

WPA Alabama Writers Project
FOLKLORE
Superstitions

Edited for Filming: 5-17-1977
Filmed:

"Haunting of Crommelin Estate"

On the corner of North Hull and Columbus Streets once stood a handsome residence which belonged to the Crommelin Estate.

After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Crommelin the home remained furnished, for rent. Many families moved there at different times, but were unable to remain more than a week or two.

Often after midnight weird noises were heard, sometime like the breaking of dishes; then again like stones were being thrown against the house, or windows being rattled. The people were never able to ascertain just what made this dreadful noise. The house stood vacant for many years before it was razed to make room for a city playground.

Consultants: Hattie Davis (colored)
Mrs. W. E. Dughan.

O. O. Lowrey
10/21/36
100 Words.

Murdered Girl's Spirit Lives.

About the year 1850, in a small community, 12 miles southeast of Montgomery, a beautiful girl, wearing a white shawl over her shoulders, was murdered by a negro slave. The lovely old colonial house, where she lived and met her fate, has since been "ha'nted."

At late hours of the night, when everything is still, the form of the girl appears, wearing a white shawl. She sits at the piano playing old familiar tunes; then, suddenly disappears.

Those who have lived in the house, took great care to fasten and bar the doors at night, only to find them unlocked next morning.

Consultant: Mrs. C. Meriwether, Matthews Station.

Maggie Boswell...10/23/36.

75 words.

Week ending Nov. 27, 1936.
S-242-Other folklore- Negro-
Superstition.

Francois Ludgère Diard,
Identification No. 0149-5252
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 6.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

A SUPERSTITIOUS NEGRO'S "HOODOO" MURDER.

(Compiled by Francois Ludgère Diard.)

On Wednesday, February 7th, 1883, there was a report brought to the guardhouse of Mobile that a foul murder had been committed in the northern part of the city, and that the corpse had been interred in a yard on Claiborne street, east of Lipscomb. Early next morning of the next day, Thursday, Detective Bressingham went to investigate the report. In the yard alluded to, where live several families of colored people, he found a mound of fresh earth, appearing to be a grave. A tin can filled, and a corn sack saturated, with blood were found near the mound. A negro was employed, the mound levelled, and a hole, underneath which had been filled with dirt, was excavated, but the supposed corpse could not be found, nor could anything else of interest.

Detective Bressingham, after making further investigations as to the mound and blood, discovered the following curious circumstances; About a year previous an old woman, who occupied the yard, died very suddenly from heart disease. It was supposed by the darkeys of the neighborhood that she had buried her hoarded riches in the yard.

Tom Taylor, a negro neighbor, was strong in his belief of this rumor of the buried money, and thought that he knew the exact spot where it was hidden.

The question of the riches preyed upon the mind of Tom Taylor on the Tuesday night before the report was made at the guardhouse, and he could resist no longer the temptation to make the search. So said he to himself; "De first thing I'se got to do is to hoodoo de witches what guards de ole lady's money, and I'se all right." This accounted for the blood, which was to overcome the power of the mystical guardians of the mystical money.

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-2-

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Tom Taylor, the negro "hoodoo^oist" was not arrested, however by Detective Bressingham, as he had committed no crime and not even a misdemeanor, but received a lecture; and when asked about the blood and whose it was, he replied;

"Well, yo' seed I was 'fraid to use ma own blood, so I'se just kilt a chick'n and used dat."

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Conversations with the older negroes of Mobile living in the neighborhood where the occurrence happened and who remembered it.

Conversations with the present Police Officer Bressingham, a relative of the Detective Bressingham who was detailed on the case in 1883.

Old Time ^superstitions Of The Negroes.

The old_time slave negro was far more superstitious than to_days colored people. Many of their beliefs were no doubt handed down from their ancestors in Africa.

I was born and raised on an Alabama plantation, and I knew them in their little cabins in our own "quarters". One morning my old nurse Aunt Haldy was combing my hair, which was unusually tangled, she said, "De witches were here las, night kaze dey done tied hard knots in yo hair. I bound I fixes em. I is gwin to fling some salt over my left shoulder in the fire tonight an I bound dey dont come back no more."

They used to practice witchcraft in various ways, the most common of which was the "CUNJUR_BAG". When one suspected another of wanting her job or her lover, she used to cunjur her. Sometime a cunjur _bag containing a mixture of curious and mysterious matter, is found under the door_step of the person to be cunjured.

When the person finds it ,or walks over it or walks over it, the spell is on her and the craft is put on her and she is cunjured.. She then is in the power of the person who placed the bag there.

A CUNJUR _BAG is usually made of unbleached domestic without any figures or stripes, and tied with an old leather string. It contains: pieces of human hair, sheep wool, horses hair, bones, teeth, splinters of pine, particles of sand salt and red pepper, grains of corn, wheat, pieces of straw, and shucks, strings, ashes and lampblack.

The mystery of the CUNJUR _BAG fills it with a peculiar interest, men and women too, have been known to pine away and die under the illusion that they have been cunjured.

Nothing could induce a negro to kill a cat, as they think they have nine lives and as often as you kill one, it will come back and haunt you.

They often wear leather strings around their wrists, but are evasive when asked why.

At the first call of the whip_poor_will made in the spring, the superstitious negro, will take off his coat, turn it wrong side out, to bring him good luck. Some of their superstitions are as follows:

If your right hand itches you are going to shake hands with a stranger: if the left hand, you will receive either a letter or a present. If either foot itches you will walk on strange ground.

When the right ear burns, someone is speaking good about you, the left evil.

"When de squinch owl hollers in de fore part of the night, Aunt Muldy would say "dat is a shore sign of death, an when a hound_dawg howl an lay flat of his back_its a sign some body gwine to be laid out soon. When you drap the dish_rag somebody shore is coming harngrny. Dem is true signs an I done seed em come to pass."

The horse_shoe is held sacred for good luck, and their faith is strong in its viture. They hang it over their doors and in other places, they wish to bring luck.

They hold the rabbit foot in great awe, which mystery still lacks a satisfactory explanation. It is considered bad luck for a rabbit to cross your path late in the afternoon. The foot from the left hind leg of a rabbit, caught in a grave_yard is a great charm and brings good luck to the wearer. When a squirrel crosses the road in front of you, your journey will be safe.

These and many other superstitions were told me down in Black Manny, s cabin in the "quarters" on the old plantation near Curry, s Station.

This story was told me by Mrs J.H.Lane,

Talladega, Ala.

William W. Ellison,
Editorial Department.

(1st draft)

ALABAMA SUPERSTITIONS

Although the strides of religion, medicine, music and education have been little short of miraculous during the past few years, the sinister shadows of superstition still prevalent in some sections of Alabama have been proportionately slow in lifting.

Sorcery is still practiced in the "conjure country", in the southeastern portion of Alabama, and "hill billies" of the mountainous region to the north swear by weird remedies, fantastic cures and doubtful healings handed down from a dim and distant past. But the Black Belt, comprising the west central counties, maintains the same aristocratic air of aloofness characteristic since ante-bellum days, while Alabamians of the remaining eastern and central parts are occupied with manufacturing or agriculture and find little time to ^{reflect} ~~contemplate~~ on good and bad omens.

The ~~essence~~ ^{beliefs} of toothless negro crones who profess supernatural powers, ^{are} ~~is~~ not confined to members of their own race by any means. An incredible number of white persons ^{presumably} ~~evidently~~ of normal intellect, follow wilderness trails to dismal hovels hopeful of finding a panacea for ills, domestic difficulties and even advice on highly technical commercial ^{prob-} ~~com-~~plexities. Such recognition naturally fills an illiterate conjurer with a feeling of swelled importance and the fee for such service automatically soars to new heights.

The abiding faith some folk manifest in roots, herbs, vines, soil, ^(of man and animal) ~~hair~~ birds and beasts, is as amusing as it is amazing. Strange ^{unheard of} mixtures and concoctions in the pharmaceutical pestle in an enlightened era, are diligently stirred before immense fireplaces and then applied in the midst of mysterial rituals.

An innocent and unsuspecting rabbit is taken captive solely to secure a single hair from his tail, or a frog is sacrificed to hasten retarded nature. No species of fish or game indigenous to the state seems immune from practitioners of black magic, ~~nor any person with will power sufficient to withstand a genuinely potent spell.~~ The monetary consideration involved in the transaction gauges a spell's potency.

A surprising number of palmists---they resent being called fortune tellers anymore---have found the larger cities of Alabama sufficiently profitable to establish a year round stand. Others, belonging to a roving itinerant class, make stops lasting from a week to a month en route Florida ~~and~~ to escape the rigors of winter. This motley crowd, usually a curious mixture of English and Irish with a generous sprinkling of Gypsies, has discarded flamboyant horse-drawn wagons as a means of transportation in favor of high-powered automobiles. Women attend to ~~palming~~ ^{affairs of occult nature} and the ~~"men folks"~~ ^{while the men} invariably of a mechanical bent, pick up odd jobs within ~~the scope of their professions.~~ ^{their}

These traveling groups live in portable tents always pitched on sites in the county just beyond the cky limits to avoid payment of prohibitive licenses. A large ~~mat~~ ^{palm} painted on canvas and suggestive of circus art, showing lines running in every direction, is posted at a vantage point where it may be easily seen by passersby. Then there ~~are~~ ^{are} advertisements inserted in the newspapers and several thousands of small "give away cards" printed and distributed from house to house to "drum up" trade.

Palmists appeal to couples whose matrimonial bliss has deviated from its course and gone on the reefs; love-smitten ^v victims of both sexes, and great numbers from the army of the unemployed who want some tangible idea if, and when, they'll go back on the payroll. Then there ~~are~~ ^{are} those anxious to recover lost or stolen articles. Negroes are suscepti-

ble to readings as are many of the poor white laboring class, although instances are not rare wherein celebrities and personages of wealth have parted with surprising sums on promise of "learning some news you'll be mightly glad to hear." ✓

Sometimes these wandering readers suggest the use of divining rods as an aid in the location of imagined treasure buried on the premises of persons they have "spotted" for swindle. The first and most important detail, of course, is to place a certain number of "pieces of silver in my hand". When the process of spading up earth commences, the roving informant is rolling merrily on his way to a new destination. *(State writing)*

(Sneak) No season is without its compliment of superstitions. These begin on New Year's Eve and gallop down the calendar to Christmas Day. Weather does not intervene. In fact, some of the most popular superstitions draw heavily on rain and sunshine. Nor are they a respecter of sex, color or creed and are ever present from the cradle to the grave.

Ample provision has been made for the infant, *in superstitions believe among the more ignorant classes*

Never cut a baby's fingernails or it may die before reaching *classes* the age of six months. A hat should not be placed on a child's head, nor permit *him* to look into a mirror as these things are conducive to bad teething. *Spit* ~~spit~~ open a live frog and tie it to the little fellow's neck or rub his gums with the still warm brains of a rabbit, and teething comes easier. But, if a baby teeths early, he is making way for the arrival of a new brother or sister.

Thrash, or sore mouth, need cause no alarm. Simply brew tea of nine Saw Bugs and have the child drink it. If this fails, it is best to send for a granny woman who will cross two sticks in his mouth, utter some gibberish and a cure will have been affected. A male born after his father's death can breath into the mouth of an infant afflicted with thrash

and cause a cure. However, if such a child is not ^{available} ~~convenient~~, give the ailing youngster seven sips of water from the heel of a shoe that has been worn by one who was born after ^{its} ~~their~~ father died and the results will be just as satisfactory.

Bend a horseshoe nail into a ring to prevent rheumatism. Whooping cough may be prevented by swallowing three small live minnows. And do not despair of warts. If you see two persons riding the same horse, wish ^{the} ~~your~~ warts off on the "hind" or second rider, and they will vanish overnight.

The animal angle has not been neglected.

When a cow is made sick by ^{swallowing} ~~licking~~ cud, wind a ball of wool thread tightly and fry it in hot lard and have Bossy swallow it. Gunpowder and raw meat fed to a dog makes him savage and if you cut off the tip of the canine's tail, burying it under the front door steps, he'll never leave home.

Animals can talk at midnight on Christmas Eve.

If a rabbit crosses the road to your left, bad luck is in the offing; if to the right, good luck is in store. If you are the first person a cat looks at after "licking himself", you are going to be married. You'll contract a headache by walking through a place where a horse wallows and if you kill a toad your cow will go dry.

That a death will

A whippoorwill's singing near a house is warning ^{occur} ~~there'll be a~~ death there soon. If a hen crows like a rooster, kill her, or there's bad luck ahead for your family. Stepping on ants or spiders will cause rain. ^{give warning of} ~~Ants tip you off there's to be~~ no more rain that day when they bring dirt out of their holes. The cry of a rain crow during a drought means rain's coming. To kill a snake and hang the reptile's body on the fence, will bring rain before nightfall.

one's

If a butterfly comes into ~~your~~ home, it is a good omen. A young lady wearing a dress the same color as the butterfly's may pay a visit ere the day has waned.

~~There's a way~~ to stop the eerie hooting of a screech owl in the dead of night ^{one} by putting a shovel with some salt in it into the fireplace to remain in the flames for awhile. You'll ~~not hear anymore~~ ^{there will be no} hooting that night.

~~The~~ Bad luck can be caused by ways other than a black cat crossing your path.

It's courting disaster to count the cars of a funeral cortege; you'll lose the finger used in counting, ^{will be lost} ~~you~~ or someone dear to you, ^{the person} ~~him~~ will die if ~~you~~ wait until nightfall to carry out ashes. To take the rings off one's finger causes heart trouble. If the pictures are not turned to the wall after a death, some other member of the family will die.

^{object} Be cautious about throwing bread into the fire; ~~you may come to~~ want ~~as a~~ ^{will} result of this ^{from wastefulness} ~~unthoughtfulness~~. ^{And} it is ~~certainly~~ bad luck to spill salt, carry a hoe through the house or place ~~your~~ shoes higher than ^{the} ~~your~~ head. Walking under a ladder is bad business and breaking a mirror means seven years of hard luck.

Good luck may be courted favorably. Stop a clock after a death or carry the left hind foot of a rabbit in a side pocket. Buckeyes will suffice if no rabbit foot is available. To see a white horse means ^{one is} ~~you're~~ due for a thrill by seeing a red-headed girl. Moreover, it is good luck to hang a horseshoe on a nail or drop a pair of scissors and have them stick up in the floor.

~~Your~~ eyes, ears, hands and feet are constantly reminding you of things.

If ~~your~~ ^{the} right eye itches, ~~you'll~~ be made mad; if it's your left, you'll be made glad. If ~~your~~ ^{the} left ear burns, someone's saying something ~~bad about you~~; if it's ~~your~~ ^{the} right ear, the remarks are good. If ~~your~~ ^{the} right hand itches, you'll ~~receive~~ ^{will receive} a present; if it's ~~your~~ ^{the} left, ~~you'll shake~~ hands with a stranger. For the bottom of ~~your~~ ^{the} foot to itch, means ~~you're~~ ^{is indicated} ~~due to~~ ^{a spike} journey on strange land. Somebody is intending to pay ~~you~~ ^{the} a visit if ~~your~~ ^{the} nose itches. Dropping a dish cloth means the same thing.

Keep ~~your~~ ^{the} eyes open for anyone ~~sweeping~~ ^{using a} broom. To sweep under ~~your~~ ^{the} feet means ~~you~~ ^{you} will never marry; if already wed, ~~you~~ ^{you} will never re-marry. To sweep directly in front of one means ~~their~~ ^{his} wealth is being carried away.

Friendships may be guarded. If ~~you're~~ walking with a friend, never ~~split~~ ^{on either side} ~~apart~~ go around a post lest there ~~should~~ be a quarrel. Never give a knife as a present as it ~~tends to~~ cut your friendship in twain. To touch the corpse of a friend precludes the possibility of haunting memories.

The sun and the rain play their respective roles ~~of importance~~ ^{in superstition}.

If the sun shines during a rain, this is ~~an~~ indication the Devil is whipping his wife and it is a sure sign there'll be rain on the morrow also. Seeing a new moon for the first time through shrubbery is a bad omen; ~~maneuver around where you can view the moon unobstructed~~. Milk sours when it thunders and a turtle or crawfish will not let go until ~~they hear the~~ rumble of thunder. If ~~you~~ sit ^{twice} on a featherbed or ~~place~~ ^{with} your feet in a bowl of water during a storm, lightning will not strike you. And:

"Rainbow in the morning, sailors take warning,
Rainbow at night, sailor's delight."

It is important to pay close attention to dreams for all have their interpretations.

To dream of marriage means someone in ~~your~~^{the} family will become critically ill. A dream of muddy water also indicates illness of death. Dreaming of snakes ~~means you have~~^{indicates} enemies, ~~to~~^{to} kill these snakes in ~~your~~^a dream means ~~your~~^{the} enemies will be eliminated.

It is well to be observant. ~~if you~~^{the finger} find a pin with the head toward ~~you,~~^{the person} it's bad luck; if the point is toward ~~you,~~^{the person} it's good luck. ~~if you see~~^{and you're bold enough} a ghost and ~~can refrain from running,~~^{find it} speak to the apparition and ~~it~~^{it} will disappear as suddenly as it came. ~~if you~~^{if} hold a mirror over a well at 12 o'clock on the first day of May, ~~you~~^{you} will see reflected the image of ~~your~~^{the} future husband; if a casket is reflected, it means death. ~~if you~~^{when} start ~~ing~~^{ing} someplace and ~~have to~~^{the} turn back, ~~be sure and~~^{make} make a cross on the ground with ~~your~~^{the} toe and spit on it before retracing ~~your~~^{the} steps. ~~this~~^{will} wards off bad luck.

To find a lost article, spit in ~~your~~^{the} left hand, tap it with the index finger of ~~your~~^{the} right hand and, observing the direction it goes, chant:

"Spit, spat, show me where I lost it at."

Beware of a blue gum Negro. Not only is he a dangerous character but his bite is as poisonous as a rattlesnake.

Superstitions are interwoven with songs, poems and traditions handed down in Alabama. Folklore is replete with them. Education has gone a long way toward enlightening all classes as to the fallacy of these beliefs, yet there are those who persist in telling of superstitions in good faith and with an element of doubt as to their relative merits.

"Mountain People."

" A lot has been said about "mountain people," but so far as I kin see, we hain't so different from other folks.

" We all come into the world the same way; we all breathe the same air; even if it is het up and cooled off in different ways; we all eat the same vittles - just cooked different. A pot o' biled cabbage, and a good crusty corn pone tastes as good to us - and a sight better than cabbage kivered with cream sauce, as they call it, and baked with cheese grated over it, and put on the table in the same fancy dish it was cooked in, with little bokays of paisley all eround it. Corn bread sticks, too, look a sight diffrunt, but have the same things in 'em as a corn pone.

Them things is all right, and tasty too, but it is the same as a person who has had a stroke of bad luck he is mighty glad to hev any duds that will keep him warm, and clean, maybe and well enough to git eround but, after a sartin time passes, ef he has used his time to any advantage, he dresses up more, and looks better but ten to one, he don't feel no better, maybe not as well.

When the folks on Lookout mountain, and in the valley too, first come to this kentry, they moved in from Va., and the Carolinas and a few from Georgy, but most uv the old settlers went to Sand mountain, from Georgy and Tennessee.

When my family moved into Alabama ten families come at the same time, from Barnesville, Georgy. In them times, the roads was jest waggin tracks, over the thick carpet of brown pine needles. On either side of the road was thick woods, with the big branches wavn' in the high winds, and the

pine trees moanin' so loud you doouldn't scarcely hear yerself think, let erlone talk.

We wuz 14 days makin' that trip so the waggins wuz kivered with thick, heavy sheetin', or canvas on some, fer shelter and pertection too. They wuz ten uv those waggins pulled by long-horned steers, rollin' erlong one after t'other. The oxes' feet did not make much sound in the pine straw. I've 'seen many a parade since then, but nary a one that looked so good to me, as that line of kivered waggins, pulled by them patient, ploddin' oxen, with the tips of their long horns glittering in the sunlight.

But best of all, wuz the faces shinin' outer them waggins of old neighbors and friends goin' ter settle a new kentry and take pot luck altogether.

We stopped and had dinner at Cave Springs, Georgy and a might purty place it wuz. I hear they've got 'lectric lights in that cave now, and people pay to drink from that spring, 'way back up in the cave but nawthin' could be added to make it look plumb like a picture' more than it did that day those ten kivered waggins was drawn up around the cave, with the thick walls uv green trees all around. That day, the wind fairly sung through them pine trees.

All the animuls wuz wattered, and we all set around and et the vittles that we had brought with us, all of our own raisin'. Meat and raised bread, raised with hops grown on a trellis out behind the kitchen and we had baked apples, and sweet potato biscuit we had hoochelers, the cling-stone peach, peeled thin and dried whole; and the seed flavored it

fine, when it wuz cooked and I still remember them pampadoodles bread dropped in boilin' fat, and fried a golden brown.

We never knowed a thing in them days 'bout bringin' home a meal in paper sacks. Any settler woulder been ashamed ter show his face to have to borry, er buy to feed a neighbor.

The settlers lived plain, and worked hard, but we allus had somethin' to divide.

At Cave Spring, we sat around and talked an' planned until the moon riz and the road wuz light as day but I recollect now how keerful we wuz thet nobody saw the moon over his left doulder fer that shore would have brung bad luck.

These folks who talk so much about "helpin' the mountain people," many uv 'em don't stop to think how maybe we don't look with favor on the same things. The very things they value the highest may rate pretty low with us and vicey vercy as we used to say in the old Blue backed Speller.

Mountain people stick together, clannish some calls it. But we mighty nigh know that blood is thicker'n water and that Bible verse about "He that sheds man's blood, his blood shall be shed," is as good a law's we want.

Those furriners who ride through the mountains in their fine cars, with their drivers dressed up like a policeman, er an army captain call theirselves tourists call the mountains "grand," and "gorgeous" but to us they mean a lot more than that they 're a livin' part uv us. Theys times that they're kivered with blue-grey clouds and look so sullen, you watch fer red sparks to fly. Then theys days when the sun-

light falls like gold with soft shadows that turn the big rocks black, again the bright green moss. Then, in the Fall all the leaves change color, and the hills seem alive.

But the best is on an early mornin' when the highest peaks rear against the sky with its soft changin' colors like pearls er roses and the mornin' breeze comes up, and the dew is in the air, and the birds flutter and chirp and begin to sing. Then the first rays uv the sun slip over the peaks.

There wuz a time when folks wuz lonesome in the mountains. No roads through the winter fitten to travel, no schools fer the kids never see nobody outside the family fer weeks and months. But them times is gone all changed. The State and County done part uv it, but the biggest change all through this kentry, is what President Rosyvelt and his woman has done fer us. Folks said Mrs. Rosyvelt went all over the kwntry to see what all the folks needed to help to whatever job they had, in the best way it could be done.

One uv those travelin' furriners dropped a paper once, and I seed in it a picture uv two miners diggin' down underneath the ground, and one uv 'em looked up and said, "Gosh, there comes Mrs. Rosyvelt."

I never held with women knowin anythin! much, about their man's affairs, but I think this is one case where the meddlin' of the President's woman has been a mighty good thing fer the kentry. Fer mountain folks fer Valley folks and fer all the folks.

H. H. C.

S-240

Superstitions in the Deep South (1st draft)

SUPERSTITIONS

A spider web formed over the doorway is a sign of a death in a few days. "It sho' is true for we had one over our door and in a day or two my aunt died". Also, "if a dog turns over three times on his back there will shortly be a death in the family".

Who lives on Dickerson Street, Montgomery
Mrs. Morrow is sure that if a cow ~~lopes~~ ^{lowes} after midnight continuously for three times there is sure to be a death in the neighborhood. She said, "One night not long before Mr. West died, my husband "waked up" in the middle of the night and a cow was ^{lowin'?} loo'in' he said, "lis'n there's sho' to be a death in the neighborhood, and sho' nuf in a day or two, less than three days Mr. West died."

"Up in Shelby County a man died with smallpox. The same night my husband had to spend the night in this same house where he died and all during the night little balls of fire played about over the bed and floor. The man wuz said to have plenty of money, buried about, and these balls of fire wuz signs tryin' to show my husband where the money wuz".

A Hanted Place.

In Jefferson county hit us'ter be called the G. P. crossing, but now I don't know the name 'cause I'se ben way frum theres 35 year, but my brother lived theres 8 year, and they seen things. If it ever has ben a house that wuz hanted that house wuz, - my mother really seen things ever night.

A Captain of the War (Between the Statss) lived thar once an' he wouldn't let his wife go out doors after dark for tha' wuz a nigger without any head walkin' 'bout. Me and my husban' an anpther lady an her husban' lived thar an my husban' said he wuz sho' goin' to git them one ^{night} ~~side~~ an he ^{laid} ~~had~~ down flat by the door and heard knocking an tried to see them but he ^{said} ~~had~~ he knowed hit wuz hants. My chillun was all borned up thar.

Mrs. Morrow of Dickerson Street states that she and her husband believe that. Her bed was moved over near the fireplace, and she died. Mrs. Bell in the things that can't be explained, in fact, she gives several experiences known she was warned of her Ma's death. of theirs.—

"I use to live down in Cuffee county. The house we lived in was haunted. "My grandmother up in Shelby county told me and I know it's the truth, or folks said it was. I don't know whether it was not nos, but I know she and that lots of nights she'd wake up by a loud noise. She'd get straight up and my sister went out in the yard one night and we saw a great big white something a real dog would be lying at the foot of the bed, when she'd get up the dog it liked to scared us to death, and we never did find out what it was. Dogs would too, and then he'd just rub hisself up against her and then he would nagre boys use to pass by the house every night and they'd see little children vanish away. Grandma would know that was a sign of bad luck and most of the playing on the porch. All kind of things were seen. Guess it was because the time after seeing one of them dog's she'd have bad luck". man who lived there a long time ago was rich and before he died he buried gold.

Mrs. Morrow relates:

I've heard since I left there that a tree was cut down and at the roots was a bucket of gold. Guess the legends won't come any more". he says it'll sho bring bad luck. One time I made him take ~~off~~ a cat ~~across~~ ^{offer} the table. Right after that he was taken down sick and like to die.- He ~~says~~ ^{says} that was sho the reason of his sickness".

Consultants:

"My Pa, who's name is Mr. Schuffert, he lives up in Shelby county. Well, Mrs. Morrow, 816 Dickerson St., Montgomery, Ala. him and a man had a big fuss, so this man conjured 7 black cats. Them cats Mrs. Schuffert, 325 Bell St., Montgomery, Ala. went to Pa's house and walked all 'round his bed one after the other. He liked never got them to go away".

There is an old ~~saying~~ ^{saying} in Alabama if a baby is born with a veil over its face that child will have a foresight of coming mystic events. Such a person is Bell Barnes, of Coopers, Ala. Her sister-in-law, Mrs. John Schuffert, 325 Bell St. ^{Montgomery} gives the following:

"She is always seeing things, and anything that is coming to pass, such as deaths, she always know it. The house that she lives in now, ^{is} near Coopers, she sees things there.

One night she waked up late and saw a figure all dressed up in white ~~over~~ by the fireplace. She screamed ~~real loud~~ and it disappeared. Another time she saw a wreath hanging on the wall. Her mamma taken sick right after

as in other states, the belief originating in Europe, that

that. Her bed was moved over near the fireplace, and she died. Lila Bell knows she was warned of her Ma's death.

"I use to live down in Coffee county. The house we lived in was ha^unted or folke said it was. I don't know whether it was nor not, but I know me and my sister went out in the yard one night and we saw a great big white something^g it liked to scared us to death, and we never did find out what it was. Some negro boys use^o to pass by the house every night and they'd see little children playing on the porch. All kind of things were seen. Guess it was because the man who lived there a long time ago was rich and before he died he buried gold. I've heard since I left there that a tree was cut down and at the roots was a bucket of gold. Guess the ha^unts won't come any more".

Consultants:

Mrs. Morrow, 216 Dickerson St., Montgomery, Ala.

Mrs. Schuffert, 325 Bell St., Montgomery, Ala.

Mabel Warrior
Lois Lynn

1/14/37
904 words.

Sent to
Washington
Jan 19

A spider web formed over the doorway is a sign of a death in a few days. "It sho' is true for we had one over our door and in a day or two my aunt died". Also, "if a dog turns over three times on his back there will shortly be a death in the family".

Mrs. Morrow who lives on Dickerson Street, Montgomery is sure that if a cow lows after midnight continuously for three times there is sure to be a death in the neighborhood. She said, "One night not long before Mr. West died, my husband "waked up" in the middle of the night and a cow was lowin'. He said, "lis'n there's sho' to be a death in the neighborhood, and sho' nuf in a day or two, less than three days Mr. West died.

"Up in Shelby County a man died with smallpox. The same night my husband had to spend the night in this same house where he died and all during the night little balls of fire played about over the bed and floor. The man wuz said to have plenty of money, buried about, and these balls of fire wuz siggs tryin' to show my husband where the money wuz".

A Haunted Place.

In Jefferson county hit us'ter be called the G. P. crossing, but now I don't know the name 'cause I'se ben way from theres 35 year, but my brother lived there 8 year, and they seen things. If it ever has b'en a house that wuz hanted that house wuz," my mother really seen things ever night.

A Captain of the War (Between the States) lived thar once an' he wouldn't let his wife go out doors after dark for tha' wuz a nigger without any head walkin' 'bout. Me and my husban' an another lady an her husban' lived thar an' my husban' said he wuz sho' goin' to git them one night an he alid down flat by the door and heard knockin' an tried to see them but he said, he knowed hit wuz hants. My chillun was all borned up thar.

Mrs. Morrow of Dickerson Street states that she and her husband believe in the things that can't be explained, in fact, she gives several experiences of theirs.--

"My grandmother up in Shelby county told me and I know it's the truth, that lots of nights she'd wake up by a loud noise. She'd get straight up and a real dog would be lyin' at the foot of the bed. When she'd get up the dog would too, and then he'd just rub hisself up against her and then he would vanish away. Grandma would know that was a sign of bad luck and most of the time after seeing one of them dog's she'd have bad luck".

Mrs. Morrow relates:

"You can't get my husband to take a cat away no where for nothing cause he says it'll sho bring bad luck. One time I made him take a cat off'n the table. Right after that he was taken down sick and like to die.- He says that was sho the reason of his sickness".

"My Pa, who's name is Mr. Schuffert, he lives up in Shelby county. Well, him and a man had a big fuss, so this man conjured 7 black cats. Them cats went to Pa's house and walked all 'round his bed one after the other. He liked never got them to go away".

There is an old saying in Alabama as in other States, the belief originating in Europe, that if a baby is born with a veil over its face that child will have a foresight of coming mystic events. Such a person is Bell Barnes, of Cooper's, Alabama. Her sister-in-law, Mr. John Schuffert, 325 Bell St. Montgomery gives the following:

"She is always seeing things, and anything that is coming to pass, such as deaths, she always know it. The house that she lives in now, is near Coopers. She sees things there.

One night she waked up late and saw a figure all dressed up in white by the fireplace. She screamed and it disappeared. Another time she saw a wreath hanging on the wall. Her mamma taken sick right after that. Her bed was moved over near the fireplace, and she died. Lila Bell knows she was warned of her Ma' death.

"I use to live down in Coffee county. The house we lived in was ha'nted or folks said it was. I don't know whether it was nor not, but I know me and my sister went out in the yard one night and we saw a great big white something. It liked to scared us to death, and we never did find out what it was. Some negro boys use' to pass by the house every night and they' see little children playing on the porch. All kind of things were seen. Guess it was because the man who lived there a long time ago was rich and before he died he buried gold. I've heard since I left there that a tree was cut down and at the roots was a bucket of gold. Guess the ha'nts won't come any more".

685 words
ALABAMA SUPERSTITIONS

Student of fact, follower of fancy, is Alabama, possessor, with a larger part of the Southern group of states, of a people who are incurably superstitious - a people who, notwithstanding the advances made by science, modern thought and religion in the last century and a half, still cling to a belief in the capabilities of supposed possessors and appliers of occult power.

It is not only the Alabama of the tenant shack and backwoods hovel which carries that belief. Incredible is the number of citizens who consult seers as to the future, relators of the past, with blind faith. Even in the larger cities, such soothsayers carry on a profitable business with the gullible year after year.

An extremely large Negro population accounts, of course, for a great part of the incredible hold superstition has over the State's people, but white inhabitants possess, in many cases, just as great a degree of superstition as do the Negroes. Sorcery is still practiced in the "conjure country," made famous by Carl Carmer's Stars Fell on Alabama, and natives of the mountain regions doubt little the effectiveness of weird remedies and cures, fantastic and doubtful "spells," prescribed and cast by those of their ancestors who possessed

more than mortal sight. Only the Black Belt sections, and the bustling central counties seem to have rejected to any extent the manifestations of the spiritual. The one is aloof, the other, for the most part, busily indifferent. In Birmingham, largest and busiest city of the State, however, spiritualists, claiming ability to communicate with the dead, cater to a huge clientele, as do palmists. The Palm-readers - their profession has attained a dignity which forbids the use of the title of "fortune teller," are found throughout the young city, and in others of the larger classification.

Less dignified, but far more picturesque occults occupy the more rural sections of the State. Their professed power lies in a knowledge of roots, herbs, vines, soil, hair, birds and beasts. Incalculable to them is the value of a hair from a rabbit's tail, a buckeye or a rabbit's left hind foot. Considered of scarcely less value are frogs, other animals and even hair from the human.

No season of the year is without its complement of superstition, no sex, color or age. From birth to death, signs are ever-present, which read properly by the proper person, can mean much to the individual.

Ample provision has been made for the infant. The believer's told never cut a baby's fingernails, or he will die before reaching the age of six

months. Disastrous results will follow the placing of a hat upon the child's head. Difficulty in teething can be lessened by splitting open a live frog and tying it around the baby's neck, or rubbing his gums with the still-warm brains of a rabbit. Early and easy teething means, however, that the infant is making way for the arrival of a new member of the family.

No less well-treated are the infant's ailments. A tea made of saw bugs will cure thrash, or sore mouth. Or if this fails, a granny woman can effect a cure by crossing two sticks in the baby's mouth, and muttering several magic words, known only to her. Almost as effective a healing agent is a male born after his father's death. He has merely to breathe into the infant's mouth to cure almost any illness.

Rheumatism in an older person can be prevented by bending a horseshoe nail into a ring. Swallow three live minnows, and you will not contract whooping cough, and, as for warts, they need cause no trouble, even if they cover your body in greatest profusion. Wait until you see two persons riding on the same horse, and wish your warts off on the rider nearer the tail. Your affliction will vanish immediately.

Illness and death can be courted just as easily as health and life. The finger used in the counting of a funeral cortege will come off. To

remove a ring from the finger will cause heart trouble. If the pictures in a home are not turned to the wall after a death, some member of the family of the deceased will follow him quickly. Someone near to you will die if you carry out ashes after night has fallen. Sweeping after dark will also bring death. If someone sweeps under your feet you will never marry.

Animals and birds have not been overlooked by the superstitious. When a cow loses her cud and becomes sick, fry a ball of tightly-wound wool thread in lard, give it to her, and she will become well. Cut off the tip of a dog's tail, and he will never leave home. If a rabbit crosses the road in front of you from right to left, bad luck is in the offing. The reverse holds true.

A whippoorwill's singing near a house will bring death, and a hen which crows like a rooster will bring bad luck. Ants are great weather prophets. When they carry dirt out of their holes, there will be no more rain during the day. You can cause rain by stepping on an ant, or a spider, or hanging the carcass of a snake you have killed across a fence.

The worrisome and eerie hoot of an owl in the dead of night can be stopped by a very simple process known to the initiate. You place a shovel with some salt in it in the fireplace, and allow it to remain in the flames for a while. There

will be no more hooting.

The guarding of friendship is difficult. If you are walking with a friend, take care never to go around the opposite side of a post from him lest there should be a quarrel. Never give a friend a knife. The bond of friendship may be cut if you do. To prevent haunting memories after a friend's death, touch his corpse.

Dreams are especially significant. A dream of marriage means that someone in your family will become critically ill. A dream of muddy water also indicates illness, or possibly death. You have enemies if you dream of snakes. But if, in the dream, you kill the snakes, your enemies will be eliminated.

It is well to be observant, for some signs may escape you. If you find a pin with head toward you, you are certain to have bad luck; if it is pointed away from you, your luck will be good. A mirror held over a well at 12: o'clock on the first day of May will reflect the image of your future husband or wife, or a casket, which foretells your death. Stop, make a cross on the ground with your foot, and spit in it, if you are forced to turn back after starting somewhere. This wards off bad luck.

Beware of a "blue-gum Negro." His bite is as poisonous as that of a rattlesnake.

If you wish to cast a spell over some enemy, go to the "conjure woman." She will make any

sort you wish.

Those and thousands of other fanciful beliefs are interwoven with songs, poems and traditions handed down in the State. Folklore is replete with them. Education has done something toward dispelling the many in more advanced Alabama, but in the primitive backwoods country, it still is, and will be--

"Go to the conjure woman."

L.H.

Superstitions Familiar To Many Urban And Rural Residents.

Never move your house-cat when you move. If you do, the house to which you are moving will be visited by ill omens while you reside there.

Never turn back to a house once you have left it and have forgotten something. If you do return you will have bad luck, unless you make a cross mark on the ground with your right foot and spit upon it.

Never trim your finger or toe nails on Friday, to do so will certainly bring bad luck to you the following week.

If a whipp-poor-will cries in your yard, some member of your family will die before the year has ended.

Ninety days from the date the first whip-poor-will cries there will come the first frost of the season.

If a screech owl gains entrance to your home at night, serious illness will come to some member of the household before the year has passed.

To be prosperous throughout the coming year, eat hog jawl and black-eyed peas for dinner on New Year's day.

A posthumous person can cure hives and thrash on an infant child by taking taking it to a spring of water, whispering a bibilical expression and blowing their breath into the face of the baby.

If you kill the first snake you see in the early spring you will not have any enemies to annoy you during the year.

When you pull a tooth be sure to bury the tooth to prevent an animal from swallowing it, for if an animal sawllows the tooth, another will come in its place like that of the animal's tooth.

The one who plants a cedar sprout or seed will die when the tree grows larger enough to shade their grave.

ALABAMA NEGRO SUPERSTITIONS

To keep hawks from catching your chickens, place a flint rock in your fire-place.

If a dog trees a raccoon or o'possum and you can't get him down, tie an apron string around the trunk of the tree, He won't back down the tree over it, and you can return next morning and catch the animal.

Break a mullein stalk in the spring so the milk will run out of it. If it grows out again, you will marry within 12 months.

Never converse with a woman first on Monday morning, for if you do, you will have bad luck during the week.

If a rabbit crosses the road ahead of you, be sure to turn back, walk ten paces, and then turn around three times on your heels to avoid having bad luck on your journey.

Wear a silver dime around the neck to prevent rheumatism.

Wear a silver dime around the ankle to keep the witches away.

To cure neuralgia, drill a hole in a nutmeg, tie to a string and wear around the neck.

Don't permit a woman to enter your home on New Year's Day as the first visitor, for if you do, you will raise no chickens

Tie a knot in the corner of your apron to keep the screech owls out of your house at night.

Never kill a toad frog. If you do, your cow will go dry.

When the hoot of the owl comes from the lowlands, a storm is brewing. When the hoot of the owl comes from the highlands, fair weather will come.

When you leave your house, hide the cant hooks to keep the witches out.

Washington Copy

S.B.J.

6/24/38

SUPERSTITIONS AND FOLKLORE.

walker # 5

The black cat superstition of the Negro has passed down through succeeding generations of their race and today is obeyed and respected along with many other of their primitive beliefs.

If you are going somewhere and a black cat crosses the path in front of you stop and whistle a call to the cat, if it stops and meows you may continue your journey, but if it runs away it is bad luck for you to go on in that direction.

The women of the Alabama hill country use to practice this primitive and superstitious method of preventing bole-hives on their babies. Take a "lancer" and make a small laceration in the back of the infant as soon as born and draw out several drops of its blood and mix with the breast-milk of the mother. Give this mixture to the baby in dosages of five drops at intervals of three hours until three doses have been given.

The Negro believes the wearing of a bracelet made of copper wire around his wrist will prevent rheumatism. One may see many Alabama negroes practicing this custom of their race.

One may see their future wife or husband if unmarried by reflecting a mirror over a dug well on the first day of May.

"Aunt" Sally Tomlin of Walker County, was a devout believer in the teachings of witchcraft. She always locked the doors and fastened the windows to her home when she went to visit with her neighbors or to town. She concealed the keys to her house under a stone near her home, and when asked why she did this, she replied, "To keep the witches away while I'm gone". Upon another occasion "Aunt" Sally Tomline was seen boiling her coin in a wash pot, and when asked why she did that, she replied that the money had been "bewitched" and she was destroying the evil spirits. When any article of her household was missing its disappearance unaccounted for, "the witches", according to the belief of "Aunt Sally," had taken it away.

In Fayette County, near the banks of New River, lives a very old Negro man named Si McCollum. During the Civil War old Si believed he and his master, Major McCollum, would be killed by the Yankees, and so preparatory to his believed execution, he hewed by hand his own coffin out of the trunk of a huge oak tree. The coffin was dressed, neatly padded and lined with the usual shroud. The negro laid aside from his wardrobe an old discarded dress suit in which he wished to be buried. The suit he prized so highly had been given him by his master. The war ensued and Fayette County had a taste of it from Croxton's raiders. They marched on the McCollum plantation and killed Major McCollum and his daughter. The daughter died in a futile effort to protect her father. The faithful negro house servant, Si, barely escaped with his life. A bullet clipped his ear as he ran and escaped into the woods. And now after the passing of seventy-four years and a sad memory with old Si of that unforgettable day the Croxton raiders invaded the McCollum home and murdered his master and his master's daughter, the hand-hewed coffin awaits the inevitable death of its maker. It is neatly kept in the attick above the bed of the aged old negro.

301 words

FOLKLORE AND SUPERSTITIONS

Crabs are fatter and more prolific in the full of the moon; and in winter they seek deep water.

One should not sleep exposed to the full moonlight. There is danger of being affected by it, hence the old saying, "moon struck" or "luny" from Lunar, the Moon.

In some sections one must kill hogs at the right time of the moon, or ham and bacon will not be as palatable.

To lay the foundation of a house at the wrong time of the moon, means cracked walls, as the earth recedes from the pull of the moon on the surface, and the house settles, and the walls crack.

Should one wish to dispose of a hated rival, obtain his photograph, go to a swimming stream, tear the photo into small pieces, and cast upon the water in midstream. As long as a piece floats, your rival will be kept on the move, and out of your way.

The Negroes of the South believe anything planted after March 15 will grow, and by planting sweet smelling flowers around fruit trees, they hope to make the trees produce sweeter and more fragrant fruit.

Old time Negroes carried a potato in their pocket to cure rheumatism.

An egg laid on Good Friday will not spoil, can be put away and be kept for years in a loose bag. The contents turn into wax.

Beans and peas, planted on Good Friday, will thrive.

Go out in the first May shower and get the hair damp,
and you will not have a cold all year.

Old-time Negroes believe that an enemy can voodoo them
by cutting the hair of a yellow dog and putting it in butter,
and placing the hair under their front door steps.

Old-time Negroes also believe if a "blue-gummed" Negro bites
you it will give you hydrophobia like a mad dog.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Contact with different people.

S.B.J.

6/24/58

also.

ALABAMA SUPERSTITIONS

Although the strides of religion, medicine, music and education have been little short of miraculous during the past few years, the sinister shadows of superstition still prevalent in some sections of Alabama have been proportionately slow in lifting.

Sorcery is still practiced in the "conjure country," in the southeastern portion of Alabama, and "hill billies" of the mountainous region to the north swear by weird remedies, fantastic cures and doubtful healings handed down from a dim and distant past. But the Black Belt, comprising the west central counties, maintains the same aristocratic air of aloofness characteristic since ante-bellum days, while Alabamians of the remaining eastern and central parts are occupied with manufacturing or agriculture and find little time to reflect on good and bad omens.

The beliefs of toothless negro crones who profess supernatural powers, are not confined to members of their own race by any means. An incredible number of white persons presumably of normal intellect, follow wilderness trails to dismal hovels hopeful of finding a panacea for ills, domestic difficulties and even advice on highly technical commercial perplexities. Such recognition naturally fills an illiterate conjurer with a feeling of swelled importance and the fee for such service automatically soars to new heights.

The abiding faith some folk manifest in roots, herbs, vines, soil, hair, (of man and animal), birds and beasts, is as amusing as it is amazing. Strange mixtures and concoctions unheard of in the pharmaceutical pestle in an enlightened era, are diligently stirred before immense fireplaces and then applied in the midst of mysterious rituals.

An innocent and unsuspecting rabbit is taken captive solely to se-

cure a single hair from his tail, or a frog is sacrificed to hasten retarded nature. No species of fish or game indigenous to the state seems immune from practitioners of black magic. The monetary consideration involved in the transaction gauges a spell's potency.

A surprising number of palmists---they resent being called fortune tellers anymore---have found the larger cities of Alabama sufficiently profitable to establish a year round stand. Others, belonging to a roving itinerant class, make stops lasting from a week to a month enroute to Florida to escape the rigors of winter. This motley crowd, usually a curious mixture of English and Irish with a generous sprinkling of Gypsies, has discarded flamboyant horse-drawn wagons as a means of transportation in favor of high-powered automobiles. Women attend to affairs of occult nature while their men, invariably of a mechanical bent, pick up odd jobs within their scope.

These traveling groups live in portable tents always pitched on sites in the county just beyond the city limits to avoid payment of prohibitive licenses. A large palm painted on canvas and suggestive of circus art, showing lines running in every direction, is posted at a vantage point where it may be easily seen by passersby. Then there are advertisements inserted in the newspapers and several thousands of small "give away cards" printed and distributed from house to house to "drum up" trade.

Palmists appeal to couples whose matrimonial bliss has deviated from its course and gone on the reefs; love-smitten victims of both sexes, and great numbers from the army of the unemployed who want some tangible idea if, and when, they'll go back on the payroll. Then there are those anxious to recover lost or stolen articles. Negroes are susceptible to readings as are many of the poor white laboring class, al-

though instances are not rare wherein celebrities and personages of wealth have parted with surprising sums on promise of "learning some news you'll be mighty glad to hear."

Sometimes these wandering readers suggest the use of divining rods as an aid in the location of imagined treasure buried on the premises of persons they have "spotted" for swindle. The first and most important detail, of course, is to place a certain number of "pieces of silver in my hand." When the process of spading up earth commences, the roving informant is rolling merrily on his way to a new destination.

While palmistry is the most popularly accepted method of modern reading, it is but an echo to prophecies solemnly deducted from tea and coffee grounds poured from cup into saucer. Cards have always been employed in determining good fortune or in predicting evils. Slate writing and ouija boards come under the classification of spiritualism, a psychic power more sedate and off the beaten path of fortune-telling which, has comparatively few converts in Alabama.

Scattered about the state are "readers" who have catered to people prominent in society and everyday business life with the result they have achieved considerable popularity and command unusual respect from those who believe it possible to pull back the screen of present day routine and peer into the past or future. In Calera, between Montgomery and Birmingham, is a woman whose ability has received state-wide acclaim because of her mental qualities that supposedly transform the mind of a client into an open book from which are taken pages that alternately baffle, startle and leave the subject in a state of bewilderment. Another such reader is near Sylacauga while Birmingham and Montgomery offer year round residence to others who maintain studios open to the public.

It may be truthfully said that paths have literally been beaten to the doors of women who have the faculty to advise after mystic consulta-

tions, and they have been known to offer procedure into matters of business and affairs of the heart that have been followed with every degree of success. Alabamians, cultured and respected, seek these consultations without trace of embarrassment or effort at concealment.

No season is without its complement of superstitions. These begin on New Year's Eve and gallop down the calendar to Christmas Day. Weather does not intervene. In fact, some of the most popular superstitions draw heavily on rain and sunshine. Nor are they a respecter of sex, color or creed and are ever present from the cradle to the grave.

Ample provision has been made for the infant in superstitious beliefs among the more ignorant classes.

Never cut a baby's fingernails or it may die before reaching the age of six months. A hat should not be placed on a child's head, nor he be permitted to look into a mirror as these things are conducive to bad teething. Split open a live frog and tie it to the little fellow's neck or rub his gums with the still warm brains of a rabbit, and teething comes easier. But, if a baby teethes early, he is making way for the arrival of a new brother or sister.

Thrash, or sore mouth, need cause no alarm. Simply brew tea of nine saw bugs and have the child drink it. If this fails, it is best to send for a "granny woman" who will cross two sticks in his mouth, utter some gibberish and a cure will have been effected. A male born after his father's death can breathe into the mouth of an infant afflicted with thrash and cause a cure. However, if such a child is not available, give the ailing youngster seven sips of water from the heel of a shoe that has been worn by one who was born after its father died and the results will be just as satisfactory.

Bend a horseshoe nail into a ring to prevent rheumatism. Whooping

cough may be prevented by swallowing three small live minnows. And do not despair of warts. If you see two persons riding the same horse, with the warts off on the "hind" or second rider, and they will vanish overnight.

The animal angle has not been neglected.

When a cow is made sick by swallowing cud, wind a ball of wool thread tightly and fry it in hot lard and have Bossy swallow it. Gunpowder and raw meat fed to a dog makes him savage and if you cut off the tip of the canine's tail, burying it under the front door steps, he'll never leave home.

Animals can talk at midnight on Christmas Eve.

If a rabbit crosses the road to your left, bad luck is in the offing; if to the right, good luck is in store. If you are the first person a cat looks at after "licking himself," you are going to be married. You'll contract a headache by walking through a place where a horse wallows and if you kill a toad your cow will go dry.

A whippoorwill's singing near a house is warning that a death will occur soon. If a hen crows like a rooster, kill her, or there's bad luck ahead for your family. Stepping on ants or spiders will cause rain. Ants give warning of no more rain that day when they bring dirt out of their holes. The cry of a rain crow during a drought means rain's coming. To kill a snake and hang the reptile's body on the fence, will bring rain before nightfall.

If a butterfly comes into one's home, it is a good omen. A young lady wearing a dress the same color as the butterfly's may pay a visit ere the day has waned.

To stop the eerie hooting of a screech owl in the dead of night one puts a shovel with some salt in it into the fireplace to remain in the

flames for awhile. There will be no more hooting that night.

Bad luck can be caused by ways other than a black cat crossing the path.

It's courting disaster to count the cars of a funeral cortege. The finger used in counting will be lost. The person or someone dear to him, will die if he waits until nightfall to carry out ashes. To take the rings off one's finger causes heart trouble. If the pictures are not turned to the wall after a death, some other member of the family will die.

Be cautious about throwing bread into the fire; abject want will result from this wastefulness. It is bad luck to spill salt, carry a hoe through the house or place shoes higher than the head. Walking under a ladder is bad business and breaking a mirror means seven years of hard luck.

Good luck may be courted favorably. Stop a clock after a death or carry the left hind foot of a rabbit in a side pocket. Buckeyes will suffice if no rabbit foot is available. To see a white horse means one is due for a thrill by seeing a red-headed girl. Moreover, it is good luck to hang a horseshoe on a nail or drop a pair of scissors and have them stick up in the floor.

Eyes, ears, hands and feet are constant reminders of things.

If the right eye itches, be made mad; if it's your left, you'll be made glad. If the left ear burns, someone's saying something bad; if it's the right ear, the remarks are good. If the right hand itches, a present will be received; if it's the left, a handshake with a stranger is indicated. For the bottom of the foot to itch means a journey on a strange land. Somebody is intending to pay a visit if the nose itches. Dropping a dish cloth means the same thing.

Keep the eyes open for anyone using a broom. To sweep under the feet means one will never marry; if already wed, one will never remarry. To sweep directly in front of one means his wealth is being carried away.

Friendships may be guarded. If walking with a friend, never go on either side of a post lest there be a quarrel. Never give a knife as a present as it cuts your friendship in twain. To touch the corpse of a friend precludes the possibility of haunting memories.

The sun and the rain play their respective roles in superstition.

If the sun shines during rain, this is indication the Devil is whipping his wife and it is a sure sign there'll be rain on the morrow also. Seeing a new moon for the first time through shrubbery is a bad omen; Milk sours when it thunders and a turtle or crawfish will not let go until a rumble of thunder. If sitting on a featherbed or with feet in a bowl of water during a storm, lightning will not strike you. And:

"Rainbow in the morning, sailors take warning,
Rainbow at night, sailor's delight."

It is important to pay close attention to dreams for all have their interpretations.

To dream of marriage means someone in the family will become critically ill. A dream of muddy water also indicates illness or death. Dreaming of snakes indicates enemies. To kill these snakes in a dream means the enemies will be eliminated.

It is well to be observant. Finding a pin with the head toward the finder is bad luck; if the point is toward the finder, it's good luck. The person seeing a ghost and yet bold enough to speak to the apparition will find it disappears as suddenly as it came. The holder of a mirror over a well at 12 o'clock on the first day of May, will see reflected the image of her future husband; if a casket is reflected, it means death. Starting somewhere and turning back, a cross made on the ground with the

toe and spitting on it before retracing the steps will ward off bad luck.

To find a lost article, spit in the left hand, tap it with the index finger of the right hand and, observing the direction it goes, chant:

"Spit, spat, show me where I lost it at."

Beware of a blue gum Negro. Not only is he a dangerous character but his bite is as poisonous as a rattlesnake.

Superstitions are interwoven with songs, poems and traditions handed down in Alabama. Folklore is replete with them. Education has gone a long way toward enlightening all classes as to the fallacy of these beliefs, yet there are those who persist in telling of superstitions in good faith and with an element of doubt as to their relative merits.

G. L. CLARK
Sept. 21, 1936

ALABAMA SUPERSTITIONS

It is good luck to see the new moon clear, especially so if seen across the right shoulder; it is a sign of trouble ahead to see it first partly obscured by clouds.

Each lefthanded person owes the devil three days' work.

Salt spilled accidentally is a sign that visitors are coming.

When the nose itches expect company.

Accidental dropping of a dishrag or piece of table cutlery is another sign of company coming.

^(firefly)
A lightning bug in the house foretells a thunder storm.

Throw food in the fire and you will go hungry.

Burn the combings from your hair and you will suffer from chronic headache.

If your chair falls over when you arise from it you will not be married during the year.

If on first sight of the new moon you take up a pinch of earth from beneath your right instep you will find in it a hair of your mate.

A butterfly in the house signifies a visit by a strange woman who will be wearing a dress the color of the butterfly.

(The continuous crowing of a rooster in front of the door signifies visitors if his head is turned toward the house; if he faces away from the house there will shortly be a death in the family.

(If bread burns while cooking, the head of the house is angry with the cook.

(Those who die during a gentle rain are gone to rest, but those who die, from natural causes, during a storm, are accursed.

(To learn whether your sweetheart loves you, get two large leaves of mistletoe and place them on a hot stove. Name one for your sweetheart and one for yourself. If his leaf hops toward yours he loves you. If it hops away he despises you. If your leaf hops toward his you love him truly. If the two hop toward each other at the same time your love for each other is equal and very deep.

(If ~~the~~ you walk backward you will curse your mother.

Reference: Personal reports from those who believe in the superstitions given.

G. L. Clark
Sept. 21, 1936
300 words.

Omens of Death

Superstitions and customs concerning the Disposal of the dead.

Nearly every ordinary act presages Dire Disaster.

1. While the corpse is in the house the looking-glass must be turned toward the wall; otherwise whoever looks in the mirror will die within a year.
2. The clock should be stopped at the time of death, as its running will bring ill-luck.
3. To keep the corpse in the house over Sunday will bring death in the family before the year is out.
4. If the grave is left open over Sunday another death will occur the next Sunday.
5. If rain falls into an open grave another burial in the same cemetery will occur within three days.
6. A common saying is "Happy the corpse the rain falls on". Thus it is said that if rain falls at the time of the funeral it is a sign that the dead man has gone to heaven.
7. If a hearse is drawn by two white horses death in the neighborhood will occur within a month.
8. To dream of a white horse is a sign of death.
9. It is unlucky to pass through a funeral either between the carriage or mourners on foot.
10. If anyone comes to a funeral after the procession starts another death will occur in the same house.
11. Whoever counts the carriages at a passing funeral will die within the year.
12. The corpse must not pass twice over any part of the same road.
13. The funeral procession must not cross the river.
14. It is unlucky in a funeral for those present to repass the house where death has occurred.
15. Entering the church before the mourners means death to some of the entering party.
16. The person on whom the eyes of a dying person last rests will be the first to die.
17. The last name a dying person calls is the next to follow.
18. If 3 persons look at the same time into a mirror one will die within the year.

Omens of Death - continued

19. To break a looking glass is a sign of death or bad luck for seven years. It adds to the ill luck to preserve the broken glass. In some places you will never have good luck is the belief, until you have broken two more.
20. If in sickness a pair of shears be dropped in such a manner that that the point sticks into the flooe it indicates the death of the sick person.
21. To dance on the ground indicates disaster or death within a year.
22. If 13 sit at a table the one who rises first will not live through the year.
23. If 13 sit at a table the last one who sits down will not die that year.
24. A dish-cloth hung on a door knob is a sign of death in a family.
25. If a hoe be carried thru the house someone will die before the year is out.
26. If you carry a spade it is a certain sign that a grave will shortly be dug for some member of the household.
27. Whoever works on a sick person's dress, he or she will die within a year.
28. To put on a bonnet or hat of one in mourning is the sign that you will wear one before the year is out.
29. Don't try on a black bonnet it means death.
30. When a woman who has been sewing puts her thimble on the table as she sits down to eat it is a sign she will be left a widow if she marries.

THE MYSTERIOUS HUSBAND.

Many years ago, soon after Clarke county was established, and new settlers were coming in rapidly, among them came William Walker with his family and settled at the place now called Walker Spring.

Here, by the side of a much traveled road he built a tavern for the accommodation of the many travelers then passing through, naming his establishment The Roadside Inn.

In those days travel was slow and sometimes difficult, and as the traffic increased by reason of the influx of added new-comers, the business of The Roadside Inn grew in proportion accordingly.

Among the members of the Walker family were several daughters, one named Elizabeth, a very pretty girl, and it is concerning her life and experiences this story is written.

In many sections and among certain classes an old belief existed that girls of marriageable age could see the image of their future husband's face by looking down into the water of a dug well under certain conditions. The attempt must be made at the hour of noon, on the first day of May, and the method employed was the use of a mirror held over the well in such a manner as to cast a reflection on the surface of the water at its bottom.

On such an occasion, Elizabeth with her sisters, were trying the experiment when suddenly she became excited and almost swooned, saying she had seen clearly the image of a man's face looking up at her from the surface of the water below. For a time the girls were quite thrilled over the outcome of their observations, but as the older members of the family treated the matter lightly, the incident was soon forgotten by all except Elizabeth, to whom the experience had occurred.

Time passed, and one day a stranger on horseback approached the Inn and applied for lodging for the night. When Elizabeth saw him she immediately recognized his as the face she had seen in the well, and so informed her mother. Again the matter was given little thought and the daughter was told it was merely a day dream. However, she insisted his was the face she had seen so clearly.

Afterward the stranger passed through frequently, always lodging at the Roadside Inn. A rather handsome chap, he was apparently a man of means as he seemed at all time to be well supplied with money which he spent freely, and rode a splendid horse. He gave his name as Collins, and his business as a trader, dealing in land, live-stock and slaves.

In the course of time he and Elizabeth fell in love with each other, which culminated in their marriage a few months after his first visit. Thus came to pass the event foretold by the incident of the image seen by her in the well.

Following their marriage she accompanied him to their new home in north Alabama, where he continued his activities as an alleged trader. But his failure to present her to neighbors, or to invite them to visit her, or to even introduce her to his friends, aroused her suspicion, and led her to the realization that something was amiss and all was not well.

His business called him away on supposedly long trips during which he would be absent for days - even weeks at a time. Otherwise he treated her well, and continued to be free with his money of which he appeared at all times to be well supplied. While she did not fully understand these things, his explanations of his periods of absence, together with his faith in and love for him, caused her to overlook much she could not understand.

In a little more than a year following their marriage, twin boys were born to them, and though Collins was still absent much of the time,

the twins were to her a source of comfort, and a means of dispelling in part her loneliness besides occupying pleasantly much of her time.

While absent on one of his numerous and to her mysterious trips, one day a party of men rode up to the porch of their home where she and her babies were seated. The men were armed and inquired of her if Jim Copeland lived there. She informed them to the contrary and told them she and her husband, named Collins lived there and that he was absent at that time on business.

After talking with her a short while, making inquiries concerning her husband's business they rode away. Presently, one of the party returned and explained that he was a neighbor, and while he had been impressed with her previous statement, he was of the opinion still, that her husband was none other than Jim Copeland, a member of Murrell's band of outlaws, and the posse who had just left were seeking him and would certainly capture him eventually. He advised her to return to her people in Clarke county.

After considering the matter seriously, and in view of past events, she concluded the neighbor had informed her correctly, so she and the twins returned to her father's house, the Roadside Inn.

One night some months later, while she was absent visiting a sick neighbor, the twin boys were left in charge of an old negro mammy. The old negro was familiar with the history of Miss Elizabeth's unfortunate marriage, and had been given instructions to allow no one in the room where the babies slept. But during the night Jim Copeland came back to Clarke county and to Roadside Inn to see his wife and their sons.

His arrival and request to see them greatly frightened the old nurse, but assuming a bold front she said: "Now Mistah Jim, you go on away, 'cause Miss 'Lizabeth dont never want to see you no mo'." But

with disregard for her warning and command, and brushing her aside, he proceeded to the little bed where the babies slept, followed closely by the old negro who was fearful he might try to take them away.

In this she was mistaken, for he made no such attempt, only looking down at them with longing, tearful eyes. Before departing he told the old negro to say to Miss Elizabeth that he felt she would not be annoyed or embarrassed much longer on his account as he was certain he would be captured soon. The reason he gave for this was that constantly haunting him was a dream he had that a man on a big white horse was pursueing him, and he was impressed that this must be true. He asked that she also tell Miss Elizabeth that he had always loved her, but would never see her again. He then rode away.

A few weeks later Jim Copeland was captured in George county, Miss. The posse making the capture was led by the sheriff who rode a large white horse.

WFJ- 7/23/37

while palmistry is the most popularly accepted method of modern reading, it is but an echo to prophecies solemnly deducted from tea and coffee grounds poured from cup into saucer. Cards have always been employed in determining good fortune or ~~for foreboding~~ ^{in predicting} evils, and slate writing and ouija boards come under the classification of spiritualism, a psychic power more sedate and off the beaten path of fortune telling which, while ~~claiming~~ ^{was} comparatively few converts ^{in Alabama} ~~in America~~, has a large following in England and elsewhere abroad.

Scattered about ~~Alabama~~ ^{the state} are "readers" who have catered to people prominent in society and everyday business life ~~of the state.~~ with the result they have achieved considerable popularity and command unusual respect from those who believe it possible to pull back the screen of present day routine life and peer into the past or future. ^{between Montgomery & Birmingham} in Calera, ^{woman} especially, is a ~~madam~~ whose ability has received state-wide acclaim because of her mental qualities that supposedly transform the mind of a client into an open book from which are taken pages that alternately baffle, startle and ~~leave~~ leave the subject in a state of bewilderment. ~~there is~~ ^{is} another such reader ^{in Sylacauga} near ~~Andalusia~~ while Birmingham and Montgomery offer year round residence to others who maintain studios open to the public.

It may be truthfully said that paths have literally been beaten to the doors of ~~these~~ women who have the faculty to advise after mystic consultations, and they have been known to offer procedure into matters of business and affairs of the heart that have been followed with every degree of success. Alabamians, cultured and respected, seek these consultations without trace of embarrassment or effort at concealment.

"SUPERSTITION AND VOODOOISM"

Mrs. Belle Stewart.

Tuscumbia, Alabama.

Years ago, back in slavery and after slavery, people didn't believe in anything but conjurism and voodooism. A few white folks believed in it, but all of the colored folks believed in it because they had been taught that by the white folks. The white folks didn't believe in it, that is the biggest majority of them didn't. They knew that they could scare the colored people so they wouldn't run away. The colored people believed everything that the white folks told them that's why so many of them are superstitious today. After the war when the colored folks were free some of them called themselves "Witch Doctors", and some of them made good money at it. People would go to them and pay them a big sum of money to fix somebody for them. Plenty times I've heard of the witch doctors doing something to somebody.

Once a woman thought her husband was courting, so she went to the witch doctor to have him fixed. Some more folks saw her when she went to this place and they began to whisper, that man sure had better watch out because his wife is visiting the witch doctor. About three days later the man got up and ate his breakfast and went to the field. He stayed in the field about an hour and then came home sick. He sent for the doctor. When the doctor got there and examined him he couldn't find the trouble. He asked the man what he had eaten. The man told the doctor what he had eaten for breakfast. Then the doctor asked what he had been drinking and the man told the doctor that he hadn't drank anything but some water. The doctor asked for the drugs of the water and poured them in to a bottle and went away. The next day the doctor came back with the bottle that he had carried the water away in. The doctor held the bottle up and said, just like these snakes are working in this bottle so are

are they in this man and there is nothing that I can do to get them out. What it was that the woman put in her husbands water I don't know, but he certainly died two days later.

Another time I remember that a lady was jealous of her husband and she went to the witch doctor to have him fixed. The doctor told her to get some of his hair and put it between the mattress and sleep with it there for three days and her husband would be completely under her control. This lady went home and that night while her husband was sleep she cut some hair out of the mole of his head and put it between the mattress and left it there for three days. After the three days the woman had her husband under her control just like the doctor told her she would.

Colored folks have always farmed for their living. I remember when I was a girl that some of the folks would bury a frog on his head by the side of an oak tree and three days later it would rain. Some folks think that right now if they bury a frog on his by an oak tree or kill a snake and turn him up on his back that it will cause it to rain.

If a man or a woman thought that some body was coming to his or her house while he or she wasn't at home, they would bury a cricket under the doorsteps to stop any one from visiting them while they wasn't at home. Lots of men use to do this if they had to work very far from home where they couldn't watch. I know that that didn't keep no body from coming to a persons house, because a man did that one time because he thought that his wife was courting, but the man that was courting his wife never stopped coming to his house but the man that buried the cricket under the doorsteps thought that his wife quit courting and he never thought of her courting no more, but she didn't quit.

If a person wanted to run you crazy, all they had to do was get some of your hair and put it between two Indian head pennies and put it up over the door and in a few days you would go crazy. If they didn't put your hair between two Indian head pennies they could take it to the river and throw it in. If it floated down the stream and didn't go to the bottom you would go crazy, but if it went to the bottom you would learn to like the person.

Another superstition that a lot of people believe in today is, if you start somewhere and have to turn around it is bad luck and you wont get where you started, if you dont make an "X" and then spit in the center of the "X" where it crosses.

If a person has the asthma take him to an oak tree and mark his height up against the tree. Then take some hair from the mole of his head, bore a hole one inch above the mark on the tree and put his hair in the hole. When the person grows up to where the hair is in the tree ^{he} ~~they~~ will be cured.

If an owl hoots in the night some body is sure to die. The only way to prevent any one from dying is by placing an iron poker in the fire. This will run the owl away and the omen will follow the owl.

People have always worn brass and copper to keep from having the rheumatism. Some people wear a dime around their ankles to keep any body from conjuring them or hoodooing them as some say. If a rooster crows in the front door before breakfast some stranger is coming to the house before the day passes. If a spider comes down the wall into the house a stranger is coming to the house. To nail a horse shoe upside down over the front door will keep all bad luck and sickness away from the house.

If a person looks through a fork into a whirl wind he can see

the devil. They say that if you drop a dish rag somebody in the house is hungry or else somebody is coming to the house.

People shouldn't be so foolish as to think that some body can do something to you unless they feed you something. If some one feeds a person something they should know that they will be sick, but unless you eat something you don't have anything to worry about, that is so far as hoodooing is concerned.