' like a jack. Man! it wasn't more'n the shake of a sheep's tail when them cattle begin millin' an' then they was off. Yuh never heard such a racket in your life, what with their runnin' on that hard open ground, their bellowin' an' their horns crashin! Their horns crashin' was the worst. Yuh wouldn't think they could make so much noise. They was jest crazy with fear. Well, there wasn't much sleep for any o' us that night. We'd try to get 'round 'em, yellin' like mad, an' every once in a while the tail end o' the big bunch would drop off an' wander away, an' then they'd have to be herded in. It was

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long after sun-up 'fore we got 'em in control, 'an then we found we was 26 head out. Four was killed an' the rest we finally tracked up to the mountains an' got back. We was 12 days goin' that 120 miles.

We had a lot o' songs we sung, but the only ones I remember was the "Spanish Cavalier," "Juanita," "Leather Britches," an' "Thru the [key-hole?] in the door." That last was kind-a smutty, not bad, just kind-a smutty. I don't remember how they went, any of 'em, just their names.

The boys them days didn't dress so gaudy as these rodeo riders. They wore 'chaps, o' course. Sometimes they was goatskin with the hair outside. Sometimes cow leather, mebbe just plain or mebbe with fancy carving on 'em. They wore flannel shirts most o' the time, but plain colors, not these big checked things like we see today. They wore Stetson hats with stiff brims, an' of course they wore [neckerchiefs ?]. There was sense to that to keep their necks from burnin'. There was a time for four or five years in the '80s when the boys wore tailor-made pants, made 5 perty tight, with a strip o' buckskin up the inside seam an' buckskin sewed over the seat. This buckskin was sewed an with fancy, colored thread in fancy stitchin, so they was perty gay. That was quite a style with the boys out there, an' I never knew of them pants bein' wore any place else. I don't know who started it.

We didn't have much racin'. Guess the boys was too tired ridin' range. But I did see one race I'll never [forget?]. It was at Paisley. There was a feller there called Dick Sherlock. Nobody liked him very much. An' there was Uncle George Duncan. Sherlock had what they called a sheepcamp team, an' Uncle George had a span a bays. Some way they got arguin' about which could go faster, an' they settled it on the track. There was a mile track, a n' those two men got out, one in his buckboard [md] that was Sherlock [md] an' Uncle George in his buggy, an' away they went lickity-split. They run them horses clear 'round that mile track. Ev'ry minnit look'd like one or 'tother 'd go over. Everybody in town [md] 'bout two or three hundred people [md] was out yellin' their fool heads off. Even the women

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was out, yellin' "Come on, Uncle George[!?] Come on, Uncle George!" Uncle George beat by 'bout 60 feet.

I never got lost but once, 'an then it wasn't in [eny?] blizzard; just a common old snowstorm. Duncan and me was up' in the Tamarack Mountains. We was kind-a cold, so we built a fire and warmed up, an' then we started home. Snow was fallin' but it wasn't bad. We kept goin' an' goin' an' gettin' no place, an' perty soon we came to same tracks, an' Duncan sez, "There goes a couple o' ol' bulls, let's follow 'em up." We followed 'em, an' perty soon there we was right where we'd built a fire to warms ourselves! There, we thought we was all right an' we was just goin' in a 6 circle all the time. But there wasn't anything scary 'bout it. We soon found our way out.

We didn't have much dancin'. The nearest girls was at Paisley. That was too far to go very often. 'Bout the only chivarri in my recollection was my own. That was in 1888. It vas on my ranch at Silver Lake. Some o' the boys tipped me off, so when the crowd come I was ready for 'em. I had a double-barreled shot-gun an' I filled her up with powder. When I heard 'em, I opened the door a mite and stuck that gun out, an' Jack Kelsey yelled, "Jesus Christ, boys, he's shootin' at us!" I [hed?] to laugh then. I called 'em in. I had a couple o' jugs o' whiskey I give 'em, an' they got teed up an' went home.

Form D

Extra Comment

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Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 27, 1939

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Name and address of informant Gus Schroeder 1315 S. W. 10th Ave., Portland, Oregon

Comment:

The informant proved a character of the "Virginian" cowboy type, Gentle and slow speaking, and still handsome, he drawled at the finish of the interview, "I didn't think I had much that was interestin', but I wouldn't be surprised if yuh didn't get a perty good story after all, with all them questions o' yours."