"No Bob Yet" A Collection of Narratives from Nobob, Kentucky

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Keith J.

1981
"NO BOB YET"
A COLLECTION OF NARRATIVES FROM NOBOB, KENTUCKY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Modern Languages
and Intercultural Studies

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Keith J. Ludden
December 1981
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"NO BOB YET"

A COLLECTION OF NARRATIVES FROM NOBOB, KENTUCKY

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Keith Ludden
Lincoln, Nebraska
November 24, 1981
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"NO BOB YET"
A COLLECTION OF NARRATIVES FROM NOBOB, KENTUCKY

Keith J. Ludden December 1981

Directed by: William Lynwood Montell, Robert Teske, and Burt Feintuch

Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies Western Kentucky University

Transcribed narratives from the community of Nobob (Barren County), Kentucky, and its surroundings. The narratives were tape recorded between October, 1977 and November, 1978. Interpretation is offered in the form of an introduction, which includes a brief history of the area and a discussion of genre and annotations to the narratives. Annotations make use of standard bibliographical reference works and archival sources available at Western Kentucky University.

The narratives are divided into legend, tale, and personal experience stories. A number of the narratives refer specifically to the Great Depression. The collection seeks to particularly demonstrate the presence of valuable historical data concerning details of everyday life and the fluidity and complexity of genre in traditional narrative.
INTRODUCTION

A small creek only a few feet wide and four or five miles long flows through the southeastern corner of Barren County, Kentucky. The tales grow here like tobacco plants out of the orange-red soil, cured in tradition's barn with the varied and unique agents provided by individual tellers. Some of the tales recount events of the past decade, and others have old roots not even dreamed of by their tellers. Between 1977 and 1978 I became aware of the narrative tradition in the area of Nobob Creek and collected the anecdotes, legends, lies, and personal experience stories that form the substance of this volume.

With this collection of narratives from Nobob, I hope to do four things: 1) provide material from a geographic area not already explored in detail by narrative scholars; 2) arrange and annotate the material in a manner useful to both professional students of folklore and amateurs; 3) provide examples to show the generic complexity of folk narrative; and 4) provide, through the medium of these narratives, a portrait of Nobob and its people, giving particular attention to the Depression period.

1 Dr. D. K. Wilgus conducted field research concerning ballads at Nobob during his tenure at Western Kentucky University in the 1950's and 1960's. It was a recording made by Pat Key, a student of Wilgus' which led to my research in the area. Dr. Burt Feintuch, of WKU has also conducted field research in musical traditions in the Nobob area. Dr. W. Lynwood Montell has conducted extensive narrative research in Metcalfe and Monroe counties, immediately to the west and south of Barren County.
Plate 1

Nobob creek
While it is true that library shelves are already generously filled with collections to be studied, there is much to be said for adding material from geographic areas not already explored. There has been no extensive collection of narrative material from the Nobob area. Although some material from Barren County has been included in some more general collections, such as William Lynwood Montell's *Ghosts Along the Cumberland*,¹ no particular collections focusing on the community of Nobob and its immediate surroundings have yet been produced. In student collections housed in the Western Kentucky University Folklore, Folklife and Oral History Archives prior to 1975 the narrative material which can be identified with Nobob consists of three versions of a place name legend.² There is certainly room for this small amount of material to be augmented and commented upon. It should also be noted that this collection includes an extensive amount of legend material, a genre which has recently come to enjoy the increased attention of narrative scholars. As late as 1969 Wayland Hand issued a call for legend collections from all parts of the country.³ It is hoped that this collection of narratives will help to answer that call.


²Student collections in the Western Kentucky University Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives were not entered into the general indexing system beyond the year 1975 at the time the research for this collection was done. This archive will hereafter be referred to as WKUFFOHA.

From the era of the first great national tale collection produced by the Grimms,¹ Asbjornsen,² and others, we have come to expect to see tales printed in neat units which show either the conscious or unconscious hand of the editor. To provide an analogy, one might have a mental image of what a chair looks like and then sit down with a pencil and paper to make some lines which create the impression of a chair. So one might also have a mental image of what a tale or legend should look like on a piece of paper and then sit down to edit the narrative into the image he perceives.

Narratives are not bound by the literary concept of a complete sentences, nor does the narrative in its pure state as an aural and visual medium have any need for punctuation. The performer has the use of his voice and his body to perform that function. In order to make my transcriptions of these narratives accessible and intelligible to the reader, some compromise must be made between the rules of literary convention and the grammatical rules which govern the narrative performance. The reader should understand that there are two sets of conventions at work in this volume and that the printed versions of tales presented here are a composite, or hybrid, of the two conventions.

All of the narratives in this collection are verbatim transcriptions which include my questions and comments as well as the narrator's performance. The annotations contain information about the style of per-

¹Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Kinder und Hausmarchen, 1812-1814.
formance as well as relationships to other versions. Another aspect of
the collection which, to my knowledge, is not common in most contemp-
orary narrative collections is the fact that where several versions of
a tale exist, all are presented, not only the "best" versions or the
"most complete" versions. In this way, the variation in a given legend
or tale within a small community can be observed.

Aside from simply providing annotated material from a geographic
area not already explored, I hope to demonstrate with the narratives
here presented what Linda Døgh observes, that is, that the narrative is
not always performed in the pure form of a given genre.1 Our conceptions
of a particular genre are to some extent metaphysical archetypes.
Genres blend within the confines of a single narrative as the narrative
shifts between genres, beginning in one genre and perhaps ending in
another, or perhaps even shifting back to the original genre before the
narrative ends. Genres are basically literary concepts, which have been
applied to a medium which manifests itself aurally and visually. As such,
they are concepts which fit only loosely but still help us define the
nature of a given narrative. The pure idea, or concept of the given
genre, exists only in our minds.2 As a case in point, consider the nar-
rative contributed to this collection by Creed Berryman concerning the
character of Noah Spears (1-9). Mr. Berryman began the narrative in the
documentary fashion which most of us recognize as legend. In the midst

1Linda Døgh, "The Belief Legend in Modern Society," in American
Folk Legend: A Symposium, p. 57.

2Dan Ben-Amos, "Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres," Genre
2 (1969): 275-297; and Roger Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple
of the narrative, Mr. Berryman broke from the plane of the legend and related an anecdote concerning the strongman, Spears. In response to my comment concerning Noah's strength, Mr. Berryman returned to the plane of the legend—all in the space of a few minutes.

A more subtle example is seen in the narrative concerning Fish Ritter's business trip to Louisville (1-13). The character of Fish Ritter takes on a clearly legendary quality. He is almost always introduced with a colorful and documentary description of his physical appearance, or some conjectural allusion to his financial wealth. The narrative is regarded as fact by its tellers and takes on the didactic nature sometime associated with legend. The story itself, however, has the caricature-like protagonist in a comic situation which seems to belong in the realm of the anecdote.

Finally, we see genres becoming mixed when a cycle of narratives forms around a single character. Individual narrators will express their impression of the character according to the genre of their choice. In the cycle of narratives surrounding Ambrose Huffman (1-11), we see evidence of legend in the yet blooming flowers Ambrose once planted; anecdote in the memory of his impatience; and the lie in Glen Berryman's narrative of potatoes in Illinois.

These are illustrations of the way in which tale tellers combine genres and dissolve the notion of hard and fast lines between them. Each genre and each narrative, having its unique qualities and information, acts in concert to form a portrait of the community, just as shades of color on a portrait canvas can provide the perceptual infor-

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1 These numerals reflect the order of a given narrative in this collection. The numbering system is explained on page 9.
ation which the human eye and mind interpret as a human face with an individual personality and temperament. More specific discussions of generic definition will be approached later on.

The question of what percentage of the narratives are historically accurate is not at issue, since their veracity is not being probed. What is historically significant are the scores of small details about life in the community of Nobob which are woven into the narratives, giving us a picture of how business was done, how the dead were buried, and other very human aspects of community life. If the tale concerning the corn thief (2-1) is not a bona fide occurrence, the context in which it was told to the informant's mother reveals information about the courtship process and the social forces operating upon it. Such human elements must not be overlooked if we are to avoid what Theodore Blegen termed "inverted provincialism."

This inverted provincialism considered itself urbane and cosmopolitan. It was little interested in the values of the folk culture. It rejected the near-at-hand as local and insignificant. It cultivated the far away, without fully understanding it because it did not understand the near-at-hand, without sensing, too, that the far away may in its inner meaning be near-at-hand. 1

This collection of narratives focuses particularly on the historical era of the Great Depression. Because of this focus, the people who have made narrative contributions to the collection are all old enough to have experienced the Depression as children, or as adults responsible for the support of a family. The attention to the Depression is partially the result of my own interest in this era. Personal

1 Theodore C. Blegen, Grass Roots History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1947), p. 5.
interest was strengthened by the fact that the Kentucky Library at
Western Kentucky University seems to have more local history material
dealing with the early settlement and Civil War periods in Barren County
than for the Depression era.

Methodology

This collection grows primarily out of fieldwork in the Nobob
area which was conducted in the spring and fall of 1978. The collection
includes narrative materials performed by persons who are presently liv-
ing near, or who have been associated with the Nobob area for a consider-
able time. Some of the materials presented here do not take place at
or have their origin in the immediate area of Nobob, but nonetheless have
entered the oral tradition of the area.

Before engaging in fieldwork, information on the historical back-
ground of the area and possible subjects for investigation in oral tradi-
tion was sought. Some of the most useful sources on the history and
legend of southeastern Barren County were the newspaper clippings in the
vertical files of the Kentucky Library, Franklin Gorin’s The Times of
Long Ago,1 C. Clayton Simmons’ An Historical Journey Through Barren
County, Kentucky,2 Florence Edwards Gardiner’s Cyrus Edwards’ Stories
of Early Days,3 and William Lynwood Montell’s Ghosts Along the Cumber-
land, already referred to.

1 Franklin Gorin, The Times of Long Ago (Louisville: John P. Morton
and Co., 1929).

2 C. Clayton Simmons, An Historical Journey Through Barren County,
Kentucky. 1940 (Typewritten).

3 Florence Gardiner, Cyrus Edwards’ Stories of Early Days (Louis-
Once I had consulted the printed sources, a body of questions was drawn up on the basis of these sources and Sean O' Suilleabhain's *Handbook of Irish Folklore.* Because the questionnaire became quite lengthy, some priorities were also established. Questions that I considered to be more important were placed toward the head of the questionnaire, while more marginal questions were placed toward the end. This questionnaire was later weeded for items that did not generate very much response, and items requesting specific information were plugged into the questionnaire where they might supercede or supplement questions of a more general nature.

I interviewed twenty people for varying lengths of time concerning oral tradition in the Nobob area. These people represented approximately a fifth of the present population of the immediate area of Nobob. Two of the sources interviewed presently live in nearby Glasgow, Kentucky. One of these two is a former resident of the Nobob area, and the other has family ties in the area. In some cases, I interviewed the sources in groups of between two and five persons.

Interviews were conducted rather loosely, with an attempt to follow and unravel a train of thought rather than to elicit specific answers to specific questions. I did not overtly encourage or discourage any particular kind of narrative, with the exception of indicating an interest in the Depression, and pursuing the interests and abilities of each individ-

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1Sean O' Suilleabhain, *Handbook of Irish Folklore* (Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, Ltd., 1942). Though this work deals specifically with Irish folklore, it is a good general reference for questionnaire topics and specific questions.
Interviews were varied in length, though most did not last more than ninety minutes. Some sources were interviewed more than once, but most were not.

Comment was made earlier in this introduction concerning the manner in which genres in folk narrative can become shifting hybrids. These comments hint at perhaps the thorniest problem for this collection. Whether I accept the conventional genres of legend, tale, and personal experience stories as an organizing principle for this collection or whether I seek to identify and define genres as they are recognized by local narrators, such as "stingy stories," or "scary stories," the process will be subject to a certain amount of interpretation. I must match individual narratives to conventional genres, or identify and define the folk genres. In either case the fact that I was not raised in the environs of south-central Kentucky presents a filter which is difficult to avoid. Conventional genres have here at least the advantage of having been extensively discussed and to some extent defined and understood to mean certain things to students of folklore. For this reason I employ conventional genres in my groupings. For the purposes of reference I have simply given each section a number. The section on legends is given the number (1), the section on tales is given the number (2), and the section on personal experience narratives is given the number (3).

Within each section, each of the narratives is given a number. These two numbers are separated by a dash to refer to a particular narrative. Finally, letters are added to indicate individual versions.

A second problem referred to earlier is that different versions of a narrative may be expressed in different genres. It was decided that this problem should be dealt with by looking at all of the versions of a particular narrative that were collected and determining what generic traits the narrative possessed as a whole. This approach allows all versions of a particular narrative to be placed together for comparison.

This collection is divided into three sections, each representing one of three major genres: legend, tale, and personal experience stories. Of all the narrative genres, the legend is the least cohesive and the hardest to define. One of the earliest definitional statements concerning the legend, from Jacob Grimm, makes note of three essential points: 1) the legend is related to the Märchen; 2) the legend is localized and down to earth; and 3) the legend has historical validity. 1 Seán O’Suilleabháin, a collector of Irish legends, seems to agree with Grimm on all three points.

It is localised; it is factual and often has some validity. It is told in ordinary speech unlike some folktales which have long, repetitive "runs" or rhetoric; it is a straightforward art and is extremely variable, though usually short. 2

Stith Thompson included the concept of belief as part of his simple definition: "... an account of an extraordinary happening believed to have actually occurred." 3 Linda Døgh and Patrick Mullen both have


recently begun to explore the relationship between legend and belief in their writings.\(^1\) Mullen sees legend as "merely conventionalized rumor." He borrows a phrase from Gordon W. Alpert and Leo Postman and refers to legend as "solidified rumor."\(^2\)

Max Luthi takes a different approach to examining the legend. In addition to the attempt to identify the traits of the legend, Luthi attempts to examine the legend's relationship to man.

The legend also gives a description of man. . . . The marchen considers man, the legend considers what happens to man. The marchen outlines the narrow road of the hero walking through the world and does not dwell on the figures meeting him. But the legend looks fixedly at the inexplicable which confronts man.\(^3\)

Exploring the triangular relationship between man, legend, and environment, Janet Langois examines the legend of Belle Gunness and sees the legend as a metaphor for social structure and relationships:

I suggest that the narratives of Belle's wandering cows and pigs and of her sausagemaking are "sign images." They communicate to their tellers and audiences in the LaPorte community a method of evaluating the relationship sets of neighbor and of marriage which would otherwise remain unelaborated.\(^4\)


Legend flows out of pieces of conversation, as Dēgh and O'Suilleabhāin have observed, sometimes existing in something as simple as a one-sentence statement. Herbert Halpert has raised the question of whether such one-sentence fragments are not actually legend, but that which Von Sydow called "dite." I disagree with this position not only because it involves splitting hairs needlessly, but also because legend is made up of such floating fragments, combining and recombining at the hands of various narrators. Roger Welsch has recently cautioned us to avoid demanding definitions where they do not exist. He cites an experience in which he worried for several days over the time and place for a Native American ceremony to which he had been invited, later learning that the ceremony could not be defined in terms of time and place. It happened when everyone involved was present. Where definitions do not exist, or where they have no meaning, they should not be sought.

Legend, as it appears in this collection, is almost always connected with specific historical individuals or events known or believed to have existed. Couching his narratives in terms of concrete realities, the legend teller can and usually does treat life situations dramatically, or even melodramatically, though in this collection there are two examples of legends taking a humorous turn. Some legend tellers treat the preternatural and have the intriguing ability to present the preternatural without indulging in the overtly fantastic. The teller of legends does

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1Dēgh, "Folk Narrative," p. 74; O'Suilleabhāin, Legends From Ireland, p. 12.

2Herbert Halpert, "Definition and Variation in Folk Legend," in Hand, American Folk Legend: A Symposium, p. 53.

not ask his audience to suspend disbelief, only to consider the unknown possibilities. I believe the legend's fascination lies in the question mark which straddles the borderline between the preternatural and the fantastic. It could have happened. It might have happened--but did it?

The legend can be moralistic or instructive in its underlying purpose. Consider the stories of Rob Borders (1-5) and Fish Ritter (1-13). Distinctly instructive purposes can be seen in both of these legends. One is an example of what happens to those who do not lead a good life, and the other is an admonition not to judge a person by his appearance.

As well as moral or practical instruction, the legend can provide explanations, such as the origin of a town name. These place name legends are among the most varied and widely known legends told by the people of Nobob.

Several kinds of legends appear in this collection. The collection begins with the etiological or explanatory legends concerning place names. Other legends, such as the story of Huffman's Hill or the AWOL soldier in the cave are historical in nature. Memorable characters such as strongmen, or curers, or such unique characters as Fish Ritter provide the theme for another group of legends in this collection.

1 Thompson, The Folktale, p. 9


The tales in this collection contrast with the legend in that they are all of a comic nature. They are what Stith Thompson has referred to as "simple tales"--jests, anecdotes and lies. The simple tales also contrast with the legend in that their structure is tighter and more visible as opposed to the loosely structured, fragmentary legend. The tale is more likely to draw a practical lesson, while the legend is more likely to draw a moral lesson. A tale crystallizes a situation or a caricature-like personality from which humor can be drawn, while legend crystallizes a memorable sequence of events or a memorable individual.

Linda Dego's article on folk narrative follows Thompson's classification, adopting the concept of the complex and the simple tale. Dego describes an anecdote as a narrative which "characterizes a person, a memorable event, or a place through a representative personal episode," and a joke as "always short, built on a double meaning of words, and therefore not open and obvious to everyone." This obviously leaves some room for overlapping, as we look at such items as Ina Jones' two narratives involving country doctors (2-12, 2-13), which seem to fit the criteria for both definitions. I will not attempt, then, to draw hard and fast lines between these two kinds of tales, and have entered them both into the same section of this volume. Dorson suggests that a joke does not become a folktale at all until it is repeated "often enough to endure." Even then, Dorson muses that jokes seem "somehow a little

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1Thompson, The Folktale, p. 188.
2Dego, "Folk Narrative," p. 69.
disreputable to keep company with Aesop and Grimm. ¹ Though I suspect
the statement was made only half seriously, it is nonetheless my concern
that these examples appear to be part of the storytelling tradition of
Nobob, whether or not they appear to take on a classic form.

From my own point of view, that of an outside observer, the tales
in this collection seem to fall into two groups. The first group con-
sists of anecdotes, the retellings of humorous occurrences. Some of
these occurrences are no doubt real, others are believed to be real, and
still others are anecdotes of long standing in oral tradition, which are
simply cast with local personalities and told in fun.

The second group of tales in this collection are lies, or tall
tales. In his collection of Plains lies, Roger Welsch identifies sever-
al noticeable characteristics of lies: brevity; conflict with logic or
physical laws; pretended detail used to add credibility to the tale; and
straight-faced performance. ² Lies are sometimes cast with specific
local personalities, such a Bobby Lawson's tale of the two-by-four to
heaven (2-21); and sometimes with general descriptions, such as Glen
Berryman's two neighborhood liars (2-24). Skilled practitioners of the
tall tale combine very ordinary elements with skillful, incremental exag-
geration, deriving their humor from the sudden realization of the ridic-
ulous, out-of-proportion juxtaposition of the ordinary with the exagger-
ated.

¹ Richard Dorson, Folktales Told Around the World (Chicago: Univer-

² Roger Welsch, Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies (Chicago:
Swallow Press, 1972), pp. 11-12. With regard to the first of these char-
acteristics, it should be noted that some skillful liars have succeeded
in stretching their lies to great lengths with the employment of skill-
ful building processes.
The final group of narratives in this collection consists of personal experience stories. These are narratives of events which the teller has personally experienced. In her article on oral narrative, Dégh points to three major themes that appear in personal narratives: labor reminiscences, autobiographical, and emigrant-immigrant narratives.¹ The theme of emigrant and immigrant experiences does not enjoy a representation in this collection. Some of the personal experience stories in this collection embrace both the themes of autobiographical experiences and labor experiences. They are autobiographical in the sense that they relate to the individual’s own personal struggle to cope with the Depression economy; and they are labor related in the sense that the Depression economy and the personal struggles it cause directly affected the work experiences of the Nobob people, who, to a great extent, are still primarily farmers, raising tobacco and corn.

These personal experience stories can be said to be traditional in several ways. First, even though only one person tells the story, it becomes part of that person’s tradition. The person tells the story in the way that has become traditional for him or her to tell it. Secondly, others may not tell the story, but know the story and know who tells it. They also provide aesthetic input and help to determine whether the story will be repeated on other occasions.³ It may thus be said that

¹ Dégh, "Folk Narrative," pp. 79-80.
³ Glassie, "Take That Night Train to Selma."
though only one person tells the story, it can still be thought of as being in the oral tradition of a particular group. Consider, for example, the fact that Glorine asks her husband, Bobby, to tell his story about the visit to the moonshine still. They both know the story, but it is traditional for Bobby to tell it. Thirdly, the personal experience story may contain traditional ideas, values, or attitudes without containing a traditional plot or story line.¹ This is particularly true of the narratives concerning the Depression. Almost all of them focus on the idea that the Depression was hard, but not intolerable.

I have, for convenience sake, divided these personal narratives into two groups—those dealing directly with the Depression and those dealing with other topics. The Depression narratives explain at least one reason why the people of Nobob felt that urban labor communities in such cities as Detroit suffered more from the Depression than they themselves did. The feeling can be summed up in the repeated and paraphrased statement, "We could grow what we ate." The personal experience narratives that do not deal with the Depression are, of course, more varied in both chronology and subject. They encompass the excitement of a recent oil prospecting effort and the grim reality of the first embalming in the area.

These three narrative genres—legends, tales, and personal experience stories—all focus sharply on the life of the Nobob community in

distinctly different ways. The legends, while they are more realistic in tone, reveal the unusual, the startling, and in some cases, the apocryphal information about the community. The tale materials bring into sharper focus the day-to-day ordinary events and relationships, not because they are more realistic—indeed in some cases they are exaggerated to the point of caricature and fantasy—but because the tales in this collection are built upon daily events and relationships. Even the incredible tale concerning the overgrown turnip begins with what was a very common event and relationship—two local liars “loafing” in the neighborhood store, outdoing each other with lies. The personal experience narratives provide more direct historical perspective to the life of the community of Nobob. In these narratives such subjects as the day-to-day hardships of the Depression and the danger involved in logging operations are addressed.

I have, then, presented these narratives within the framework of the three major genres: legend, tale, and personal experience stories. Within each of these major genres can be seen groups of materials with similar themes, structure, or purpose. Any given narratives or group of narratives addressing the same subject, for example, the cycle of narratives concerning Ambrose Huffman (1-11), may contain a mixture of these genres or of the groupings within the genres. This mixing effect can perhaps best be illustrated if we imagine three dyes dropped in a glass of water, each one of the primary colors representing one of the genres. Only pockets of red, blue, and yellow will be seen in their pure state. At other points, greens, browns, and oranges will result from the dyes coming into contact with each other. It is easy to see, then, how such infinite possibilities for combination and variation in genre provide a rich lode of interesting narrative material.
Clorine Jones Lawson was born close to Temple Hill (Barren County), Kentucky, in 1917, and has spent part of her life in Florida, Indiana, and the community of Kino, also in Barren County. Her father's people have been living in the Nobby area since the mid-1800's. At present she and her husband, Bobby, own a farm about one and one-half miles south of Nobob, and she commutes to work at Glasgow's hospital nursery as a licensed practical nurse.

Her knowledge of local tradition comes from an interest in the history of the area. Using a pencil and paper to record her information, she began in the late 1950's to seek information on the history and oral tradition of Nobob from older members of the community, some of whom are no longer living. Some of the sources she cites for her information include Henry Ballock, Bill Reagan, and John Kingrey. A number of her stories came from the Kingrey family. She also cites Glen Berryman, who is one of the sources for this collection. Clorine enjoys a reputation in the community from being knowledgeable in local history, and being able to remember what she has been told. Many community events have been recorded in her diary.

Clorine has made contact with printed as well as spoken tradition, having corresponded with Allan M. Trout, former columnist for the Louisville Courier-Journal. It is possible that Clorine's narratives are among the most elaborate in this collection because she has actively

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1Trout was the author of a long running and popular column in the Louisville Courier-Journal which dealt with local tradition, tales, and witticisms. For a discussion of Trout's influence, see J. Vaughan Webb, "Traditional Elements in the Selected Columns of Allan M. Trout." (Master's thesis, Western Kentucky University, 1977).
sought information, bringing her into contact with many versions of various stories and because of her artistic competence. Clorine has been interviewed by Dr. D. K. Wilgus, Pat Key, and Dr. Burt Feintuch concerning her repertoire of traditional songs. She is a featured singer on an LP of traditional music from south central Kentucky, titled, "I Kind of Believe It's a Gift" (Meriweather 1001/2).

Bobby Lawson, Clorine's husband, is from Monroe County. Family tradition claims some Indian blood lines. Bobby provided narrative materials concerning a visit to a moonshine still and his success with tobacco farming during the Depression. As a young man he placed a high value on receiving a high school education. It was traditional in his family for the boys to receive a horse as they came of age. When Bobby's turn came, he bargained for a high school education instead.

Ina Jones, Clorine's mother, was originally from Rock Bridge in Monroe County. She first came to Bob with her father in 1906 when she was eleven years old. The Norman family, of Rock Bridge, from whom Ina is descended, were Irish. The Bushongs, of nearby Mt. Gilead, from whom she is also descended, were German. Clorine credited Ina with being the storyteller in the family, and Nadine Lawson Lowe, Ina's granddaughter, claimed she knew a number of ghost stories, though Ina was reluctant to tell any. Ina's masterful, straight-faced performance of her stingy man anecdote in this collection (2-22) indicated that her reputation as a storyteller was well deserved.

Ruby Smith was born in 1917 in Barren County and is the librarian at Temple Hill High School. She traces her ancestry to Albemarle County, Virginia, and says the Crabtrees, the maternal side of her family, came from Monticello (Wayne County), Kentucky, when her grandfather was four years old. She is a sister to Gladys Pace and a cousin to Clorine
Lawson, both of whom are sources for this collection. Like Gladys and Clorine, Ruby was eager to put any notions of superstitions into the past. While leaving a detailed study of folk belief to another occasion, it is my inclination to associate this attitude with the general difficulty I experienced in eliciting ghost stories. As did Clorine, Ruby made mention of John Kingrey as a source for some of her narrative.

Kenneth Smith was born at Marr (Monroe County), Kentucky,¹ in 1907. In 1911 or 1912, Kenneth’s father, Horace, bought one of the stores at Nobob and moved his family there. Kenneth helped run the store until World War II, when he joined the armed services and the store was closed. Horace’s store was one place where Kenneth remembered stories being told on rainy days. Kenneth particularly remembered a pair of sisters whom he would encourage to tell ghost stories.

In order to obtain a high school diploma he boarded at Tomkinsville for two years and rented a room at Glasgow to complete the last two years of his high school education, as did Bobby Lawson. Many of his stories are personal experience stories concerning the operation of the store, or stories of legendary figures of the area.

Gladys Pace is a sister to Ruby Smith, a cousin to Clorine Lawson, and the eldest of her family. She and her husband, Darrel, have recently moved back onto land near Logan’s Crossroads, where she was born in 1916. They had recently been renting a dairy farm near Eighty-Eight (Barren County), Kentucky. She and the Lawsons were, at one time, next door neighbors. As an adult, Gladys describes herself as a farmer’s wife—

¹Mr. Smith says that Marr was the name of the post office that was established at Horace Smith’s store near Flippin.
as a girl, something of a tomboy. "I more or less played the boy's part at home, because my brothers were younger." Though familiar with some local forms of belief, she was careful, as were Glorine and Ruby, to couch any discussion of them in the past tense.

Gladys focused on tragedies in the community as important events. The community she lives in is important to her, and she misses the feeling of the close, integrated community she knew as a girl. Gladys has a repertoire of traditional ballads, some of the temperance ballads, and has demonstrated a remarkable resilience of memory when singing them. She has been interviewed and recorded by Wilgus, Key, and Feintuch, and is also a featured singer on "I Kind of Believe It's a Gift."

Creed Berryman was born a mile and a half away from Nobob in 1914, and moved to Nobob with his family when he was five years old. It was in Kenneth Smith's home that I first encountered Creed, as they talked over old times and exchanged one story after another.

Creed was married to his wife, Alma, in 1936, and they lived between Nobob and Temple Hill since their marriage. Creed Berryman was a dramatic performer who used both his body and his cane to delineate space and act out parts of his stories. He was especially well versed in the legends of the area. Creed and his brother have a recognizable vocal pattern that is part of their performance. The pattern consists of quick, low-pitched beats alternating with slow, high-pitched beats. The pattern is part of their performance and serves to alert the listener to the beginning of a narrative. Creed Berryman died on December 29, 1978, shortly after my last visit with him.

Glen Berryman, Creed's brother, has always lived around the Nobob neighborhood and moved to Logan's Crossroads about a mile and a half
from Nobob in 1945, where he opened up a store. He has lived at his present location near Logan’s Crossroads for about twenty years. Though about seventy years old, Glen still raises cattle on the land he owns. His wife, Sophie, is a somewhat reserved woman who is familiar with much of the traditional knowledge but is somewhat reticent in revealing it. Like his brother, Creed, Glen is also inclined to dramatic performances, using such devices as emphatic body movements and character voices. He is an especially accomplished performer of lies. Upon beginning each lie, Glen breaks into a polished style of performance with a calculated rhythm that creates maximum effect.

Glen appears to be an important link in the tale tradition of Nobob. For fifteen years or longer he visited the Kingreys often, and he says that John Kingrey told him many of his tales. Loss Chapman, one of Glen’s grandfathers, was noted by Howard Wiley as being a good storyteller. Clorine Lawson, in turn, cites Glen as the source of some of her materials, as well as the Kingreys.

Flava Froedge was born in 1896 and has lived in the house just north of Glover’s Creek on Highway 839 for seventy years. His wife, Verna, was born in 1898. Flava worked for the stockyards in Glasgow for forty-three years and proudly points to the fact that in those forty-three years he has missed only three sales. Flava’s narratives were primarily concerned with the Depression, which he remembers with a degree of bitterness.

R. Henry Miller relishes his role as a local historical authority. "I know everything that happened," he told me, recalling others who had come to him for information. Mr. Miller was born in 1889, on the farm adjacent to the one on which he now lives, and he has lived there
Plate 4

R. Henry Miller
for sixty-four years. His present farm between Nobob and Temple Hill
is also adjacent to the mill operated by Fish Ritter, a one-man local
bank and a legendary character of the area.

John Robert Miller is the son of R. Henry Miller. John was
born in 1923 near Ritter's Mill and lived there until he went into the
armed forces in 1941. In 1948, after John returned from World War II,
he bought a farm about a mile from the farm he was raised on. He con-
siders this event one of the most important in his life. John was a
magistrate in Barren County from 1965 to 1976, a position which gives
him a great deal of knowledge concerning the development of roads in
the area. In 1976 he sold his farm and moved to Glasgow.

Buelah Bartley Wiley was born in 1907, and her husband, Howard,
was born in 1903. Mrs. Wiley says she moved to Nobob with her family
when she was three years old. Mr. Wiley is a "thrash doctor."1 People
in the area have even in recent years brought babies to him to cure of
thrash by blowing into their mouth. Some physical manifestations of
folk practices were seen as the Wileys took my wife and I on a tour of
their farm, pointing out rocks that had been hollowed for grinding corn
into meal and trees with initials carved into them more than twenty
years ago. No direct transcriptions of their narratives appear in this
collection, due to the fact that the interview was not tape recorded.

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1 The term "thrash" is used to describe a type of rash common to
infants. For references see: Wayland Hand, Popular Beliefs and Super-
stitions From North Carolina in The Frank C. Brown Collection of North
Plate 5

John Robert Miller
Hobart Wilburn and his wife live in a renovated schoolhouse about a mile and a half to the northeast of Nobob. He was born in 1896, a short distance down the road from where he now lives. He is familiar with some of the better known stories of the Nobob area, and much of his narration concerned itself with transportation and communication developments.

James Simmons teaches history at Glasgow High School. He provided me with background information, particularly on the Civil War history of the area. He is the nephew of C. Clayton Simmons, a local historian whom I have earlier cited.

At this point I think it would be well to consider some indirect sources for this collection. Prior reference has been made to the Kingrey family and to Loss Chapman. Clorine Lawson provided me with information regarding these sources. I quote from her letter.

John Kingrey was born Sept. 17, 1870 and died July 1, 1966. His parents were Jake Kingrey and Laura Webb Kingrey. Jake Kingrey's father was a hat-maker. Jake Kingrey was a Civil War veteran who received a pension. Also he and his wife took care of some Bell sisters and received a farm (less than 40 acres, I think.) for that. John did some farming and at times did carpenter work. In later years he received the old age pension. As someone expressed it, he never was a very hard worker. When he was about 37 years old, he married Mary Elizabeth (called Mollie) Kingrey (1886-Dec. 2, 1961) a daughter of James Ferris Kingrey (born 1856) and Elizabeth Ellis Tunstall Kingrey. They had no children. John had 3 sisters and 2 brothers.

It has been more difficult to find anything about Loss Chapman. He is buried at Union #2 in an unmarked grave and nobody seems to know the dates. The things I have about him are just from memory of certain people and I know that memory isn't always too accurate. So what I'm telling you is what I've been told. Loss Chapman was Sophie Berryman's grandfather, but Loss and Glen's grandfather were brothers. Glen's grandfather was named Alan Chapman. Loss' wife was Matilda Kingrey and they had 2 daughters and at the time Loss died one was dead and the other either dead or away from here. Anyway Loss had ended up at the county farm or "poor house" as it was called. Glen Berryman said that he and his mother got him out of the poor house and brought him to Glen's mother's house where he died in 1930.
Plate 7

Hobart Wilburn's renovated schoolhouse
His occupation was farming. I talked with his grandson, Frank Rich, and he showed me a picture of Loss made with a large group including Frank's mother evidently made in the period between 1900 and 1910. Frank didn't know all of Loss's name, but on the back of the picture was R. L. Chapman for his name. Frank Rich is Sophie Berryman's brother.

In gathering the history of Nobob, the only mention I heard of Loss Chapman was that he set the pine tree that stands in Union #2 cemetery. It is a very large tree now. 1

R. Henry Miller recalled a third well-known storyteller in the Nobob area. Jake Luster ran the store on Highway 1324 that is now called "Crabtree's Store." 2 Mr. Miller says that Jake told jokes at his store and "kept them all a-laughing." 3 But, said Mr. Miller, when Jake died several years ago, the jokes stopped and the stories were no longer told at the store on Highway 1324. 4 Two of the stingy stories in this collection (2-19, 2-20) are directly attributed to Mr. Luster.

Description of the area

Nobob lies on the Nobob Creek, a tributary of Skaggs' Creek. The Nobob crosses the southeastern corner of Barren County, Kentucky, and extends slightly across the Metcalfe County line. The area is on the southern borderlands of the "barrens," the name given to this section of Kentucky by early residents for its scarcity of trees. 5 A few miles below Nobob, one finds the rougher, more densely timbered hill country of Monroe County, the birthplace of some present residents of Nobob. The

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1 Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden, 15 December 1980.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Carl Ortwig Sauer, Geography of the Pennyrile (Frankfort, Kentucky: The Kentucky Geological Survey, 1927) p. 123.
area immediately surrounding Nobob is marked by intermittent level, cleared land and wooded hills. Once more heavily wooded, it was depleted of its timber by logging operations and the traditional clearing of "new ground" for planting tobacco and corn.

Good roads are a product of only the last three or four decades. The area has not, however, been subject to a history of complete isolation, with the Cumberland River about twelve miles to the southeast and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad about ten miles to the northwest at Glasgow. The railroad reached Glasgow in 1871, and prior to that time, the Cumberland River provided a major avenue of transportation.\(^1\) Blacktop roads around Nobob generally did not appear before the 1960's, with the exception of Highway 63.\(^2\) The undeveloped condition of the roads effectively limited communication between Nobob and its neighboring communities. For the purposes of this collection, the area is roughly bounded by Highways 1324 and 839, Rock Spring Road, and Tom Ward Road. The area includes several branches of the Nobob Creek.

The History

The Nobob community had its beginnings before the state of Kentucky was officially recognized. Until 1792 all of Kentucky, including the Nobob area, was under the political jurisdiction of the state of Virginia. By the time Kentucky became a state in 1792, a log schoolhouse had already been erected on the banks of the Nobob creek.\(^3\) C. Clayton Simmons, a

\(^{1}\)Clorine Lawson and Ina Jones, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, March 8, 1978.

\(^{2}\)John Robert Miller, interview at Glasgow, Kentucky, November, 1978; Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden, 15 December 1980.

\(^{3}\)The Edmonton Herald-News, 16 October 1969.
local historian, places some of the earliest settlers arriving in the period between 1795 to 1805.\textsuperscript{1} Simmons indicates that some of the original Nobob settlers came from a German colony in Virginia, which was called Germanna.\textsuperscript{2} An examination of the 1820 census for Barren County shows a predominance of names that appear to be British or German.\textsuperscript{3} According to Corin, there was much communication between Nobob and Edmonton, named for Edmond Rogers, who surveyed much of the area.

\ldots These two neighborhoods, No Bob and Edmonton, from relationship and other causes, affiliated, visited, and associated more together than any other neighborhoods in the county. They had frequent social and dancing parties. The older ones would dance the old Virginia jigs and reels to the great admiration of the younger portion of the company, while the latter delighted in the light fantastic toe.\textsuperscript{4}

In the early 1800's both water and horsepowered mills were built in the Nobob area. Such facilities were one of the first essentials to any community which hoped to survive for any length of time. One of the earliest mills built in the area was built by John Counts. This mill's function was not to grind meal, but to manufacture gunpowder from the raw material provided by nearby Salt Peter Cave.\textsuperscript{5} A horsepowered

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}C. Clayton Simmons, pp. 105-108.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 108.
\item \textsuperscript{3}By the designation "British" I am including Scotland and Ireland. The 1820, 1830, and 1840 census are simply head counts which do not break down any further geographically than the county itself. The 1850 census was the first census that broke the county down into districts and indicates place of birth. Most Barren County residents were, by this time, however, second generation Americans, or even second generation Kentuckians, leaving surnames as the only tenuous clue to cultural heritage.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Gorin, p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Gorin, p. 25; The Glasgow Times, "Old Water Mills," n. d.
\end{itemize}
mill was run by Henry Baldock's grandfather near Nobob about 1835.¹
Later mills used diesel engines for their power if they were not located on the creek where water power was available. A diesel mill of this sort was run by Vern Berryman as late as 1945.² A tanning yard run by Thomas Bell existed at Nobob as early as 1813.³

During the Civil War, the Nobob area was a pocket of Union resistance in an area that was dominated by Confederate supporters.⁴ "I've heard it talked and told," said Glen Berryman, "that there was brothers against brothers and maybe sons against their daddies, and the state of Kentucky was divided."⁵ Clorine Lawson points to various members on both sides of her family that fought for either the Union or the Confederacy. Bobby Lawson's grandfather and great grandfather fought on opposite sides of the conflict, father and son opposing one another.⁶

From the time of the Civil War, the shifting of major roads has played a large part in the history of Nobob, just as the coming of the railroad in the growing western states boosted or destroyed the fortunes of frontier towns. This shifting can at least partially explain Nobob's present state of commercial inactivity. C. Clayton Simmons describes the first road that connected Glasgow to Tompkinsville:

¹Clorine Lawson, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, March 25, 1978. In the previously cited article titled, "Old Water Mills," mention is made of a horsepowered mill being established "eighty years ago" by Andy Quigley.
³Ibid. She cites a letter to Thomas Bell dated February 21, 1978.
⁴James Simmons, interview at Glasgow, Kentucky, February, 1978.
⁵Glen Berryman, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, April 4, 1978.
The first road from Glasgow to Tompkinsville followed the Burkesville Road to a point just east of Fallen Timber Creek. From this point the present home of Buell Chenowith—it followed almost a direct course to Oak Grove Church in the edge of Monroe county. It passed the home of Isaac Denham where Flava Froedge now lives, then by Thomas Bell's tan yard, the present home of Ernest Chapman, near the old church on Frank Kingrey's farm intersecting the present road a point locally known as "The Boot Jack" where John Kingrey now resides.2

For the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to the above described route, which approximates the roadbed of the present Highway 839 running through the townsite of Nobob, as the eastern route. A second route, which traveled roughly the same region as the present Highway 1324 from the Monroe County line northwest through Logan's Crossroads,3 Temple Hill, and on to Highway 63, appears on the 1951 USGS map4 labeled route 839 and will be referred to as the western route.

Ruby Smith recalls the existence of an "overnight stay house" on the eastern route at Nobob when she was a schoolgirl in the 1920's. At this time livestock were driven to market at Glasgow on this road, bringing trade to the town of Nobob.5 The eastern route existed from the time of the Civil War.6 About 1920, the road which became the

1 Both the house and Flava Froedge are to be found at this location today. Mr. Froedge is one of the sources for this collection.

2 C. Clayton Simmons, p. 109.

3 The point referred to as Logan's Crossroads is at the junction of Antioch Church Road and Highway 1324, approximately on and a half miles south and slightly west of Nobob.


6 Clorine Lawson, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, April 4, 1978.
present Highway 63 was improved. At the same time, local residents pooled their labor and materials to build a gravel road from Temple Hill to Logan's Crossroads. Highway 63 was then blacktopped in 1930. These changes began a sequence of events which served to isolate Nobob from the mainstream of traffic. In the 1870's Franklin Gorin reports that Nobob was a town of seventy-five inhabitants, while Temple Hill had about forty inhabitants. The present size relationship between these two towns is greatly reversed.

In addition to the improvements in Highway 63 itself, bridges were in existence along Highway 63 from the early 1900's. On the eastern route, bridges were not built across the Nobob and Glover's Creeks until the late 1940's. Even these bridges, reports Clorine Lawson, were inadequate during a "big tide." A covered bridge, constructed on the western route at the Nobob Creek in the early 1920's, further encouraged traffic to route itself northwest from what is today the junction of Highways 839 and 1324 and away from Nobob.

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1 Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden 15 December 1980.
2 Clorine Lawson, April 4, 1978. Hobart Wilburn also mentioned a cooperative road building effort, but did not specify the time or place.
3 John Robert Miller, interview at Glasgow, Kentucky, November 1, 1978.
4 Gorin, p. 99.
5 Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden, 15 December 1980.
6 Ibid. Clorine's daughter, Nadine Lawson Lowe, said she could remember having to ford these creeks.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
Taken from: USGS topographical map, Freedom, Kentucky Quadrant, 1953. The map shows the route of highway 839, beginning at the extreme southeast corner of the map, as it appeared in the 1950's.
Taken from: General Highway Map, Barren County, Kentucky. Kentucky Department of Transportation, 1977. The map shows the present route of Highway 839.
Political considerations reinforced the western route in the 1950's. Though Highway 839 was completed in Monroe County in the late 1950's, Highway 1324 was placed on the Barren County agenda before Highway 839 and was built in the early 1950's.\(^1\) Highway 839 was a dirt road until 1954 or 1955,\(^2\) and the section running through Nobob was not black-topped until 1963,\(^3\) probably as a result of the interest in oil prospecting near Nobob during the 1960's.

As the roads in the Nobob area provided one important means of communication, the importance of the post office at Nobob is also suggested by the prominence given it by some Nobob residents in their narratives.\(^4\) Until 1927, when postal operations for Nobob were moved to Summer Shade, Nobob had its own post office, which in different periods was run by Mrs. Horace Smith and Mandy Borders.\(^5\) In addition to the official post office at Nobob, an unofficial post office existed at Logan's Crossroads during the first decade of this century.\(^6\) The

\(^1\) Ibid.; John Robert Miller, November, 1978. Clorine dates the construction at "about 1950." The 1951 USGS map previously cited would suggest that construction took place after 1951, as the approximate route for Highway 1324 still appears on this map labeled Route 839. John Robert Miller says Highways 1324 and 839 were built within about a year of each other. Both Clorine and John Robert refer to political considerations having affected road construction in the Nobob area.


\(^3\) Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden, 15 December 1980.

\(^4\) Creed Berryman, Kenneth Smith, Hobart Wilburn, Clorine Lawson, Ina Jones.


\(^6\) Clorine Lawson, Ina Jones, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, April 4, 1978.
arrangement for the post office at Logan's Crossroads was that whoever happened to arrive at the Nobob post office first took the mail for Logan's Crossroads on down the road to the store there where it was deposited in cubby holes similar to the official post office.\textsuperscript{1} Clorine Lawson still keeps a postcard which bears an unofficial Logan's Crossroads address.

Gorin describes Nobob in the 1870's as "two stores, one doctor, two blacksmith shops, one wagon maker, one steam saw mill and grist mill, one carding factory, one tobacco warehouse, [and] one saddle and harness shop."\textsuperscript{2} Four stores have existed at Nobob at various times. R. Henry Miller told me that there have been one or more stores at Nobob since about 1890.\textsuperscript{3} The first store Mr. Miller remembers was on the west side of the road through Nobob. It was run by a Mr. Oliver. Oliver's successor sold the store to a Mr. Baxter, who in turn ran the store for several years and sold it to Turner Gregory.\textsuperscript{4} Clorine Lawson drew a map of how her sources have remembered Nobob and its businesses from about 1910 on. The map is reproduced on the following page. Two of the store buildings are still standing.\textsuperscript{5} One, the store owned by Horace Smith, is now a cabinet shop. The general store in that building was closed when Kenneth Smith joined the armed forces during World War II, and could no longer help run it. The Smith store building still bears

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Gorin, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{3}R. Henry Miller, interview at Ritter's Mill, November, 1978.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.; Kenneth Smith, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, April 4, 1978.
the conical shaped bullet marks in its south side which it received during the Fate Billingsley fight (1-6). 1 The other store building still standing was used as a store from about 1956 to 1974, when Vern Berryman, its owner, died. 2 Vern's store had previously been housed in the building immediately to the north, where Vern Berryman also ran a black-smith shop from 1945 to about 1956. 3

An axe handle factory operated at Nobob about 1900 but it was quickly moved to another location about 1901. 4 Another wood related industry, a barrel stave mill, was in operation about 1934 or 1935 at Logan's Crossroads. 5 The axe handle factory and the stave mill were complemented by the logging industry in the area. Poplar, white oak, beech, and walnut have all at one time been cut in the Nobob vicinity. 6 Though Clorine Lawson says much of the logging was done before her time, she and her husband sold timber off of their land as late as 1953. 7

"This country here used to be the finest timber," claimed Glen Berryman,

1 Kenneth Smith, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, March 29, 1978.
2 Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden, 15 December 1980.
3 Ibid.
4 Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978; Clorine Lawson, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, March 8, 1978. She cites O. C. Miller, the owner of the factory as her source for the dates. Others have told her that the factory was established about 1880.
remembering poplar logs so large that they had to be sawed in half in order to be hauled to the mill. 1

Nobob's timber resources provided a common means of income supplement, according to R. Henry Miller, who told me that, "Everybody around here hauled logs." 2 The reader will find that one of the strongman legends in this collection tells of how Noah Spears hewed and hauled railroad ties for fifty cents a tie (1-9). Standing in testimony to the fine timber once found in the Nobob area is a living monument fifteen feet in circumference behind the Lawson's home--a massive white oak that cannot be circumscribed by even two men's outstretched arms. An imposing feature on the landscape, this oak perpetuates its place in the oral tradition of Nobob as Clorine tells of the lock of hair imbedded in its trunk (1-15).

The people of Nobob endured and were not broken by the Depression. Of the four banks at Glasgow, only two survived the Depression. 3 Some of the banks only paid back a percentage of the depositor's money, if any. 4 If one did manage to salvage any money from the bank closings or manage to escape them altogether, one alternative to re-investing in the banks was the Postal Savings Bank. 5 The program paid a two-percent

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1 Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.
4 Gladys Pace, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, March 2, 1978.
The improvised schoolbus that transported Nobob teenagers to high school at Temple Hill in the 1930s. In the row standing, at extreme right, is Gladys Pace.
interest, according to Bobby Lawson, who saw it as a welcome alternative to the failing commercial banks.¹

Unlike the popular television conception of the Depression-weary John Walton heading for the county seat to look for work when the times got bad, there simply were no factory jobs in the towns near Nobob.² There were no dissenting opinions to challenge this assertion. The reverse of the popular notion seems to have been the norm. John Robert Miller noted that some people who had gone to large cities, such as Detroit, were forced to return to the Nobob area from lack of work in the northern cities.³ He further stated that because of the low wages in the Nobob area, some of these same people drifted back north when the nation's economy began to stabilize.

Wages on the farm were low. The highest figure mentioned was one dollar a day.⁴ The lowest figure mentioned was fifty cents a day.⁵ The most commonly mentioned figure seems to have been about fifty to sixty cents a day.⁶ Though many people may have considered themselves fortunate to earn a dollar a day, and may have considered it a "high" wage in relation to the economic realities of the time, the relative

¹Bobby Lawson, March 8, 1978.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Creed Berryman, interview at Nobob, Kentucky, March 29, 1978.
power of that wage to provide a standard of living would still be considered low by today's standards.

Income from the produce of the farms was also low. Tobacco sold for thirty and forty cents a pound until after World War II.\(^1\) Eggs sometimes sold for six cents a dozen.\(^2\) Eggs, milk products, and chickens, it must be remembered, were some of the continuing sources of income that provided the day-to-day goods for which the family had to barter or pay cash. The income from the tobacco sales occurred only once a year at the fall tobacco market.

With the banks closed and very little in the way of non-agricultural jobs in the area, there was very little money circulating. Kenneth Smith, who helped his parents operate one of the stores in Nobob during the Depression, notes that everyone was in the same boat as far as money was concerned, yet people were honest and paid off their debts at the store.\(^3\) Kenneth explained that "due bills\(^4\) were used at his store. People who had no money traded eggs and chickens, receiving due bills for the goods they traded. The due bills were then traded later at the store for supplies that were needed.

The year 1936 added to the economic troubles of the area. Mrs. Pace recalls that because it didn't rain early enough in 1936, holes in which to plant tobacco were dug with a hoe into dry earth.\(^5\) Normally

\(^1\) Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.
\(^3\) Kenneth Smith, March 29, 1978.
\(^4\) A form a scrip which promised payment in goods for goods received.
\(^5\) Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.
the tobacco setting would wait until after the first rain of the season made the earth soft.  

There were two factors that were mentioned in connection with the economic recovery of the area: 1) the beginning of a milk route in the area during the mid 1930's, which eased the shortage of cash for short-term expenses, such as household supplies; and 2) the introduction of fescue grass, which curtailed the erosion of the land.

Another thing that has changed the farming situation here in Kentucky is fescue. It used to be—when you'd go through the country you never did see any green fields with fescue like you do now. And you could see all kinds of big gulleys washed out through this country. You don't see them like you used to. You'd be surprised at the difference in how this country looked than when Bobby and I first married.

The land was the key to surviving the Depression. With the exception of the tenant farmers, the people in the Nobob area still owned the land they farmed. "There'd be weeks you wouldn't earn a nickel; but we had plenty to eat," was the succinct summation of the situation offered by Glen Berryman. "We could grow what we ate," was a statement that was echoed and paraphrased by several sources. Though there was enough food to eat, the Depression made life difficult all the way through the mid to late 1930's, sometimes giving cause to keep watch on the smoke-

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1 Ibid.
4 Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.
house, fruit cellar, or watermelon patch. Though the Depression presented the people of Nobob with a major hardship, it perhaps did not present a critical threat. ¹ Creed Berryman, whose family rented land, marveled at one point that he and his neighbors made it through the Depression, then also stated that life went along just the same. There just wasn't any money. ²

Farming in the Nobob area underwent changes after World War II, with the continued use of fescue and the use of tractors to do the work of horse and mule teams. Clorine listed the farm implements her husband owned in 1937, when they began farming, as a brand new wagon, a team of horses, a double shovel plow, perhaps another plow or two, and a harrow. ³ Through the 1930's the tobacco was "set out" or planted by hand, a task that is presently accomplished with tractor-drawn mechanical setters. ⁴

One of the last tasks for which teams were used was the harvesting of corn. Manually harvesting corn required that the harvester move the farm wagon ahead a few feet at a time as he walked alongside of it, pulling the corn from the stalk and throwing it into the wagon. This could be accomplished with verbal commands to the teams without mounting and dismounting the wagon. It was, of course impossible to train a tractor to respond to verbal commands, such as "Whoah!" ⁵


⁴ Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.

Tenancy does not have the same meaning today as it did in the 1920's and 1930's. It implied a certain amount of poverty and dependency in earlier times, when the tenants made only fifty to one hundred dollars a year.¹ Sometimes the tenant would hire out for extra work.² Nearly every landowner had a tenant on his farm,³ and housing was provided by the landowner.⁴ The tenants were given corn to make their meal and were allowed to raise a garden in addition to some tobacco for themselves.⁵ Though the tenants were not well paid, no one was during the 1930's. None of the sources who were asked reported that any of the tenants were abused. There were, however, two narratives, one of which is included in this collection (2-15), which told of employers gambling with their hired help to win back the earnings of the previous week.

Tenancy no longer presupposed the dependent kind of relationship it once did. The landowner does not necessarily provide housing for the tenant today; and the tenant may be a landowner in his own right, who is simply renting land to add to his crop holdings.⁶

Along with its farmland and timber resources, the Nobob area has also received some income from its mineral resources. An oil strike at Sulphur Lick, to the southeast of Nobob, attracted oil prospectors to the Nobob area in the 1960's. The prospecting produced a great deal of

²Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.
⁵Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.
excitement, if very little oil.¹ Most of whatever money was made from
the interest in the mineral resources of the area came in the form of
oil leases on land owned by the residents of the area. Some natural gas
was tapped and used to heat homes in the Nobob area.²

As I talked with the residents of Nobob about their history and
about the people who have lived there, one of the first questions I
asked each source was, "What's the most important thing that ever hap-
pened here?" The answers can be found following this page. Each one of
the sources for this collection witnessed important changes in their own
lives and in the community. Each source sees different images of the
past and its inhabitants. People who lived and worked in the Nobob area,
giving the region its character, are remembered in these narratives
decades and as much as 150 years after their deaths. These narratives
are more testimony to the existence and vitality of the past residents
of Nobob than ever any granite stone was. The individual images of commu-
nity change and of the people who lived in the community are embodied in
the following narratives. That is why the following pages are important
both to you as the reader and to the people of Nobob.

Some of the sources expressed surprise at the thought of anything
important ever happening at Nobob, Kentucky, and required a small amount
of coaxing to give thought to the notion. I find it hard not to imagine
their turning the next page while I stifle a gentle ... ever so gentle
... "I told you so."

¹Clorine Lawson, March 25, 1978; R. Henry Miller, November, 1978;
Ina Jones, March 25, 1978; Bobby Lawson, March 25, 1978; Flava Froedge,

"That's a true story."

1. LEGENDS
1-1 HOW NOBOB GOT ITS NAME


This place name legend is perhaps the best known story in the area. I do not recall having met anyone near Nobob who was not familiar with it. On several occasions, the legend was volunteered early in the interview before I made my knowledge of the story known.

The town of Nobob was once known as 'Flathead,' and some of the residents of the generations past, such as the Kingreys and Ina Jones' uncles, knew it by that name. Clorine Lawson states that the town was called Nobob since the time a post office was established there.

Aside from a healthy existence in oral tradition, the legend is kept prominent in the minds of the residents of the area through the print medium. It appeared in Allen Trout's column in the Louisville Courier-Journal, according to Ruby Smith, who told me that a traveling salesman had copied it down and sent it to Trout. On more than one occasion, the legend has appeared in the Glasgow newspaper anniversary edition. One such edition was published during the time I spent gathering this collection and influenced at least one of the versions collected here, that of Creed Berryman. Three versions of the tale are deposited in the WKUFFHOA.
An almost identical story is told with the setting of the Nolin River in the Mammoth Cave area of Kentucky, about sixty miles to the northwest of Nobob. The Nolin River version concerns a man named Lynn. Gordon Wilson's note to this narrative closes with a reference to the Barren County version and the speculation that, "Maybe Bob got lost, too."

Apparently so.


CLORINE Well, this man--everybody says--I've had several stories about who this man was. He was supposed to have been among the surveyors, which he was, so this lady told me. Now the one --I've got it here how she's related to him. She was a relative of the surveyor, Edmond Rogers. And Edmond Rogers is the one that surveyed a lot of land through here, along about--it must have been around 1800, or maybe even a little bit before. Let's see here. Anyway, she had a flower shop over here. Mrs. Perry Coffman was her name. And she told me that her mother was Lula Rogers, the granddaughter of Edmond Rogers. So she's the one that told me that a person named Bob was a slave of Edmond Rogers. And he was left here at the camp as a cook. And of course, the surveyors, when they come in he was gone one day. And every time they'd come back in the camp at night, they'd say, 'Well, no Bob yet.' So they called it Nobob.

KEITH Have you ever heard anybody describe it as a hunting party instead of a surveying party?

CLORINE Well, yes, I've heard people describe it as that, but they were just people that--you don't know whether they were reliable or not. Of course, I don't know how reliable this woman was, but I do--since she was a descendent of--I would come near believing that her story is more likely to be correct. But whether it is or not, I don't know.

1-1(b) Ruby Smith, February 25, 1978.

RUBY The story goes that a group of surveyors were surveying in this area, and camping here on Nobob Creek, and while--they left a man named Bob to take care of the camp, you know, and do the cooking for them. And they were out and when they came
in one night, he was gone. And they searched for him for two or three days. They assumed that he must have been captured by the Indians, or wild animals. Something happened to him; he disappeared, and so each night, when they'd come in they'd say, 'No Bob,' you know. They couldn't find him. 'No Bob yet!'

1-1(c) Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN There was surveyors through this country, you know, when they first begin to settle. And they had a camp down here about where Nobob's at.

KEITH Where did they camp?

GLEN Down along the creek, there, someplace. And they'd get out and send a bunch here and there and all around and over the neighborhood, you see. Well, this one guy, he come up missing, and they'd get out and hunt all day and come in in the afternoon. His name was Bob. They'd say, 'No Bob.'


JOHN There was a guy named—his first name was Robert, and I can't think of his last name. And they—he was called Bob. And they—he disappeared. And of course they—he was a bachelor. And the other people in the area got concerned and started to looking for him. And so they got a search party, and they came and each day they'd come back and they'd say, 'Well, did you find him? and they'd say, 'No Bob.' And so that was the way that the name got started for Nobob was that every time they'd come back, they'd say, 'Did you find him? They'd say, 'No Bob.'


HOBART Well, they was camping down here, see. And I think there was seven or eight. I'm not sure. They was camping down there on that creek. That was back years ago. And they would go out in the daytime, and I suppose they'd—you know, they'd look for stuff and everything, and they come in at night, one of their men was missing. And his name was Bob. And they kept hunting for him, and they couldn't find him. They'd go every day and when they come back in to the camp, they'd say, 'No Bob yet.' That's the way they called it. They meant, you
know, that they hadn't found him, said, 'No Bob yet.' And that's the way that Nobob got its name. They were close to this creek, and when they left, or whatever it might be, they named that little place down there Nobob Creek. That's Nobob Creek, and that's where it got its name. They were there, these men, on--at that creek.


KENNETH One way was that this boy that was named Bob fell in the creek out here, see, when it was up, and drowned. And of course they never did find his body. I've heard that. That's the least authentic, I think. In other words--and they'd go out and hunt for him and they couldn't find him, and they'd come in at night, see. . . . They'd say, 'No Bob.' No Bob.

1-1(g) Creed Berryman, March 29, 1978.

CREED Well, there was an Indian lost, and his name was Bob. And he didn't--went out hunting, I suppose, and didn't come in. So the next day they started a hunting trip, and they took off on different branches of this little creek. Well, when they met, why everybody come up, 'No Bob.' So they named the creek Nobob.


INA The reason they called it Nobob then was because this man was lost. They couldn't find him, and they searched for him during the day, and they come in at night and said, 'No Bob yet.'

1-1(i) Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.

GLADYS I always heard that there was a boy lost and his name was Bob, and they never could find him. They didn't know what happened to him. Every time when someone came back in after they were looking for him, they'd say, 'No Bob.' And they more or less changed it from Flathead to Nobob.

JAMES The original survey, the Revolutionary survey party came through here--Edmond Rogers, that Edmonton was named for--of course he came back and settled. He was a Revolutionary soldier himself, and he came here. And he explored that area out there. And they had a hunter, or a cook, one. I don't know which it was. It's hard to say. But they had a hunter, or a cook, one, out there, whose name was Bob--probably both. He came back from surveying, and Bob was missing, and . . . looked for him, and there was no Bob.


FLAVA I've heard them tell. I don't know whether there's anything about it. They said this fella got lost over there once, and they hunted all night for him, and they said, 'No Bob tonight.' And they said they named the town after that. So I don't know. That was back before my time.


HENRY There used to be a man started from Nobob and he got drowned, and they hunted for him, and they couldn't find him, and when they come back, then they'd always say, 'No Bob.' Then they named the community Nobob.

1-2 HOW FLATHEAD GOT ITS NAME


The legends explaining the name "Flathead" are not as well known as the Nobob place name legend, but are more varied. There is some suggestion that there may have been separate, but adjacent communities named Flathead and Nobob. An early map of Sartain precinct prints both the names Nobob and Flathead close together, and Flava Froedge's comments concerning Flathead and Nobob suggest two townsites. The majority opinion, however, seems to be that Flathead is simply another earlier
name, or a nickname for Nobob. Flava remarked that it was the first
time in fifty years he'd heard the community called Flathead.

The incident of the explosion of the powder mill is mentioned
by Gorin, who dates it at about 1811 or 1812, but he does not use it as
an explanation for the name "Flathead." Mr. Wilburn's narrative differs
from others here presented, in that he is not so much explaining the
origin of the name as substantiating his statement that Flathead was
a joking nickname for Nobob.

1-2(a) James Simmons, February, 1978.

JAMES There used to be at one time, supposedly there was a man
who manufactured powder, gunpowder somewhere on Flathead Creek.

KEITH Flathead Creek?

JAMES Flathead Creek, yeah. That's what they used to call Nobob,
see. They called it Nobob Creek [or] Flathead Creek. Nobob
and Flathead's all the same. But anyway, supposedly this pow-
der factory blew up. Of course it was a small operation. It
blew up and flattened his head. Now that's one thing. But
another thing is the rocks--the big flat rocks around here.
They call those flathead rocks, too. So that's probably what
it was.


CLORINE They had a powder mill along Nobob Creek somewhere. Now
where that powder mill was, I don't know exactly. You see
Nobob goes down here just about--it's not over two miles before
it runs into Skaggs' Creek. Well, down on Skaggs' Creek, they
had this Salt Peter Cave, and during the War of 1812, I
believe it was, they got salt peter from that and had a powder
mill, they said, on--around somewhere on Nobob Creek. But
now, I just don't know exactly where it was. But anyway, some
people tell me that the reason this place was called Flat-
head was because the mill blew up and it blew some people's
heads flat.

KEITH Oh!
CLORINE Now that's one of the stories that I've heard.

INA My mom told me one time, I don't know when it was... We lived at Rock Bridge. We got down to Nobob. I'd never seen Nobob. She says, 'Now that's Flathead. They call that Flathead. And she said—I understood her to say that there was a Negro around there, and a log rolled over him, and mashed him flat.

KEITH I've never heard that story.

INA And that's why they called it Flathead.

CLORINE Well, now, that may be true, too, or something on that order, but anyway, then Uncle Dexter Jones told me that the reason it was called Flathead was because there was some man in the early part of the settlement of it that had an awfully odd shaped head, and it was kind of flat. And they called it Flathead because of him.

1-2(c) Hobart Wilburn, November, 1978.

KEITH Some people have said that it was called Flathead. Do you know anything about that?

HOBART That was a nickname.

KEITH That was a nickname for it?

HOBART Yeah, that was on up above Nobob. They called that Flathead.

KEITH Were there two different townsites?

HOBART You know, just more houses along up there. Somebody give it that nickname just—you know, for onriness; just to have fun. And they called it Flathead.

KEITH Did they ever tell why they called it Flathead?

HOBART No, I don't think they ever did.

HOBART [returning later to the same topic] Jim Rich and Sam lived back of Nobob over there, in a little house, and Uncle Bruce—that was their brother, too—Bruce Rich. This Jim, he raised tobacco there, anyway, he had some tobacco, and they asked him where he wanted them to send his check. 'Aw,' he said, 'Just send it to Flathead, Kentucky,' he said, 'I'll get it.' And they used to have a post office that was up there for several years above Nobob.
1-3 HOW LOGAN'S CROSSROADS GOT ITS NAME

Clorine Lawson, April 4, 1978. The intersection referred to as Logan's Crossroads is approximately one and one-half miles to the west of the Lawson's home. Antioch Church still marks the location.

So I went up to see him [Bill Reagan] not too long ago, and I asked him, 'Do you remember how Logan's Crossroads got its name?' And he said "Yes." Said that he'd heard that there was a colored man named Logan, and they hung him on a pear tree out there between the crossroads and where Antioch Church house stands. But it was back before his time, and that's what he'd heard.

Then I mentioned that to Bobby's brother that's older than Bobby is, and he said, well, he remembered now, after that that there was a colored man named Logan that--said, "He'd steal everything he could get his hands on," is what he heard. So I don't know whether he was stealing all that stuff was the reason they hung him, or what happened. Now, that's what they told me, and that's all I know about it.

1-4 HUFFMAN'S HILL

This narrative preserves one piece of historical fact that was pointed up by James Simmons. Nobob and its immediate area was a pocket of Union resistance during the Civil War, surrounded by Confederate territory. The Confederates had no intention of tolerating a Union camp in what was essentially their territory, and the fighting was accordingly bitter. The hill is called Huffman's Hill because it stands on land once owned by the Huffman family.

Many times I passed the hill a couple of miles north of Nobob described in these narratives. The cliff would indeed have lent itself to the kind of stampede described here.
That was back up—it was right very near Union Number Two where that big bluff over Glover's Creek, there is. And they camped. They had Camp Joe Underwood. And they were drilling there, and had tents and things—those lean-to's and things set up. And on the twenty-fourth day of October, 1861, there was a unit sent from Cave City. They had a whole regiment of mounted infantry, and two companies of cavalry and a piece of artillery. They really wanted it bad, you know. And they attacked it. They had marched all night long, there on the twenty-third. They marched all night long. And they attacked at dawn. Everybody was still asleep, except the sentries, of course. Mass confusion, and the thing they did; they charged through there, you know, on horses, instead of getting off and surrounding the place. They didn't reconnoiter, and they didn't know the big bluff was there. And of course it thrilled some of them going off that big bluff, you know, what with horses off that big high bluff. Everybody was supposed to have been killed.

Was this a Confederate unit that...

It was a Confederate unit that attacked, uh huh [affirmative].

James Simmons might have told you about that. He—during the war—Civil War. He’s written something about a skirmish or something that was on the Huffman Hill out here. Now he...

Where was the Huffman Hill?

As you go on 839, now, as you get past Union Church. You remember a church building that set on the left. You start down the long hill, you know. I told you about the hill. You get to Flava Froedge’s. It’s that hill. Look up on your left, and there’s blackberry briars there. And that’s where he writes about—something about during the Civil War.

Union Number Two refers to a church house north of Nobob. The designation "union," according to Mr. Simmons, comes from the fact that the building was used by more than one denomination.

CLORINE  And there at Huffman Hill--John Kingrey was the one that was telling me about it--down here at this Huffman Hill.

KEITH  Yeah.

CLORINE  Right above Glover’s Creek, there, there’s a hill that kind of just comes out--you know, it’s just surrounded there. And they said that one night that there was some soldiers encamped up there. They had a skirmish up there on that Huffman Hill and the men scattered. Albert Baldock was wounded. And there was two or three Confederates killed, is what they claim. And John Kingrey said that Matt Payne was in the group at Huffman Hill. And he reported that Kit Denham shot a rebel there. And I don’t know, now, just exactly who it was, but anyway, they said that he’d killed one, and some women went down and discovered them there, I think, close to a spring. That’s what he told me. But I don’t know just exactly where it was, but it was between here and Glover’s Creek.

1-4(d) Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN  I can’t tell you much about it. I know of one old man got shot there that day.

KEITH  What happened?

GLEN  He just stepped out and fired at him and run, and he run over there and got under that--Flava Froedge’s house, first big old house across the creek. And some of the soldiers, they run over there and shot him in the leg, I think.

KEITH  Who was he?

GLEN  Old man Albert Baldock.

KEITH  Was that Henry Baldock?

GLEN  Henry Baldock’s dad.


CREED  They told about one place where they were--and that’s here
KENNETH    Glover's Creek, you know where Glover's Creek; you know they was supposed to have had a battle on that hill there, you know.

KEITH     They call that Huffman's Hill?

CREED     Huffman's Hill, that's right.

KEITH     Well, now, is that right over there by Union Number Two?

CREED     Just after you come from Flavy's, just as quick as you cross the creek from Flavy's. Have you been to Flavy's house?

KEITH     Yeah.

CREED     Well, just after you cross the creek coming this way, coming up that hill. You might not have noticed it, but there's a big high Bluff, down the creek, like, and that's Huffman's Hill.

KEITH     It's like a bluff?

KENNETH     They had a battle over that hill.

1-5  ROB BORDERS' DEATH

Motifs:  D1814.2 Advice from a dream. (Cross)
        E367.1 Person returns from the otherworld to preach rewards of heaven and the pains of hell. (Cross)
        E723.6.1(c) Wraith appears to person in bedroom. (Baughman)
        V511.2.1 Vision of the fires of hell. (Cross)

The story of Rob Borders' death is a well known story in the Nobob area. Howard Wiley recalled that Rob's full name was William Robin Borders, and that for a joke he was sometimes called William Robin "Redbreast" Borders. Mention of Rob's name or an oblique reference to the event recounted here will almost always bring recognition among the residents of Nobob. Each of the tellers brings a unique detail to the story, completing part of the whole. The narrative provided by Glen and Sophie Berryman illustrates the situation of two narrators feeding on each other's performance and acting in concert to supply detail and accuracy to the narration.
The incident in which Clorine's uncle claimed to have seen Rob Borders in the flames of hell resembles motifs from Irish tradition related by Cross. The wraith incident seems to form something of a kernel of traditional oral literature within the larger narrative. The motif of the wraith appearing to a person in his bedroom is reported in England, New England, and Maryland, but is not reported by Baughman anywhere in the south.

The narrative concerning Rob Borders is generically complex, containing not only elements of legend and personal experience narrative but also elements of memorat, or the recounting of supernatural encounters, and exempla, didactic stories which feature a good or bad role model and relate their appropriate fate. The characteristics of exempla show most clearly in Clorine's recounting of how Fish Kingrey uttered a prophetic warning to Rob. The characteristics of memorat also show in Clorine's narrative as she tells of her uncle's encounter with the vision of Rob Borders in hell.

Rob Borders was born in 1856, and his death occurred on February seventh, 1914, before Clorine Lawson was born. As younger tellers, such as Clorine, begin to recount the story as it was told to them by others, the narrative begins to cross the line between personal experience story and legend. Other tellers, such as R. Henry Miller, can state that they knew Rob Borders and were alive when his death occurred. During this transitional period between those who recount the story from first-hand experience or close association and later tellers who retain the story in local tradition, certain details become selected

1 Clorine Lawson to Keith Ludden 15 December 1980.
and imbedded in the folk memory. Details such as the carpentry work at the store, Borders' drunkenness, and the position in which the body was discovered are found in similar forms across several versions.

Đêgh asserts that the greater the popularity of a legend within a group, the more functional it becomes.1 Perhaps the inverse is true here. The legend may have survived because of its usefulness as a moral lesson. Does a narrative acquire functions because it survives on an aesthetic basis, or does it survive in tradition because it has acquired a function? My feeling is that the usefulness of this narrative as a moral lesson is too great to discount moral function as a significant influence on the narrative's survival. Clorine's version was the first version I recorded. She says Fish and Abe Kingrey were the major sources for her version.


CLORINE Well, there's another thing that I've heard them talk about how a lot of people in the community were really scared, especially the younger people in the community, and that was the time Rob Borders froze to death.

KEITH He froze to death?

CLORINE Yes, he froze to death. He had been working on a--helping work on a store, I believe, over where--Paul Crabtree's store, now. He got drunk and he started home. Well, he got drunk, is what it was. He got drunk, and he got so drunk he couldn't work and they just told him to go on home. And he lived right up here, right above Nobob. And on the way home he got down and--close to Poplar Grove School--and froze to death.

At first they didn't know what had happened to him. In fact his wife didn't know he was really missing. There came a big snowstorm that night. And she just thought he'd stayed

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1Đêgh, "The 'Belief Legend' in Modern Society," p. 62.
over there that night; but then the next night he still didn't come in, so she went to inquiring around to find out about him, and found out he was missing. And well, of course, they alarmed the neighborhood, with the telephone system and all. And I've heard--Fish Kingrey and Abe Kingrey are the ones who were telling me about it, probably. And they said she was just scared so bad as she'd hear them talking on the telephone about how he was missing; didn't know what happened to him.

So they finally found him, and he was over there, about halfway covered up with snow. Down close to a log, I believe they said. They said what his trouble was, he had a hernia, a rupture, and whenever it would come out of place, he just couldn't get around; couldn't go. And of course, being drunk, too; he just got down and couldn't go. He just froze to death.

KEITH And the alcohol would have made it worse.

CLORINE Then my uncle was telling me about it one time, and his name was Walter Jones. He said that the night before he found out that Rob Borders was missing at all, he said he was dreaming. He said he woke up in the night, and said that he saw Rob Borders in the flames of hell.

KEITH Oh!

CLORINE And he [Rob] said, 'Just think. This is forever!' Said that's what he heard him say. And so he really thought he saw that; that he had the awfullest, saddest feeling before they ever found out about Rob Borders. Said he just knew that's what happened to him.


CLORINE My uncle that was telling me about this, he said he dreamed it before he knew the man was even missing. And a lot of others have told me that the man, they'd been trying to get him to become a Christian all this time, and trying to get him to quit drinking. And Mr. Fish Kingrey told me--he said that the last time he helped him in home when he found him down drunk; he carried him home, and said, 'Now, this is the last time I'm bringing you in home.' And he said it was the last time, because he froze to death.

1Mrs. Lawson refers here to the final paragraph of the immediately preceeding narrative, 1-5(a).
HENRY Rob Borders. He got drunk.

KEITH What happened there?

HENRY He went—laid down. He was up to the other side of the store. He got drunk and laid down beside a log and froze to death. Yeah, that's true. Rob Borders. Knowed him well. He was drinking and he laid down. Got too drunk and fell down, I guess. And just laid down and froze to death. Snow was on the ground. Yeah, that's a true story.

KEITH Clorine was saying about her uncle said he saw him in a dream that night, or something.

HENRY Is that right?

KEITH Did anybody ever say anything about that to you?

HENRY No, I never heard anything about anybody dreaming about it. But they—country people went out hunting for him, you know, and—when he didn't come in at night. And they found him up there at the schoolhouse—next to the schoolhouse beside a log, froze to death. Yeah, I knowed him well. He was a carpenter. He drank all the time.

1-5(d) Glen Berryman, Sophie Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN He was building this store right down here. Do you know where this store is? Down here about three miles?

KEITH No, I don't.

SOPHIE Crabtree's store.

GLEN About halfway between here and Temple Hill? He was a-building that store, wasn't he?

SOPHIE He was building a house, when . . .

GLEN Oh, where—for Atkinson? He was building a house down there, then, across from the road, and there come a big storm and he started home. He lived over here in Stringtown where there's a trailer sits over there, now. His house burnt, there. He started home, coming across—well, there's all woods through there—died. And they got out a-hunting, and found him.

SOPHIE Didn't find him until the next day.
GLEN I know!

SOPHIE And, oh, I was just a kid then, and we was so afraid at this. And they said when they brought him home, that he just sweated like everything--froze to death or something. Thawed him out and said he just sweated like everything!


KENNETH He was out somewhere. Where was it?

CREED Well, he drank a lot. He was at the store down there, Luster's store. And he started home, and he was pretty well full, I guess. I've heard that told different times. I didn't pay that much attention to it, now. I never seen him myself. I guess along about the time that . . .

KENNETH I remember hearing about it.

CREED And he cut his initials. Back, I'd say, twenty-five years ago you couldn't have went into the woods around here but what a big beech tree, or . . .

KENNETH W. R. B.

CREED B. R.?

KENNETH No, W. R. B., wasn't it?

CREED His initials was cut. And I mean they was as nice as you ever seen--was cut in the bark on that. And maybe some of them had been dated back for thirty years. And it'd still show, just as plain as it could be.

KEITH Are any of those trees still around, or are they all gone now?

CREED I wouldn't know where to find one right now. I guess--I doubt if there's any of them around. I guess they'd be hard to find. But he'd have his initials and the date it was cut on. And he started from the store. Crabtree's store, it is now, and had been about two miles, or two miles and a half. And he lived up here in Stringtown, is where he lived. And there was a schoolhouse--Poplar Grove schoolhouse--and he ventured off down in the woods for some reason, or something and they found him sitting by the side of a tree the next day or so, froze to death; setting, backed up against the tree.
HOBART He was working at Poplar Grove, over there at the schoolhouse. He had a way of coming through there. He lived right over here, right above Nobob. Like I told you, Mandy Borders run the post office, see. That was his wife. And he'd come from Poplar Grove, down there. He would cut across them woods, here, and--you know, just say I wanted to go anywhere in the neighborhood. If I was a-walking, I'd cut across a field or anyway to get--to be the closest walk, see. And he was working down there--carpenter work. And he left from down there. I guess he was drinking, I don't know. But anyway he got to the fence, and I think he got hung or something trying to get over the fence. I think he got hung and killed himself.

1-6 THE HODGE-WATT AND BOYD-BILLINGSLEY FIGHTS

Motifs:  
F1096.2 Person lives on with intestines exposed. (Cross)  
F1084.4 Marks of a furious battle left in rock. (Cross)  

References: 'From the Files," Glasgow Daily Times, 22 March 1945.

Two major fights have become a part of Nobob's oral tradition. The first occurred in 1888 between Dimmon Hodge and Henry Watt, in which Watt received a fatal knife wound. Hodge then moved to Indiana and met his end in an accidental drowning. The Glasgow Daily Times reported the incident as follows:

At Nobob they had a big Saturday. Henry Watt was reported probably fatally stabbed by Dimmon Hodge, 18, whom Watt first attacked with a knife. A sort of David and Goliath battle followed, as Hodge was described as "small but fearless" and Watt "A powerful man of 25." Hodge stopped his attack by felling him with a rock, but Watt arose and lunged with his knife. Hodge warded off the blow and then plunged his knife in the antagonist. The blade penetrated the left breast, severing a lung, a condition which the attending doctor pronounced fatal.

The second fight occurred before 1920, involving an argument between Sheriff Boyd and Fate Billingsley over the arrest of another man.

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The sheriff shot Billingsley near the general store. Conical-shaped dents in the wooden siding of the store were shown to me by Kenneth Smith, who said the marks were made by bullets during the Billingsley fight. The building, now used as a cabinet shop, is the same store that was owned by Kenneth's father, Horace.

It is interesting to note that the story may have taken a turn of poetic justice in that Billingsley's first name may have been "Fayette," a name that appears elsewhere in the Billingsley family. The name is, however, pronounced in one syllable, as the word "Fate." Mr. Wilburn seemed to reject the suggestion that the name was not 'Fate." His narrative, the reader will note, combines elements from both fights.

1-6(a) Clorine Lawson, March 8, 1978.

CLORINE Well, I've heard a whole lot about it, but he was killed down here in the--I believe it was the blacksmith shop, 'cause they said that the man--the Hodge boy stabbed him. And when he stabbed him, he was there, and fell down evidently in the blacksmith shop, among the cinders, and it just ripped his abdomen open, and of course his entrails fell out on the ground, and they called the doctor. The doctor came. Well, he went to sewing him up, and it must have been right there, from what they said. And some of them said, 'Well, aren't you going to wash the cinders off?' But he said, 'Aw, it wasn't no matter.' Said, 'He'll be dead in two hours anyway.'

CLORINE ... You were talking about the Watt boy that got stabbed; did they ever tell you what happened to the Hodge boy?1

KEITH I heard something about him going to Indiana.

CLORINE Well, he got drowned in Sugar Creek, up there, is what one of the neighbors told me.

INA In the quicksand?

CLORINE I don't know. He got drowned is all I know.

1 Mrs. Lawson returned to the subject matter later in the interview.
INA Sugar Creek in Indiana had a lot of quicksand in it, and I thought maybe . . .

1-6(b) Kenneth Smith, March 29, 1978.

KENNETH I've heard something about it, but I couldn't tell you much about it. I don't know anything about it.

KEITH Did one of them go to Indiana after that, the one that survived?

KENNETH I don't know which one was killed, or what. I've heard that somebody was shot, and laid out on the counter of the store, see, and died.

KEITH Was that your store?

KENNETH This store here. But that was before we came here, see all that happened.

1-6(c) Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN Hodge killed Watt. And Hodge . . .

SOPHIE You just made Glen think about it.

GLEN He [Hodge] went to Indiana and drowned up there in Sugar Creek just a little while after he arrived there.

1-6(d) Clorine Lawson, March 8, 1978.

CLORINE They were telling about people who used to get killed down at Nobob, way back, years and years ago. Two people have been killed down there.

KEITH How did that happen?

CLORINE Well, one time there was a sheriff was trying to arrest a man and this Fate Billingsley, he tried to intervene, didn't want him to arrest him, so he just tried to stop him, and the sheriff shot him. His name was Fate Billingsley that got shot, killed, and the sheriff's name was a Boyd, they said.

KEITH What was the sheriff's name?
Last name was Boyd.

Boyd?

Uh huh [affirmative] and . . .

When did that happen, about how long ago?¹

I don't really know how long ago now that's been. Now that was probably, oh, early 1900's I guess, just from what they said. At least before 1920, I would think. I really don't know how long ago it's been.

And then, there was another killing there in Nobob.

Oh? I don't think I've heard about that one.

Old man Fayette Billingsley.² Deputy sheriff, or sheriff--I don't know which it was. Anyhow, the sheriff killed him.

What happened there?

Well, he'd arrested a feller; and I think Billingsley, I guess was drinking. He [Billingsley] was going to take him away from him. And he [the sheriff] shot him.

Mr. Smith showed me some dents on the side of the store that were supposed to be from the bullets. Is that the fight that those came from?

Probably was. The other killing, I think that was done with a knife.

There was supposed to have been--this was a long time ago. There was supposed to have been a fight down here at

¹Nadine Lawson Lowe is Mrs. Lawson's daughter.

²It is unclear whether Mr. Berryman's pronunciation uses one or two syllables in the name Fayette.
The Walker cabinet shop, formerly Horace Smith's Store. It was the scene of the Boyd-Billingsley fight.
Plate 17

Bullet mark in Walker cabinet shop
Nobob between Dimmon Hodge and Henry Watt. Did you ever hear people talk about that?

HOBART Yeah, that was--my uncle, Ceph Billingsley married my dad's sister, so I always called them Aunt Betty and Uncle Ceph, see.

Well, Ceph Billingsley's daddy and Hodge, there in Nobob. And of course I can't tell that like it should be told. Anyway, they got into a fuss; a racket there in Nobob. He shot and killed him. Uncle Ceph tells--Fate Billingsley shot and killed him.

KEITH I see. How's that name spelled?

HOBART B-i-double-l-i-n-g-s-l-e-y.

KEITH No, the first name.

HOBART Ceph. Dimmon Hodge and Fate Billingsley.

KEITH Yeah, is it Fayette?

HOBART Now, Dimmon Hodge is the one killed Fate Billingsley, down there at Nobob.

KEITH Was Billingsley's first name Fayette, or was it Fate?

HOBART Fayette Billingsley--Fate, Fate! Yeah, that's the first name. Billingsley was the last name.

KEITH Ken Smith was showing me the marks in the store where that bullet hit, out there.

HOBART Well, I don't--of course I don't remember about that, see.

1-7 THE AWOL SOLDIER IN THE CAVE


CLORINE Didn't she tell you about the man that stayed in there trying to hide out? He was AWOL from the Army and he . . .

KEITH Somebody mentioned that to me, yeah.

CLORINE I believe she told you about it the other time.

INA That was in World War I. That was Jess Wilburn's brother.
CLORINE It was a Wilburn and he contracted pneumonia and--killed
him, because he was out in the cave.

KEITH They found him dead in there?

CLORINE I don't think they found him dead, Mama, did they? I
really don't know.

INA I don't know. I don't know what they done about it. I
don't guess he died in there, because I guess they got him out,
and got . . . . I don't know.

CLORINE I guess some of them brought him food, you know, but I
guess he was just hiding in there, I suppose.

1-7(b) Glen Berryman, Sophie Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN Well, he took pneumonia fever and died.

KEITH He took pneumonia, you said?

GLEN Yeah, they sent for my dad. Some of them come and got
him. Knowed he wouldn't tell anything, you know. He went,
but he was just about dead. He did die.

KEITH Why did they send for your dad?

GLEN Well, they could trust him, you know.

KEITH Were they going to bury him, or was your dad a doctor?

GLEN No, no. He was just a neighbor, you see. They could trust
him, wanted him to come see about him. See, he didn't want
anybody to know he was around the neighborhood. There was a
cave, right up above the house, there where he lived.

SOPHIE He took pneumonia fever and then--what was it; something
happened.

GLEN He took pneumonia fever and died.

KEITH But that's not the cave they call Piercy Cave, is that
right?

GLEN No, that's what they called the MacWebb Cave.
Tale-type: 955C Mr. Fox. (Baughman)


This narrative told by Gladys Pace in October, 1977 is a fragment of the tale known as "Mr. Fox." Mr. Fox is a subtype of the "Robber Bridegroom" tale that was known in Shakespeare's time. Both Halpert and Roberts note Shakespeare's allusion to the Robber Bridegroom tale in Much Ado About Nothing. Halpert prints extensive notes on both the Robber Bridegroom and Mr. Fox tales. Mr. Fox usually includes a rhymed riddle, sometimes a neck riddle, contrived by a condemned or overpowered person, who thus "saves his neck." An example of such a riddle is printed by Mrs. L. L. McDowell:

Riddle me, riddle me right
Where was I last Friday night?
The wind did blow, the trees did shake
To see what a hole the Fox did make

The versions printed by Brewster, Randolph (1944), and Halpert (1941), and McDowell all present the tale as the answer to a riddle, rather than the riddle as part of the tale. Mrs. Pace omits the rhyme altogether and presents the story as historical fact. Mrs. Pace's version turns the tale into legend and, though quite abbreviated, follows the general pattern of the versions printed by Carter, Halpert (1941), Parsons, Halliwell-Phillips, and Redfield, with the exception of the rhymed confrontation and the differing conclusions. Mrs. Pace's narrative ends with the discovery of the suitor's intentions, while the Halliwell-Phillips version, first published in 1849, recounts that the young girl was a victim of seduction, and that having escaped death once, she is murdered when she confronts her suitor with the knowledge of his intentions.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Mrs. Pace's narrative is the interlocking relationships between narrative and broadside ballad traditions. The version of 955C printed by Halliwell-Phillips under the title "The Oxford Student" shows a clear connection with the "Jealous Lover" group of ballads described by G. Malcolm Laws in American Balladry From British Broadsides. The Oxford Student includes the motifs of seduction, a rendezvous, and subsequent murder, which are all common elements in the Jealous Lover ballads. One such ballad is known as the Oxford Girl, or the Knoxville Girl. Another member of the group

of Jealous Lover ballads closely related to the Oxford Girl is Pearl Bryan, which interestingly enough was the catalyst which directly triggered Mrs. Pace's memory of the story of the girl in the tree. She related the story to me immediately after having performed Pearl Bryan for me.

GLADYS . . . There was a lot of stories like that back when I younger. I know they told about one family not too far from us that the girl was engaged to a guy and she was supposed to meet him somewhere, out away from the house at night. And so she went out early and climbed up in a tree. She was afraid. And it was some tree that he was supposed to meet her at, and she climbed up in this tree. And when he came, he had a shovel and a pick, and everything with him. And he set down at the tree and dropped these down by him. Well, she stayed in the tree, and didn't come down to meet him. And after he left--He finally got tired of waiting for her. He left and went home, and they found out he was going to kill her and bury her.

1-9 NOAH SPEARS

Motifs: X949(b) Strong man lifts extraordinarily heavy objects. (Baughman)


Told by Creed Berryman in March and November of 1978. Howard Wiley, of Nobob, was also familiar with Noah's feats of strength. A narrative concerning a similar character is in the files of the WKU FFOH A, told by Estil Lucas, of Liberty (Casey County), Kentucky, in 1967. Floyd Stapp, like Noah Spears, was reported to be able to carry hewn railroad ties out of the woods and load them on a wagon by himself. Creed also makes something of a trickster of Noah with the teasing anecdote about a marriage proposal inserted into the legend. Creed then expands the legend to include Noah's father and wife.
From New England tradition, Dorson also makes note of the husband and wife combination of strongman legends. Dorson's narrative concerns a man travelling a great distance to "throw" a man whose strength he has been hearing of. On the challenger's arrival, he finds only the strongman's wife at home. The wife, not to see him disappointed, challenges him to a wrestling match and throws him.


CREED... And Noah Spears always hewed railroad ties and I guess carried them out of the woods. Carried them out so they could load them from his place back in there. You ever notice a railroad tie, what a weight it would be then? And I've always heared that...

KEITH He made railroad ties?

CREED Yeah, he'd cut a tree, you see, about--just a little bigger than the size, and then he'd hew it down to square it up. He had a hewing axe, they called it, and he'd hew them out and they got, I think in them hard times, they got down to fifty cents a tie. And then they had to be hauled to town.

1-9(b) Creed Berryman, November, 1978.

CREED Now, Noah Spears left this country, I don't know how old he would be. He come back here, then in--maybe fifty years ago. Maybe--I'd say--about the time I was grown. About forty or forty-five years ago. And he was some man. I've always heared that he was a real man.

[Some off-mike comments by Alma Berryman]

CREED... It hasn't been that long, then. It's been about forty years ago. But he come back during them hard times, anyway. He come back. His mother lived up there, close to Nobob--his mother and dad. And he would hew railroad ties. Did you ever notice how heavy a railroad tie would be?

KEITH Yeah.
CREED

He'd hew them out in the woods and then carry them off to the loading place--put them on his shoulder. I've heared that. I never seen him. He hewed them out with a hewing axe.

And there was a woman across the creek here; an old widow woman. And he was going along the road there, and he met her in the road and spoke to her, and said, 'Howdy,' and said a few words to her. He said, 'Would you marry me?' And he was as old as she was, or a little older, and she said, 'I don't know,' said, 'I'd have to study about it.' So he said, 'Well, you study about it.' So one of them went one way, and one another, and walked a few steps. And she hollered and he turned around and she said, 'I might marry you.' And he said, 'I done changed my mind.' He just . . . just to tease her. You may [have] in your sparking days aggravated a girl that way. Something like that. I've heared them laugh about that.

KEITH

He must have been some guy if he could carry railroad ties.

CREED

I've heared it from . . . saying they've heared that he was really some man. But now, back when he was back here, he didn't look like he was that much of a man. His daddy was a big, stout man, and--I don't know--took rheumatism or something. And he had a place in the wall here, and one over here, and the ceiling, and a rope come down; come around. He used that; He was bedfast. I visited him when he was here, and he used that rope to pull up and turn himself in bed.

. . . His wife, she wasn't so big, and they lived about a mile from Nobob. She'd come to Nobob and bring a basket of eggs. She'd get that basket full of groceries--twenty-five pound sack of flour. That wasn't everytime, but I've seen her do that. I've seen that myself--and more than me and you would carry from here to the road. If you had that thing loaded to carry from here to the road, you'd make two or three loads out of it. And she'd start out from Nobob, and it was uphill the biggest part of the way, too, to her place.

Motifs: F511 Person unusual as to his head. (Baughman)
F624.3 Strong hero lifts cart. (Thompson)
F613 Strong man's labor contract. (Thompson)
F685 Marvelous withstander of cold. (Thompson)
H331.1.7 Contest in reaping. (Cross)
X937 Lie; Loud voice. (Baughman)
X941(1) Strong man lifts back end of load of hay by putting feet under load, lifting with legs. (Baughman)
X998 Remarkable harvester. (Baughman)
Barney and Cleve Watt were two Nobob strongmen still remembered by Nobob residents who knew them, and yet have already begun to take on legendary strongman motifs with barely the passing of a generation. Monroe County, which borders Barren County on the south, has produced a similar strongman hero in the person of Bill Coe. W. Lynwood Montell records essentially the same cart-lifting feat attributed to Bill Coe as Creed Berryman here attributes to Cleve Watt. Dorson records an incident in Vermont that is quite similar to John Robert Miller's version of how Cleve was able to shift logs with his feet. Again, in this group of narratives, which range from a short comment to a sustained narration of a particular event, we see the various narrators contributing details in a complementary fashion.

1-10(a) John Robert Miller, November, 1978.

KEITH A couple of people have also told me that Cleve Watt was supposed to be a pretty strong fella.

JOHN Yes, he was supposed to be. He was a logger, I think, then. He worked in the logging woods.

KEITH A logger, you said?

JOHN He worked in a logging woods, yes. And he was supposed to be real strong. I have my doubts about how strong he was--I mean if he was as strong as they said he was.

KEITH How strong did they say he was?

JOHN Oh, well, he was supposed to be able to lay on his back and turn logs, you know. They'd load these logs on the wagons, you know, like these road wagons. They'd load these logs on the road wagons. He was supposed to be strong enough he could take his feet and turn those logs on the wagon, so he could get more on them, you know--scoot them close together. I doubt it, but they used to tell it on him.
KEITH Who would tell things like that?

JOHN Well, this was some of the neighbors in that area. They're dead now. I've heard my father talk about him. I'm sure I've heard Dad talk about him, because he was--he had an unusually large head, I think. He was a pretty good sized fella. And he wore a large hat, I think--a real big hat. I don't remember what size. I always heard them say, 'He had a head like Cleve Watt.' He was a large man, though. And he was real strong.

1-10(b) R. Henry Miller, November, 1978.

HENRY He was a stout man. Had a big head on him. They called it: 'He had a head on like Cleve Watt.'

KEITH He was a pretty good sized fella?

HENRY Yeah, he had a big head. He had an awful large head. And they always--people'd say, 'He had a head like Cleve Watt.'

1-10(c) Creed Berryman, March 29, 1978.

CREED Well, I guess it was Cleve Watt, they said somebody fell off his wagon, under the wheel. He got down when it was loaded. He got down and lifted the wheel of the wagon for them to get out.

1-10(d) Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN He was an awful stout man, and you brag on him just a little bit, and he would really work.

1-10(e) R. Henry Miller, November, 1978.

HENRY Barney was his daddy.

KEITH He was supposed to sometimes . . .

HENRY He . . . go barefooted when the ground was froze.

KEITH Pardon me?
He went over to a sale over here, and the ground—the ground—they had a big fire—Indian . . . cold. People built a fire, you know, while the sale was going on. And that son of a gun was barefooted. He was tough. Went to that sale barefooted.

KEITH Goodness!
HENRY Yeah, he was tough.
KEITH Did you say he was part Indian?
HENRY I don't know what he was, really. But he didn't care for nothing. Went to that sale barefooted. First time I ever saw a man barefooted and the rest of them freezing to death.

KEITH That must have been something.
HENRY It was!

KENNETH . . . Talking about Cleve Watt; how strong he was—this field here, in front of the house, about two acres in it—my dad had it planted in corn. Of course back in that time in harvesting corn, they cut it and shocked it, see. So he come along and asked Cleve if he'd cut it for him, and he said he'd do it. He said, 'How do you want to cut it? So much—'I'll give you two dollars a day to cut it or . . .'

CREED So much a shock; they paid so much a shock, and . . .

KENNETH Yeah, but wait a minute. Yeah, two dollars a day to cut it or by the job, he'd give him two dollars to do it. Wait a minute—yeah, by the job; he'd give him two dollars. So Cleve come along and said, 'Well, I'm gonna take it by the day.' Two dollars a day. He started in on cutting the corn and shocking it, and about the middle of the afternoon, he walked out of the field. He'd cut it all down and shocked it, see. My dad looked sheepish, you know, because if he'd have took it by the job, see, he'd have been money ahead, see. So my dad said, 'Here.' He give him the two dollars. Said, 'I'm gonna give you your two dollars.'

KENNETH . . . Then, his father [Barney] lived across country, up here by the place over here about . . .

CREED . . . A mile; two or three—three miles up here . . .

KENNETH Barney Watt?
CREED Them Watts up here, yeah. No, that ain't over a mile there.

KENNETH Yeah, about a mile up. They claim he'd come outside. It's uphill from here, this guy, see. He'd come out some of these cold mornings, you know, and yell and holler; and you'd hear him 'way down here hollering.

1-10(g) Hobart Wilburn, November, 1978.

KEITH How about people who were really strong, like I've heard people mention Cleve Watt.

HOBART Cleve Watt?

KEITH Uh huh [affirmative].

HOBART He was. He and his daddy were awful strong.

KEITH Can you tell me about him?

HOBART Well, they just--they were just human like everybody else, but they'd go out and cut cordwood. I think what they said they could do, they could cut and split and put up four cord a day, and cut it with a cross-cut saw and an axe.

And if they got ready to go to the mill, they just threwed a bushel of corn on their shoulder, and took it to the mill, and had it ground for corn bread. That's the way they made their corn bread. That's the way everybody made their corn meal.

1-11 AMBROSE HUFFMAN

Certainly one of the most loved characters in the Nobob oral tradition is Ambrose Huffman. The mention of his name will almost always evoke a smile and a knowing look. The Huffman family, craftsmen and instrument makers from Virginia, established themselves on the Nobob Creek about 1805 with the arrival of Henry and Teter Huffman. 1 Ambrose had, according to Buelah Wiley, gone to Alaska for some time.

1 Simmons, An Historical Journey, p. 108; James Simmons.
around 1900, and then returned. Shortly after 1900, Flava Froedge moved onto the farm adjoining the Huffman farm. Flava remembers that Ambrose was an old man then.

The texts presented here are what amount to a cycle of narratives concerning Mr. Huffman, which share some common ground between the anecdote and legend. The character is certainly legendary, as are the flowers he planted, but some of the material related here might also be considered anecdotal. In the spring of 1978 I saw for myself the flowers he had reputedly planted, growing along the side of highway 839 as I headed south toward Nobob.


FLAVA He was a right smart old man. He didn't want nobody to help him do nothing; he was going to do it all his self. But he'd come and see every neighbor he had once a year--flowers right over there, now, across the road. He come--he said he wanted to give all of his neighbors some of them flowers, and he wanted to set them out. And he did. He went and put them around there; a white--something, I don't know what you call them--and great big flower there. He'd go around and see every neighbor he had once a year, but he wouldn't stay over ten minutes to an hour. He'd just talk a little, and here he'd go. He lived over there on the hill. He was a good old fellow. I thought lots of him; everybody else did, I reckon. I don't know where he came from, or know nothing about him, because he was an old man when I moved here.

1-11(b) Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLEN Ambrose?
KEITH Do you know him?
GLEN Oooooh my, yes!
SOPHIE Who was telling you about him?
KEITH Somebody told me he used to—he liked flowers a lot, and he used to plant flowers.

GLEN Yeah, yeah.

KEITH Are they little yellow flowers?

GLEN Yeah.

KEITH I saw them on the road today.

GLEN I'll tell you a tale he told me one time.

KEITH Okay, I'd like that.

GLEN He always told them on himself, how, he didn't tell tales on anybody else. It was always on himself. He called himself 'Huffman.' That's all he was always called. He said, 'When Huffman was a young man, he went to Illinois to get him a job working on the farm.' And he said they was a-feeding him marshed potatoes. He said he liked them and . . . . He said he was setting up there one day, eating them, and the man says, 'Huffman, is potatoes down in Kentucky as good as they are here?' He says, 'B'God'—That was his word—'B'God, I don't know. We all just raise enough for our seed!'

. . . And he wouldn't let a neighbor help him do anything; I don't care—stack hay—anything that come up, he done it himself.

1-11(c) John Robert Miller, November, 1978.

JOHN Ambrose, he was a unique type fella. He could saw wood with a cross-cut saw by himself. He would hang his hat on the other handle on the other side, you know, and saw wood by himself.

KEITH Was it he that planted these flowers along 839?

JOHN Uh huh [affirmative].

KEITH Why did he do that?

JOHN He was kind of a unique type fella. He was a loner, you know. I think he enjoyed the nature. He enjoyed everything—he wanted everything natural. He liked wood. He didn't like to disturb any—and he wanted—now, like if he was to build a barn, instead of buying a roof, he'd make his roof, you know, out of boards. He didn't buy anything. He usually made it himself. And of all his buildings, there—his barns, and everything, they were either hewed out of logs, or he split the logs to make the lumber himself.
CLORINE  Every time I go down that road in the spring of the year I think of him [Ambrose]. And the reason I think about him is because all these flowers he set out. Has anybody told you about how he set out flowers?

KEITH  Mr. Froedge and Nadine were telling me about that. Can you tell me more about it?

CLORINE  . . . Well, the only thing I know about it was that he just enjoyed flowers, and he said, well, he wanted other people to enjoy them, too. So he set them up all up and down his farm. And he had a lot of roses. He set out roses. In the spring of the year at first, there'd be these yellow buttercups, or whatever they called them come up. They'd come up and bloom. And a lot of those are still blooming now.

BOBBY  I remember one time he took a--two old horses and a mule out to mow some hay to put up for winter time, and they balked on him. They wouldn't pull the mowing machine. He says, 'All right,' says, 'I can make it [through the winter] if you can!'

HENRY  . . . Oh, he was a worker. That day that--when he planned on cutting tops, why when he got ready to cut them tops, and cut them; if they wasn't ready just right yet, it was their bad luck. He'd cut his tops. Always laughing about that. Whatever he planned on doing, he'd do it. And he said if it wasn't ready to be done, it was just their bad luck. When it come time to cut tops, why--and he had to cut tops, why he cut tops. If the corn wasn't ready, why . . . [laughter]

KEITH  Did he ever plant any of his flowers around here?

HENRY  Oh, not around here. Around his home he did.

KEITH  I see.

HENRY  And they're still there. And he's been dead for--I went over there when he died. I guess he's been dead thirty years, maybe longer. I don't know just when he did die. And them flowers is up and down the road now.

KEITH  I think I saw a few of them last spring.

HENRY  Yeah, he was a grand feller--good feller.
KEITH   Everybody seems to have liked him a lot.

HENRY   Oh, he was a fine feller. Wasn't any better. Yeah, he was a fine feller. I went over there when he died.

1-12 THE PANTHER CHASE

Tale-type: 313 The magic flight.

Motif: R231 The obstacle flight--Atlanta type. (Thompson)


It is in this narrative that legend mixes with mythological motif. The obstacle flight is an internationally known motif with roots in the mythologies of many cultures, both western and oriental. It is also known among Native Americans. Dobie publishes several versions from Texas. Although the panther chase story is well known in the South, it is not limited to that region only, as Dorson's New England version illustrates. The panther in the versions of Dobie and others becomes a pack of wolves in Dorson's version.

Various objects, usually food or discarded clothing, are used to delay the panther in pursuit. Turkeys, venison, or hams often fill the role in Southern versions, while as one might suspect, Dorson's New England version employs fish. Clorine's version below employs the device of discarded clothing. Boatright and Montell both publish versions in which a panther does not chase, but menaces from the roof on a cabin. Montell's version, however, still employs the suspenseful device of appeasement with small bits of food thrown out to the panther.
Three other panther chase stories appear in the WKUFOHA. The first, collected in 1965, by Jackie Anderson, from Sam Sartin of Metcalfe County, involves a racehorse and a panther. No attempt at distraction with food or clothing is made in this version. The second version was collected in 1963 by Charles McMurry from Tom Claunch, of Harrodsburg, Kentucky. The third version was collected in 1965 by Montell, from Hitty Squires, of Bramlett (Green County), Kentucky. Gorin makes note of frequent encounters with panthers in Barren County.¹

Boatright, in his comments to the discarded clothes variants he prints, observes that no version ever came to his attention in which the fleeing pioneer woman had to "twitch her own last garment off." Hitty Squires' version seems to suggest just that. Clorine's version is much more kind to the poor pioneer woman, using only outer garments. She recited her narrative from a text, which she said was from her mother's dictation. Her narrative is characteristically well documented with regard to the individuals involved and the oral pedigree of the story.

CLORINE

... She lived up here close to the White cemetery, so evidently Nobob was known as a place to go to the store for quite a long while, because this woman was probably dead by 1850. Mrs. Lewis Williams said her father, Harmon Hayes, who married Leigh Bowles told her this story when she was a child. Mrs. Lewis Williams died in about 1967. And Mrs. Cade lived in a house near the new part of the White Cemetery; was riding a horse from Nobob, where she had probably come to the store. As she was coming home, a panther started following her. She rode the horse as fast as it would go, but the panther was gaining on her. She threw down her bonnet. The panther stopped and tore it up. That gave her a little time. But then the panther caught up with her again, and she threw down her apron and shawl at intervals to gain some more time. By the time the panther got close again, the horse hit the waters of Skaggs creek at the ford. And that made so much noise the dogs at the home were aroused. The dogs scared the panther away.

¹Gorin, pp. 19, 25.
Fish Ritter's given name was Fishburn Ritter, after the maiden name of his mother. On Skaggs Creek, just above the point at which it is joined with the Nobob, he built and operated a water mill which serviced the surrounding area for many years. The mill was torn down in 1949 or 1950, according to John Robert Miller, but the memory of "Uncle Fish" enjoys a healthy survival in this narrative which combines elements of both anecdote and legend. Bobby Lawson says the incident happened about seventy-five years ago.

The character of Fish Ritter is in some ways similar to Uncle Bud Long, described by Kenneth Clark. Clark related an incident in which Uncle Bud, in tattered clothes, attending an auction, peels off money from a large roll of bills in order to pay for a mule, much to the surprise of the skeptical auctioneer. A narrative nearly identical to the one below, collected by Martha Spinks from Lloyd Spinks, a Bowling Green, Kentucky native, is deposited in the WKUFOHA. The similarity between Mr. Spinks' narrative and the legend known in the Nobob area is too great to be discounted. Mr. Spinks, an insurance adjuster, who travels to many towns in central Kentucky, sets his narrative in Barren County in the late 1940's, and simply substitutes an automobile for mill machinery. Mr. Spinks' narrative illustrates the process of the folk divorcing the legend from its original context and allowing it to migrate. Both the character and the object being bought are made less specific and more universal in the Spinks narrative, a prerequisite for migration. Howard Wiley indicated to me that the same story was told regarding a local
undertaker who lived at Summer Shade, Kentucky, a short two or three miles from Nobob.

1-13(a) R. Henry Miller, November, 1978.

HENRY Oh, yeah. That's a true story. He went up to Louisville to buy a flour mill. And they didn't want to take his--it cost thirty-five hundred dollars. And [at] that time thirty-five hundred dollars was the same as twenty-five thousand now. And he wanted to give them a check for it, and they didn't--He told them to call the bank and ask them about it. And they told them to sell him anything he wanted. He could buy Louisville if he wanted to. And he might near could.

And he was an old fella--and never did have a haircut, hardly. His hair was down long, and he worked in the mill--flour all in his hair. He wore colored shoestrings, and he had enough money to buy anything. He really had the money. A good man. I borrowed money from him many a time.

And he went up there to get that, and they just--they was afraid to take his check, you know. They called down to the bank in Glasgow, and they told them to sell him anything he wanted. He could buy anything.

1-13(b) John Robert Miller, November, 1978.

JOHN Yeah, I lived just up on top of the hill from Uncle Fish. Fish Ritter.

KEITH Could you tell me that story?

JOHN Well, he was, of course, real conservative, and he wore--he would take his wife's old dresses and rip them up and make shoestrings out of them, you know. He wore tennis shoes--real old shoes, or tennis shoes. And he'd take--if it was a checkered dress, or whatever, it didn't make any difference, he'd just rip it up and make the shoestrings out of it. Of course you can imagine how weird that'd look for pieces of a dress [to be used] for shoestrings.

And he always wore an old hat that had flour all over it. And he had his--he wore clothes that had flour all over, you know. He was really clean, but I mean there were always patched clothes, overalls, and the shirt would be patched. And he wore little glasses, real small glasses that weren't any bigger than that, and he'd pushed them way down over his nose,
and look over the top of them. They'd always have so much flour on them, he couldn't see through them anyway.

So that's the way he went all day, and so when he'd go to--he went to Louisville. He had to have a--he went there to buy a part for his new mill--for his blender for his flour mill. So he got up there, and he walked in, and he told them that he wanted a blender for his flour mill. And they looked at him, you know, 'course he's--looked at his dress shoestrings, and his patched britches, and his glasses he couldn't see through and his old slouch hat with the flour all over it, and they said, well, you know, 'Who's gonna pay for it?' And he said, 'I'm gonna pay for it,' Kep.' He called everybody Kep. Said, 'I'm gonna pay for it, Kep.' And he said, 'Well, what with?' And he said, 'Money. I'm gonna give you a check.' They said, 'No, we can't take a check on you.' And so it was about four thousand dollars. Of course, then four thousand dollars was an awful lot of money. And he said, 'Well, that's the way you'll get the money, is by check.' And he said, 'Well, we can't take it.'

So then he told them, 'Just call Glasgow Bank.' And so they called. Then he said, 'Well, if we call Glasgow Bank, it's gonna cost us money.' He [Fish] said, 'If there ain't no money in there, I'll pay for it, and if there's money in there, you pay for it.' So they thought, well, that's a pretty good deal, you know and they'd take it. They called the bank, and they [the bank] told them, 'Why, if he wants to buy a dozen of them, go ahead and sell it to him.' So they were real embarrassed because they--you know, they thought they had a doosey there with no money. But Uncle Fish had all the money there was in the country at that time. In fact he was the local bank in that area. And he didn't believe in keeping a lot of money in the bank at all times. He'd maybe have eight, ten thousand dollars in the bank. But he'd keep money--a lot of money around the mill there, because if somebody wanted to come along and borrow a hundred dollars, why Uncle Fish had the money.

And my dad has said that he's borrowed a hundred dollars from him a lot of times, you know. He'd go down there, and Uncle Fish had it, and it was real reasonable interest, I don't know how--I don't remember how much the interest was. But it was real reasonable, and--

But he did all of his carpenter work. He did all of his mill work himself. He hired no help. He was one of the best sawyers in the country, there. And his water mill didn't cost him anything, you know, because the water controlled all of the mill, you know. Everything was hooked up to this water mill--his corn grinding, his wheat grinding--everything was hooked up to the water mill--even the saw mill at that time. So everything--if he made a dime, it was clear, you know. And he saved it, he didn't spend it, and so then when he died...
... Uncle Fish was real good. He gave you good measurements. And he was tight, but he was honest. And nobody complained about Uncle Fish and his measurements, because if anything, he'd give you the benefit of the doubt.

1-13(c) Kenneth Smith, Creed Berryman, March 29, 1978.

KENNETH Fish Ritter?
KEITH Yeah.
KENNETH Yeah, he used to run a water mill down here.
CREED On down another creek over here.
KENNETH Skaggs Creek.
CREED yeah, I've been there to the mill. Real old man at that time. He's supposed to have had right smart old money for ... but I don't know. It didn't never work out to look like he had it, did it?

[overlapping voices]

KENNETH He had some money, I think.
CREED He had some money, but the people thought at that time, I guess $10,000 would really seem like money.
KENNETH At that time, that was big money. He might have had that much.
CREED Yeah, I guess he did, 'cause...
KENTHENH ... 'Cause they told on him that he went up to Louisville—to buy a mill, wasn't it? And he got up there. And of course he went just like he dressed at home, you know—old ragged clothes, you know—overalls and all. And he went in and told them what he wanted—the mill business. Of course looking that way; and the looked him over, you know. They was wondering about him. 'He hasn't got no money.' So they shy around, and finally they got some of the office boys to call back to Glasgow to the bank, see, and ask about him. So they did. And the banker told them, 'Go on and sell him whatever he wanted,' see 'Because he's got the money.' After they found that out, they always treated him real nice.
1-13(d) Bobby Lawson, April 4, 1978.

BOBBY You ought to tell him about that old man that run the flour mill and went to Louisville to buy some modern equipment back, oh . . .

KEITH You know that story?

BOBBY . . . Seventy-five years ago, and he was wealthy in them days. . . .

CLORINE Fish Ritter.

KEITH Uh huh [affirmative].

BOBBY But he didn't--to look at him you think he was a tramp. He'd be in that flour mill, and he'd be--he never would shave and there'd just be flour dust in his whiskers, and his hair run down on his shoulders, kind of like some of these hippies, now. And he went up to Louisville to buy good, modern equipment for a mill. And they asked him how much--what he wanted would cost, and they said, 'Thirty-five hundred dollars.' And he said, 'Well, I'll take it.' He went to give them a check, and he didn't know about taking a check from a man that looked like that. And he seen the bank was here in Glasgow, and they called the bank and asked could--fella by the name of Fish Ritter--check--would they honor a check for thirty-five hundred dollars? He says 'He can buy the whole firm out up there if he wants to!'

1-14 FOLK CURERS--WILL SHEP, "LITTLE GEORGE" CRABTREE, AND HOWARD WILEY

Motif: Z252 Hero at first nameless.


The sensitivity of the Nobob area residents to the concept of superstitions is readily observed in the manner in which some of the sources are particularly careful to divorce themselves and their families from what they perceived as superstitions. They seemed especially anxious to place any discussions of folk beliefs in the past.
Every cultural group maintains a fluctuating system of traditional beliefs and cures, and our technological society, though it actively disparages or considers itself disinfected of traditional beliefs, in fact has its own set of traditional beliefs. The supposed efficacy of our present technological state of being is in itself a traditional belief. The reader who would faintly smile at the ideas of wart cures and thrash doctors would do well to heed Richard Dorson’s admonition in Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers.² Dorson cautions his readers to examine the role commercial advertising plays in the contemporary individual’s perceptions about himself, his world, and the means to success. How much distance is there, really, between blowing in a baby’s mouth to cure thrash and choosing a particular brand of toothpaste on the promise of an improved social life?

Three particular individuals from the Nobob area were mentioned as having the power to cure warts or other diseases, such as "thrash." Will Shep was said to have acquired his powers from the fact that he had never seen his father. Ken Smith said he knew Will well, though Clorine knew only of his reputation. "Little George" Crabtree was a cousin to Ruby Smith and lived at Logan’s Crossroads. Both Will and Little George were remembered for curing warts. Howard Wiley, who still lives in the Nobob area, claims the ability to cure infants of thrash, a rash-like affliction. Again, I call the reader’s attention to the manner in which Creed Berryman and Kenneth Smith complement and feed each other’s narratives organically with the context of the conversation.

CREED

He [Will Shep] was found on a doorstep, ain't that right? What you've always heared?

KENNETH

Well, I've heard that, and I've heard also that he was found wandering around the campsite up here on the creek.

CREED

And he named himself, is what--did you ever hear that?

KENNETH

No, I . . .

CREED

Nobody ever knewed who he was, is the way I've always heared it. And he named himself Will Shep. And he could--you could go to him and say, 'I've got a wart here on my hand, would you like to take it off?' And he'd look at you, and talk on a little; 'You think I could?' And if you say 'No,' I don't know whether it'd come off or not. And if you'd say 'Yes,' it wouldn't be maybe ten days or two weeks; something like that, probably wasn't no wart there.

KEITH

Did he ever use a stick that he cut notches in?

CREED

Not to my knowledge. He took some warts off of me, and he just talked to me . . . all he ever done. And I've heared of people using string some way--tie a string around a wart, or something, or do something. I've heard of that, but I've never seen that done.

KEITH

Did he ever do--was he able to do any other kinds of cures besides warts?

CREED

I don't remember if he did. Yeah, he wouldn't take no--nothing for it. And he was one of our poor men, too--as poor as I ever was, I guess.

KENNETH

He was one of the what?

CREED

Poor fellas, I say; that seen it hard. He really seen it rough. . . .

KENNETH

Someone the other day--I was talking to someone about him, and he had a whole bunch of warts on him. I believe it was Howard Wiley, up here.

CREED

Everybody went to him!

KENNETH

And he went down there to take the warts off, and he told him how--told him what he wanted. I believe it was Howard. He looked at Howard, and said, 'I can't take them off.' Howard says, 'Why?' 'Cause you don't believe in it.' Howard says, 'That's right!'
He took them off me, and I heared of plenty of them he did.

1-14(b) Glen Berryman, Sophie Berryman, April 4, 1979.

KEITH He [Will Shep] was supposed to have been found wandering around, is that right?

SOPHIE On a door step.

GLEN He was a little baby in a basket, or something, set on a doorstep.

SOPHIE He could, you know--claimed he could take off warts off your hands. You know what warts is, don't you?

KEITH How did he do it?

SOPHIE Just look at them, I think.

1-14(c) Clorine Lawson, March 8, 1978.

KEITH Were there any people around here that were supposed to be able to cure--oh, like hives or warts?

CLORINE There's been a lot of people supposed to have been able to do that. Old Mr. Will Shep was the one they told me about. And he was the one that was left on somebody's doorstep, and nobody knew his parents.

KEITH Mr. Smith said they thought he was left by gypsies.

CLORINE Yeah, that's what I heard, too. That's what we heard; left by gypsies, they thought. He was supposed to be able to take off warts.


KEITH Was Will supposed to have been found somewhere--found wandering around somewhere--something like that?

JOHN He got old and I think he did kind of go off his rocker, maybe, when he got older. And he would wander around, yeah, before he died. He's been dead--like twenty years, probably. He was--I'd say he was around ninety probably when he died.
And he did; he would wander off and get lost, and wouldn't know where he was at.

1-14(e) Glen Berryman, Sophie Berryman, April 4, 1978.

KEITH Was there also a seventh son around here? He was one of the Huffmans. Is that right?

GLEN Little George Crabtree was one. There was two George Crabtrees, and one's 'Old George,' and one 'Little George.'

KEITH Was he supposed to be able to cure people by breathing into their mouth?

SOPHIE You're talking about Howard Wiley. He used to do that, over here.

KEITH Howard Wiley used to do that? Is that the one that lives down here?

GLEN Yeah, over on the other road.

KEITH I see.

SOPHIE I don't know whether he still does or not.

GLEN What was Howard? Was he a seventh son?

SOPHIE I think he must have been.

GLEN See, Will Shep, he'd never seen his daddy, you see. That's where he got his--supposed to.


RUBY Then I had--my mother's first cousin--one day at church he noticed that I had some warts on my hand and he said, 'I can cure your warts.' And he just reached up on the tree and cut a little tiny limb, and made a little notch in it.

KEITH What kind of tree was it?

RUBY It wasn't the tree. It was just that he was making the little notch--I think! No, I have no idea. He just got him a little tiny stick and cut a notch, and touched to warts, and he said, 'Now it'll disappear.' Well, they disappeared, but you know warts will disappear anyway, I think, because they're--what are they, a virus or something? At least they disappeared. Now did he cure them? You can decide if he did.
... But he said he could cure my warts and they went away.

KEITH Do you remember his name?

RUBY Yes, George Crabtree. He was my mother's first cousin.

... But I understand that a wart is just a virus, isn't it? I think that's what it is. Maybe he just touched it right, I don't know!

KEITH When he did that, did you believe it?

RUBY Oh, we were just having fun. He just said he would. He believed it. Yeah, he knew he could! But I didn't pay any attention to him much. I just let him because he wanted to. He cut his forked stick and touched my warts, and in a day or two--I didn't even notice it, and they were all gone. But they might have all gone away, in a day or two, as far as that's concerned. I'm not saying I believe it or don't.

1-14(g) Ruby Smith, February 25, 1978.

RUBY Oh, yes, this house, you know, out on the Huffman place that I was telling you about--this man who lived there--now, I think it was perhaps Mrs. Huffman's father. And he was supposed to have been the seventh son. And what is it they cure? The hives?--by blowing in your mouth or something. But people would take the babies to him.

1-15 A Lock of Hair in the Oak Tree

Motif: F950.3(b) Person bores a hole in tree exact height of child, puts lock of child's hair in the hole, plugs hole. As the tree grows, the child will begin to grow. (Baughman)


Clorine Lawson, April 4, 1978. The story was told to her sometime prior to 1965 by Smith Oliver, a former owner of the farm the Lawsons now operate. The cure appears to be well known, as both Thompson and

This narrative is perhaps one of the best examples in this collection of what Mody Boatright called the "family saga." The narrative is justified by the existence of the massive and unusual white oak tree in the Lawson's yard. A sense of wonder is injected when one attempts to visualize such a massive tree once being small enough to measure the height of a child.

**LONE** Well, Smith Oliver was the one that told me about it. He came out here several years ago, before we tore the spring house down, and we tore it down in 1965. And he wanted to know if I'd make his picture standing there at the spring house. He used to live here when he was a young boy. So he got in the door of the spring house, and I made the picture of him.

And then he was talking about the big oak tree that sits right on the hill, up there. It's a great big tree; about the biggest white oak that there is around here. I don't know if you've noticed it or not, but anyway--you can't see--see, you can see the limbs of it right there. But anyway, while he was out there he told me, he says, "A lock of my sister's hair is in that tree." I said, "Well,"--I asked him about it and he said, "Used to--" that she had what they call phthisic.

**KEITH** Tizzy?

**CLORINE** Phthisic, they called it. And it's spelled p-h-t-h-i-s-i-c, in case you want to know how it's spelled. They called it phthisic. And I don't know whether it was TB, or asthma, or what.

**BOBBY** Emphysema.

**CLORINE** Well, she was just a young girl, and she'd have these attacks of phthisic, that they called it. So they heard that if you would bore a hole in the tree and put a lock of your hair in at the height that the child was, then the child grew past that height--maybe the thing healed over; something of
that sort--well, then, they'd outgrow this phthisic. So they bored a hole in that tree up there, and put a lock of her hair in it. I said, "Well, did she get over it?" He said "Well," he didn't really remember too much about that part of it, but eventually--his sister was dead at that time--but I don't know whether she got over the phthisic or not. But that was one of their superstitions that they would do that.
"That's what they told on him."

2. TALES
2-1 THE CORN THIEF

Motif: K730.6 Thief reaches hand into corncrib for corn, catches hand in steel trap. He is given a warning. (Baughman)


This anecdote is told by Clorine with a certain amount of skepticism as to its veracity. Clorine's doubts originate from the fact that the anecdote is related by Jesse Stuart, a prominent Kentucky author, in Beyond Dark Hills. Mrs. Jones tells me that the tale was told to her in 1914 by a brother, with a neighbor as the butt of the joke. Ina had been courting the neighbor's son, who was not in good favor with her brother, so the tale was told to discourage the relationship.

Herbert Halpert's notes to the version appearing in Who Blowed Up the Church House? cites versions from Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, and Kansas. He further cites a version from Warren County, Kentucky, which adjoins Barren County to the west. The Warren County version appeared in Trout's "Greetings" column in the Louisville Courier-Journal. Halpert's note to Roberts' brief version from Tennessee calls attention to a Virginia version, featuring Patrick Henry, which appears in Botkin's Treasury of American Folklore.

Randolph's and Botkin's (1944) versions have the accommodating victim of thievery sending the thief away with a sack of corn and a
Plate 18

Corn crib
warning, while the version reported by Craddock is more similar to Clorine's version, in that the thief is simply released. A common element to all of these versions is the image of the helplessly trapped thief being ignored until he asks to be set free, creating the suspense of who will be the first to speak.

**CLORINE** My mother told me a story about when she used to go to some --a boy, and my uncle didn't like him too well, and so he told this story on his grandfather--or his father, Mr. [name], wasn't it? Anyway, he told Mama that his daddy one time kept missing corn out of his crib; missing corn out of his crib, so he decided to find out who's been doing it. He had a hole in his crib and he could see that somebody'd been coming there and pulling the corn out and taking it off and stealing it. Well, he thought he would catch him, so he set a trap inside the hole, there. Well, the next morning, he went down to the barn, and there sets this man at his crib, and he spoke to him, 'Good morning,' and he went on about his work, and came on back and he was still standing there. So finally the man had to tell him, said, 'I'm caught in a trap in here; you'll have to come in and get me out.'

2-2 TOO MUCH AXLE GREASE

Creed Berryman and Kenneth Smith, March 29, 1978. The story provides historical insight into the trade mechanisms of the 1930’s.

**KENNETH** They told on him that he bought some axle grease, and he thought he'd . . . how was that? . . . Tell it, Creed.

**CREED** Well, a drummer come through . . . and axle grease, do you know what that is?

**KEITH** Yeah.

**CREED** . . . To grease the old road wagons with. A little can that big would grease a wagon for--close to--for a year, I guess. And he bought so many boxes of axle grease, and he thought he was getting maybe fifty boxes of axle grease. Well, when he went to get it, they sent him sixty cases. And maybe there's a hundred boxes . . . .

**KENNETH** Twelve by twelve--one hundred and forty-four boxes to a case.
And anyway, he had a whole wagon load of axle grease. He wouldn't have sold that if he'd lived to have been a thousand years old. And somebody said something to him about it--his axle grease. He said, 'Yes, we got it.' Said, 'Only one thing wrong, just too damned much axle grease!'

2-3 INA'S CAKE

This narrative told by Ina Jones is apparently one of the favorite stories of the Lawson family. Knowing smiles and slight chuckles were in evidence as the narrative began. It was recorded at the Lawson home on March 8, 1978.

INA I remember one time when I went to Nobob to get some brown sugar.

KEITH You said you went to Nobob to get some brown sugar?

INA Yeah, we was going to have company that night, and I wanted a cake, so my mother said I'd have to get some brown sugar to have brown sugar icing, so I got on a horse and started. My mom, she needed some coal oil, so I had a coal oil can--and I had a basket of eggs on my arm, and a coal oil can in this hand. And then I had to have my bridle reins in the other one. So I started back from the store. I don't know; that spout of that coal oil slopped a little out, I reckon. I didn't know it until I got home. And it went through the basket, and on this paper sack. See, they put sugar in paper sacks then. Didn't have plastic bags, and so it got through that paper sack a little bit, and got in that brown sugar. Well, soon as I opened it, I knewed my cake icing was going to be ruined. So I just decided, 'I'll just use it anyway. And I'll just flavor it up pretty heavy with some banana, some vanilla, one thing and another.' So that night this boy that was there this night . . . said that's the best cake he ever ate in his life.

NADINE It had coal oil in it.

INA I never did tell him that it had coal oil in it.

KEITH The coal oil leaked into the brown sugar?

INA Yes, it just--the spout on the coal oil can didn't have anything over it, and so I reckon when the horse was climbing and jolting along, why it slopped out a little bit, out on the basket, and through that basket on the paper bag.
KEITH And he thought that cake was the best cake he'd ever eaten.

INA Yeah, he did. And he meant it, too, because he didn't know the difference. He didn't know the coal oil was in it.

NADINE It wasn't enough to hurt him, anyway.

INA No, he couldn't tell what it was. You couldn't tell it was coal oil, because it was flavored up too much. But still, I could, because it was in there.


Richard Dorson and Carl Sandburg acknowledge Abraham Lincoln's use of this anecdote. Dorson states that "Lincoln used the anecdote to express his feelings at having to release the Confederate envoys Mason and Slidell to Great Britain." The version in The Jonny-Cake Papers makes Sylvester Hazard and his brother, John, the butts of the anecdote. Hazard's version is greatly detailed, and of a literary rather than an oral nature. Clorine does not tell us who was the butt of her version, but does indicate that a local physician, Dr. Biggers, told it on a couple of Nobob area residents.

CLORINE I always thought it was real interesting about this man that Doctor Biggers told about, that he was sick, and he thought that he was going to die. And he and another man had a-oh, they'd had a disagreement, and were out for each other. ... So he told the doctor--well, he asked the doctor, he said, 'What are my chances of getting well?' He says, 'I'll tell you. You're in pretty bad shape.' He says 'Well,' says, 'I'll tell you. I'm enemies with this fella over here, now you bring him along next time you can, and I want to make up with him, because I might die, and I want to make up with him.'
So when he came the next time, he brought the man along and they made up. And they said that—yes, you know, he’s sorry for doing whatever it was. Wanted to be friends with him, and they shook hands. So when they went to leave, the man says, 'Now, if I die,' says, 'That stands.' But says, 'If I get well,' says, 'Everything stands just like it was.

I heard them tell who those people were, but I don’t know for sure that they were who it was, and I just kind of hate to mention it.

2-5 HOW MUCH IS A RIGHT-SMART?

Kenneth Smith, March 29, 1978. This anecdote turns on a regional expression generally used to mean "a substantial amount." After telling the story, Kenneth added that he and the customer had a big laugh over it.

KENNETH... It was a neighbor, brought in a couple of frying chickens, I believe it was--two or three. He was always kidding me when he had a big time, see. And he said, 'Kenny, guess what--on these chickens.' What they weighed--for the candy, see. I said, 'All right.' And I guessed about three pounds and a half, and he said three pounds, I believe it was. So when I weighed the doggone chickens they weighed--lacked a little of weighing three pounds and a quarter, see. Of course I tried to shake it so I'd break even, you know. He said, 'Kenny, how much does it weigh? How much does it weigh?' I said it weighed 'three pounds and then a right-smart.' He said, 'How much is a right-smart?' He saw I was trying to get by him.

2-6 GAMELING

The fact that this narrative, like the panther chase story is being read from a manuscript causes some alteration in Clorine’s performance style. The performance takes on more of a literary, rather than oral quality; the pitch of her voice becomes slightly higher, with increased volume; and inflection is less pronounced than when she per-
forms a narrative without a text. Due to the sensitive subject of the
narrative, I have deleted some of the names.

CLORELLE It's supposed to be true. And this [name] that we were
talking about was a gambler. He was in that bunch. The gam-
blers called their meeting their school. You've heard them
say they'd call it their school? They'd meet on Sunday.

INA [Name] passed here one morning and wanted to know where
they had their meeting, and my father came from the barn--
It was one Sunday morning early, and so . . . . He asked him
where he was going, and he said he was going to this .

CLORELLE School.

INA Yeah, going to this school. He was going over there to
play some cards.

CLORELLE This is what I've written down. Of course it's from what
Mama has told me. It says:

A gambling party of several men would gather on Sundays
near a cave. It was called the 'Uncle Bill Miller Cave'--to
gamble . . . 1 [Name's] wife, Eliza, told Grandmammy Payne
--Amelia was her name--how she worried about the men tying
their horses and leaving them all day without water. Grand-
mammy Payne asked Eliza, why doesn't she go hunt his horses
and give them some water. Liza said, 'Oh, I knewed better,
Miz Payne, I knewed better.'

Liza raised geese, and at sometime a gander took up with
her husband, Lam. This gander would follow Lam as he worked,
jabbering like geese will do. When he was planting corn, the
gander would follow right along with his jabbering but never
pick up the corn. The gander stayed at the doorstep at night,
and at times that Lam was in the house. Eliza would have to
put the gander up to keep him from following Lam when he got
on a horse to go anywhere. Lam became so upset by all of this
that he quit his gambling.

1Clorine here mentions the names of several individuals who
attended the gambling parties. I have deleted them.

2The surname is deleted here.
Clorine Lawson, April 4, 1978. Clorine says Mr. Strode told her this story with himself as the infant being fed. Mr. Strode died in 1965.

Clorine: Back in old times, they didn't have choppers and ground food for the babies, and so they—the mothers sometimes would chew the food and the babies couldn't chew...

Bobby: I've seen my mother do that!

Clorine: They'd chew the food and put it in the baby's mouth and feed it. Mr. Strode said one day his mother was feeding him—chewing food for him and feeding him—said that somehow or another, she was talking to a group of women, and she—he turned his head and instead of getting it in his mouth, stuck it in his ear.

2-8 NOBOB'S FIRST TELEPHONE LINE


Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978. Both Dorson's version and Glen's version combine the elements of the newly installed telephone and the uninitiated user. Dorson's version relies on the dialect and ethnic rivalries for much of its comic effect, while Glen's version, performed with a character voice, not a dialect, plays more upon local and verbal caricature. Glen's version is less overtly comical than Dorson's, subtly serving more as a crystallization of an historical event in Nobob. Within this anecdote Glen has capsulized the historical import of the event, its meaning to the community, and the contrast it presented to the community's established perception of the world. The contrast is advanced in the form of a dramatic tension between the
reality of the event and the disbelief of one man. The tension is resolved with the matter-of-fact-statement, 'That war his holler,' and the telephone becomes an accepted and functioning part of the community, as the earlier presented narrative concerning Rob Borders' death demonstrates.

Jim Gregory was a wagoner, according to James Simmons, and Hobart Wilburn described Gregory as a "great big man."

**GLEN**

The first telephone line that ever come to Nobob, why they was a-running it from Summer Shade to Nobob, and Mr. Jim Gregory, he claimed it couldn't be done. And when they completed it, some fella--I forgot who, now--at Summer Shade. He called up. They had it in the store down there--the telephone, you know. He said he wanted to talk to Jim Gregory. He went to the phone, and he hollered at him; called him Jim, and commenced talking. He turned around and looked at the rest of us there, and said, 'Well.' He couldn't talk plain. 'You've got me,' he said. 'That war his holler.'

**2-9 TUNSTALL'S DEBT**

Clorine Lawson, March 25, 1978. Though Franklin Gorin mentions Tunstall as one of the earliest residents of the area, I believe this is the only reference made to him during the period in which I interviewed Nobob residents. Mention of Tunstall's name did not elicit recognition. Clorine attributes this anecdote to John Kingrey.

Clorine said, "Well, there was a Mr. Tunstall. And the person that was telling me about it was John Kingrey. John Kingrey's wife was a descendant of this Tunstall. And he said that Tunstall was due to pay the debt on the land that he had boughten up. My understanding is that this land was the land where the old Dr. Depp place, they called it, up here--in the edge of Barren and Monroe County. In fact Barren and Monroe County line runs through that farm now. But it was in the neighborhood of that, Mr. Kingrey said."
And his notes were coming due, and he had—the money that he had was some kind of paper money that was issued by some bank. But anyway, the man that he owed money would not accept the bank notes that he had. He didn’t think it was any good. Well, of course that made Mr. Tunstall mad, and he thought, well, he’s gonna pay his debt off. It was twelve hundred dollars in money that he owed him.

So he went to Louisville. And I believe he said he drove a ox wagon and went to Louisville and got pennies. He got twelve hundred dollars in pennies and brought it back in kegs like nail kegs. Well, he took that up to the man; he said, ‘Well, here’s your money.’ Of course the man, he wanted his money, all right, but he sure hated to take it in all those pennies.

2-10 TURNER GREGORY’S FIGHT

The memory of this fight story is in its aftermath, not in its conflict. Unlike the stories concerning the Hodge-Watt and Fate Billingsley fights, these two narratives take on a comic tone.

2-10(a) Clorine Lawson, March 8, 1978.

CLORINE ... And Turner Gregory, he used to run a store down here, and he would get into fights with them a lot of times. Sophie Berryman was telling me about one time he got cut up pretty bad, and they were sewing him up, and she said everytime they’d get him just about sewed up just right, you know, he’d start in busting and crying and burst his stitches.

2-10(b) Sophie Berryman, Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

SOPHIE Well, they had a fight.

GLEN That was Turner Gregory.

SOPHIE Yeah, and they split his back open, and the doctor sewed it up, and he was hurt so bad over it, you know, getting cut up, and he’d bust out a-crying and bust out the stitches where they’d sewed him up.
GLEN In the time of it, why the fella that she was telling about --you know, getting stabbed in the back--his brother, he was into it, too, and Joe Wilson. He picked up a big rock and hit this fella in the head with it, and busted the rock.

KEITH Busted the rock!

GLEN Some of them said, 'John,' said, 'Didn't that hurt?' 'Oh, no,' he said, 'Soft rock!'

SOPHIE His head was harder than the rock.

GLEN His head was harder than the rock.

2-11 GHOST PRANK

Motif: K1833 Disguise as ghost. (Thompson)

Kenneth Smith, April 4, 1978. There are several versions of this narrative in the WKUFFOHA. The vivid closing images of a hasty exit from the room appear to be a common element in the various versions. Some piece of furniture is overturned, or a door is torn off in the effort to leave. A version almost identical to the one presented here is reported from Scottsville (Allen County), Kentucky, narrative by Mary Pearson. Other versions are reported from Glasgow Junction (Park City, Barren County), Kentucky, and Elmore (Edmonson County), Kentucky. The Edmonson County version takes on the character of a legend, as the would-be prankster is clubbed to death with a poker by his frightened victim.

R. Henry Miller, in a narrative that appears later in this volume relates that during the 1930's, and perhaps later, embalming was not practiced. The scene that Kenneth Smith here describes suggests a traditional wake, a practice which predates embalming. Among the functions served by such a wake is guarding the soul against the inter-
vention of hostile spirits.\textsuperscript{1} William Lynwood Montell, in his \textit{Ghosts Along the Cumberland}, notes that the Kentucky foothill tradition demanded a continuous deathwatch from the moment of death until burial.\textsuperscript{2} Montell further cites the wake as a guard against body snatchers who stole corpses to sell to medical schools.\textsuperscript{3}

Remembering legends from my own childhood, of coffins opened to reveal frantic scratch marks on the inside, I might also suggest that the wake served a further unspoken purpose of confirming death.

KENNETH I could tell you one, but it didn't happen here, I don't think. It was a fella that lived here that it happened to. His name was Bud Williamson. The poor fella's dead. He was a young man back then, pretty mischevious. And so a fella in the country died, and they laid him out on a bed and put him under a white sheet, see. [They put ] a white sheet on the bed, see. . . And they were all sitting around him, you know. Somebody suggested, 'Let's go in the kitchen and fix us some coffee,' see. So they all went in the kitchen but this fella. Left him there with the dead man, see. So he thought how funny it'd be to take the dead man's body out from under the white sheet, see, to push it under the bed. And he crawled under the sheets. So when they all come back and sit down, you know, from the kitchen, drinking their coffee, he commenced groaning and taking on under that sheet, you know. He said, 'Those people went out of there just flying.' Some of them went out the windows and doors and everything else.

2-12 THE PILL AND THE PUMPKIN

The following two anecdotes related by Ina Jones in November, 1978 deal with the doctor-patient relationship. The structure between the two anecdotes is quite similar. The doctor makes a prescription, which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}William Lynwood Montell, \textit{Ghosts Along the Cumberland}, p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
is misinterpreted either semantically or conceptually. The misinterpretation creates a ridiculous image, which is then explained to the doctor.

As with Ina’s other narratives, these two are well paced.

INA Well, used to—way back, you know—used to the doctors—had country doctors out in the country, and they doctored the ones out in the country. And so the one fella’s wife got sick, and he went to the doctor, and he gave her some—she couldn’t swallow a pill down good. So he gave her some little pills she had to swallow, and so she said she couldn’t swallow them, and he said, ’Well, just put it in a little fruit.’ And she’d swallow it, you know, and never know it. And so [name] says, ’We don’t have any fruit, would a little pumpkin be all right?’ And he says, ’Yes, a little pumpkin would be all right,’ to put it in the pumpkin. So he left, and he had certain days to go back and see her. Not the next day, but the next time he went back, he asked, ’Well,’ said, ’Did she take the medicine?’ Said, ’No, didn’t take it.’ Said they hunted all over the field for a pumpkin little enough to swallow, and couldn’t find one—so he could give it to her. He meant a little cooked pumpkin, you know, that was cooked. So he hunted all over the field and couldn’t find one.

2-13 THE POULTICE


INA Well, anyway, his wife got sick and so he sent for the doctor; told him to make a poultice and put it on her chest. And so when the doctor started to leave, he happened to think about [she] didn’t have no chest . . . . But they had a trunk, though, see. [laughter] So he went hollering for the doctor to stop, you know, and said, ’Say, doctor,’ says, ’You said to put a poultice on her chest, but we don’t have a chest. Would a trunk do just as well?’

KEITH Did he explain it to her then?

INA I reckon he did.

CLORINE I just wonder if he really did that or if they just told that on him.
I've heard them tell about the other boy--some of them would be great big dudes--run the teacher off and things like this back in them times. But I never seen nothing like that happen, now, myself.

I've heard my mother tell about one boy, that was . . . he was just a big old poor rough boy. And the teacher'd work him over, and one day he didn't get a whipping, so they dismissed the school, and so he hit the door and jumped and said going down the steps--my mother said he hollered, 'Wheee!' said, 'I gather this is one day that I never got a whipping.' Said the teacher in the door, said, 'I can't slight you today.' So he whipped him for nothing.

It was a man by the name of McMillan, why he had colored people that he hired. What he gave them a day for their work, I don't know. Probably--I think the going rate was fifty cents a day, but of course he got them colored people less, probably a quarter a day. He'd work them until Saturday. And Saturday, when he'd pay them off, he'd say, 'Well, boys, let's all have us a game.' And he'd gamble with them and get that money, and hire them back the next week with it.

CLORINE You were talking about the fights that we used to have at Nobob. This Mr. Howard Strode that lived over here, he died in 1965 at the age of ninety-three. He used to tell about this [name withheld] that lived over there at this place. At that time, Mr. Strode lived up there on the hill. He had a cane, and he put a nail in that cane, and sharpened it real sharp, and so he'd go down to the store and--with his cane--and he'd have it under his arm, like, you know, and he'd . . . that thing and get him a big plug of tobacco. Nobody would know it. But somebody caught him stealing something one time and then they had a great big fight about it, because they told on him, you know. They had a terrible fight about it.

BOBBY . . . He would drive the nail in this thing, and then he took the head off of it. Then he sharpened it real sharp. He'd just run that end into a plug of tobacco, and run it up, and put it in his pocket.


BOBBY I heard tell about one old guy down here, he was gonna--I heard Dexter Jones tell about it. It was some old guy, he was sick, and he had a big farm, and had a lot of hands a-working for him. And they had hay out there in front of the house, you know. He was just at the point of death, and they just--of course they wouldn't work--him gonna die. They just all come into the house, waiting around there. The old man reminded us, says, 'You'd better get that in; it's gonna get wet!' And he died then, in a little bit. He was still worrying about his hay and he died.


KENNETH Did you ever hear--tell you what; I shouldn't tell this on him, I guess--but [name withheld] he came down to the store and told my dad, he said, 'I want to buy my wife a dress for
her birthday, see. So he told him how many yards he wanted, and my dad measured it off and wrapped it up, you know, and everything. He handed it to him, he said, 'Well,' he says . . .

CREED Betty was her name.

KENNETH 'Betty will pay for this today.'

CREED 'The next time she comes in.'

KENNETH He's buying her a dress . . .

CREED She's the one going to pay for it.

KENNETH You've heard that, I guess, haven't you?

CREED Yeah, I heared it. Yeah. 'Betty'll pay for this next time she comes down here.' Something like that.

2-19 THE SOW IN THE STOVPIPE

Both R. Henry Miller and his son, John Robert Miller, remember Jake Luster's story about a local character with a reputation for hang- ing onto a dollar. They both related the story to me in separate inter- views in November, 1978. R. Henry Miller adds the comic image of Eliot Beatty, the offended butt of the story, stomping off angrily.


JOHN The store there at Poplar Grove, on 1224 1 --there was a Mr. Luster that owned the store. And he had a neighbor there that was real tight. He had money, but he was real tight. And he claimed that his sow--this fella's sow crawled up in a six-inch stovepipe looking for something to eat, and starved her pigs to death. The pigs couldn't suck at her. She crawled up in this stovepipe. We kinda doubted it being true, but he told it anyway.

1 i.e., highway 1324.
HENRY

One time I was over there [at Jake Luster's store]. Eliot Beatty was the stingiest man there ever was. And he didn't--never would spend nothing, and he didn't take no care of nothing. And one time Jake told about he had an old sow that had pigs, and she crawled in a stovepipe and the pigs starved to death.

KEITH

Who told that story?

HENRY

Jake Luster. Everybody knows Jake Luster around here. He died several years ago. And he told that on Beatty. And Beatty got mad and went home.

2-20 THE DEFECTIVE LAMP GLOBE

In the same interview with John Robert Miller, he offered another of Jake Luster's stories about Eliot Beatty.

JOHN

... This same man, Eliot Beatty, that lived down the road from the store there, at Poplar Grove. And when Mr. Luster had it, Mr. Luster claimed that he come up there and bought a ten-cent lamp globe, and he took it home, put it on the mantle. It fell off the hearth and broke. He picked it up and took it back and told him it wasn't any good. He wanted his money back or another lamp globe. Said it wasn't made good enough. It fell off on the concrete, you know, off the mantle on the concrete and broke. And he took it back--picked it up in pieces to bring it back, because he was so tight. Said it wasn't any good.

2-21 STINGY CHARLIE

Motifs: A661.0.5.1 Soul bridge; easy for the righteous to cross, more difficult for others. (Cross)
F150.3 Challenge at entrance to otherworld. (Cross)
H1573.6.1 Ability to cross bridge as test of righteousness. (Thompson)
X597 Jokes about new arrival in heaven. (Thompson)

Bobby Lawson, November, 1978. This narrative is one of several stingy stories told at the Lawson's.
BOBBY

Up there are Kino where we lived, George Spencer, he was at Charlie Branstetter's store. And Charlie Branstetter was wanting every penny and dime he could get ahold of—and said that George's nephew dreamed that he died. In order to get over to the pearly gates he had to walk something like a two-by-four over the pits of hell.

CLORINE

Charlie had to walk it.

BOBBY

Everybody that went did! George said, well, he'll try to walk it, and he was on there walking, and said that he met Charlie Branstetter. He was coming back! He'd been over to the pearly gates, and he'd sent him back, because he knewed him and Charlie would get into a fight, and they'd both wind up down in the fire. And he said he happened to think he had a dime in his pocket. Reached in the pocket, got a dime, pitched it down there. Said Charlie went after it. Said he went on. [laughter] And when he said that, Charlie reached over and give him a big slap right on the head. Knocked his hat off.

2-22 STINGY MR. CURTIS

Motif: W152.14.2(f) Man gives his children dimes for going without supper. He takes them from under their pillows while they sleep, whips them in the morning for losing them.


This tale is told by Ina Jones with masterful timing. Clorine said she had not heard the story before. Two other versions were found in printed sources. Botkin's version, reprinted from Blakely, has a small boy trade pennies for a nickel, then nickels for a quarter, depositing them in a succession of small banks, until the quarters are deposited in a quarter-in-the-slot gas meter, which the child is let to believe is another coin bank. Malcolm Jones' version from Massachusetts is closer to Ina's, with the exception that his version has the miserly father sell hot biscuits to the hungry child in the morning instead of beating him.
Well, that wasn't as bad as the Curtis fellow that would hire his kids not to eat no supper. He gave them a quarter for them not to eat no supper, so he would save that much, you know. And he'd watch where they put it, and he'd take it that night. And then the next morning, he'd whip them for losing it, and then they'd be too mad they wouldn't eat no breakfast. And so that . . ., [laughter] that's what they told on him.

2-23 THE SETTING MULE

Motif: X1242 Lies about mules. (Baughman)


Dorson and Sandburg acknowledge Abraham Lincoln's use of this narrative in the form of an anecdote. Lincoln's version of the tale employed a balky horse rather than a marvelous mule. The horse is represented as being good at hunting birds. Rather than simply stopping at the river, Lincoln's horse sits down in the middle of a stream, to the embarrassment of its purchaser. The former owner then points out to the dupe that the horse is as good at fishing as it is at hunting birds. Dorson notes that he was told a similar story by Leroy Ferguson, of Michigan State University, with the exception that the horse sits down on a grapefruit rather than hunts birds.

One version of the tale, collected from R. W. Searce, of Jefferson County, Kentucky, exists in the WKUFOHA. Mr. Searce's version concerns a farmer with the mule that has a sore shoulder. The mule would stop as if pointing if the shoulder was hit. The farmer then convinces some hunters that the mule can point as well as their dog, and sells the mule to the hunters. In crossing the stream, one of the hunters hits the shoulder, causing the mule to stop short. The mule's former owner then advises the hunters that the mule will point for fish as well as birds.
Glen Berryman tells the tale with a dramatic, calculated rhythm which makes one conscious of the fact that a performance is taking place. Glen’s version takes on more of the character of a tall tale than an anecdote. The emphasis is on the marvelous abilities of the mule rather than the character being duped. It is also interesting to note that Glen makes the dupe an Indianan, suggesting the kind of interstate rivalries that exist in many regions of the country.

GLEN

I can tell you one about a mule. And it was supposed to have been so. But it wasn’t. This fella, he put an ad in the Courier-Journal, the Louisville Courier-Journal. He had a mule setter, to set birds, you know. You know bird hunters use a dog, you know.

KEITH

Oh, okay, yeah.

GLEN

He used a mule. This fella from Indiana come down and said, 'I'd just like to see if that mule will do what you say he will.' He said, 'Let's go out, and we'll try it.' Went out, and sure enough, he set a covey of birds. He said, 'I'm gonna take the mule, but I can't get it 'til tomorrow.' He said, 'How you going to get that mule home?' 'Well,' he says, 'I'll just come up here and put him on a truck, and go up here to Louisville, and cross over into Indiana with him.' 'No,' he says, 'You can't do that.' 'Well,' he said, 'I'd like to know why I couldn't.' He says, 'You can't.' He says, 'If I buy and pay for him, he's my mule.' 'Yeah, but,' he says, 'that mule'd rather fish as to hunt.' He wouldn't cross the river.

2-24 THE TURNIP AND THE POT

Tale type: 1920A Contest in lying. (Baughman)

Motif: X1431.1(a) Turnip grows so large that man puts a fence around it.


This double-barrelled windy is known extensively in the southern states as well as other sections of the country. Versions are reported from Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas as well as New York, New Jersey, Indiana, and Michigan. A loosely related version concerning a giant pumpkin is also known in my own home state of Nebraska. Rogers' version from Tennessee and Dobie's version from Texas also make use of a pumpkin rather than a turnip. Mr. Berryman artfully sets his narrative in a local store and begins the tale with one liar and an acre of ground. Dorson's version, set in Montana, and Arrowood's version, set in Texas, expand the turnip patch to a considerable less modest 250 and ten acres, respectively. Some more modest versions begin the tale with a half acre of ground, or even an exceedingly modest quarter acre, as published by Botkin.

Glen achieves the size of the kettle through the image of a telephone line across the top of the kettle, allowing its builders to communicate. This appears to be a modernization of the tale, as several of the printed versions indicate the size of the kettle by the fact that the workers are so far apart that they cannot hear on another's hammers.

Dorson's version provides a unique twist in that a Cornishman, who is subjected to an American's prevarications about the productivity of land in Montana, takes the American to a shipyard, and tells him they are building tanks in which to cook his produce. The kettle is not always saved for the punch line, as Arrowood's version from Texas has
the second liar pick the story up with the assertion that he got the contract to build the kettle to cook the turnip in.

Two unpublished versions from Kentucky are found in the WKUFFOHA. The first, collected in 1964(?) by Hollis DeHart from an anonymous source in Russel Springs, Kentucky, is set in Louisville. The second of these two versions was collected in 1966 by Lynn Farmer from J. W. Farmer, of Irvine (Estill County), Kentucky. Mr. Farmer's version, though somewhat shorter than Glen's, is very similar, with numerous matching elements.

---

I'll tell you a story. It happened right up the road up here. You know it used to be your loafing places in this country was around these little country stores. And they'd go in up at the store and set and swap jokes, you know.

One fellow, he said he cleared a acre. Went out in the woods and cleared him a square acre. He said he commenced working that ground in the spring of the year, and he worked it plum up to about in August. He built him a rail fence. You know what rails are? Built out of trees, you know. Built him a rail fence and put it around. He said he sowed it in turnips. And he said it was dry. There was one turnip come up, right out in the middle of the patch. And he said that turnip growed and pushed that rail fence down, plumb around that tree.

Well, they all laughed, you see, and one of the old fellers setting around, 'One time,' He waited a few moments, you know. Back when he was a young feller, he worked down in Birmingham, Alabama—steel mills down there. He said they built a big iron kettle. They had to use a telephone when they was putting on the place for the deal, you know. Had to use a telephone to talk back and forth to one another.

And this same old feller, he said, 'Well, what in the world would they want a kettle that big for?' He said, 'To cook that turnip in!' 
"At that time they didn't have no undertakers..."

3. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVES
3-1 THE FIRST EMBALMING AT NOBOB


HENRY At that time they didn't have no undertakers come out here and get them and dress them. They'd—the neighbors washed him and dressed—put on his clothes and fixed him ready to . . . They didn't embalm then.

KEITH How did they do that?

HENRY They didn't embalm them.

KEITH How did they get them ready for . . .

HENRY Well, they didn't do nothing; they just wash him, give him a bath and put on clean clothes. And then the undertaker come and . . . When they come to put him in the box; bury him—left the box there 'til time to bury him. They didn't take them over to a home then.

KEITH That's the way they did it in the thirties?

HENRY Oh, yeah. It ain't been—oh, I don't know how many years—not too many—embalmer. I guess thirty years ago they commenced embalming some, but none of them didn't embalm then. And they had to bury them, you know, they next day because they couldn't keep them. And now, everybody when they died, the undertaker comes and gets them, and takes them over there, and fixes them up ready for burial. But then they didn't.

The first man that was ever embalmed around here that I seen . . . done over here in an emabling room across the creek. Fella name of Zeke Jones. And he was about a hundred years old. And I held the light for him to embalm him, and that's the first one I ever seen done. They put it right under their arm, here, and drawed the blood out with one tube, and another tube pumped a red medicine in them to make the color, you know. That's the first one I ever seen done. He was about a hundred years old.

3-2 THE LOST DOG

Bobby Lawson related this experience concerning a lost dog. In the WKUFOHA two other similar narratives concerning lost dogs are
found. One, a legend from Park City (formerly Glasgow Junction, Barren County), Kentucky, collected by Debbie Williams; tells of a dog lost for twelve days in Mammoth Cave's "bottomless pit." Another narrative, related by William Bailey Allen, of Clarksville, Tennessee, is similar to Bobby Lawson's narrative in that the dog is trapped in a limestone crevice, and escapes due to the fact that it becomes thin from lack of food, enabling it to squeeze out of the crevice.

BOBBY

It was on my farm. And it was a boy a-helping me cut corn; putting it in the shock. And his dog was with him. And at night the dog didn't come in home. And it went on there, I guess six weeks. We never did hear of that dog any more. And that boy was a-gathering that corn by hand. And we heard a dog. . . . He says, 'Well, that is Brownie, sounds like.' And I don't know, we said something and the dog yelped again, and we went over where it was at, over to a bluff. And that dog--what he had done--he got after a rabbit or something and come--just like here was a bluff, and it went into a den. Well, the dog, he's a small dog, and he just scratched and filled it up behind him. And he went on over here to this side and he could . . . There was a little crevice in the rock--solid rock, but the dog couldn't get out. He was back in there, but he could see the light. And of course he had the hole filled up behind him, you know, where he was scratching. And that dog had been in there all of that time. Well, we seen the dog and knowed him. And we went and got the neighbors in there, and well, that boy's daddy--they come there and they went to digging on that bluff. And they finally dig in there and got that dog out.

KEITH

He'd been in there all that time?

BOBBY

Yeah, been in there, I guess--six weeks, I think it was.

CLORINE

Oh, it wasn't six weeks, honey, it was . . .

BOBBY

It was a long time; several days . . .

CLORINE

Twenty some odd days is what it was.

BOBBY

That dog, he was--he might near starved to death in there. Of course, [name], he carried him out, and . . . . 'Get that dog a drink of water!' He really had him a drink. Hadn't had no water or nothing all that time he'd been in there.
... But that oil, it brought people in here from everywhere. There was a Mr. Bolrack that came here from Arizona or New Mexico, one. He'd been a lieutenant governor and got to be governor, I think, part of the time there, and he had made a lot of money in the oil business. He said he started out real poor, but he'd got going around different places, and he found a big oil pool somewhere in New Mexico or Arizona, and I can't remember which it was. So he came here, and he got ahold of Bobby, and so Bobby was tickled to death--was going to help him to get other people to lease their land. He was going to let us have the land here for twenty dollars an acre. He'd been wanting just to pay ten dollars an acre, but he said if Bobby would help he would give him twenty dollars an acre; if he'd help him get some of the others to lease, on back further away.

The direction of the wells was south of here, is where the wells where they struck this oil. It was so close to the... That's why it was so interesting. So Bobby helped him get quite a few acres leased through here, and he did go ahead and give the twenty dollars an acre for our land. He thought my mother's land up here, that they could lease it, too. But of course, the way my mother's land was left, it was supposed to belong to her and to all of her children. It was a little hard to get all the children contacted. L. T. right there was in Missouri, I believe, at the time, weren't you?

L. T. Yeah.

CLORINE I called you about it, and we was going to see about leasing it. And he said whatever we wanted to do would be alright. And I called my sister that lived at... , and they said it would be alright. My brother that lives up here on the place, he didn't much want to do it. So we kept fooling around and fooling around, but...

INA Well, they offered me eighty dollars an acre, the man did that night, and Ed was supposed to be down here, and he was supposed to be here early next morning to--Ed was going to sign that thing. And so Eddy came and he wasn't here, and so then Eddy left, and they never did get together no more, and that was the end of it.

CLORINE And by that time, they were beginning to find that they didn't think there was any oil down this way. By the time--they had--it was early spring, I guess. The last person that I know that got a whole lot out of their lease was Thomas Jones and their family, over here. They got fifty dollars an acre for their lease. Of course that amounted to quite a bit of money.
KEITH Yeah.

CLORINE But that was the biggest that--actually got an acre around here. Now, I don't know how much they got up around Sulphur Lick, a few of them.

L. T. One of the reasons--you left out why it grew so fast, didn't you? Why they give so much more? They hit a--I'm thinking right, you can correct me. They hit a well up here that just come to the top of the ground, and just covered--quite a bit of--you know, gusher to the top.

CLORINE Well, yes, but they had not leased our land at that time.

L. T. Oh, they hadn't? I wasn't here.

CLORINE That was Thanksgiving day of 1965 when they hit that gusher, and it was running all over the bottom up there, down on the--They were going out with the bulldozer and digging holes to catch that oil in, because they didn't have any tanks to hold it. But it was the thing that really brought all these people in here. But then they kept a-drilling, and they had some fires in the wells, and they did find enough oil that some people got a whole lot of money out of their leases, at least. That was the main thing that most of them got their money out of, really, around this part. Because then they began to drill wells. And these people right over here, Strodes, they'd leased their land I think about the time this one came in, up here at Sulphur Lick. They'd leased it for a dollar an acre, I think it was. Well, they came down here and set up a well on their place, and drilled down it. And the evening that they were expecting to strike this sand that was supposed to produce the oil, that yard over there was just full of cars; people just standing there waiting on it. Well, they--it was a dry hole. So that's the kind of--when that dry hole was hit there, why then... At that time I think that they had already set up--they had a well over here on this place over here. They had a well right down here, up the creek from us; joins our farm. They drilled a well on this man right up here, that joins our farm. They drilled a well on this lady that lived right up here, that's just beyond our farm. And they drilled--at one time one morning I think I went out and I think I could hear about ten drills pounding away. But they never did find any oil down this way.

So when they found out there wasn't any oil down this way, why a lot of them just gave up and they quit trying to drill here. When they hit this dry hole over here on Strode's land, I think that cooled a lot of them down. They saw right then it wasn't going to amount to a whole lot. But a lot of them thought--I know Bobby come in here one day, says, 'Who knows,' says, 'This may be my chance to get rich!'
Mr. Bolrack, he just leased his land for a year; just for a year's time. And he thought that would be long enough to lease it, because--find out what they was going to do. So in a year's time he came back, and he decided he didn't want to put down any more wells and so out land was released then, from the . . . They also went from the--in this direction, you see. They came down in this direction from Sulphur Lick. Sulphur Lick's about--I guess about five miles from here. That well is probably about three and a half--that broke the flooring out--I imagine it's about three and a half miles. And they are still getting a little oil up through there. But they also went in the other direction, up in Monroe County, and they found wells--a few of them--here and there.

And one bunch of land along around close to Rock Bridge that belonged to one of my mother's cousins--they'd inherited it through the Norman family. And they kept wondering why it wasn't nobody ever came around wanting to lease their land. So they come to find out that my great grandfather, long about--oh, before 1900, I guess, he'd sold all his mineral rights on all the land he owned up through there. And he owned about five hundred acres. So the mineral rights had been sold to some other family. And nobody wanted to fool trying to trace them, you know. They just wouldn't trace them. Come to find out they didn't have any mineral rights on it.

They said that the first oil that they struck up here, around Sulphur Lick, close that way--they were drilling in an old water well up on a place just above Sulphur Lick. And then they started coming down this way, and they hit a flowing well.

It was discovered by accident, or . . . ?

More or less, I think. Yeah, I think it was more or less by accident.

Somebody happened to be drilling a well, and they found out there was oil around here?

That's the way I understand it, not, that they set down over this water well, and they discovered oil. Started this boom this time. There's been other oil booms throughout Barren County in different parts, but as far as I know, they had never drilled around through this section right in the Nobob section until then. I believe they said that they'd put down a well way over here, the other side of Nobob Creek once, way back several years ago, but they didn't find anything.

So it was quite a boom all right when the people were coming through here. There was something in the paper all the time about it. I cut out all the articles that I could find, including our paper that tells about it. Of course I wrote in my diary about it, too. I thought someday I might get all that
stuff together and make me a scrapbook out of it, but I haven’t had time to do that yet.

One day while we were--they were talking about leasing the land; and I think it was while they were still thinking about wanting to lease my mother’s land, up here, and this old Mr. Likens, I believe was his name--came in here, and he was telling about that he had drilled so many dry holes. And he was just talking about how he had drilled for oil all his life. And he was about seventy years old. And I set there and just listened to him talk and I just thought now, he really had oil fever, because all of his life he’d been trying to discover oil. And there he was, seventy years old, and one thing he said was, says, 'I'll tell you one thing,' he says, 'It takes steel and money to find oil.'

KEITH Yeah.

CLORINE 'It takes steel and money.' I kinda felt sorry for him. He’d never made much at it.

KEITH He was seventy years old and still hadn’t found his gusher.

CLORINE No.

3-3(b) R. Henry Miller, November, 1978.

HENRY I don’t remember what--they drilled four or five holes here on my place.

KEITH They did?

HENRY Yeah.

KEITH Did they come up with anything?

HENRY A lot of gas. I didn’t get no oil out of it--lot of gas. The bottoms down there, now, you can unscrew a pipe and gas just blows like everything. Brent struck a little oil down there in one of his bottoms--the farm next to me. They struck a little oil, but . . . . They drilled--I think it was four holes that was on my place. But there was no oil. I think that was--I don’t know what year that was. It’s slipped my mind what year it was.

KEITH Did people get pretty excited over that?

HENRY Oh, yeah, Yeah, there was a lot of excitement over the oil through here, but they never--they drilled, well they drilled on Glen Rich’s place, up here, and just all around. But they never did strike nothing; just trapped gas. And they drilled
and they drilled one up the creek, here. And they put—used gas for fuel for several years, but it played out. And they struck gas just across the creek from my bottom on the other end of the place. And they got a right smart little gas over there for several years, 'til it played out. No oil through here, just gas. I don't know where it come from. Looks like there'd be oil somewhere. Bound to come up with that oil, or there wouldn't be no gas.

3-3(c) Flava and Verna Froedge, March 3, 1978.

VERNA Well, they came to strike oil down here once, but it played out. That was important back when they was all rushing different places to see the well—when it began to produce, you know.

KEITH Where was it they had a well?

VERNA In the bottom, there.

FLAVA Seven hundred feet from the house, here. We used the gas here in the house here for two years. Played out.

3-4 THE KU KLUX KLAN

Though Gladys Pace's narrative contains images of both the Klan and a ghost story session, it is clear that she places both of them in the same category of frightening experiences. The fear employed by the Klan respected no color lines. Bobby Lawson's narrative is in a lighter tone than Gladys'. Both narratives crystallize around the anonymity employed by the Klan and its meeting place.

3-4(a) Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.

KEITH Do you know any ghost stories?

GLADYS Well I can't think of any right now. I used to. The Ku Klux Klan used to meet out here where this clubhouse is. There used to be a church building. The Ku Klux Klan, they dressed in sheets and all, and then you wouldn't know who they were. The men would go to the meetings, but we didn't go. The women stayed home for that.
I know we were setting by the fire one night and my father was gone, and someone else was there. I don't know who the person was even. They were telling some ghost stories and a noise was outside and it all scared the wits out of us. It scared us because we heard something outside, and we didn't know who it was--what it was, or anything. Could have been an animal or something, you never know. But people used to like to sit around the fire and tell ghost stories. And I guess I've more or less forgot about them, because I don't remember that much, really.

KEITH Was the Klan strong around here?

GLADYS That was just the one time that I--I mean one year that I remember they had some meetings. I don't know what they did, really. I mean, where they--what they were especially doing--why they wanted the Klan. I don't even understand that.

KEITH Were they trying to organize it?

GLADYS I suppose they was, though they did--they just had the--I just remember that one meeting a lot. Because my father was gone from the home and we got so scared. And I really don't know why they were in here.

KEITH Do you know if they had a cross burning?

GLADYS No, they didn't have then, that I remember. No, they just met, and some of them who were members came up there. I think [they] wanted to organize a club in here, or something. Why they wanted to do it, and what they was up to, I never did understand that. I was just a small child, eight or nine years old, and I just wasn't interested in things like that.

KEITH That's interesting.

GLADYS But they did have a Klan meeting. I know they had it in this church--a Presbyterian church. That church was built in 1914.

3-4(b) Bobby Lawson, November, 1978.

CLORINE Bobby, do you remember anything about the Ku Klux Klan?

BOBBY Yeah, I've seen them. They'd meet there at that Word's Chapel church. I was coming in there one night, and they all had their white robes on, and of course--white robes over the face. You didn't know who anybody was. I've seen them.

KEITH They were just kind of organizing through here?
Yeah, I never did know much about them. They said [name] belonged to them; he was one of them, but it—when they met there and come in with their white robes on, you didn’t know who any of them were.

[Name] was so tall, you’d know him from the rest.

I wouldn’t know him from a hundred other people. They came in down there at Word’s Chapel church house, you know. They met down there.

3-5 LOGGING


R. Henry Miller, November, 1978. A story with a similar theme and with comic overtones is reported in The Saga of Coe Ridge. The reader will also recall from the earlier section concerning legends that a log rolling over a man’s head is one of the explanations given for the name "Flathead."

Was there a lot of logging around here?

Logging?

Yeah, lumberwork?

Oh, yeah. There used to be a mill there. Used to be a mill between here and the store. Right this side of the store. And a log rolled over Ira Star and cut him and bled. And he cut his lip. He wore a scar all the rest of—’til he died.

Who was this?

Star, Ira Star. He worked at the mill between here and the store. They were on the hillside, and—rolling logs down to the mill, and it rolled over him and cut a place on his lip, there. And he carried that on ’til he died. It left a scar. And he lived for several years and died of a heart attack.
Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

GLENN I'll tell you something that happened to me and my brother one night. We was coming across the big woods and up ahead of us, a big light up there, about that big. Flash up! . . . go out . . . Flash up! . . . go out. We didn't want nobody to see us, we were probably up to something mean, or something. We was just boys. So we kept on walking around that, and walking around that. The timber'd been cut around there and the briars had come up. Great big briars, as tall as this ceiling. You've seen them in the woods like that. So we stopped. Flash up! My older brother, [name], he lives in Glasgow. So I said, "[Name], I'm not gonna go home and not find out what that is." I got down on my hands and knees and crawled in that briar patch, and what do you think that could have been?

KEITH I dunno.

GLENN Have you ever seen the big funnel shaped spider webs?

KEITH Yeah.

GLENN Great big here, and funneled right down to nothing, just about. And you know what a lightening bug is--a firefly? He was in there and . . . Flash! And that'd light that thing up, just like a big ball of fire.

"We could grow what we ate."

The Depression

3-7(a) John Robert Miller, November, 1978.

KEITH When the Depression hit, did it cause some of the people to come back from [sic., to] the farms?

JOHN Yes. Well, people were working in Detroit, you know. For instance, not many of them came out of Glasgow back to the

1 Though Mr. Miller lived most of his life between Nobob and Temple Hill, he now lives in Glasgow, the county seat of Barren County.
country, because Glasgow really wasn't hit. There was no factories there in Glasgow at that time; and Glasgow wasn't hurt like a lot of your bigger towns because, you know, Glasgow was real small, and it was just a community. It was a county seat, and we had a tobacco market here, you know--warehouses. And that was about the biggest thing, probably, in--outside of your merchandise, your grocery stores and hardware stores and this type thing, that was--no factories, though. Glasgow really didn't lose too much during the Depression. We lost a bank, you know. There was a bank lost in Glasgow. But not a lot of people lost their jobs, because there wasn't a lot of jobs in Glasgow at that time.

Now, Detroit, there would be a lot of people that lived--that was from the area went to Detroit to work in the factories there, and lost their jobs, and would have to come back And then they were--they would maybe rent tobacco, or something, you know. Try to hire out as farmers.

KEITH And they became tenants, some of them?

JOHN Right. They did. That was the only way they had of a living. And so they did that until they got back on their feet again, and then, of course after the Depression started easing off, why then they slowly drifted back--back north. But I do know of two or three families that did this that had to come back, you know, and were tenants until--'til it opened up again up north. Most of them that were used to making money in the factories were never satisfied back on the farm, because you know, it was real slow, a dollar a day, and your dinner. And that was about all anybody could afford to pay, because an acre of tobacco would bring maybe fifty dollars. So they just--there wasn't a lot of money on the farm. But he didn't spend any because, see there was no electricity, and there was a telephone. They had a telephone at home, but it was locally owned by--all of the community owned them.

... Of course the farmers learn to cope with hardship and no money, and this type of thing to start with, because they dont have much money anyway. So the Depressions were real hard on them in that area, but not as hard as it was on the cities, because they were used to doing without anyway. And so the only thing that was hard on them was making their payments that they--where they bought farms and land, and this type thing. It was hard on them to make their payments. But as far as their living, they lived about like they always did, because they raised their own foods, and they did their own sewing, and they made their own clothes, and so really, there wasn't--Now, I was born in '23--well, the Depression started in about '30, you know. And really I--I was going to school, going to grade school, and we never did really know any difference because we were used to hardship anyway. And my dad had a car. He had a '25 Model T Ford, and he used it about once a month
to drive into Glasgow, you know; take the chickens and then he'd take the eggs and butter, and what have you. And we kept it until 1931. So he bought a new 1931 Model A in 1931. So really, we lived about as good as we ever did, really.

KEITH So you did pretty well during the Depression...

JOHN Right. I mean as good as anybody in the area, because nobody had any--nobody had any money. And we lived as good as anybody else, so really, we were all about alike.

3-7(b) Flava Froedge, Verna Froedge, March 3, 1978.

FLAVA Just got all I had, that's what it did. They didn't nobody have no money for nothing. Got every darned penny I had but seventy-five cents. Every bit of it.

KEITH That was when? 1929?

FLAVA 1932, I guess. Thirty one or two.

KEITH Mrs. Smith, down here at Nobob says she remembers when the bank at Glasgow closed.

FLAVA I sure do! That's where they got all I had!

KEITH Did a lot of people lose money because they had it in the bank?

VERNA That's right.

FLAVA Both two or three banks closed over there. My daddy had right smart money in the Trigg Bank, and they got it, every bit. And then he put a little up there in the First National Bank. Been in there about a month, and they got that. When he died, he had six dollars in one bank, and seven in the other, and he was just as afraid of them as he could be. Said all it done, they give you a piece of paper showing you put it in, but it didn't show you get it out.

KEITH How did you do during the Depression? You said you were left at one time with about seventy-five cents?

FLAVA I done about the best I could. Just like anybody when they took all they had. Couldn't do much of nothing.

VERNA We always lived on the farm, and you know we'd raise what we eat. You know, always--I raised turkeys, and I raised chickens, and milked cows and raised our hogs. And we had some sows, horses and sheep and things. And there was always something to be sold that would bring in some money. But the last few years
since we've got older, and Flava worked in the stockyard all the time, and we've, you know, not raised and produced stuff like they did years ago.

KEITH Do you still raise turkeys?

VERNA No, I don't have turkeys now. I raised $534 worth of turkeys one year. Of course that don't sound like nothing now, but back years ago, when money was hard to get ahold of, we thought, you know, when we got a hundred dollars for something, you know, maybe we'd accomplished something.

FLAVA . . . I tried to work all the time, and borrowed a little money from Johnny Whitlow, up here, and made it through. But nobody would have your check; wouldn't offer to. I don't care how good you was. They wouldn't do it. You'd take the money and buy anything he had for half price, if you had the money.

I come down the road up there, and Johnny Whitlow wanted to know if I needed some money. I told him, well, yeah, I did. I didn't have but seventy-five cents in the world. He said, 'Me and Mertie's got ours out of the Summer Shade bank. We'll let you have some if you want.' I borrowed a hundred dollars from him. Of course I've always fooled with stock ever since I was a kid, and I'd take that hundred dollars and get out here, and buy a . . . . calf. It wasn't worth about thirty. They'd take fifteen for it to get the money; but they wouldn't have your check no way in the world. I made a lot of trips to Louisville. Three trips a week . . . . got ahold of a calf that was worth thirty dollars; you could buy it for fifteen dollars. I've bought stuff ever since I was a kid--fooled with stock.

Now, it was pretty trying times, right then when you didn't have no money. I went out to my daddy's and told him I had an insurance policy that was due the next day. He said, 'They've tied me in every bank. I can't buy my medicine.' Says, 'I'd let you have it, but I can't.' He says, 'That insurance company's any account, they'll pack you for thirty days until you do something.' I said, 'Yeah, I'm going to do something. I've got ninety hogs and a bunch of cattle out there. I'm going to sell enough so that I can get some money some way.' Me and Brent Shipley, over there, took three loads to Louisville, one right after another, just as fast as we could haul it. I got a little money. Hogs weren't worth nothing, though. I just got two and a half cents a pound for them.

. . . About eighteen months of it, there, was pretty rough. I don't know whether it was '31 or '32. Thirty-two, I think. It was rough all year. Nobody had no money; it was all tied up and they couldn't get it if they had it. All I had was seventy-five cents left when they tied mine up. Every bit. Wasn't enough to buy a smoke, it seems like.
KEITH When did it start getting better?

FLAVA I don't remember what year. Three or four years it got a little better, but it took a long time. 'Bout got it now in as bad shape in one way as it was then.

HENRY Well, people just stayed home, and didn't buy nothing, and we got along fairly well. The ones in debt couldn't pay nothing hardly, but things didn't cost nothing then. It didn't cost-- We raised what we eat and we didn't spend nothing--stayed to home. Couldn't--nobody could run a car much, and we used the team in that Depression, and there was not no gasoline or nothing, just plow parts is about all you could afford to buy, and we got along fair.

KEITH Did a lot of people come back from the towns?

HENRY To the farms?

KEITH Yeah.

HENRY Yeah, that's right, yeah, several. And you could hire a hand for fifty cents a day--handwork for me all the time, fifty cents a day.

KEITH There were a lot of people looking for work, then?

HENRY Yeah, they wanted to work; didn't have no money. They wanted to work, but then the farmers didn't have no money to pay them much, and fifty cents was top dollar at that time.

CLORINE Well, you were talking about how the Depression did people back then. 'Course when we came back from Indiana we didn't have anyplace to live and so my uncle lived down here on this farm--Ira Jones--Kenneth Smith's father-in-law, he was. He bought a little cabin here from her uncle, and we moved up there, and it just had one room in it at the time, but Uncle Ira built another room onto it, and we lived in that for about seven years.

INA We'd been living there eight years, when your daddy bought this place over here, and we moved over here.

KEITH What kind of cabin was it? It was just one room?
It was just one room, but they had built another room on, the same size. There was two rooms in the house, and there was eight of us all together, when we were all there.

How did he build the other room onto it?

Just put on a little shed, like...

Kind of a lean-to kind of thing?

Un huh [affirmative]. That first room was fairly warm, because it had--my uncle that had built it was an old bachelor, and he'd built it up to where it was real warm. It had tongue-in-groove flooring; tight flooring. It'd been papered on the inside, but it hadn't been sealed on the inside. The two-by-fours were still showing. But yet he'd papered... it made it real warm. But the stove we put up there--we didn't have a chimney. We had a piece of tin up in the wall, with a hole in it, and you'd run the stovepipe out that piece of tin.

You had a flue?

Yeah, yeah, that was the flue. And that's the way we had the flue in the kitchen, too. But when Uncle Ira built the half of the house that was the kitchen, he had cracks in it that wide. Some of them were about an inch wide. Whenever we'd spill something on the floor, we'd just take a teakettle full of water and a broom and we'd go sweep and wash it under the floor.

Nowadays and times, people want four bedrooms and a bath and all the modern conveniences. And back then they had two rooms and a path and a Sears Roebuck catalog.

And sometimes they didn't have a Sears Roebuck catalog.

Two rooms and a path!

But the thing about it was, we were really well off to what some people... Mama remembers the family down the road, that they had a little child, I guess he was eighteen months old, wasn't he? This man worked sometimes at the stave mill. There was a stave mill up next to here, and he was working some up there. And they were living in a little old cabin. They used to call it the old Powell cabin. It belonged to some heirs, I think, some way or another, and they couldn't sell it. I don't know what, really,... but they'd rent it out to people... and you really did have to have no place to go if you lived there. But what I'm trying to say is why they kept it in the family so long. They just didn't know. I guess as long as Mrs. Powell was living, or something--but anyway, they'd rent it. And this one family that lived there--after they moved out. The stove that they had used was a lard can.
KEITH What kind of stove was it?

CLORINE ... People used to get lard in fifty gallons. I don’t know if they still serve it in fifty gallon cans or not...

BOBBY Fifty gallons!

CLORINE Oh, fifty pounds is what I mean. I don’t know how many gallons it was, but fifty pounds.

KEITH A big barrel? That they burned wood in?

CLORINE No...

BOBBY It was about that high, and ...

CLORINE ... and made out of tin...

BOBBY ... Oh, about that big around.

INA They cut a hole in the lid of the tin, and had a pipe fixed in it, and they had a hole in the side of the can...

CLORINE Yeah, some way or another. And now, that was what they had for heat, and I don’t know what they slept on. Mama, didn’t you say they had just a little...

INA I don’t know what they slept on. I didn’t see a bed. I don’t think. I went down there, because he was a--bottomed chairs, and made baskets and things, and I bought a basket from him, and I had him bottom a chair, too. And so he wanted to take his pay in sweet potatoes, and weighing them up to him, I made a mistake, and I didn’t give him enough. I got to thinking about it, and after he went back home, I brought the rest of them down there to him, and that’s how we come to know about it.

3-7(e) Bobby Lawson, March 8, 1978.

BOBBY I worked for my daddy until I was twenty year old, and I didn’t get anything for what I worked for. The year that I was twenty-one I got part of the crop. I got--my tobacco brought--I done extra good that year. It got a hundred and seventy dollars, and I owed my daddy seventy [for] going to school. And I paid him off, and I had seventy left. I put it in the bank, and the banks closed and got that.

CLORINE Well, then, tell him the next year you made forty dollars...
BOBBY  I made forty dollars, and--I made forty dollars the next year. I got disgusted, and didn't make much, but I just made forty dollars worth. But by the time next fall run around, I saved another forty with it, and I had eighty dollars. I was considered a man of money, then. And I think I got a hundred and twenty-five dollars that year. And I was known to a doctor, come and borrowed money from me.

NADINE  Which doctor was that?

BOBBY  But I didn't put no more money in banks. I put it in the post office. I put money in the post office; I'd get two percent interest. Boy, was that easy money! Two percent interest.

KEITH  That was the Postal Savings Program?

BOBBY  Yeah, I put it in the post office.

3-7(f)  Ruby Smith, February 25, 1978.

RUBY  I was only a little girl. I can remember, you know, we had telephones where you crank, and you ring a long, or two shorts, and--somebody's ring. It was a party line. And I can remember most vividly the bank closing in Glasgow, and everybody had his life savings, you know, tied up, and couldn't get them. And they'd worked a lifetime, maybe to save a thousand dollars, or five hundred, and it was gone! And I can remember the people crying--oh, it had such a terrible effect on me. I can remember people just crying, and saying, 'What are we going to do?' And that's all you'd hear, you know. But it was--I can't recall that very many people lost any farms or homes, or anything like that out in here, 'cause--they just lost their savings.

3-7(g)  Gladys Pace, March 2, 1978.

KEITH  How did the Depression affect this area?

GLADYS  Well, there were a lot of people--maybe there was a lot of stealing that was going on at the time.

KEITH  A lot of what?

GLADYS  Stealing. I mean people had to live; to eat, and about all that you could steal would be food. Your smokehouse might be robbed if you didn't watch it, and your fruit cellar, if you had one, and your corn crib. Because people had their, you
know, we had mills in the community that would grind our wheat and corn for our meal and our flour, and they would—I know we’ve had things like that taken from our home. Well, we didn’t—that was in 1929. It was in—I think it was in the last years in grade school at the time, and of course we—we had one dress a year to wear anywhere, and we—it didn’t bother us so bad but what we were on the farm and we could grow what we ate. We didn’t have to buy things, only my mother would sell eggs so we could get our sugar and matches—we’d have to make the salt and soda, and that’s all she had to buy, really as far as have to buy. . . . And my mother did my sewing. So really, the Depression years—and people hadn’t got the habit of, you know, running to town and buying a lot of things like they do now. The children seemed to not know that you had to do without things. And we just learned to do without, I guess. I mean we hadn’t gotten used to having a lot. Like . . . my father was paying on a farm. He took those things—you might say during those Depression years his sheep was all that helped him out. He had sheep and cattle and he had a payment to make in the middle of the year, so he would sell his wool and some [lambs?] to get the payment on his farm in the middle of the year. And we didn’t have to buy a lot of other things. . . . Of course we had two tenants on the farm and they—he would pay them, and sometimes it was in corn—you know, give them corn to make their meal, and maybe raise a garden, and they’d have a little tobacco, which was running three or four cents a pound. Things like that that people would think was terrible now.

KEITH

You said sometimes people got into the smokehouse or the fruit cellar. How did you guard against this?

GLADYS

With a lock on ‘em. They’d have locks on. And we usually knew the people in the community who did things like that and we’d more or less watch for them. Sometimes they’d go to the field with their tractors, if they had any tractors. My father had an old tractor that he kind of fixed up. . . . And if they came to the house to eat, sometimes when they’d get back the gas tank was empty. And that was something—they was some people that didn’t work very well.

. . . Well, we knew of one guy, that, he took some corn out of his crib. He lived on our place at the time. And he begin taking corn to the store and selling it, and we found out where it was going to. Some things like that. But my father was one of these people who wouldn’t try to hurt other people if he knew they was desperate for money and knew they needed things. And as long as he could make out without it, he didn’t press any charges.
KEITH How did the Depression affect you?

HOBART Just like everybody else. It was pretty hard. Well, back then you worked for seventy-five cents a day; fifty cents a day. And you was lucky to get it. I can remember when I worked for seventy-five cents a day. And you had to work from sunup to sundown to get it.

BOBBY It was down in Monroe County, was—back during the Depression, why he couldn't get ahold of enough sugar to make his moonshine with, and I managed to get ahold of—and I had corn. He'd come get his corn, and put it in a barrel, sour it, and he'd buy the sugar. Gave me half a gallon of moonshine out of every run he made. And I'd take it and put it in my crib; scratch a hole in the corn and put it down in there. And my daddy'd watch it for me. He didn't know it, though. He wouldn't want nobody to come by and get in the corn, of course.

KEITH He thought he was just watching corn.

BOBBY Yeah. One time, I wanted to see it run. I wanted to see what it looked like; one of them things running. They told me, 'Well,' he said, I could come and see it. It was by a big spring, and just like a molasses mill. And the way they had that thing, it was a—the box where they had the mash in, where the ... is capped over, had a lid on it. And of course it was a hollow pipe run from that for the steam to get out. It'd go over and coil around in another barrel of cold water. Well, that'd condense it. It'd come up—come out—oh, about like a rye straw down the lower end of it.

And I was sitting there, watching that; enjoying seeing it run. And I was scared all the time, though, too. I'd—bird'd fly through there; I'd look to see what it was. I'd think something was going to get me. And it—one time I looked up through the woods, and it was a man dressed up—new overcoat on. I says, 'Lookee yonder,' I says, 'Who is that?' Well, the ones that was a—running it, well, that scared them. They thought it was the law. Well, they started to run. Well, I didn't start, I flew! And I went through a briar patch that a bumble bee couldn't have got through it. I run off and left all of them. I didn't want to get caught there that day. And finally I noticed—I got back in sight distance—looking through the window; I saw they was still there. And I walked up closer, and I seen they was all right. It just happened to be another fella coming after some moonshine.
AFTERWORD

But there's nobody that loaf's around the store to speak of at all. We used to go up there... over close to Nobob. And there'd be a store full [of men]--talk and tell their big windy tales, you know--what they'd done, and what they was making, and anything they could bring up to talk.

--Creed Berryman, 1914-1978

It is true that traditions die, just as surely as their creators and followers do, but it is also certainly true that an item of folklore may enjoy oral and literary circulation in our midst for many years, affecting us, and being affected by us. After all, is that not what is meant by the word "traditional"--something which has outlived and continues to outlive the situationally and culturally defined generation of its creators, and communicates ideas and values to those people beyond their reach.

Almost without recognizing the fact that they themselves were still actively involved in telling the stories heard around Nobob for many years, some Nobob residents regard the stories they told and the tradition of tale telling itself as the surviving remnant of a lost art. The fact that such a rich vein of narrative can still be found at Nobob points to the conclusion that the tale tradition at Nobob remains vital and adaptive. Glen Berryman's tale of the first telephone at Nobob (2-8) gives us a hint of how modern technology becomes woven into tradition. Witness also the story concerning Elliot Beatty's broken lamp globe (2-20), and the use of the telephone in the story of Rob Borders (1-5).
During the interviews I conducted, much comment was made concerning the settings in which narratives used to be told. The most often mentioned settings for tale telling were the local stores, which were especially well populated with tale tellers during inclement weather.  

They used to—wet days and cold days, they'd meet at the store and talk, and laugh and have a good time. But they don't do that now.

Hobart Wilburn reported that in the winter time "loafing" at the store was an activity which followed cutting the firewood in the morning. While some of the residents of Nobob referred to the practice of congregating in the store as "loafing," Clorine Lawson referred to the practice as "gossiping." Another setting that was mentioned with regard to narrative activity was the harvest. The harvest brought crews of men and women together in an occupational and social situation, providing good opportunities for narrative activity.

Well, you'd just go from one crop to the other and thrash it out; have a big dinner; all get together and tell big lies.

R. Henry Miller, however, disagreed with the practice of telling tales at harvest time.

It [tale telling] made too much fuss and took too much time. When they'd go to thrash, they'd want to get done, and they had to work.

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3 Glen Berryman, April 4, 1978.

Henry's son, John Robert, gave some insight as to who told the tales.

Usually when a person got to be fifty years old on the farm—he had his kids that were growing up, and they pretty well did the work, and he just did the overseeing, and you know—set back and tell tales. My dad wasn't like that.¹

A third setting for tale telling was mentioned by both Clorine Lawson and Creed Berryman. It was common practice for families to make an evening's visit with a neighbor. It is because of such visits that Clorine remembers many of the stories told by the Kingrey family.²

What do these narratives tell us about the nature of folk narrative and about the community of Nobob? They illustrate to us that although each individual narrative taken by itself might be quite simple, with few characters and a single chronological line, together they form a complex, interrelated system. The narratives are interrelated with each other and they are interrelated with the society from which they emanate. For example, it becomes easier to understand Kenneth Smith's tale of a ghost prank (2-11) if we also look at R. Henry Miller's personal experience story concerning burial procedures and the first embalming at Nobob (3-1).

Some of the narratives are generically complex. The cycle of narratives surrounding Ambrose Huffman ranges from legend, to anecdote, to lies, to personal experience stories—a fine example of how the folk, given one theme or topic, will respond in a variety of ways.³ Within

³Dągh and Vaszonyi, "Multiconduit Hypothesis . . ."
a given narrative, as I earlier pointed out, the genre can shift, and then shift back again.

Even if we do not go looking for the "kernel of fact" in some of the legend material presented in this collection, or try to reconstruct what happened on Huffman's Hill in 1861 (1-4), there are scores of small details about everyday life scattered throughout these narratives which paint a historical picture of Nobob as it sees and remembers itself. Just as Theodore Blegen and Linda Døgh were able to extract details and information from diaries and letters, ¹ so also in these narratives details can be noted on how business was transacted, how farming was conducted, what kinds of tools were used, what kinds of entertainment took place, how courtship was carried out, and so on. Some of these details will, except for a few diaries and letters, pass with the generation that told these tales to me. Some details will be crystallized in the narrative tradition and survive for a time. New generations will select and add new details to fit a new age. And as surely as the tobacco will be planted next year at Nobob, the curing process continues.

¹Blegen, Grass Roots History, pp. 14-80; Linda Døgh, "Two Letters From Home," JAF 91:361 (July-September, 1978); 808-822.
Plate 19

Tobacco curing
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