

Content Warning: Libraries and archives collect materials from different cultures and time periods to preserve and make available the historical record. As a result, materials such as those presented here may reflect sexist, misogynistic, abusive, racist, or discriminatory attitudes, actions, or ethnic slurs that some may find disturbing, harmful, or difficult to view.

Cp80: American Folklore
Spring Semester, 1965

Text: Dorson, Richard M., Buying the Wind (Chicago, 1963).

On reserve: Dorson, Richard M., American Folklore.
Thompson, Stith, The Folktale.

In the reference room: Thompson, Stith, Motif-Index of Folk Literature
R398.012/T377
Thompson, Stith, The Types of the Folktale
R016.398/Aa74a.

- I. Feb.²: Aims of the Course
Feb.⁴: Some Definitions. Collecting Folklore.
Reading: BW 1-20; T 3-10, 406-412.
- II. Feb. 9: Indices and Archives.
Reading: T 406-427
Feb. 11: Belief and Superstition.
Reading: BW 27-39, 333-340.
- ✓ III. Feb. 16: Birth and Infancy.
Feb. 18: Death and Forerunners
Reading: BW 63-64.
- IV. Feb. 23: Luck
Feb. 25: Water-Witching
Reading: BW 319-323.
- V. Mar. 2: Plants and Animals
Reading: BW 118-128
Mar. 4: Folk Medicine
Reading: BW 323-332.
DECISION: COLLECTION OR PAPER.
- VI. Mar. 9: Healers and Second Sight.
Reading: BW 261-269, 455-459.
Mar. 11: Witches and Wonder Workers.
Reading: BW 55-62, 111-117, 314-319.
- VII. Mar. 16: Legend: A Definition.
Reading: BW 62-63, 436-441; ~~2~~(recommended) T 234-271
Mar. 18: The Devil in Belief and Legend
- VIII. Mar. 23: MIDTERM PRELIM
Mar. 25: Ghosts and Haunted Houses. PROGRESS REPORT
Reading: BW 191-192, 300-313.

SPRING VACATION

- IX. Apr. 6: Guest Lecturer: Ellen Stekert, Wayne State Univ.
Apr. 8: Legends: Conclusion
Reading: BW 295-299.

- X. Apr.13: Jokes and Anecdotes
Reading: BW 78-94, 129-135, 181-189, 351-358, 442-454
Apr.15: Jokes and Anecdotes.
- XI. Apr.20: The Tall Tale
Reading: BW 347-351; AF 199-243
Apr.22: Tall Tale Heroes
Reading: *BW 21-161
- XII. Apr.27: Characters and Folk-Heroes.
Reading: BW 40-54, 65-77, 512-522.
Apr.29: Characters and Folk-Heroes.
Reading: *BW 163-288
- XIII. May 4: The Märchen .
PAPER DUE.
May 6: The Märchen.
Reading: BW 168-180, 203-212, 246-260, 341-346
423-435.
- XIV. May 11: The Märchen.
Reading: Northeast Folklore IV(1963), 1-70
May 13: North American Indian Folklore
Reading: *BW 289-414.
- XV. May 18: North American Indian Folklore.
May 20: North American Indian Folklore.
Reading: *BW 415-535.

Quizzes: You should expect a quiz on any day for which reading has been assigned. Missed quizzes count as zero; in order to have the zero removed, you must give me a written excuse within a week of the cut.

Readings: Assignments that are starred and underlined follow Dorson's regional plan for the book. You will already have read much of the material in each of these sections when we took up the particular genres along the way. Nevertheless, you should either re-read or (at the least) review this material, and of course you should read carefully Dorson's introductions and the material not previously assigned.

Paper: The paper for this course may be either a first-hand collection of tales and legends or a study based on other people's first-hand collections. Let's consider these separately:

1. A Collection: Turn in a collection of about two dozen items (not counting beliefs and superstitions) of folklore interest, following carefully the mimeographed "Guide for Collecting Folklore and Writing the Report for Cp80: American Folklore." There is only one additional instruction: a third to a half (though it could be more) of your collection must be on some special topic. For example, you might include a dozen variants of ~~the~~ one joke or legend. Or it might be a collection of tales about one specific type of person ("athlete" or "professor" stories). You should have settled on a "special topic" by the March 25

progress report. If there is any aspect of this assignment that you do not understand, please come talk to me about it at your earliest convenience.

2. A Study: Usually a study will involve working with material to be found in the Northeast Folklore Society Archives. You should settle on a topic by March 4. Make an appointment with me before that date for this purpose.

Student: Put this page in place
of page 7 in the "Guide"

Your name

Harriet Farnham-14-

page number in
your collection

(Pulpit Rock)

Title of story. Since title
was supplied by the collector, not
the informant, it's in parentheses.

The Devil preached a sermon to the fish on Pulpit Rock at
Robbinston. The Devil did not like the attitude of the haddock. He
jumped in and caught one with his thumb and finger. To this day the
haddock has dirty marks on each side of its neck where the thumb and
finger touched and marks on its sides where the haddock was
scratched as it was trying to get away.

Where and when
collected

Coll.: Red Beach, Me., Oct. 24, 1960

Name, age, and
address of informant

Inf.: Martin Sullivan⁽³⁰⁾, RFD 1, Calais.

C

Type of transcript
See page 3 for this.
Here it means "Informant's
content, but my words"

Note: Mr. Sullivan did not believe the story; said it was "just a
yarn he'd heard," but he'd often told the story to his children.
He wasn't sure that this is how Pulpit Rock got its name, but
that's where the story is supposed to have taken place.

This is Motif A 2217.3.2 Marks on certain fish from Devil's fingerprints.

Put anything in the notes that bear on
informant's attitudes. Also include here any
comments he might have made on the story.
And any comparative material you can give.

Self - 26

When passing salt & pepper shakers, it's unlucky to pass them hand to hand. You should set them on the table between people & the next person pick them up.

From family. Don't believe, but do it if convenient. Don't make a thing of it in company.

Anita Bassell
Wayne, Maine
Feb. 14, 1967

0146
Informant: Clarence Oakes, Bradley, Me., 12.

Belief: Bubbles in your coffee is a
sign that you'll come into some money.

Background: He heard this from his mother,
but doesn't believe it because
neither knows of anyone it has
happened to.

Collector: Joanne Lobdell
146 N. Brunswick
Old Town, Me.

Date: Feb. 10, 1967

0233

Informant: Doug Aitken 2921 Manchester Road
(Phi Kappa Sigma) Shaker Heights 22, Ohio 44120

Belief: It is good luck if when you pour a
cup of coffee, all the bubbles form a
circle in the center of the cup.

Background: Doug can't remember where he
heard this belief, and does not believe
it.

Collector: Betsy Fairclamb
Cuddy's Harbor, Me.

Date: October 10, 1966.

0236

Informant: Maryanne Butson 68 Brook Street
Noank, Conn.

Belief: It is bad luck to take the last
portion of piece of food from a
platter. (Will be an old maid)

Background: Maryanne strongly believes this.

Collector: Betsy Tackland
Cundy's Harbor, Me.
Date: October 9, 1966.

0310

Informant - Martha Biscoe, 75 Forest Ave, Orono, Me., 60

Belief - If you scoop up & eat the bubbles on your soup or drink, you will have more money than otherwise.

Background - She doesn't remember where she heard this and she doesn't really believe it but she does it with her coffee in the morning.

Marj Biscoe
75 Forest Ave.
Orono, Me.
Oct. 9, 1966.

0344 44

Inf.: Mrs. Tarbox, 246 Ocean House Road, Cape Elizabeth,
Me., 36

Belief: A bubble in your coffee means ~~that~~ you will get
some money.

Background: Mrs. Tarbox said that whenever she had had
bubbles in her coffee she never received any money.

Coll.: Pamela Germain
York Hall
Univ. of Maine

Date: October 30, 1966

0388

INFORMANT: self 62

BELIEF: It is wrong to eat with head covered (men)

BACKGROUND: This was very common belief among our N. B., folk. Eating was regarded as a semi-religious ritual and a covered head meant disrespect for the Divine source of the blessing of nourishment. I still shudder at seeing males eating in restaurants with heads covered, although I am not religious; the belief was firmly ingrained in us as children.

COLLECTOR: Edward M. Macdonald,
Hampden,
Maine

DATE: Nov. 23, 1964

0466
INFORMANT: self 62.

BELIEF: Taking something on your plate when you already
had plenty.

BACKGROUND: If done unconsciously, this meant somebody
was coming to the house hungry. Very common
belief in N. B., when I was young.

COLLECTOR: Edward M. Macdonald,
Hampden,
Maine

DATE: Nov. 18, 1964

INFORMANT: self.62

0480

BELIEF: Sing before you eat,
You'll cry before you sleep.

BACKGROUND: I think everybody I knew as a boy had a
crack at quoting this one. Very common in
Kent County, N. B., up to 1922, when I left
N. B.

COLLECTOR: Edward M. Macdonald,
Hampden,
Maine

DATE: Nov. 18, 1962

INFORMANT: self. 62

0483

BELIEF: It wasn't good to throw away anything that could be eaten, because some day you'd be hungry and wish you hadn't.

BACKGROUND: This belief was a must in my family. I remember my grandmother quoting this poem:

I must not throw upon the floor
The crust I cannot eat,
For many a hungry little child
Would think it quite a treat.
All wilful waste makes woeful want
And I may see the day
That I shall wish I had the crust
That once I threw away. (N. B. 1908)

COLLECTOR: Edward M. Macdonald,
Hamden,
Maine

DATE: Nov. 18, 1964

6558

Informant: Mrs. Grace Greene, 20 March Circle,
Bangor, Maine (38)

Belief: If there is food left over from a meal
there will be rain the next day.

Collector: Carol Vachowski
N. High St.
Bridgton, Maine

Date: November 16, 1966

Informant: Sandra Howard, 20 Mill St, Springvale, Me., 22
1557

Belief: If you start to eat a piece of bread, then
take another one before you have finished
the first some one is going hungry.

Background: If she made a pig of herself her
mother would tell her this.

Collector: David Mann
RFD Springvale, Me.

Date: March 31, 1965

Informant: Essie M'Avoy, 81 Quince Ave., Haverly, Me., 49.
1587

Belief: If you take another helping of something while you still have some left on your plate, someone's coming surgery.

Background: This statement is always made at our table when we take something, forgetting we still have some of same, almost a tradition. Nobody has ever come.
TYPICAL ANSWER: "He'd Better Hurry!"

Collector: Margaret M'Avoy
81 Quince Ave.
Haverly, Maine

Date: April 2, 1965

1661
Informant: Goldie Morse, South Harpswell, Me., 54.

Belief: If you get a meal ready for your husband or brother and then have to wait for him to come. If after you've waited a long time you sit down, he'll come.

Background: Thinks it really works

Collector: Ellen Peabody
South Harpswell, Maine

Date: March 30, 1965.

1971

Informant: Self, 26 Phillips Road,
Falmouth, Maine, 54.

Belief: If you discover little bubbles on your cup of tea or coffee formed when milk or cream is added, quickly ensnare them on your tea-spoon and swallow them. If you do this before they break, it means that you will soon get some money.

Background: I have been familiar with this saying for many years. Even today, at home or in restaurants, when bubbles appear on the top of the beverage, I still have friends who will revive this saying or I'll say it to them if the bubbles are in their cups.

1972
Informant: Mrs. Lillian Russell, Gray, Maine
age. 54

Belief: Sing at the table; cry before you sleep.

Controlling data. She spent her childhood in
Montello, Wisconsin.

Dorothy Russell
Gray, Maine

April 5, 1963

Informant: Wm. J. Spert, 42, Washington, Me. ¹⁹⁷³
Belief: If you stir your coffee clockwise, ¹²⁷⁰ you're a farmer; counter clockwise, you're an aristocrat.
Background: Learned in Guilford, Conn. from a friend.

Collector: Sharon Spert
R2D Liberty, Me.
Date: July 26, 1964

Informant: Self Machiasport, Maine 1974

Belief : If you have bread on your plate
and take another peice, someone
will go hungry in the family.

Controlling data - my grandmother always said
this.

Robert E. Allen

Informant: Ida Dow, East Machias, Maine
About 65 years old

1875

Belief: Taking the last piece of bread on the plate
or to throw away bread is to invite bad luck.

Controlling data: She has always heard this and
refrains from doing it whenever
she can.

Lina Bagley
East Machias, Maine
Nov. 14, 1963

Inf (P)
Have heard this for years.

1976

If you take a slice of bread
or any food while you still
have some of same on your
plate Company will come
to your house within a
short time.

Dec 7, 1962

Elmer B. Proda
42 Pleasant Street
Houlton, Maine.

1977
INFORMANT: Claude de la Roche, Guatemala & France
23 years old

BELIEF: "In France it is believed bad luck to
cut a pie in half first, when dividing
it."

CONTROLLING DATA: Some housewived believe this.

Ann Papadopoulos
Orono, Maine
May 8, 1963

1978

Informant: Mary E. Hilton, about 65.
Perry, Maine

Belief: Wish on the point of your piece
of pie and do not eat the point until
last and your wish will come true.

Controlling data: Always heard this,
does not believe this.

Virginia Pottle
Perry, Maine
Oct. 6, 1963

Informant:

self

1979

25 years old

Belief: Never eat the hole of a
donought.

Controlling data: Heard when I was a
child in Machios.

Sandra J. Pottle
Perry, Maine
Oct. 20, 1963

1980

Informant: Elaine Smith, Campton, New Hampshire, 28.

Belief: Never sing before breakfast otherwise opposition will come.

Background: Grandmother strictly forbade the relatives to do this. She strongly believes in all these signs and what they portend.

Collector: Sr. St. Jude
273 Minot Ave.
Auburn, Me.

Date: Nov. 18, 1963

1981

INFORMANT: ELIZABETH GIBSON, KENNEBEC HALL, ORONO, ME., 20.

BELIEF: IF YOU SING AT THE TABLE, YOU'LL BE STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.

BACKGROUND: SHE DOESN'T BELIEVE IT, BUT HER GRANDMOTHER WAS DOING DISHES BY A WINDOW WITH A KNIFE AND WAS KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS BY LIGHTNING. TO THIS DAY SHE CLAIMS SHE SANG AT THE TABLE THAT NIGHT.

COLLECTOR: MARY DODLEY

KENNEBEC HALL

ORONO, MAINE

DATE: FEBRUARY 8, 1967

Mrs. Frances Pike, 49
Houlton, Me.

1982

Belief—

Singinq at the dinner table is
a sign of bad luck.

Heard from my mother since I was
a child.

James Pike
Fort Kent, Me.

Dec. 3, 1982

Informant: Mrs. Frances Brown 1983
Grewett, Maine

Belief: Do not sit down to eat with 13
at the table; bad luck.

Background: This belief was known and
believed by the many who also felt that 13
was an unlucky number.

Collector:

D. C. Lewis

B. R. H. S.

Boothbay Harbor

Maine

3/11/64

Informant: Carolyn Somers, Limestone, Maine
21 years old

Belief: If you sing before breakfast, you will
cry before night.

Controlling data: Heard this as a child, and
follows it.

Carolyn Somers
Limestone, Maine
May 13, 1963

Informant: Self

Belief: Sing before you eat (in the morning), cry before
you sleep.

Background: Believed in Powersville, Maine

Collector: Jennie Powers Boynton
RFD#2, Box 294
Brewer, Maine

Date: 1910-on

Inf. Mrs. Edna Gilpatrick
Miss Mabel Merrill
Lisbon, Maine
1938

Cure: "One who sings early in the morning will cry
before going to bed."

LC: WPA mf 189

Violet Ballard Age 60

West Enfield, Maine

Belief: Laught before seven, cry before eleven.

Jo Ann Bowden

Dec. 6, 1962

Limestone, Maine

Mrs. Frances Pike, 49
Houlton, Maine

Belief -

Laugh before you eat; Cry before
you sleep.

Hears from my mother since childhood.

James Pike
Fort Kent, Me.
Dec. 3, 1962

Informant: Judy Morley, Watertown, New York

19 years old

Belief: Sing before breakfast, cry before night.

Controlling data: She believes this. She never sings before breakfast. Each time she has ever sung before breakfast, she ended up bawling.

Margaret Markowski
University of Maine
Orono, Maine

April 23, 1964

Informant: Margaret Crowley, Addison, Maine
72 years old

Belief: Sing before seven , cry before eleven.
Sing beofre you eat, cry before you
sleep.

Controlling data: She said that her mother used
these sayings if they were not acting
as they should.

Charlotte Look
Addison, Maine

Nov. 8, 1963

Informant: Sharon Graffam, Bath, Maine
student - University of Maine

Belief: If you sing before breakfast, you'll cry
before supper.

Controlling data: Sharon believes this to be very
true. She said that it always happens to
her.

Janice Swiek
Caribou, Maine
May 5, 1964

A

Informant: Elizabeth Beal, Milbridge, Maine
Age: 48

BElief: If you sing before you eat, you'll cry before
you sleep.

Controlling data: This was a saying told to her by her
mother. As a result she doesn't like singing
before breakfast. I don't really think she
believes it.

Joyce Bailey
Milbridge, Maine
Sept. 29, 1963

Informant: Mrs. Richard Adams, Perry, Me
27 years old

Belief: "Sing before you eat, cry before
you sleep."

Controlling data: Told by her mother, when
she (informant) would sing
in the morning, when she
was a child in Robinston.

Sandra J. Pottle
Perry, Maine
Oct 11, 1963

Informant: Mrs. William E. Colbath, RFD#1 Raymond, Me.

Belief: Sing before breakfast, cry before nightfall.

Background: No belief in this - got it from Mother.

Collector: John R. Buckley
62 Irving St.
Portland, Maine

Date: 14 November 1964

Informant: Mrs. Belmont Adams, Park Ave. RFD1, Scarboro,
Maine, age:47

Belief: Sing before breakfast, Cry before bed.

Background: She was told this by her mother and as
a little girl strongly believed it.

Collector:

Alice Rideout

323 York

Date: Feb. 14, 1964

Informant: Gery Kendall, Perry, Maine
33 years old

Belief: Laugh before breakfast, cry before
supper.

Controlling data: Heard when she was a child in
Eastport.

Sandra J. Pottle
Perry, Maine
September 17, 1963

Informant: Margaret Crowley
Addison, Maine

Belief: Sing before you eat,
weep before you sleep.

Contralling data: Just a little
saying used in her
home when she
was a child.

Charlotte Look
Addison, Maine

Informant: Lois Webster, Vinalhaven, Maine, 18.

Belief: If you sing before breakfast, you'll cry
before night.

Background: Informant heard it from her mother.

Collector: Clara E. Sawyer
13 Preble St.
Gorham, Maine

Date: December 1, 1964

Informant: Mrs. Arden McEachern, Machias, Maine.

62 years old.

Superstition: Sing before you eat-- cry before you sleep.

Controlling Data: This was a superstition the older folk used to
tell their young.

Mabel B. Small

East Machias, Maine.

Oct. 15, 1963.

Informant: Ora Huntley, Marshfield, Maine
Deceased

Belief: " Sing before you eat and you will cry
before you sleep".

Controlling data: When we were visiting her she
always remind us not to sing or whistle
before we had our breakfast.

Etta H. Clark
East Machias, Maine
Sept. 23, 1963