

SKILL AND STATUS:  
TRADITIONAL EXPERTISE  
WITHIN A RURAL CANADIAN  
FAMILY

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

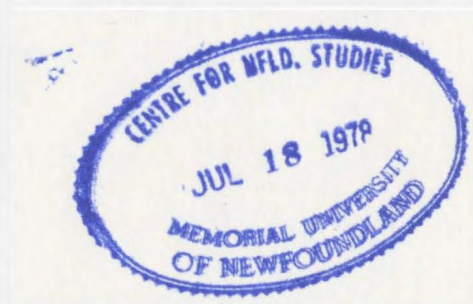
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SKILL AND STATUS: TRADITIONAL EXPERTISE  
WITHIN A RURAL CANADIAN FAMILY

by

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## ABSTRACT

In order to determine the factors regulating the achievement of status in a family setting, a ten-member rural Canadian sibling group, characterized by a high degree of specialization in various traditional skills, is studied. By means of an examination of nine distinct cases where individual informants perceive themselves or are perceived by their siblings as experts in various oral, psychic or manual skills, certain factors are seen to be influential in regulating the achievement of status. In the first place, the choice of field is limited to those traditional activities to which prestige is attached by the family and which are perceived as areas of family specialization. Choice of field is further limited to areas deemed appropriate to the age and sex of the individual. Secondly, three major factors are seen to influence the achievement of status within any given field. Age and sex provide either direct influence, as when a specific age or sex is seen as a prerequisite for expertise in a specific field; or indirect influence, as when circumstances combine to provide an advantage to one group over another, with the advantage generally falling to older members of the sibling group. Parental approval of both the skill and the individual

involved in it is a third major factor. Two minor factors, sibling rivalry and public approval, exist, but are of minimal importance within the group under study. Finally, it is seen that status positions are maintained, even if the individual expert no longer practices the skill, for reasons of the psychological and emotional benefits derived by the other members of the sibling group and the family at large.

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Memorial University of Newfoundland provided me with a fellowship which allowed me to undertake graduate studies. This was supplemented by a student assistantship from the Department of Folklore which provided work in the Folklore and Language Archive, a beneficial way of gaining practical experience in the archiving field. For this monetary support, I am most grateful.

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I was assisted throughout my term at Memorial by my



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# I

## INTRODUCTION

As a child growing up in a tiny village in the Gatineau Hills of western Quebec during the forties and early fifties, I experienced a life style rich in family relationships and traditions. Because my great-grandfather and eight of his brothers and sisters had homesteaded farm lots in the vicinity of the village during the 1860's, I was related by blood or marriage to almost everyone within miles. However, like most members of the community, I defined "family" in strictly limited terms. Included were my grandmother,<sup>1</sup> my mother and her eleven brothers and sisters along with their spouses, and all of the children of these couples, a total of eighty-five individuals, sixty of whom were children. Throughout this three-generational group, primary relationships prevailed, so that aunts and uncles were like extra sets of parents, and cousins were as close as brothers and sisters.

Within this extended family, interaction and communication were at a constantly high level and followed familiar patterns which were at once boring and reassuring to a small child. Some activities fell within the domain of certain members of the parental generation. If you

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<sup>1</sup>My grandfather had died in 1919.

needed alterations done on a garment or if you had difficulty making some piece of clothing, you went to my mother. If you needed a new well found, you asked Uncle Harry. Uncle Manuel could be called upon for carpentry work, and Uncle Jackie could make repairs to broken farm implements or machinery. Some of these specialties were well known to me as a child while others remained hidden; I discovered only years later that Uncle Fred could make harness for horses, although once he had made my brother a beautiful belt, brass-studded and laced with two shades of rich brown leather.

In talk, as in activity, certain patterns were repeated. My mother told us how her ancestors had been driven out of Ireland by the English; how her great-grandfather, Darby Kealey, had sailed from Sligo Harbour to Canada; how a banshee had followed one branch of the family from the old country to the new; how her father had caught influenza helping neighbours and had died in 1919; how Felix Kealey had been murdered in a corn field; how Uncle Harry had seen a ghost on the Borough Road -- the stream seemed endless.

But my mother's supply of stories was nothing compared to that of my uncle Manuel, who might appear at the kitchen door any night of the week, shuffle into the living room where my father was seated, and start to talk. Several hours later, when my brother and I had already drifted off to sleep and my parents were starting to nod, he would leave, having spun perhaps two dozen tales about things that had

happened to him in the lumbercamps or on the highway work crew, things he had heard from fellow workers or from elderly members of the family -- all packed with impossibly exaggerated details and more profanity than can be imagined, most of which was used to attest to the absolute veracity of every word uttered.

There were other stories as well. Whenever two or more of the twelve brothers and sisters got together with their mother, they spent hours disentangling the complex family genealogy and retelling anecdotes in an effort to keep them attached to the right individual. When their mother was not present, talk was more likely to turn to funny incidents from their own childhood or courting days.

Growing up within this rich, tradition-oriented culture, I of course took it all for granted. Then in 1953 my parents decided to move to the city of Ottawa so that my brother and I would have better educational opportunities. Although we maintained close ties with the rest of the family, the old patterns of interaction became less relevant as we underwent the process of urbanization. Attending university and becoming a secondary school teacher further removed me from my past, both culturally and geographically, as I travelled to and lived in other parts of the country and the world.

In the summer of 1971 I went back to the village for an extended holiday. Much to my surprise, I discovered that,



although some of the significant individuals were gone, the old life style remained intact on the level of interpersonal relationships, and many of the old patterns of interaction and communication remained. In addition, I realized that a discernible body of folklore materials -- stories, songs, jokes, expressions, techniques -- was being utilized in this process of interaction. Moreover, a significant part of these materials had been handed down through several generations; while some items had obviously originated within the family and were restricted to it, others were culturally widespread.

It was this perception of the traditional elements in my own background which aroused my interest in studying folklore on a formal basis. Coursework in various folklore genres carried out at the Department of Folklore of Memorial University of Newfoundland gave me a totally new framework for viewing the material with which I was so familiar, and a means of organizing it intellectually for better comprehension. Finally this academic preparation led me to undertake this work, which I saw originally as a monograph of family traditions.

Family traditions have, of course, been examined before, both by family members and by outsiders, although there have been relatively few studies. Descriptive works have predominated, especially those with a biographic approach and an orientation towards a single genre. Two of the better known of these, Jean Ritchie's Singing Family

of the Cumberlands<sup>2</sup> and Bob Copper's A Song for Every Season: A Hundred Years of a Sussex Farming Family,<sup>3</sup> were in fact written by individuals involved in the folk revival of the nineteen fifties. In examining their own family traditions, both authors had been influenced by Cecil Sharp, whose interviews with members of the Ritchie and Copper families had sparked their interest in the field of folklore. While both books contain a wealth of detail on the authors' respective cultures, their scholarly value is limited by a purely descriptive and rather nostalgic approach.

Studies of family traditions done by outsiders have been similarly limited. While Leonard W. Roberts' Sang Branch Settlers: Folksongs and Tales of a Kentucky Mountain Family<sup>4</sup> is a significant contribution to the field, it is essentially a collection, presented with a detailed introduction containing biographies of the chief informants.

Briefer works in the field have been mainly descriptive, often featuring a writer who outlines his personal experience with one genre of lore -- most frequently

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<sup>2</sup>New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

<sup>3</sup>London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1973.

<sup>4</sup>(Publications of the American Folklore Society, Memoir Series, Volume LXI), Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1974.

a narrative genre -- from his own family.<sup>5</sup> The titles of many of these articles indicate their orientation towards the grandparental generation as keepers of tradition: "Lore from a Swedish Grandmother", "My Grandfather's Speech", "Grandmother Remembers Switzerland".<sup>6</sup> At least one author, Beverly Hawkins, has examined the lore of a complete nuclear family group, with contributions from members of all ages,<sup>7</sup> but again this work is mainly a collection with a few biographic details.

Although there are few analytical studies of family folklore, important theoretical points have been made by several scholars. In his article "Family Tales of a Kentuckian", Herbert Halpert quotes John Jacob Niles as he describes how, in his family, tales are generated by the frequent repetition and eventual crystallization of a

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Shirley Copeland's "Family Tales from Chenango County", New York Folklore Quarterly, X (1951), 193-197; or Maruita Russell Lueg's "Russell Tales", in Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell, eds., Madstones and Twisters (Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, No. 28), Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1958.

<sup>6</sup> June J. Gellin, New York Folklore Quarterly, IX (1950), 268-272; Edwin Hunter, Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin, VIII (1942), 5-22; Virginia White, New York Folklore Quarterly, X (1951), 274-278.

<sup>7</sup> "Folklore of a Black Family", Journal of the Ohio Folklore Society, II (1972), 2-19.

narrative of some event, and how they become associated with certain family figures who appear the most likely to have been involved in such an incident.<sup>8</sup> Also concerned with family narrative, Mody C. Boatright<sup>9</sup> stressed that a tale must provide emotional satisfaction to the family members before it can enter family tradition; once a part of that tradition, it serves as a reflection of a social value, and must be seen in a social context. Boatright also outlined the possible ways in which stories can change as they pass from generation to generation, as hearers confuse narrator with hero, and tellers attribute events to someone known personally rather than to an unknown individual. Stanley Brandes, again dealing with narrative, provided a thematic classification for stories of family misfortune, linking the prevalence of such stories in Anglo-American culture to the strength of the Protestant ethic.<sup>10</sup>

While scholars such as these have studied the formation of texts and their entry into family tradition, others have turned their attention to the functions served by folklore within the family unit. Kim S. Garrett pointed

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<sup>8</sup> Hoosier Folklore Bulletin, I (1942), 61-71.

<sup>9</sup> "The Family Saga as a Form of Folklore", in Mody C. Boatright, Robert B. Downs, and John T. Flanagan, eds., The Family Saga and Other Phases of American Folklore, Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1958, pp. 1-19.

<sup>10</sup> "Family Misfortune Stories in American Folklore", Journal of the Folklore Institute, XII (1975), 5-17.



out that shared traditions provide a sense of unity, security and continuity, as well as reflecting the nature of the family group.<sup>11</sup> Kathryn Morgan showed how the legends of a black American family are used as "buffers" against the dominant white society.<sup>12</sup> Significantly, both of these authors are dealing with their own families, indicating perhaps that a view from the inside is an asset in perceiving the subtleties of function.

The most recent contribution to the field, a book entitled Family Folklore published by the Smithsonian Institute,<sup>13</sup> presents a series of excerpts from interviews conducted with members of the public at the Festival of American Folklife in Washington. While the material on various family customs and oral traditions is very attractively presented, the book appears to be intended as a catalyst to the collecting of family lore, rather than as a scholarly contribution to the study of such collections.

It is obvious from this brief survey of folklore

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<sup>11</sup>"Family Stories and Sayings", in Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell, eds., Singers and Storytellers (Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, No. 30), Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1961, p. 273.

<sup>12</sup> "Caddy Buffers: Legends of a Middle Class Negro Family in Philadelphia", Keystone Folklore Quarterly, XI (1966), 67-88.

<sup>13</sup> Family Folklore: Collected by the Family Folklore Program of the Festival of American Folklife, Washington: The Smithsonian Institute, 1976.

scholarship in the field of family studies that much remains to be done. Studies have tended to be descriptive rather than theoretical, and have been very limited, both in terms of genre examined (usually narrative or song), and in terms of the family relationship studied (usually parent-child or grandparent-child). At this point I must admit that, had I pursued my original plan to do a family monograph, this study would have followed in that pattern. However, preliminary conversations with my potential informants revealed three important facts which influenced the direction of my research and the final form of this thesis.

In the first place, my aunts and uncles were bearers of tradition to a degree that far outweighed my expectations. All made frequent and effective use of traditional narrative forms in ordinary conversation, whether describing a personal experience, relating a family or local legend, or telling a joke. Many were involved in some form of traditional handcraft, such as needlework, leatherwork or quilting, and exhibited an exceptionally high level of competency in these crafts. Most sang while going about their daily work, and several sang to entertain others. One could step dance and another could call a square dance set. Their knowledge and talents seemed endless; obviously there was enough family lore to fill several descriptive-style theses, so that attempting to undertake the

production of a definitive collection within a reasonable time appeared inadvisable.

The second fact that became evident was that among this sibling group there were many experts -- individuals who showed a special interest in, and an exceptional talent for one or several traditional activities, whether related to an oral skill such as telling family legends, a manual skill such as making harness, or a psychic skill such as sighting ghosts. This tendency towards specialization has been pointed out by sociologists as being characteristic of a large family. Bossard and Boll, who are experts in the field of large family studies, refer to Durkheim in corroboration of their contention that "the larger the number of people living together, the greater the division of labour and specialization of function there are apt to be."<sup>14</sup>

Finally, it was apparent from preliminary inquiries that, while the level of specialized activity in various traditional skills was very high within the sibling group, only a limited number of individuals were seen as experts by their brothers and sisters. Moreover, it became obvious that a regulatory system existed which determined which individuals could enjoy the status of "specialist" in any

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<sup>14</sup> James H. S. Bossard and Eleanor Stoker Boll, The Large Family System: An Original Study in the Sociology of Family Behavior, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1956, p. 172.

given field. This phenomenon was first described by Ralph Linton, who pointed out that even when a status is "achieved" through individual ability and effort, rather than being "ascribed" by outside factors, there are still limits on who can achieve that status within any social group.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, while status within the sibling group could not be gained solely on the grounds of ability and effort, the reverse was also true: the possession of status in a field did not necessarily imply a superior knowledge of that field or a higher level of activity in it. This situation has been noted by Gerald Pocius in relation to a Newfoundland outport community. In the course of interviewing an acknowledged singing expert, he discovered that the singer's wife possessed a repertoire superior to that of her husband. She was barred from achieving the status of singer because of her husband's status, and because of her social position as a married woman.<sup>16</sup>

Within the sibling group, it was obvious that there existed alongside the status system an independent system of generally negative images which typified the personalities

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<sup>15</sup>The Study of Man, New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1936, pp. 114, 128.

<sup>16</sup>"The First Day That I Thought of It Since I Got Wed: Role Expectations and Singer Status in a Newfoundland Outport", Western Folklore, XXXV (1976), 109-122.

of the group members.<sup>17</sup> Thus an individual could be seen by his siblings as the "bossy" one or the "lazy" one, but still be revered as the best singer, storyteller, or quilt-maker in the family. These two frames of reference, the status system and the personality typification system, were obviously of vital importance in reference to sibling relationships within the group. Moreover, sibling relationships were obviously of vital importance in the lives of these people, a factor seen by some scholars as a dominant characteristic of this age group in North American society.<sup>18</sup>

Perceiving these factors at work within the sibling group, I determined to use my fieldwork as a means of examining them more closely, while at the same time recording as much as possible of the family's traditional lore. In examining the lore, however, I ignored the folklorist's traditional approaches, such as structural analysis, diffusion, etc., to concentrate on the factors mentioned above. This thesis, therefore, does not provide a detailed examination of traditional skills, as so many previous studies have, especially in Canada, but deals with the collected material only as it relates to the family status system. It is an

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<sup>17</sup> See Brossard and Boll, op. cit., pp. 203-221, for a discussion of prominent role-types in the large family.

<sup>18</sup> Elaine Cumming and David M. Schneider, "Sibling Solidarity: A Property of American Kinship", American Anthropologist, LXIII (1961), 498-507.

attempt to examine the nature of expertise and its systematization within a sibling group. For obvious reasons, it does not attempt to deal with the personality typification system. While this type of topical restriction can prove disadvantageous when working with one's own family, in this case the omission of this information is of no consequence to the overall purpose of the study. However, while the negative images assigned to family members by their siblings generally bear no relationship to either the family traditions or the achievement of status, it is important to remember that these images exist in order to see family relationships in their true perspective.

The major fieldwork for this project was carried out in the summer and fall of 1975, although some interviewing and a great deal of participant observation were done during the summer and Christmas vacation of 1974. Interviews were conducted with all ten of the surviving members of the sibling group, with a field notebook, a Sony Cassette tape recorder, model TC224, and a Pentax S1000 camera being used to record information. The resultant collection consists of twenty hours of recorded tape, two notebooks, three hundred photographs, and an assortment of artifacts relating to the family.

For each interview, a general list of topics to be covered was prepared in advance. To begin with, my own knowledge of the informants' special fields of interest

directed my inquiries. As I gathered more information through observation and through interviews with their siblings, I was able to cover any areas of importance which I had originally missed.

I told the informants simply that I wanted to collect family history and traditions, and that it was easier for me to record the information on tape than to write it down. If the concept "family history and traditions" seemed too abstract for their comprehension, I said I wanted to "get all the old stories and songs and sayings and things like that." No one questioned my interest in the material since they knew that I had gone to Newfoundland to study such things; moreover, they shared my desire to preserve as much as possible of the old culture.

Because I was dealing with my aunts and uncles, I had none of the fieldworker's usual difficulties of making initial contacts and setting dates for interviews. I could wander into their houses at any hour of the day or night and start up a conversation about any topic with very little preamble. Nor did they mind my producing a notebook to jot down information; such activities were in keeping with my previous role as a secondary school teacher, at least in their minds.

A major problem arose, however, in finding suitable times for tape recorded interviews. All of the informants are highly active people, in spite of the fact that their





confidence in their own verbal abilities; they were afraid that some stranger might hear the tapes and laugh at the way they spoke. When I explained that the tapes would be locked in a cabinet at the university in Newfoundland, and perhaps never touched for years, their hesitations vanished.

Of the ten members of the sibling group, two of the brothers were not recorded on tape for reasons relevant to their personal lives, although they were interviewed. One of these has lived in Ottawa for over twenty-five years and his life style is far removed from that of his brothers and sisters. While he is reputed to have been a good singer in his youth, he himself told me that he has not sung since 1935, and I believe this to be true. Moreover, he does not appear to retain any significant amount of family tradition, either as an "active" or "passive" bearer,<sup>19</sup> and enjoys no status as specialist in a traditional activity within the family. A second brother was extremely busy during the fieldwork period, conducting a campaign for election to municipal office. While he is an active bearer of tradition within his procreative family and within the community (and in fact celebrated his victory by step-dancing at a party for all the local candidates), he does not figure in the family status system for reasons which will be discussed

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<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of these terms coined by Carl W. von Sydow, see his "On The Spread of Tradition", in Selected Papers on Folklore: Published on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday, Laurits Bødker, ed., Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1948, pp. 11-43.

later in this study.

The total fieldwork experience proved enjoyable to informants and interviewer alike, especially during the final weeks of recording interviews, when I travelled from house to house within the village on afternoons and evenings, and had overnight visits with aunts and uncles who live farther afield. Although I had initially feared that my research might alter the informants' relationships with me, or influence their attitudes toward their traditions, neither of these fears materialized. Relationships were in fact strengthened by the intimate communication of the interview situation. And the interviewing provided some hilarious moments which are already being fashioned into narratives and are making the rounds of the family circle. While I viewed the fieldwork as a means to an end, the end being the production of a thesis, the informants saw it in existential terms as an occasion of emotional significance. They could relate to the thesis only as a piece of work I had to finish before I could "come home for good."

For discussion purposes, I have divided family areas of specialization into three general categories -- oral skills, psychic skills and manual skills -- although the informants themselves would perceive no such divisions. Within each category, the "experts" discussed are those who enjoy the status of specialist, or consider themselves to be specialists although they do not enjoy the status; it

is necessary to examine both these types of individual in order to understand the dynamics of the status system within the group.

Copies of the fieldnotes and field recordings have been deposited with the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive under accession number 75-301. References to fieldnotes are indicated by date of entry. Since the tapes have not yet been assigned shelf numbers, they are referred to by their chronological number (1 to 24) and by the appropriate side, A or B.

In transcribing portions of the field recordings, I have followed the system devised by Edward D. Ives for the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History.<sup>20</sup> Speech is transcribed verbatim in standard spelling. Information extraneous to the actual transcription, such as references to unusual pronunciation or indications of noise or movement on the part of the informant, is included in brackets and underscored to distinguish it from the words of the speaker. When dialogue between interviewer and informant is included, the first initial of the Christian name is used to signify the informant, and the initial "I" is used for the interviewer. Punctuation follows the informants' rhythm of speech as closely as possible, although it has been necessary

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<sup>20</sup>For a complete description of this method, see his "A Manual for Field Workers", Northeast Folklore, XV (1974), 38-45.

to add commas and periods where no pauses exist in order to avoid confusion. A dash indicates that the informant has broken off, has changed thought in mid-sentence, or has been interrupted. An underscored space indicates that the informant's words are unintelligible. Contrary to Ives' method, pauses are not indicated in the transcriptions since they are not of significance in family speech patterns.

A history of the informant family is given in the following chapter. Three subsequent chapters describe the various experts in oral, psychic and manual skills. Finally, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the dynamics and the significance of the family status system.

## II

### THE KEALEY FAMILY

The members of the informant group were born and raised near the village of Venosta, located forty miles north of the city of Hull in Low Township, Gatineau County, Quebec (see map page 21). They are the children of John Kealey and Mary McCarthy who were married in the city of Ottawa in 1898.<sup>1</sup> John Kealey was the oldest son of Ellen Brown, an Irish immigrant, and James Kealey, a homesteading farmer who acquired letters patent for lots thirty-eight and thirty-nine in range eleven of Low Township in 1864, the year John was born.<sup>2</sup> James had been born in Nepean Township, Carleton County in Upper Canada, one of the eleven children of Darby Kealey, an Irish immigrant who sailed to Canada from Sligo in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Nine of Darby's children, five boys and four girls, homesteaded farm lots in Low Township, and with their spouses

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, information on family history was obtained from Lima McLaughlin, whose abilities as family historian are discussed in Chapter III. A brief genealogy is included in the Appendix (page 158) to assist in the identification of family members mentioned in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Public Archives of Canada, List of Lands Granted by the Crown in the Province of Quebec, 1763-1890, Part II: Maskinongé to Yamaska, p. 749.

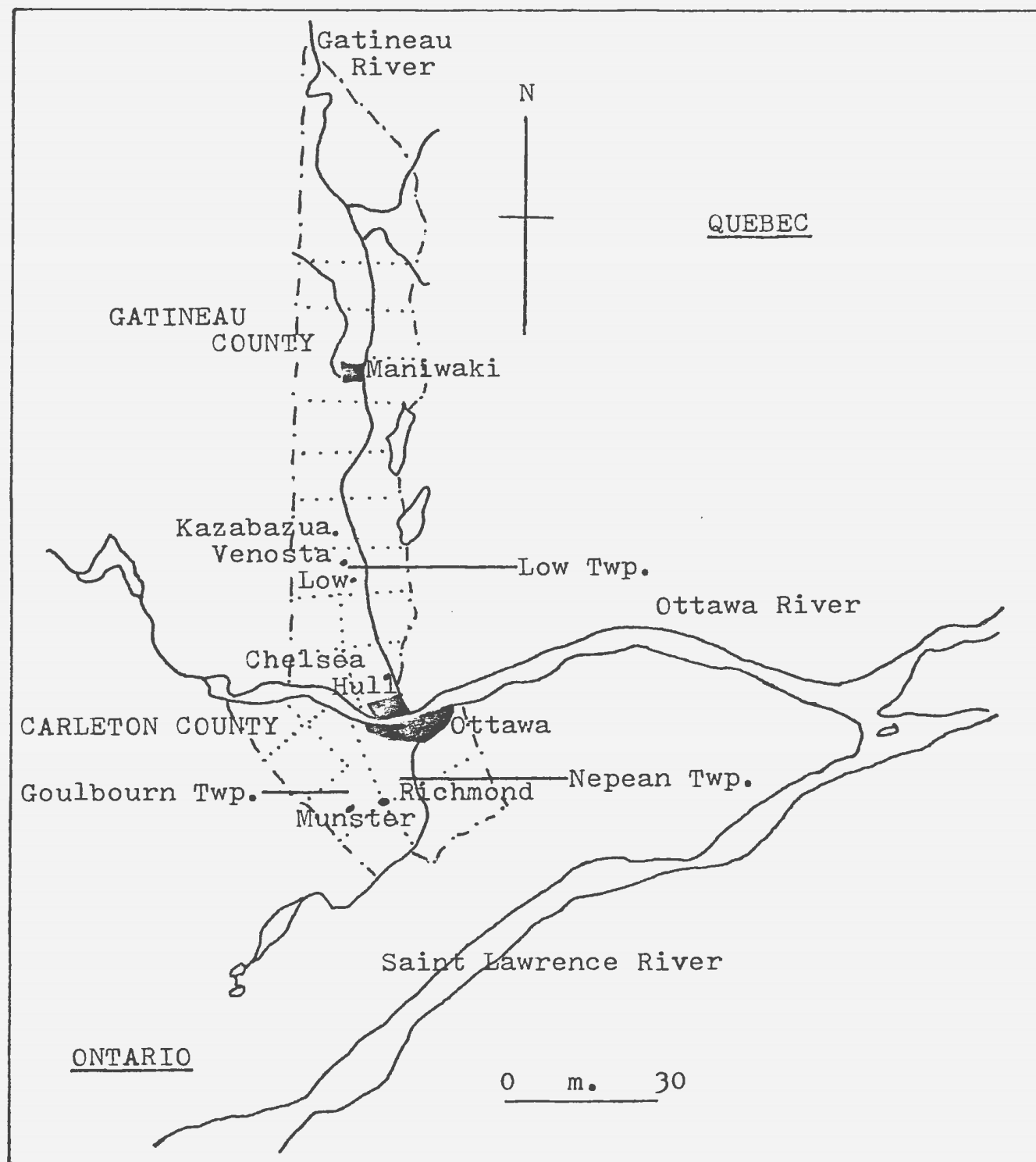


Figure 1: Gatineau County, Quebec,  
and Carleton County, Ontario

raised a total of fifty-one children.

The settlement of the Gatineau Valley had been slowed by two factors.<sup>3</sup> The mountainous terrain on the north shore of the Ottawa River was not as suitable for agriculture as were the flat lands on the southern side. In addition, the area was controlled by lumbering interests who could reserve huge tracts of land on payment of a relatively small fee.<sup>4</sup> The area was ideal for lumbering with vast stands of prime timber, and numerous lakes and streams which could be utilized in transporting the logs either to a local sawmill or to the Gatineau River and thence to the Ottawa. Thus it was not till the lumbering operations had moved further north, and the best lands on the Upper Canadian (or Canada West) side of the Ottawa River were taken up that settlers turned their attention to the Gatineau Valley townships.

Low Township (see map page 23) received its first settler in 1836, the year the lumbering firm of Hamilton and Lowe set up operations there, giving the township its name (Fieldnotes II, November 15, 1975). By 1851, the earliest

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<sup>3</sup>For detailed examinations of the period of first settlement in the Ottawa-Hull area, see: H. Belden, Historical Atlas of Carleton County, Toronto: H. Belden and Company, 1879; Lucien Brault, Hull: 1800-1950, Ottawa: Les Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1950; Edwin C. Guillet, The Great Migration, 2nd ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963; and The Honourable Andrew Haydon, Pioneer Sketches in The District of Bathurst, Vol. 1, Toronto: [n.p.], 1925.

<sup>4</sup>For a history of Gatineau Valley lumbering operations, see John W. Hughson and Courtney C. J. Bond, Hurling Down the Pine, revised edition; Old Chelsea: The Historical Society of the Gatineau, 1965.

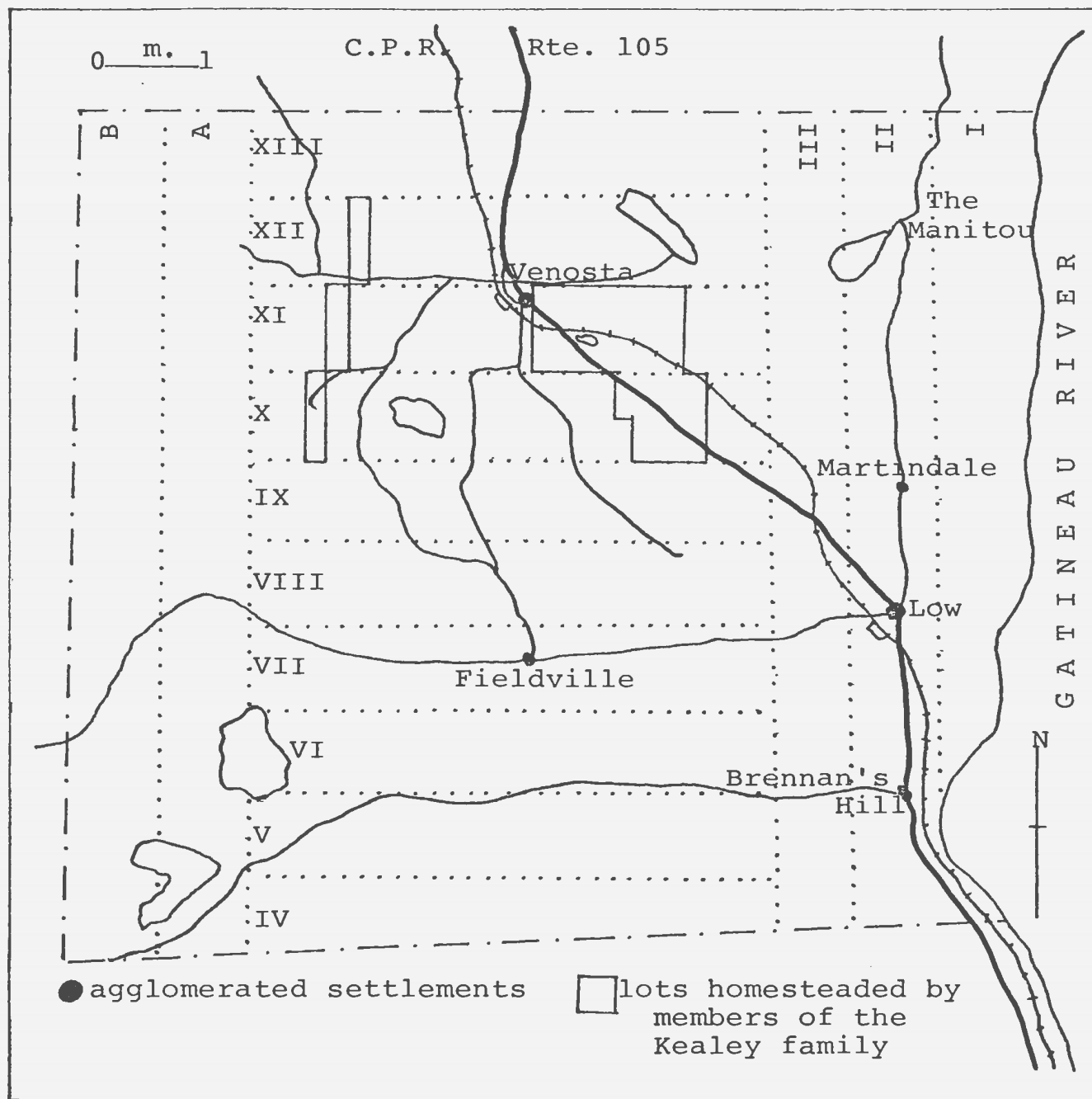


Figure 2: The Township of Low,  
showing agglomerated settlements,  
and lots homesteaded by members of the Kealey family



year for which census figures are available, there were 272 residents.<sup>5</sup> Within the next decade, settlement accelerated. In 1859, the township was erected by provincial order-in-council as a self-governing municipality,<sup>6</sup> and by 1861, there were 822 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> Included among this number were seven Kealeys, their spouses and children. Then as now, the majority of residents were Catholic and of Irish background, although numbers of Irish Protestants and French Catholics also figured in the totals, along with a few Scottish, English and American settlers.

In all of the Gatineau Valley townships, concentrations of settlement tended to occur near the sites of supply depots or "stopping places" (inns) which had been established for the lumbering trade. In Low Township, the village of Low grew up in the immediate vicinity of the Hamilton-Lowe operations. A smaller hamlet developed along the river road to the north, the route followed by parties of shantymen heading to the lumbercamps. This general area became known as the Manitou, and the hamlet was called Martindale after the man who donated land for the first chapel in the township, the site of which was used for

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<sup>5</sup>Canada East Census, 1851, Low Township, folio 280, pp. 1-14.

<sup>6</sup>Public Archives of Canada, op. cit., p. 749.

<sup>7</sup>Canada East Census, 1861, Low Township, folio 286.

the erection of a permanent church, St. Martin's, in 1892.<sup>8</sup> Towards the south of the township, other concentrations of houses became known as Brennan's Hill and Fieldville in honour of the first families to settle there. And finally, halfway along the inland road north to the upper townships and close to the Kealey lots, another village grew out of a crossroads supply depot and acquired the name of Venosta.

The origin of this name remains a mystery up to the present. Many people believe the village was named after the Venosse family who once owned land in the western part of the township; this seems unlikely since these people were not among the original settlers. A former resident of the area told me that he had heard that Venosta was an Indian word meaning "narrows"; the hamlet, however, is located on a broad plain, far away from any waterway more imposing than a small creek. Another person insisted the name, which he said means "beautiful valley" in Italian, was given to the site by an Italian foreman on a railway construction crew; while there is a Venosta in northern Italy, local use of the name predates railway construction by at least twenty years. A fourth explanation, and perhaps the most likely, is that the name, that of an anti-papist Italian general

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<sup>8</sup> Hormisdas Magnan, Dictionnaire historique et géographique des paroisses, missions et municipalités de la province de Québec, Arthabaska: L'Imprimerie d'Arthabaska, 1925, p. 567.

whose exploits made news during the last century, was suggested to the Post Office Department by a local influential Orangeman who wanted to spite the man appointed to be the first postmaster -- the latter, of course, was Irish Catholic.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the reason, the name became official with the opening of the Venosta Post Office on July 1, 1871.<sup>10</sup>

When the mother of the informants came to Venosta as a bride in 1898, she found a settlement much younger than the one she had known as a child in Ontario. Her parents, Henry McCarthy and Jane Frazer, Canadian by birth but of Irish and Scottish ancestry respectively, had farmed in Goulbourn Township, Carleton County (see map page 21), where they raised a family of eleven. They lived in the hinterland of the town of Richmond, a government-established settlement of officers and men from British garrisons disbanded after the War of 1812. Although Mary moved into Ottawa as a young woman when her elderly parents gave up farming, she retained through her life many of the traditions of her childhood in one of the oldest settlements on the Ontario side of the Ottawa Valley. At the time she met her future husband, she was working for an Ottawa department

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<sup>9</sup>See Fieldnotes I, August 14 and 17, 1975, for further details on this subject.

<sup>10</sup>This information was contained in a letter dated March 19, 1976, from the Public Affairs Division of the Montreal Metropolitan Division of Canada Post.

store as a seamstress, a trade which several of her female relatives had already followed.

At the time of their marriage, John Kealey owned a store and a sawmill. The store, which he had operated from at least 1893, was small but boasted a stock of "Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots and Shoes, Crockery, Patent Medicines, Stationery, etc.," according to an account book letterhead in the possession of the writer. This business was housed in a building owned by John's brother, Will. It was located along the main Hull-Maniwaki road (see map page 28 for all sites in the vicinity of Venosta village mentioned in the text), conveniently close to the new railway station which dated from approximately the same time.

The sawmill was set up at a lake on the Gleason farm, located along the Pleasant Valley Road which branched off from the Borough Road a mile west of the village. This farm was then occupied by John Kealey's cousins, having been homesteaded by his aunt and uncle, Mary Kealey and Michael Gleason. The newlywed couple moved into a small log house built close to the mill, and continued to inhabit it for five years.

Between 1899 and 1903, the first five members of the informant family were born. One of these, Agatha, twin sister to the oldest boy, died in infancy; the others, Manuel, Lima, Harry and Mona, survived. The small single-storey house

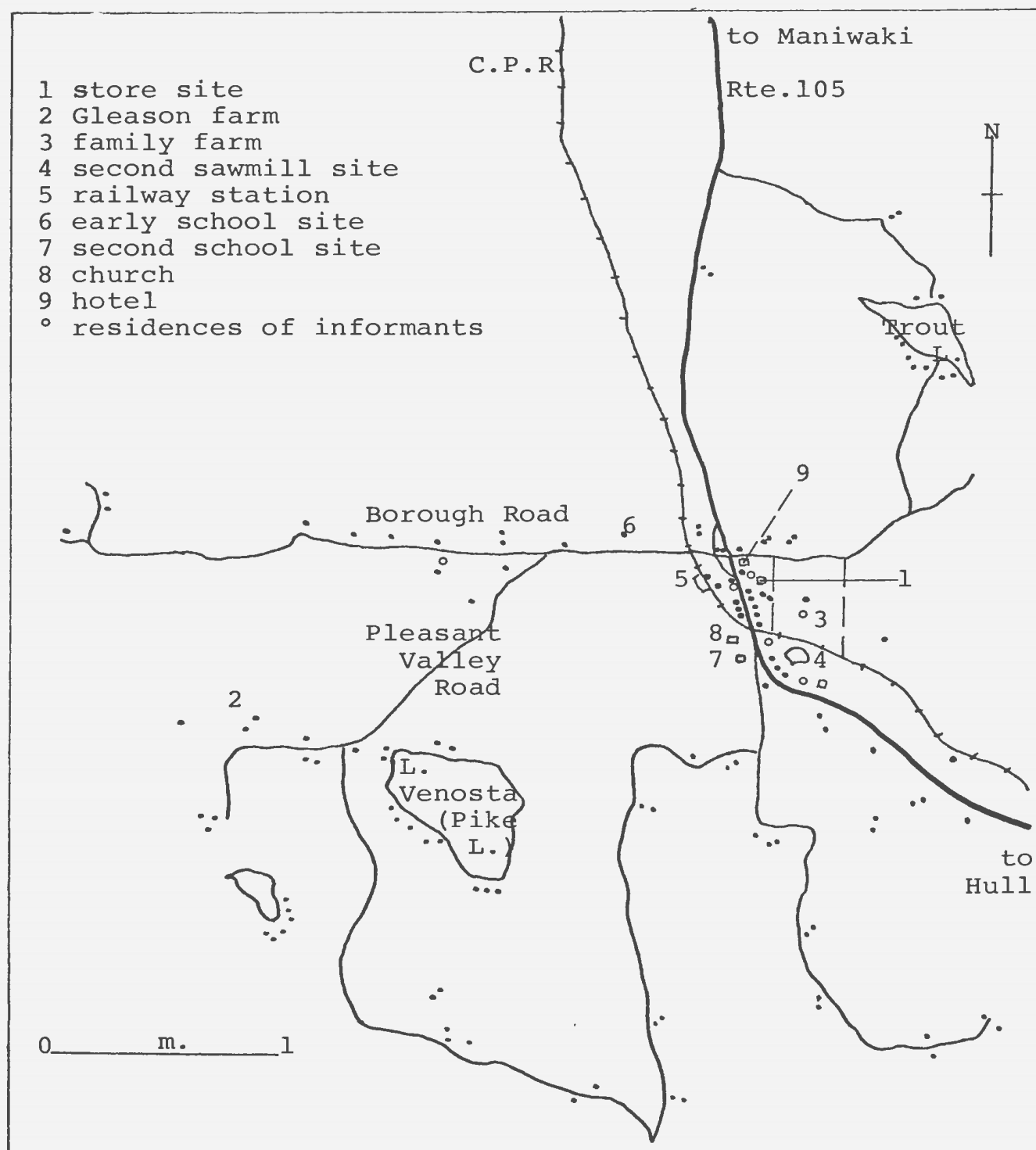


Figure 3: Venosta,  
 showing distribution of buildings  
 and location of sites mentioned in text

was very crowded by this time, but another family house became available. John's brother Mick had taken over the north half of his father's original 200-acre farm which was now split in two by the railway. After building a two-storey frame house and several outbuildings, he had abandoned farming to try his luck in the United States. John purchased the farm and in the summer of 1903 moved his young family into their new home which was located on the outskirts of Venosta. At approximately the same time, the sawmill was moved to the shore of a small lake at the south end of John Kealey's newly acquired property. Farm, store and mill were now within easy walking distance of each other, and all three were close to both the railway station and the main Gatineau road.

Eight more children were born in the new house between 1904 and 1916 -- Nellie, Gladys, Agatha (named after the infant who had died), Jackie, Paddy, Florence, Loretta and Fred. John Kealey eventually gave up his business operations to concentrate on agriculture, hoping that through the acquisition of purebred livestock, the farm would provide enough income to insure a good education for his growing family. By 1914 both sawmill and store had been taken over by new owners, with the mill being moved to another site. For cash income, the family now depended on the sale of cream shipped by rail to a dairy in Hull, and on stud fees earned by a thoroughbred Belgian stallion which John Kealey

had bought in 1913. By this time, the older children could provide needed manpower for a mixed farming operation, and the farm was largely self-sufficient.

In spite of the hard work, the informants remember their early years as very happy ones. The older children attended a one-room log school located on the Borough Road just a quarter mile west of the village; the younger ones attended a newer one-room frame building at the south end of the village. Their teachers were generally kind although ill-trained and very young, and the informants enjoyed the lessons. Unfortunately, only the younger children were able to attend classes regularly; the older brothers and sisters were often kept home to help with farm or domestic work. One aspect of this part of their lives remembered with particular pleasure by the informants is the school and community concerts. For the latter, their mother was especially helpful in teaching them songs and recitations which she had learned during her childhood in Ontario.

During summer holidays, the informants helped at home with farm and domestic work, and spent many hours picking wild fruit for preserves and tending the kitchen garden. But there was also time for entertainment -- playing with their many city cousins who visited during the summer, attending parish or community picnics, or spending long, warm summer evenings on the verandah, listening to older family members sing or play the violin.



Even World War I did not disturb the peace of the family, since none of the boys was old enough to be conscripted. But when the influenza epidemic hit the area in 1918, most of the local families were stricken. John Kealey went to help bury a neighbour's son who had died of the disease and caught it himself. He might have recovered if he had stayed home in bed. But the owner of the local threshing mill refused to visit any farm stricken by influenza, and John Kealey's grain, like that of many of his neighbours, was still standing in the field. Instead of resting, he bought a threshing mill and with his brother and oldest son took it throughout the countryside till all the work of harvesting was done. On the eighth of December he was brought home on the sleigh; influenza had turned to pneumonia, and two months later he died (Tape 23:A).

Mary Kealey, now aged forty-five, was left with twelve children ranging from three to twenty years in age. They, wishing to make life as easy as possible for their grief-stricken mother, assumed responsibility for the operation of the farm and the care of the younger children. When the work of haying and harvesting had been completed each year, the older boys undertook seasonal work as loggers or teamsters in the lumbercamps or "shanties" in the Maniwaki district, leaving the younger ones in charge of the routine winter chores around the farm. The girls always looked after the milking, since that was considered woman's work. Soon



the younger boys were old enough to leave school and join their brothers in the shanties, and only one boy had to remain home for the winter. As the younger ones became capable of handling all the farm work, the older ones could find summer employment on local highway, railway, or hydro-electric projects. For several years, the brothers operated a gas station and auto repair shop in the village. While the five brothers supplied cash to support the family, the seven sisters provided food and clothing by tending the garden, dairy, and poultry, and by helping their mother with sewing and other domestic tasks. The girls rather than the boys suffered under this division of labour, since they were expected to remain at home and serve their brothers, who, as the providers of the family, were favoured by the mother -- a common situation in a traditional agricultural community, heightened here by circumstance.

In addition to setting themselves to the physical work at hand in order to insure the physical survival of the family, the children compensated for the loss of their father on an emotional level by elevating him in memory to legendary status. The image of him presented to us as children was always that of a saint; even during the fieldwork period, I heard no word of criticism directed against my grandfather. However, through questioning the informants, I discovered that in actuality they had very little real knowledge of him. Over the years he had become more legend than reality in

their minds, and thus he represented an ideal rather than a direct influencing force in their lives.

In spite of the emotional adjustment demanded by the loss of their father, the children did not suffer economically, beyond having to abandon hopes for any education other than that provided in the local elementary school. Financially they had as much as anyone in the surrounding district, and their rich family and social life compensated for any lack of material wealth. Community concerts involving adults continued in the village school through the 1920's and 30's. House dances were common, especially at Christmas time when the men were home from the shanties. There were dance halls in the neighbouring villages of Low and Kazabazua, and square dances were held on a regular basis. Summertime featured weddings and community or parish picnics, and there were other events throughout the year such as box socials, turkey suppers, and shooting matches. As cars became more common, young people could travel into the neighbouring townships and beyond for social events. Even during the Depression there was no lack of entertainment as the bouillon became popular -- a feast of stolen chicken, cooked into a stew and served with dumplings.

Between the years 1922 and 1943, all twelve of the children married. Nine of the spouses were from the Township of Low, and nine of the couples settled in Venosta

or on nearby farms. They raised a total of sixty-one children, all but one of whom survive. While this next generation enjoyed rural childhoods very similar to that of their parents, there was considerable change in the village as they were growing up. A church was built beside the school in 1943, and parishoners no longer had to travel to Martindale to attend Mass. In 1946 nuns were engaged to teach in the school, which was enlarged to provide additional classrooms and living quarters. During this same period, high school classes were provided at Low, so that students no longer had to leave the township to continue their education. More houses were erected in the village as families expanded. The main road was upgraded to the status of highway and traffic increased. Railway passenger service was discontinued and bus service provided. A hotel was built in the village. Electricity and running water became common conveniences rather than unheard of luxuries.

Throughout all these changes, the village became more involved with the rest of the world and less self-sufficient economically. By the 1950's there was little local employment for the non-farming population, and families began to drift into the cities along with the young people of school-leaving age. Two members of the informant family, Mona and Paddy, moved to Ottawa with their spouses and children in the early fifties. Soon most of the children of the informants were working in Ottawa and coming home for

holidays and weekends; now the majority, except for a few sons who remained farmers, and a few daughters whose husbands commute to the city, are raising families in Ottawa or Hull. Children and grandchildren, however, still feel a strong attachment to their country roots, and since the village is just forty miles from the urban centre, frequent visiting is the rule.

The informants are now the senior members of the family, their mother having died in 1958 at the age of eighty-five. Two members of the sibling group have also passed away. Mona, the second eldest daughter and the family's acknowledged expert at all forms of needlework, died of cancer in 1961. In 1967 the same disease claimed Manuel, the oldest son whose storytelling abilities were acclaimed within the family and the community at large.

The ten surviving brothers and sisters, who are the subjects of this study, enjoy good health, and continue to operate according to the patterns of interaction and to maintain the family status system in reference to specialization in traditional skills which I had first glimpsed as a child. They are, in order of age:<sup>11</sup>

Lima McLaughlin, who as the oldest surviving member

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<sup>11</sup>For biographic sketches of the informants, and a list of the traditional materials collected from each, see the Appendix, pages 159-163.

of the family has inherited the role of family historian, in addition to being acclaimed by her siblings as a singer;

Harry Kealey, whose psychic powers give him a unique status within the group;

Nellie McLaughlin, who has achieved no specialist status, since her chief occupational interest lay in a field which was common to all farm women of her generation -- tending the dairy;

Gladys McLaughlin, who possesses no specialist status within the group although she aspires to the position of psychic;

Agatha McKale, who since the death of her sister Mona is generally acclaimed as the expert needlewoman, and in addition enjoys a limited status as a children's storyteller;

Jackie Kealey, who has not achieved status within the sibling group, his major field of interest being local politics, and his occupation being that of welder;

Paddy Kealey, who also has not achieved specialist status, being skilled in a contemporary occupational activity, the operation of heavy equipment;

Florence Smith, who sees herself as a singer, although her siblings have not accorded her status in this activity;

Loretta Hendrick, who neither possesses nor aspires to any special status, although she is skilled in a broad range of traditional and contemporary crafts;

Fred Kealey, horseman and harness maker, who is perceived by his family also as a singer, although his self-image is that of a joketeller.

In the following three chapters, these specialists, acclaimed or would-be, are examined in detail in order to arrive at an understanding of the dynamics of the family status system with reference to specialization.



### III

#### ORAL SKILLS

##### Family narrative traditions

Like other members of their community, the members of the sibling informant group use various traditional narrative forms as a normal part of day-to-day communication.<sup>1</sup> Conversations with any of the informants tend to develop naturally into a series of narratives, with the participants recalling personal experiences, relating family history, or describing local incidents. Moreover, they are generally very effective narrators, able to capture and hold their listeners' attention and to use language dramatically to create the desired effect. However, no particular prestige is attached to this type of narrating since it is seen as an ability common to all members of the community.

Nevertheless, there are three areas of narrative activity which are viewed as requiring special talent: relating family history, telling stories to children, and

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<sup>1</sup>This use of storytelling has been pointed out by several authors. See, for example, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Concept and Varieties of Narrative Performance in East European Jewish Culture", in Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, eds., Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking, London: Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp. 283-308; and Lawrence George Small, "Patterns in Personal Experience Narratives: Storytelling at Cod Harbour -- A Newfoundland Fishing Community", M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971, p. 3.

telling humorous stories. Why prestige should be attached to these narrative activities and to no others can only be surmised. These particular types of narration touch on areas which rank high in the informants' value system: love of family, appreciation of children, and a cheerfulness of outlook which enables the individual to perceive the humorous side of life and to share this perception with others. In addition, the narrative forms themselves are seen as being non-egotistical; the teller is either repeating a learned text, whether a family anecdote, children's tale, or joke, or relating a humorous personal experience in a self-deprecating way for the entertainment of others. In a community where egotism and snobbishness are viewed as two of the worst possible sins, activities which praise or please others, and humble one's own position are seen as being worthy of merit. A third consideration is that these three forms are surrounded by a higher degree of emotional and dramatic intensity than any others, and possess a more sharply defined purpose: instruction and/or entertainment.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the combination of all of these factors accounts

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<sup>2</sup>W. H. Jansen has examined the possibility of a relationship between the value of a particular item of verbal folklore, its exclusive ownership by one performer, and the intensity of performance surrounding its presentation. See his "Classifying Performance in the Study of Verbal Folklore", in W. Edson Richmond, ed., Studies in Folklore in Honor of Distinguished Service Professor Stith Thompson (Indiana University Folklore Series, No. 9), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957, pp. 110-118.



for the special status accorded these forms of narration within the family.

However, while status is attached to all three of these narrating activities within the informant group, it is conceded without reservation only in relation to the telling of family history; one individual is universally acknowledged to be the family historian. In the case of the other two activities, telling stories to children and telling humorous stories, status is either only partially conceded or reserved completely for reasons which will be examined in relation to the individual informants concerned.

Lima McLaughlin, family historian

Lima, the oldest surviving member of the sibling group, and indeed of the extended family (see photo page 41), enjoys the status of family historian. This reputation is based partly on sex; females are seen as superior to males in discussing the intricacies of kinship over several generations. The reputation is also based partly on longevity; since the death of her mother, older brother Manuel, and next younger sister Mona, who was also seen as an expert, Lima is considered the only survivor old enough to remember much. While Harry is only one year younger than Lima, he is generally overlooked as a possible source of family information, although Lima admits that he is old enough to



Figure 4: Lima McLaughlin

remember (Tape 17:B).<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the above considerations, the chief reason for Lima's status appears to lie in her own nature. Although seventy-six years of age, she retains her keen intelligence, and is able to express herself clearly and decisively. Her self-confidence in relating past events seems to be as important as her actual store of knowledge in gaining her the status of expert.

Lima's store of family information seems to have come to her chiefly from her mother, as well as from her own experience and observation. When questioned on the source of some bit of information, she often replies that her mother told her that. It would appear that her mother was very proud of the Kealey family and passed on to the children all she knew about their background, in addition to relating the history of her own family.

To the extent that it can be verified, Lima's information is accurate. For example, she told me that her father, after he was widowed as a young man, had courted a Kealey girl from Ottawa, one of the "Blackburn Kealeys" (Fieldnotes I, August 12, 1975). Lima did not know why this distant branch of the family were so named. In later checking land allotments in the city of Ottawa, I discovered that

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<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the importance of age and sex as determining factors in the acquisition of status, see Ralph Linton, The Study of Man, New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1936, pp. 115-116.

Thomas Kealey was the original settler on a parcel of land near the present site of Blackburn Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

While her knowledge of the early history of the family in Canada is fragmentary, Lima has a thorough knowledge of the life histories of the members of her father's generation, the first generation of Kealeys born up the Gatineau. She is able to answer most questions about ownership of land and houses, location of dwellings and commercial buildings, and kinship and marriage, steering her way through a bewildering proliferation of Micks, Pats, Jims and Johns (Tape 17:A and B).

The informant, however, really shines when relating information in anecdotal form, as in the following story of how her parents first became acquainted. At the beginning of this excerpt, she is trying to explain to me the family connection which brought her mother up the Gatineau in the first place.

L: Well, listen. You know a -- Mother's oldest sister was Mary Anne, and she married Patrick Brady --

I: Oh yeah.

L: -- from up at Munster. And, Aunt -- Aunt Liza Brady married Uncle Mickey Kealey -- that's Martin's father and mother.

I: Uhum.

L: So, her nephew Pat, young Patrick, brought her up here to, to visit his auntie.

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<sup>4</sup>H. Belden, Historical Atlas of Carleton County, Toronto: H. Belden and Company, 1879, pp. 12-13.

I: Oh yeah, brought Grandma up.

L: Brought Grandma up, yeah, she was only young then. And on their way back, when Martin drove them to the train -- drive them to the train, take the train at the station -- uh, he was sitting up in the, sitting at the window in the -- uh -- waiting room [informant starts to chuckle slightly] and they were sitting in the sleigh, and Grandma said -- like Mother, "Who is that fine looking man in there         ?" And he said, "Oh well, he's a widower," he said, "he lost his wife," and [she laughs] she said, "Oh?" And she said, "Oh, I'll talk the arm off him going down on the train. [interviewer laughs] I'll talk the arm off him going down on the train."

I: So did they --

L: And that's the way they met.

I: -- they got introduced, like, before the train came?

L: I don't know if they did or not! [informant laughs]

I: Or she just chatted him up!

L: I don't know. I never asked her that part of it but I know that, that's the way they met.

I: Uhuh.

L: And, when they were called that Sunday [i.e., marriage banns were read] you know, maybe it was six months after or a year, I don't know, Martin Kealey burst out laughing in church. [informant laughs] He'd remember what Grandma had said --

I: Oh.

L: -- and he didn't know that that's who my father was going down to Ottawa to see her, to see, and that -- he roared out laughing in church because he didn't know.

I: Oh yeah. I suppose Grandpa could just -- just go down on the train and nobody'd -- they'd figure he was going on business.

L: Nobody'd know that he was getting a new woman, see? Oh, is that on?

I: Yeah.

L: Oh my God! (Tape 17:A)

Lima's anecdotal style is most effective when she recalls incidents which made a particularly strong emotional impact on her as a child. The following is her description of their arrival at the house in the village in 1903, after moving out of the house on the Gleason farm. Lima was three years old at the time.

And we went into the house -- when they opened the door, we walked in -- to the house, you know? And, the -- oh, the loveliest smell of apples in the house -- and we wondered where the beautiful smell of apples -- we started looking around. So they opened the cellar door, took us down in the black dark, you know -- of course, they had a lighted lantern or something to take us down -- but it was so black dark -- showed us all the apples. We were happy then -- we were lonesome leaving in there and that's how we come to see the apples. And I remember Harry and I, we sat on the stairs -- it was so funny to have a stairs in the house, you know -- it was just a little one, in there [meaning the house they had just left] -- and we sat and we pounded -- [informant laughs] we were so tiny, we pounded our heels against \_\_\_\_\_. (Tape 17:A)

I had heard this same incident described on at least two previous occasions (Fieldnotes I, January 1, 1975 and August 12, 1975). Another oft-repeated narrative concerns her aunt's wedding day in 1903, when the informant was three years old.

Well I just remember them -- they were getting ready to leave and they were all -- she was lonesome going away because she was going to Duluth to live. And I remember she -- we were standing and she -- she loved us kids, you know, and she picked Manuel and Harry and I up, three little kids, and she threw us into her father's big rocking chair and rocked us, and she took -- she went away, she went and got ready to go away. I can

remember so well [I: Yeah.] because she was real lonesome going away, you know. She knew she wouldn't see us maybe for a long time. (Tape 17:A)

Because of her keen memory for detail and her feeling for dramatic style, Lima is able to convey in these and similar anecdotes the emotional sub-structure of family relationships and interaction. This ability, coupled with her head for factual information, makes her a very effective family historian.

Lima's attitude toward her position as family historian is one of pride and self-confidence. She is keenly aware of her role as the senior member of the family and considers it her duty to pass on information to interested family members. Moreover, she tends to be slightly critical of her brothers and sisters when they try to do the same, viewing their efforts not only as an attempt to usurp her role, but also as a dangerous undertaking since they might be spreading false or misleading information (Tape 17:A). They, on the other hand, would never consider questioning her status as historian, although they maintain their own right to relate whatever family history they know.

The informant's possessiveness about her status is in contrast to her attitude to the material itself. She takes delight in sharing family history with others, seeing the stories as a reflection of the lives of hard-working, self-sacrificing people who showed admirable qualities of



strength and endurance. An example frequently given is that of her grandmother walking ten miles with an infant in her arms to have him baptized at the nearest church.

Her family pride, however, is tempered with a realistic attitude to family faults. On one occasion, she recounted a story about a minor feud (Fieldnotes I, January 1, 1975), which she had recently used to show another relative that the Kealeys were far from perfect. Another incident had been used with the same relative to demonstrate that the informant's grandmother, while a very fine woman, was not a plaster saint, but possessed the same sense of humour as the rest of the family. Lima told the story to me (Fieldnotes I, August 17, 1975) to illustrate the old woman's true personality, for the latter had herself described the incident to Lima years ago. It seems the elderly lady was trying to persuade a small grandchild to lie down for her afternoon nap in the grandmother's bedroom. In those days, clothes closets were unheard of; clothing was hung from hooks or nails driven into a board which was nailed to the wall. In the grandmother's bedroom, her parasol was suspended from one of these hooks. In an attempt to divert her grandmother's attention from the nap, the little girl pointed to the parasol and asked, "Is that your arsehole hanging on the wall, Grandma?"



Agatha McKale, teller of children's stories

When the members of the informant family were young, they were told bedtime stories by their mother. These were short versions of some of the best known märchen. While some of the daughters used these same tales as bedtime stories with their own children, the only one in the family who has continued to use them regularly over the years is Agatha, the only one of the seven sisters to remain childless (see photo page 49). Agatha has achieved some measure of status within the sibling group for this activity, but it appears to be very limited; only Gladys, the sister closest in age to Agatha, wholeheartedly conceded that Agatha was superior to all of the others in telling their mother's stories.

According to Gladys, Agatha gained her reputation as narrator as a young woman through entertaining her sister Lima's children; these children favoured their grandmother or their aunt Agatha over all others as storytellers (Fieldnotes I, August 12, 1975). Up until the time of her marriage in 1943 at the age of 36, Agatha had spent most of her time living at home. With her sisters and brothers in the process of raising families, the opportunities for spending time with children were numerous. Thus the stories learned from her mother were told to nieces and nephews, and are now being told to grandnieces and grandnephews, since Agatha is still favoured as a babysitter (Tape 5:B).



Figure 5: Agatha McKale

Agatha's actual repertoire of stories is small, although she supplements it with all of the popular nursery rhymes. Since very young children in particular enjoy repetition, this is presumably not a handicap in entertaining them. It appears that her mother's repertoire was only slightly larger than her own. At the time I recorded Agatha's stories, she stated that these constituted her mother's entire repertoire. However, when I later collected "Bluebeard" (Tapes 18:A and 19:A) and "The Little Lambs and The Wolf" (Tapes 19:A and 24:A) from other members of the family, she remembered that her mother had told these stories as well, although she herself does not.

The following is her version of "The Little Red Hen".

Once upon a time there was a little red hen near the edge of the woods. One day she went out to bring in some chips to get the fire for to get her dinner. Along came a big wolf and she got scared and flew up on the beam... [interval of laughter and deialogue when informant realizes she should have said fox instead of wolf]...She got scared and flew up on the beam in the woodshed, and he said, "Cock-a-doodle-doo, come down on my head," and she said, "Oh, I'm afraid you'd let me fall." "Cock-a-doodle-doo, come down on my nose," "Oh, I'm afraid you'd let me fall." "Cock-a-doodle-doo, come down on my mouth," "Oh, I'm afraid you'd eat me up." So the poor old [pronounced oul] thing got dizzy and she fell down and he grabbed her and put her into the bag and threw it over his shoulder, and away he went over hills and hollows. And she thought to herself, "Have I got my scissors and needle and thread in my apron pocket?" So she looked and sure enough she had. She takes it out and puts a big stone in the bag, and sewed it up again. So when he was getting near home, old Mrs. Fox: "Have you got the little red hen?" He said, [informant changes the tone of her voice] "Yes, have you got the pot boiling?" So he throws the big stone into the pot and scalds the two of them and that was the end of the story. (Tape 5:B)

In the above story and in the following version of "Goldilocks", Agatha believes that she is adhering faithfully to all the details of her mother's version.

Well, Goldilocks was a bold little girl -- that's the way I tell it. She wouldn't do what her mother'd tell her. So she asked her mother could she go for a walk and the mother said, "Yes, just go a little piece and come back." So she kept on going and going and going through the bush. So she came to a little house. And she thought, "Oh, I'd like to know who lives in this little house." So she was nosey and she went in to see. So there was three dishes of soup on the table and she got all excited and she went to the big bowl of soup first and she said, "Oh, that's too salty." She went to the next one, "Oh, that's too peppery." She went to the next one, "Oh, that's just right," and she sat down and she drank all the soup and she broke the bowl. So she said, "Oh, I guess I'll have a rock in my rocking chair." So she got into one big rocking chair and she said, "Oh, that's too hard," she got into the other, "Oh, that's too soft," she got into the little one, "Oh, this is a lovely chair," so she rocked so much in it she broke the chair. And she said, "Well, I guess I'll have a sleep, I'll go upstairs." So she went upstairs and she went into the big father bear's bed, she said, "Oh, that bed is too hard," she went to the mother bear's bed, "Oh, that bed is too soft," she went to the little bear's bed, "Oh, this is a beautiful bed," she lay down in it and went asleep. And the bears came home, and Father Bear said, "Somebody was at my soup," and Mother Bear said, "So there was at mine," and little Teeny Tiny Bear said, "So there was at mine -- broke my bowl, drank my soup and broke my bowl." So they said, "Don't cry, don't cry, we'll get more." So they got him more and they ate their lunch, they went to have a rock in the rocking chair. Old Father Bear said, "Somebody was in my chair," and Mother Bear said, "So there was in mine," poor little Teeny Tiny Bear said, "So there was in mine and broke my chair." They said, "Oh, don't cry, we'll get -- fix your chair." They said, "We'll go and have a rest first," so they went upstairs and the old father bear said, "Somebody was in my bed." Mother Bear said, "So there was in mine." Poor little Teeny Tiny Bear said, "So there was in my bed -- here she is, here she is, here she is -- eat her up, eat her up, eat her up!" [informant laughs] She jumped up and out the window and the bees came in and stung them and she run home, she said she'd never leave home again.

(Tape 5:B)

In the following version of "Little Red Riding Hood", Agatha has consciously changed one detail; she admitted that the cookies and ginger ale came from a printed version of the story in a book belonging to her grandniece.

Little Red Riding Hood was a little girl and -- where'd she live? Oh I forget it now -- her grandmother was sick and her mother asked her would she take some goodies to Grandma. So she said yes and she got her little red cloak and bonnet on, and the grandmother give her the basket and she started off through the bush to Grandma's. So she watched the squirrels and the birds as she went along and the first thing she met a wolf. She didn't know what it was. He said to her, "Where are you going?", she said, "To Grandma's. My grandmother is sick." So he said, "Okay, you go that way and I'll go this way, and we'll see who'll get there the first." So sure enough he took a short-cut and he got there the first. So when he came to the grandmother's door, he rapped and she said, "Lift the latch and the door'll open." So he lifted the latch and the door opened, and he goes in and went to grab the grandmother and she jumped into the clothes closet and he put on her nightdress and her cap and got into bed. When Little Red Riding Hood came, she rapped at the door and he said, "Lift the latch and the door'll open." So she came in. She said, "What big head you have, Grandma!" No -- "What big ears you have, Grandma!" "Better to hear you -- hear, my child." "What a big nose you have, Grandma -- big eyes you have, Grandma!" "The better to see you, my child." "What a big nose you have, Grandma!" "Oh, the better to smell you, my child!" "What a big mouth you have, Grandma!" "Oh, the better to eat you up!" And he jumped at her and she screamed and run and a bushman heard her screaming and came running in and killed the wolf and got the grandmother out of the closet and she made them cookies and ginger ale -- gave them cookies and ginger ale and they sat down and had something to eat and the bushman said, "Now, never open that door to anybody else -- keep your door locked." So Little Red Riding Hood went home and everybody lived happily ever after. (Tape 5:B)

The final story in Agatha's repertoire, "The Three Little Pigs", has the same kind of repeated dialogue as the others.



Once upon a time there was three little pigs walking down the road. And the first little pig said, "I'm going to build a house." So he met a man coming with a load of straw and he asked him to sell him the load of straw to build a house. So the man sold him the load of straw -- built his house. The next little pig said, "Oh, I'm going to build mine out of lumber." So he met a man with lumber, so he built his out of lumber. The third little pig thought, "Well, I'm going to build mine out of brick, make it solid," so he met a man coming with brick and he bought the brick from the man. So the first little pig built his house out of straw and along comes a big wolf and he said, "Let me in, let me in, by the hair of my chin-chin-chinny, if you don't I'll puff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So he puffed and he puffed and he blew his house in. And the little pig run to the next pig's house and told him the wolf was coming. So the wolf came to the next house and said -- rapped at the door and they wouldn't let him in. He said, "Let me in, let me in, by the hair of my chin-chin-chin, if you don't let me in, I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So he puffed and he puffed and he blew the house made of wood in. So they run to the la -- the last pig's house was the brick house and told him the wolf was coming. So he came to that house and he rapped on the door and they -- they wouldn't let him in. He said, "Let me in, let me in, by the hair on my chin-chinny-chinny, if you don't let me in, I'll puff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So he huffed and he puffed, and he huffed and he puffed, and he puffed -- he couldn't blow it in -- no, but they put a pot -- a pot in under the chimney [pronounced chimley]. He said, "I'll go up the chimney and come down," so they put a pot there full of boiling water, so he huffed and he puffed and he couldn't blow it down, so he went up in the chimney, come down through the chimney, and he fell down and he fell in the big pot of scalding water and was burned. (Tape 5:B)

It appears that the stylistic elements in Agatha's performance of these stories, such as changes in voice tone and the addition of dramatic emphasis, have been copied from her mother's performances. She does not, however, use her mother's formulaic ending: "They lived in Greece and died in peace and was buried in a keg of tallow." (Tape 18:A) The ease with which Agatha performed these stories, once she had

overcome her initial shyness at being recorded, gave evidence of the fact that they are part of her active repertoire. Two of her sisters, in contrast, when asked for children's stories, tended to recite plots rather than to perform, and expressed scepticism as to the logic of the narrative (Tapes 19:A and 24:A). Agatha's attitude to her repertoire reflects the same pride seen in Lima's attitude to her store of knowledge of the history of the family. She is proud of the fact that she can remember her mother's stories, and that she can use them effectively for the entertainment and instruction of young children. That instruction is an important function of the stories is obvious from the tales themselves; the simple lessons of forethought, caution, and obedience are clearly portrayed, whether animals or humans are involved.

After recording Agatha's repertoire and realizing her exceptional talent in telling these stories, it remained a mystery to me why she had not achieved family-wide status in this activity, especially since she had had a broad audience over the years. I, in fact, had discovered her talent inadvertently when seeking information on her mother's stories. One reason for this lies in the activity itself. Because it is child-oriented and generally restricted physically to the child's bedroom, few adults are aware when it is happening. In Agatha's case, the stories have always been told when there were no other adult members of the family present, or when those present were too busy to look

after the children. Moreover, because these stories are suitable only for very young children and are supplanted with other activities by the time the child reaches school age, they are soon forgotten by the child, even though the close relationship with Agatha remains.

A second reason for the fact that Agatha enjoys only limited status as a storyteller to children appears to lie in the nature of sibling relationships in particular and human nature in general. It is difficult for any woman to concede that another woman, especially a childless sister, is more expert than herself in dealing with children, especially her own children.

Agatha, however, appears to be entirely free from comparing herself to her siblings in this activity. Storytelling is important to her as a means of relating to children, but it is not the only means at her disposal. It is a skill she has mastered and enjoys using, but there are other skills she takes equal delight in. In terms of her brothers and sisters, it is an activity which simply does not concern them, and the absence or presence of their recognition is of no concern to her.

#### Fred Kealey, teller of humorous stories

It is difficult to maintain a conversation of any length with Fred, the youngest member of the informant group (see photo page 113), without hearing a funny story, for telling such stories is one of his favourite means of



communication and he is a very gregarious person. Within his own home, Fred tells jokes and humorous anecdotes to his children and their spouses, and to visitors, whether family or friends. Within the community, he tells similar stories to the men he meets at work sites, at social affairs, or at local hotels or restaurants. This latter activity has earned him the reputation of joketeller among the working male population of the immediate area. But within his own sibling group, he has no particular status as a narrator of any sort.

Telling humorous stories is somewhat of a tradition among the men of the family, more so than among the women who generally refrain from telling "jokes" in the commonly understood sense of the word although they enjoy relating amusing family anecdotes. At least two male relatives had in the past achieved reputations both within and without the family for spinning amusing stories -- Fred's uncle, Ed Kealey, and his oldest brother Manuel, both now deceased. These two men greatly influenced Fred's repertoire and style.

At an early age, Fred acquired the habit of learning and telling stories in imitation of his brother. As a child, he used to eagerly await Manuel's return home on weekends, so that he could learn the new jokes and stories the older brother had heard while at work on a highway construction crew (Tape 18:A). Manuel, an almost compulsive storyteller, communicated constantly in narrative form. As a child I was familiar with his vast repertoire of local anecdotes, but

discovered only later that he also told jokes, many of which were obscene; obviously, these were not told in the presence of children. Like his older brother, Fred tells many jokes which are obscene or scatological in content.

The second family humourist, Ed Kealey, appears to have influenced Fred's style rather than his repertoire, although the latter still tells some of his uncle's stories. The older man, according to Fred, could make people laugh by the way he told stories, even if the stories were not that funny. He had the ability to attract and hold an audience; he would always have a crowd of boys around him as he sat on the steps of the village store of an evening, spinning stories. Fred also admired the way this uncle would laugh at himself, even to the point of changing a story to make himself the butt of the joke. He would also reveal humorous personal experiences which others would prefer to keep secret, as in the following example:

Uncle Ed Kealey, pretty near everything that happened, happened to himself, you know? Well, he did -- he used to get into trouble, everything did happen to him, you know? [I: Did it?] Yeah, no matter what he'd go to do, something'd happen, you know? I remember him telling one time about being out in Minnesota. He worked out there for years, you know, and he was working at this ranch, and it was a bad place for rattlesnakes, and they had warned them to watch, to watch for rattlesnakes, you know? So this day, after dinner, they were taking out their horses out of the stable and he wanted, wanted to go to the bathroom, so he just went around behind the stable and there was long weeds there, you know, and -- so he took down his pants and squatted down and something caught him right by the rear end and he took out of there, around the stable with his pants down, and he said a rattlesnake bit him, and some of the other guys went

around and there was an old duck sitting on a nest [informant and audience laugh]. He said, "She caught me right by the bags, so she did." (Tape 18:A)

Fred's current repertoire consists of a mixture of materials from a variety of sources. He continues to tell stories learned in his youth, such as the following joke which he says he learned shortly after starting school:

Well this girl went to college. She had a sister at home on the farm was pretty dumb so -- they were asked out to supper and, so she, she told her sister, "Now," she said, "be careful what you say, they're pretty sedate people, they \_\_\_\_\_ have your supper with them." "Well," she said, "what'll I say?" "Well, say everything that I say -- at the table, you know, watch your table manners." So they passing around something and they asked the smart girl what -- did she want some more of something, whatever it was, I don't know, but she said, "Oh, no thank you, I'm as full as a wine cask without an air hole." Came to the other lady, she said, "Will you have some?" She said, "Oh, no thanks, I'm as full as a wildcat without an arsehole." (Tape 18:A)

In addition he continues to learn new stories, many of these coming from the media. On one occasion (Fieldnotes I, December 19, 1974), he showed me a small black notebook he had been carrying in his pocket. During the previous two winters he had worked for the provincial Department of Transport at a local highway maintenance station. He used the notebook to jot down brief versions of jokes heard on an early morning radio programme, and later shared them with other workers during breaks between assignments. The way in which Fred mixes various elements from his repertoire indicates that he perceives no distinction of any importance in various types of funny stories. During an evening's conversation he may relate jokes, local anecdotes relating to recent or long

past events, local character stories or amusing family history stories (Fieldnotes I, June 1, 1974).

Fred's narrative style is characterized by a keen awareness of audience reaction and a genuine appreciation of the humour of a story. In telling a joke, he assumes a serious tone and facial expression, and tries to make his delivery very matter-of-fact and impersonal. He does not look directly at his audience, but manages to discretely monitor the effect of his narrative, adding extra details for emphasis if he judges the dramatic build-up insufficient. Then he delivers the punch line and laughs heartily, even if the story is one he has been telling for forty years. Usually he repeats the punch line at least once, and laughs again.

It is obvious from Fred's style of narrating that he really enjoys making people laugh. He also enjoys his role as storyteller within the local male community, and works at maintaining his reputation by constantly learning new stories. Within his sibling group, however, he has no status as narrator, for reasons which are not difficult to discern.

In the first place, Manuel, by his almost continuous use of narrative, achieved the status of narrator long ago, and continues to occupy the position, even though he died in 1967. For reasons relating as much to his personality and to the circumstances of his life as to his storytelling habits, no one else is allowed to usurp his role. In the opinion of

his brothers and sisters, Manuel "didn't have much of a life." As the oldest child, he assumed responsibility for the family on the death of their father, postponing his own marriage until his eleven brothers and sisters were grown. Then he undertook to raise his own family of four children, one of whom was only a young teenager when Manuel died, after a long and painful illness. By reserving exclusively for him the status of storyteller, his siblings show their appreciation and respect.

In the second place, even if the status were not reserved for Manuel, it would now be too late for Fred to find an audience among his siblings and establish a reputation with them. At this stage in their lives, interaction is directed towards their procreative families rather than towards their siblings. Communication within the latter group is limited to informal visiting for brief periods, or formal social occasions. Even given the opportunity to tell stories to his siblings, Fred would be forced by propriety to limit his audience to the male members of the group, who are in the minority, or to restrict himself to one segment of his repertoire, the "clean" stories. Even as a young man, it might have been impossible for him to establish himself as a narrator because of his position as youngest child. By the time he was old enough to be taken seriously as a storyteller, his audience was already limited to the younger members of the family. The influential older ones were



living or working away from home.

Although Fred obviously sees himself as following in the humourist tradition of his uncle and his brother, he does not relate to his sibling group in terms of storytelling. He does, on the other hand, enjoy his role as jokester among the men of the community and among his procreative family, and works to maintain the image by telling stories at every opportunity.

### Family singing traditions

To be properly understood, family singing traditions must be seen within the context of the local singing tradition. Since singing talents are very widespread within the community, people are not generally classified as "singers" or "non-singers". It is taken for granted that most people on earth can sing, and that most do sing as a natural part of everyday life. However, people who are exceptionally gifted in this way are seen as "good singers". These people generally have pleasing voices, a good selection of songs, and a strong feeling for melody. People who are exceptionally ungifted are described as "not having much of an air to them"; they are rarely described as not being able to sing, even if their voices sound totally off-key to a formally trained ear. Many people refuse to sing in public, using their inability to sing as an excuse, but no one believes them; this is taken to be a sign that the individual is simply too shy or too stubborn to perform before an

audience, and usually this is true.

All members of the informant family are seen by outsiders as "good singers". Many members of the community remember visiting the Kealey home and hearing the mother of the informants sing. Their father also sang; the informants recall how he would sit on the verandah on a summer's evening, singing with his brother-in-law, Ed McCarthy, when the latter brought his family to Venosta for their annual vacation. As the children were growing up, they sang at home and at school and community concerts. Later on they sang at house and hall dances during rest breaks between square dance sets. The boys sang in the lumbercamps, exchanging songs with other shanty-men, while the girls copied and learned songs from victrola records, and clipped songs from The Family Herald and The Farmer's Advocate, pasting them into old catalogues and ledgers converted into scrapbooks. While these activities in no way differed from the local custom of the time, the family gained the reputation of being exceptionally musical, presumably on the basis of both quality of performance and quantity of performers. It is a reputation they maintain up to the present although most of the informants have not sung outside their own homes in years, and even within their own homes sing chiefly for their own entertainment during manual work.

During the course of my interviewing, I recorded a total of 107 songs and song fragments from all eight of the

informants whose interviews were taped. The greatest number of these songs were provided by the two informants to be discussed here. The first of these enjoys a higher status as singer than any of the other males in the family. The second has a strong self-image as singer, but enjoys no particular status, although her siblings agree that she, like all the other members of the family, can sing.

Fred Kealey, singer

Fred Kealey is known locally as a "good singer", although his recent public performances have been limited to family weddings and anniversary celebrations. On social occasions, he does not hesitate to join in when others start to sing and will sing by himself without much prompting in a convivial atmosphere. Among his brothers and sisters, he is expected to know many songs; often when I asked for a particular number, one of the others would say, "Fred Kealey must know that."

In actuality, Fred's current traditional repertoire is limited compared to what it must once have been. He admits to having learned many songs as a young child from his mother. As her last baby, he received more attention than the other children had; after the death of her husband, she spent hours rocking him on her knee and singing to him. He also learned many songs from a boarder, Charlie Parker, who lived in the family home from 1920 to 1922. Parker, who was a railway worker then, had spent considerable time in the



lumbercamps, and according to the informants had a store of songs only surpassed by their mother's. The two, in fact, had a running competition, with Parker trying in vain to find a song that Mrs. Kealey did not know (Fieldnotes II, November 10, 1975). In addition, Fred learned songs from young men in the lumbercamps and from local singers. From the early twenties on, the family owned a victrola, and records were available at the village store. As Fred grew up, this became a more important source of new songs than local singers, whose repertoires he had already learned (Tapes 3:A and 15:A). Fred has continued to learn new songs from records and from the radio up to the present. His chief interests now are country-western songs and numbers recorded by the popular Irish commercial groups.

Of this wide range of songs learned and forgotten, I recorded only six complete songs and twenty-six fragments of varying lengths (Tapes 3:A, 15:A and B, and 16:A and B). This, however, is not a true indication of his current active repertoire. Having heard him sing eleven complete songs at a family get-together, songs which were among the earlier items in his repertoire (Fieldnotes I, August 31, 1974), I presume he finds it difficult to remember songs out of their usual context. While he is unable to name many songs learned from the radio over the past thirty years, he can sing along when someone else begins a particular number; this is true of most country-western hits of the post-war period as well as songs

recorded by such groups as the Irish Rovers.

Although Fred sometimes has trouble remembering the lyrics of the earlier items in his repertoire, he usually remembers the source of the song and there is often an accompanying anecdote. On two occasions (Tapes 3:A and 15:A), he told the following anecdote about how his family first got the words to "The Lady Leroy"; on neither occasion was he able to recall all of the song.

Paddy [informant's brother] used to sing that damn good. Dominic O'Connor -- they traded songs one time, I remember, Dominic sang that over at a concert at -- or over at a dance, I mean, at -- at Bill, Bill O'Connor's, one time. And Paddy sang another song, but Paddy didn't know all the words of this and he -- I remember him asking Dominic, he was sitting up on the stairs, and Dominic said, "I'll send you that if you promise [I: Uhuh.] you'll send me the --" well, just to the Manitou, you know, that's about the only way you could in the winter-time, you know, was mail it to him and he said, "I'll send you that song if you send me the words of that other one." That was around here for a long time. (Tape 3:A)

Sometimes a request for one song triggers off an anecdote about another. When I asked for his mother's version of "Barbary Ellen", for example, I was told the following:

I remember Grandma used to be talking about old Uncle Johnny, that'd be her uncle, you know. She'd be telling us about him -- they'd hear him bringing in his sheep, way back of Richmond there, you know -- he lived about a mile from their place and they'd hear him at night -- he'd a big long beard, he was a little short man, and they'd go out and listen to him singing -- he used to sing "Coming Through The Rye" every night. [informant and interviewer laugh] He'd say: [informant sings] "If a laddie meet a laddie coming through the rye," and then he'd say, "Nah, nah, nah, nah," calling the sheep, you know, and then he'd sing a few more words of it

and, "Nah, nah, nah," calling the sheep, he calling the sheep. (Tape 15:B)

While this might appear to be a complete non-sequitur, there is a connection between this anecdote and the Child ballad I had requested: his mother sang this same uncle's version of "Barbary Ellen", imitating the old man's voice and style. As a result, all of the informants can imitate the performance, but none know more than a few lines of the song.

While I did not collect many complete songs from Fred, I obtained a great deal of information on related matters: local social life, courting customs, visiting patterns, calendar customs, drinking habits, song makers, lumbercamp singing traditions -- in short, the total context of singing in the district during his youth (Tapes 3:A, 15:A and B, and 16:A and B). These social uses of singing were obviously just as important to the informant as the songs. He found it impossible to divorce one from the other, and occasionally interrupted a song to give some contextual information in such a manner that I could not be sure whether he had forgotten the words or simply stopped singing in order to continue the conversation. The interview was not a performing situation to the informant, but rather a communicating situation, the object of which was to pass on as much information as possible related to singing.

This unassuming attitude demonstrates the fact that Fred has no sense of exclusiveness towards his own talent or

towards his own repertoire. Throughout our many conversations on this topic, he was always quick to praise other singers, and to suggest where I might locate songs which he remembered only in fragmentary form. He recommended in this way not only other family members, but also various residents of the community and of other townships, even in some cases people with whom he was not on the best of terms.

In relation to his own repertoire, Fred shows no preferences for one song over another, and does not categorize songs except for very general divisions such as "cowboy songs" and "sailor songs". It is obvious that he perceives a difference in singing styles from the unaccompanied singing of his youth to the present styles, but he sees this difference as residing in the songs themselves. Many of the older songs he described as "more or less of a rhyme" ("Utah Carroll", Tape 15:A, for example). On two of the tapes (3:A and 15:A), he tried to articulate the differences perceived in his version of "It Was Early, Early All In The Spring" and that of the Irish Rovers, heard at a concert in the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. He stated that their version used the melody of "The Butcher Boy", whereas his melody was different from this although related to it. He also recognized the differences in plot; his song is similar to "It Was Early, Early All In The Spring" (Laws M1), whereas the Irish Rovers' version is "The Sailor Boy I" (Laws K2). While he could not articulate another difference

which he perceived, it was obvious from his renditions of the two versions that he noted a difference between the more clipped rhythm of a "camp song" and the sustained rhythm of the commercial version. While the differences fascinated him, he did not seem to prefer one version to the other; he admired the way the professional group sang the song, but he liked his own melody.

One fact which became obvious during the course of the recorded interviews and the informal conversations held with this informant is that, in spite of his status within the family and within the community, Fred is more interested in songs than in his own performance of them. He is, in fact, totally oblivious of his status, and judges his own abilities as being no different from those of his brothers and sisters. At the same time, he is vitally interested in singing and has a deep appreciation of vocal music.

It would appear that this interest was apparent at an early age and was duly noted by his sisters and brothers. They would also have been aware of the size of his repertoire, which must have included a considerable number of songs by the time he was six, the year Charlie Parker left the Kealey home. In relation to achieving status as a singer, his position as youngest child must have worked in Fred's favour, just as it had worked against him in relation to gaining status as a storyteller. Certainly a younger brother with a sizeable repertoire of traditional songs would be a much



greater source of family pride than a younger brother with a repertoire of obscene stories.

Florence Smith, singer

Of the total number of songs and song fragments collected in the course of my interviews, fifty-three were obtained from Florence Smith, the second to youngest girl in the family (see photo page 70), and all but eleven of her songs were complete versions. This collecting far from exhausted the informant's repertoire. There were many other songs in the scrapbook of newspaper and magazine clippings and in the two handwritten notebooks which I saw, all dated 1935 (see photo page 71). Other notebooks existed but they were tucked away in out-of-the-way storage places. In spite of this repertoire, Florence enjoys no special status as singer within the family, except in her own eyes. To her brothers and sisters, she shares the same interests and talents common to all members of the family. In fact, they were surprised to learn that I had collected so many songs from her.

Florence's repertoire differs from that of other family members only in quantity. Like the others, she learned songs from her mother, from other relatives and friends, and from printed and recorded sources. In Florence's case, her mother was less of an influence than with other members of the sibling group. While she remembers having heard many of the older songs from Fred's repertoire, for



Figure 6: Florence Smith



Figure 7: Elements of Florence Smith's song collection

[(from top of photo) "Old Favorites" page from The Family Herald; handwritten scribblers of song lyrics; scrapbook of songs printed in The Family Herald and other publications]



example, she admits to never having learned these songs. Of the songs recorded, only one ("Where Are You Going, Little Bird?", Tape 19:A) was sung from memory from her mother's repertoire. Several other of her mother's favourites were sung from printed versions published in The Family Herald, the railway employees' magazine (back copies of which were given to the family by an uncle who worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway), or other magazines. Only three of Charlie Parker's songs were included among the recorded items. Two of these were sung from memory: "It Was Early, Early All In The Spring" and "I Am A Jolly Shantyboy" (Tape 19:B). A third, "The Renfrew Murder",<sup>5</sup> was read from a handwritten scribbler (Tape 19:B); Florence had forgotten the melody. Apart from a few fragments of songs learned from various people and later forgotten, or perhaps never known in their entirety, all of the other recorded numbers came from the scrapbooks and song notebooks. In the latter case, it seems that many of these songs were copied from her sisters' scrapbooks, or were transcribed from victrola records. With such a variety of sources, Florence's repertoire is just what one would expect: a very mixed selection, with such popular phonograph artists as Jimmie Rodgers and Wilf

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<sup>5</sup>This murder ballad from the upper Ottawa Valley was collected by Edith Fowke, and is published as "Young Conway" in her Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods, Austin and London: The University of Texas Press, 1970, pp. 150-153.

Carter especially well represented.

Because of her sex, the informant's singing has been limited for most of her life to school and home situations, although there was probably a great deal of informal group singing during her courting days, and even at home the audience often included other than family members. Since her marriage, Florence has used her singing talents to entertain her children and more recently her grandchildren. Opportunities for spending time with the latter group have been limited, since the majority of her children have not settled close to home; but when the occasion arises, she repeats the old songs, as well as her mother's stories and other traditional items, to her grandchildren (Tape 19:A).

Over the years, Florence's repertoire of older songs has not diminished to the extent that Fred's has. There are two reasons for this. On the one hand, having a printed or written version of the words, Florence has only to remember the melody. Secondly, she has made fairly constant use of her songs over the years. Since their marriage in 1937, her husband has done shift work at the local hydro-electric station. With many long evenings to spend alone, both when her seven children were young enough to require an early bedtime, and later on when they left home for schooling and work elsewhere, Florence often took out her collection and sang for her own amusement. This constant use of her scrap-book and several notebooks is illustrated by the fact that

they are kept in the living room. At least three of her sisters have song collections, but store them in less accessible areas of the house.

Florence's image of herself as singer became evident in several ways during the course of the interviews. When I first asked her to sing for recording purposes, she showed no trace of hesitancy, unlike the other informants who had to be coaxed along. While they were afraid that someone other than the interviewer might listen to the tapes, Florence took it for granted that someone else would, and even seemed to expect that the recording would be made public in some form -- on one occasion, she made a chance remark about the "record" I was making in Newfoundland. While the others tired easily and tended not to complete songs, Florence showed determination in singing every verse of even very long or repetitive songs. For example, she completed the patriotic school song, "Where The Wild Flowers Blossom And The Sugar Maples Grow" (Tape 1:B), even in the face of teasing opposition from her sister Agatha who was present for the recording.

Florence was also more interested than the others in hearing a replay of her performance immediately after the recording. On the occasion of the second interview (Tapes 19:A and B, and 20:A and B), we played the tapes through after the interview was completed, and she laughingly applauded herself after every number, crying, "More, more!"

While all of this was done in a joking manner, she obviously viewed the event in terms of a performance to a far greater degree than Fred had; when he listened to a playback, it was to correct any mistakes he might have made in delivering the song.

Florence also displays more of a sense of exclusiveness about her own song collection. In the following conversation with Agatha, she expresses surprise that her sister too possesses a notebook of handwritten song lyrics. At the opening of this conversation Florence is explaining to me where she got a particular song; Agatha interrupts, suggesting that it might have been copied out of her scrapbook.

A: Maybe you wrote out of my scrapbook.

F: No --

A: Eh?

F: -- it was -- this was on a page, it was on three pages.

I: Oh, yeah.

F: -- this here. I never even saw your scrapbook, I never even saw any songs that you had.

A: Eh?

I: Well, it had been published in The Family Herald.

F: I never ever saw you had any songs. When did you used to write the songs out?

A: Oh, God, years -- my big -- big book of Dad's out of the kitchen loft.

F: Was there songs in that?

A: No, I -- I stuck songs -- I put a --

F: Oh, stuck them, oh yeah, but -- yeah, but I have --

I -- I thought you meant you wrote out in a scribbler like this -- but this was on three pages --

A: Well, the time you wrote out those, I was writing them too -- we have scribblers the same.

F: Yeah?

A: I have a white one --

F: I know I used to --

A: I have a red one like this and a white one.

F: -- one night I was -- was writing them when...  
[anecdote follows which is addressed to the interviewer]  
 (Tape 1:B)

Florence displays some of the same characteristics as Fred in relation to her singing, but in other ways is quite different. She shares his deep appreciation of vocal music, and tends like him to associate specific songs with specific singers and incidents from her life. Although she generally gives less detail than he does about the origin or associations of a particular song in her repertoire, the interviews are dotted with brief references to various family members and friends, as well as to past experiences. She also shares his tendency not to categorize songs; in one song, however, she interrupts the singing to state, "It's a western song," and then takes up the melody again ("I'm A Boy You Don't Meet Every Day", Tape 19:B).

On the other hand, she seems less interested than Fred in learning currently popular songs, and less aware of changing styles of singing. Moreover, while he tended during the interviews to remain dispassionate while singing, she



showed a marked tendency to become emotionally involved. This was most apparent in her many songs about mother and home, and is probably due to nostalgic feelings for her own mother, now dead, and her own children, most of whom live far away from home. During the songs "Mother, The Queen of My Heart" and "Every Boy Has Been Some Mother's Darling", for example, her voice is close to breaking (Tape 19:B). It should be noted here that all of the informants, by their own admission, tend to be sentimental; Lima often states, "Oh, we're all faint-hearted, you know, we cry at anything." However, while several of the informants were deeply moved at hearing the voices of their brothers and sisters on tape, repeating the old songs and stories, only Florence cried during her own performance.

The puzzling thing about this informant's singing is that it has not earned her greater status within the family. Her voice is comparable to that of the others in terms of tone and quality. Generally she has a very good ear for melody. At times during the recording she confused or lost a particular air, but this seemed to be the result of fatigue, since she was pushing herself to complete as many songs as possible. Her current repertoire is certainly more extensive than that of the others, and she has no lack of confidence in her own abilities.

Florence's failure to establish herself as an expert singer within her own sibling group is due chiefly to the

fact that the status had been achieved by her older sister Lima when Florence was still a very little girl. All of the brothers and sisters agree that Lima was an exceptionally good singer and musician, having learned as a young girl to play the family organ by ear. Her reputation quickly spread beyond the immediate family; other relatives would gather in the Kealey home for the sole purpose of hearing Lima and her mother sing together (Fieldnotes I, October 29, 1975). This type of singing ceased when Lima married in 1922. From that time on, she sang only within her own home for her own entertainment or for that of her children and grandchildren. I had never heard Lima sing until I interviewed her. At that time she sang for me the only song she could remember, "Two Little Girls in Blue", which she had sung in a concert with her brother Harry in 1905 (Tape 17:A). Her voice remains crystal clear and sweet in tone, although she was seventy-five at the time of the interview. It is easy to understand how she made a deep impression on her younger brothers and sisters, especially since they associate her singing with that of their mother, and why they retain the image of her as "singer" to this day. Just as the status of storyteller belongs to Manuel, that of singer belongs to Lima, and Florence, in spite of her extensive repertoire and continuing interest, can never aspire to it.

### Summary

In relation to oral skills, it is obvious that certain factors are at play determining who can achieve status in what field of activity. Abilities which are perceived as being common to all members of the community, such as relating personal experiences or retelling local legends, do not merit special status. Prestige is attached only to activities which are seen as requiring more than ordinary talents. In the case of this family, these abilities are limited to vocal music, and three areas of narrative activity, the telling of family history, children's stories, and humorous stories. It is to be noted that all four of these activities bear a close relationship to the family itself. Many of the narrative texts or songs have been learned directly from family members. Family styles of singing or storytelling are imitated by the informants. In addition, the areas of activity are perceived as family areas of specialization and the experts within the group relate strongly, or are related by their siblings, to previous family experts in their respective fields.

Sex and age are important determining factors in the achievement of specialist status in oral skills. The influence can be direct as in the case of activities which are seen as being appropriate to one sex or age group. Thus family history and children's stories are perceived as areas of female interest, whereas joketelling



is seen as a male activity. The sex roles delimited here are typical of the conservative rural community in which the informants were raised; their family was in fact more liberal than many neighbouring families in allowing individuals the freedom to cross sexual boundaries (for example, the girls often participated in heavy agricultural work, and the boys took an interest in the preparation of food). But the general sexual stereotypes of the day prevailed, influencing individual interest as well as achievement in activities perceived as being appropriate to one's sex.

While age does not provide a strong direct influence (except in the role of family historian where advanced age is a prerequisite), it serves to greatly limit achievement in an indirect or circumstantial way. To attain the status of expert in a particular oral skill, an individual must first of all impress his siblings with his ability. This is much more easily done by an older member of the group who has as audience the total family, all of whom are still at home. Once a specialist is established, it is very difficult for a younger sibling to usurp his role, since by this time the audience is scattered and only the less influential younger members remain at home. Age was the determining factor which prevented two of the informants discussed in this chapter from achieving status: Fred as humourist and Florence as singer. But, ironically, it was also the

determining factor in establishing Fred as a singer. As the youngest child he had the opportunity to acquire a large repertoire at an early age and to receive a great deal of attention from his older siblings. In addition, the activity was seen as being suitable to his age group.

Finally, sibling rivalry is a factor at work in regulating the achievement of specialist status, but as it is influential only in relation to one activity, telling stories to children, it appears to be of minor importance.<sup>6</sup> Maternal influence, on the other hand, appears to be a significant factor in determining who attains a position of prestige in relation to oral skills. All three individuals who are recognized as experts were favoured in a special way by their mother. Lima, as the oldest girl, was her closest confidante; Agatha bore the name of the infant who had died; and Fred was the baby of the family. Moreover, all three resembled their mother in their choice of interests -- she too was a singer, historian and teller of children's stories.

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<sup>6</sup>In contrast to this, N. V. Rosenberg, in his study of the early life of Bill Monroe, discovered that sibling rivalry was a major determining factor in the latter's development as a musician. See Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys: An Illustrated Discography, Nashville: The Country Music Foundation Press, 1974.

## IV

### PSYCHIC SKILLS

#### Family psychic traditions

From an early age, I was aware that having psychic powers and experiencing para-natural phenomena were seen by my mother's generation as part of family tradition. This impression was built up throughout my childhood in two ways. In the first place, my mother frequently repeated family supernatural legends, such as the story of the banshee and the tale of the ghost on the Borough Road (see pages 97 and 95 below, respectively). These narratives were always related in a reverential manner, suggesting the "specialness" of the individuals involved in such experiences.

Secondly, I observed at first hand how the members of the parental generation interpreted daily experiences in terms of the psychic, when it often seemed to me that mere coincidence was at work. However, in spite of my scepticism, I had to admit that I could not account for some incidents in purely rational terms. My mother, for example, frequently claimed she had foreknowledge of events through dreams, and would say, "There, my dream is out," when some foreseen event materialized. Usually we scoffed, much to her chagrin, but on one occasion she triumphantly returned from a day's shopping trip to Ottawa with a green earring; she had

announced at breakfast time that morning that she was going to find one, having dreamed so the previous night.

While the members of my generation tended to be sceptical of such incidents, our parents spent hours discussing and analyzing them, all the while recalling family precedents. Not every experience was accepted as genuine -- my mother met considerable scepticism when she claimed to have seen a flying saucer -- but the intensity of the discussion bore witness to the informants' perception of the family as one in which experiences and powers beyond the natural were common.

With the exception of the youngest member, who shares the scepticism of younger generations, the informant group retain this family image to the present. Most of them have had experiences which they and at least some of their siblings believe to be genuinely psychic in nature. However, only one member of the group enjoys special status as a possessor of psychic powers, although one other member has a strong image of herself as such a person and aspires to the same position. Both of these individuals will be discussed in this chapter.

#### Harry Kealey, healer and psychic

The members of the sibling group have no term to define the powers of Harry, their oldest surviving brother (see photo page 84), but with the exception of Fred they are unanimous in agreeing that he possesses special and rare



Figure 8: Harry Kealey and his wife Vera

talents. As a child I knew from direct observation and from hearsay of three of these abilities -- he could find wells, he could cure warts, and he had seen ghosts. In fact I knew very little else about this uncle because his deafness discouraged all but the briefest conversations, until a few years ago when he obtained a hearing device. On interviewing him I discovered that he also has knowledge of traditional charms and medicine, and has had experiences with ghostly figures and forewarning dreams. In short, he possesses the wide range of talents which are suggested by the term "white witch".<sup>1</sup>

Water divining seems to have been one of the first of these skills practiced by Harry. When he was fourteen or fifteen, a local diviner was asked to find a well on the Kealey property. After he had located a stream, he asked Harry if he wanted to take the stick and see if it would turn for him. The divining rod twisted in his hands, although it remained immobile in the hands of his father and older brother. Harry remembered this incident clearly, even to the point of describing in detail the nature of the stream discovered and the depth of the well dug on the site (Tape 12:A).

After this first incident, Harry found a series of

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the powers of a white witch, see Theo Brown, "Charming in Devon", Folklore, LXXXI (1970), 37-47.

wells for various neighbours and gained a reputation as a community well diviner. He has no idea of the number of wells he has located over the years; in fact, he could only name specifically the first and the last of these. Fairly recently he had turned down a request for assistance from a professional well-drilling company who were having trouble locating water on the farm where he had done his first independent divining. His refusal reflects his belief that the newer methods of finding water are equally valid as his own. If the professional drillers could not find water, there was obviously no water to be found, and there was no point wasting time looking for it. At the same time, he was obviously pleased that the drillers had shown respect for his method by asking his assistance.

Harry does not keep a divining rod on his premises. Each time he has been asked to find a well, he has prepared a branch from the forked limb of a plum tree. The branch is cut off the tree about two inches from the fork, with the other two ends left six or seven inches long. In using the branch, the two hands grip the long ends, with the short end turned in towards the stomach. When the diviner walks over water, the short end will spring up towards his face, and he can judge the volume of water by the force with which the stick turns in his hands. When I asked Harry what made the stick turn, he gave the following reply:

Well, the water is running, you know, and there has to be a stone in the tree you take, you know, like a plum



stone or -- I only use a plum, I thought it was only a plum you could use it but some other lads say you can use any crutch tree, but you can't, it has to be a stone in the tree, you know, like a plum stone or a -- maybe a -- you could use it with a butternut -- I never tried it, but there has to be -- well, they call them nuts -- well, it's a stone that's in -- they call it a stone in the -- in a prune, or in a plum.  
(Tape 12:A)

This explanation suggests the perception of some relationship between water and stone, with the fruit pit being identified with stone.

The informant sees the art of finding water (he uses the terms "finding" or "getting", never "witching" or "divining") as something quite common among previous generations, and believes they had "rigs like that" (forked branches) to find gold and other minerals as well.<sup>2</sup> When asked if anyone could use this method, Harry replied that "they claim it won't work for everyone," but hastened to add that he had seen the stick move for one of his nieces. He also admitted that one of his sisters had had the same experience. The talent came naturally to him and he used it "more for fun than anything else." There was never a question of financial reward or indeed any form of direct remuneration, since finding wells was just one aspect of the exchange of labour which until recent years had been

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<sup>2</sup>See Theodore Besterman, "The Folklore of Dowsing", Folk-Lore, XXXVII (1926), 113-133, for a reference to the use of a divining rod to locate precious metals. For a thorough discussion of the subject of divining, see E. Z. Vogt and Ray Hyman, Water-Witching U.S.A., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.



the common practice of agricultural communities.

A second aspect of Harry's talents involves a knowledge of charms and herbal lore. I was totally unaware of his interest in such matters until I went to interview him. Shortly after I arrived at his house, he presented me with a little piece of wood about the size of a thumbnail, shaped like a miniature jockey's cap, and informed me that I would never have a toothache if I carried it with me at all times. Harry referred to the little piece of wood as a "charm", and said it was called a "log tooth" or a "saw log tooth" -- a little knob of wood which grows on the trunk of a hardwood tree. When found, it has to be cut off the tree and then cleared of bark to expose the wood underneath. He had found several a few weeks before my visit, and had already passed one on to another member of the family. Harry could not remember exactly where he had learned of this charm, but said that not many know of it now except for the older people (Tape 12:A). He offered no explanation as to why it is effective, but it appears that the charm is based on a perceived relationship between a "tooth" found in nature and a human tooth -- just as the choice of wood for a divining rod had been based on a relationship between a fruit stone and a stone found in the earth.

When asked about other charms, Harry said there were many that were known to the Indians and to the early settlers. He explained that his mother knew about "things

that grew in the bush" (Tape 12:A) from her childhood in a farming community near Richmond, Ontario. It soon became obvious that Harry was talking about herbal lore, and that he considered such information as a charm. Although he claimed to have forgotten much of this knowledge, he was able to give several examples of plants used for medicinal purposes. Golden Thread, a strawberry-like plant which his mother used to gather around the lake at the south end of the family farm, was very good for treating a sore mouth. The thread itself, the root of the plant, was dried and stored; it could be chewed to cure any kind of mouth ailment. The bark of the black cherry tree was boiled for cough medicine. Bean water was effective in treating gravel (kidney stones). Harry also mentioned ginseng root, juniper berries, and slippery elm bark, but was no longer quite certain what conditions could be alleviated with any of these.<sup>3</sup>

While Harry had used the word "charm" in reference to herbal lore, he did not mention the term in discussing his experiences as a wart healer, until his wife Vera introduced the idea by claiming that he had a charm for warts. Harry then replied, "You could call it a charm." He seemed, however, to consider it a talent rather than a charm. When

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<sup>3</sup>The use of plants for medicinal purposes by Ontario pioneers is discussed in Eustella Langdon's Pioneer Gardens at Black Creek Village, Toronto/Montreal: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1972, pp. 31-45.

asked how he had first learned to remove warts, he replied that he had just started doing it; no other family member that he knew of had this ability. Although Harry gave no indication of how many people he had treated, he mentioned several names, indicating that his reputation had spread as far as the southern limits of the township.

When I asked the informant to describe his method of operation, telling him that I was interested because I had a wart on my hand, he gave the following reply:

Yeah. Well, I'll cure it after a while. But then, I'll ask you if you have any other warts, you know, wh -- I'll take your hands and rub them, find all them warts -- they're only on your hands, well I'll find them. And I'll tell -- ask you if there's any other -- where they are any other places on you, and you have to tell me where they are, so I have to see to get that other wart. Well I'll ask you where they are, you know, on your arm, how far up above his arm, and get them all.<sup>4</sup> (Tape 12:A)

At this point, I showed Harry the wart on my left thumb. He rubbed it, stared at it intently for five or six seconds, and then said, "I think it'll go now." The wart has since disappeared.

Immediately after discussing the curing of warts, Harry volunteered the following anecdote in a manner which suggested that he saw himself as a healer in broader terms.

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<sup>4</sup>The importance of the charmer's knowing the exact number and location of warts has been discussed by Theo Brown, op. cit., p. 39; and Grace Pleasant Wellborn, "The Magic Art of Removing Warts", in Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell, eds., Singers and Storytellers (Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, No. 30), Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1961, pp. 205-211.

...when I was only about, oh about five years old, I guess, we'd a water trough down at the old well there, there near where the windmill is. Me father had got a little tomahawk . Manuel was chopping ice out -- ice out of the trough -- out of the trough and I pulling the ice away so he could chop and I went to pull it away -- Lord, he clipped the top of that [indicating his finger] and it went in here on this side, made a cut in me mitt and the piece come out -- was just -- well it wasn't holding neither, it come out in the mitt. And I takes the piece and I stuck it back on again, went up to the house like that, when I got to the house, got a rag and I rolled it around it, the piece grew on alright. Took it right off, it went -- mark was in this finger a long time. See the mark right around? (Tape 12:A)

Two more descriptions followed of times when he had badly cut and treated his own fingers.

At this point I asked Harry if he had ever cured other people, and his wife replied that he had "stopped the blood on Mick Joe Laporte." Harry gave the following account of this incident which happened in 1920. From the detailed description which he gives, it is obvious that this is to him a memorable event.

The first year I went to the camp -- well, I'll tell you all about it. Uncle Ed Kealey, you know, when he was young, he was -- we'd the sawmill in there, we were cutting over at Sloan's in there. Where McCovic is now, you know, them lots back there. And Matt Mulroney and Uncle Ed was working together -- making logs I think or something. Whatever Matt went to chop, his axe glanced or something and cut Uncle Ed's nose right -- [informant interrupts narrative to ask if interviewer remembers Uncle Ed] His nose -- you seen a mark there? He cut the nose right down to his cheeks there, and this part fell down, and he was bleeding like hang, and Bill Coyle had a silk handkerchief and he takes the silk handkerchief and put it into the cut you know, and they brought him out and took him to Kazabazua to the doctor. Well, blood won't run through silk, you see -- if you get your hand cut, you can put -- [informant's wife interjects that it must be pure silk] Now, I took that handker -- no, Uncle Ed give Jackie [informant's brother] a nice big handkerchief with a row of cards there, big cards, cards all

around the edges, you've seen them, big silk -- oh, I guess it was about two feet square. And when Mother -- when I was going, my mother said, "You'd better take that handkerchief, it might happen to come in if you got cut or anything, or some of the rest of them get cut." So I folded it up, the handkerchief, and I put it in, I had a blue suit coat. We went up the sixth of October, was early in the fall. And I put it in the inside of my blue coat pocket. So that winter in our gang, our head logmaker went to top a tree one morning. It was so cold, you know, when you get so far through it, it'll break. So he hit it and the damn thing broke off quick, you know, and come down, and it tur -- it hit the bone, hit the bone of his leg there, and turned that thing [informant indicates what happened by pointing to his own leg] away down like that, right off the bone -- he was a pretty big man, too. Right the whole width of the axe, was about that much, you know, and it turned right -- [interviewer asks if he means that the flesh was partially severed from the bone] Yeah. Well, he walked into the camp. He had I guess a mile or maybe a little better than a mile to walk. I wanted to go in with him, he said no, he could make it alright himself. Went in, and I thought of the silk handkerchief all the time, you know, but never thought till he was gone. So when we come in that night -- he was a middling dark man, he was John Reiner was his name, he was middling dark, he had dark hair, middling dark -- when we come in he was as white as that paper there. I says, "Holy bald-headed, is your leg bleeding yet?" And they had three pails, that was the last, that was the third pail of flour they had his foot, pail of flour and was putting on the flour and it was just scooting out -- the man was pretty near bled to death, he was pretty near bled to death. So we went in and the lads was making their, cutting trails with me, I said, "You take," I said, "Holy baldheaded, is he bleeding like that yet?" I said, "I'll fix him." And the old Haeffy boss came in and he says, "Can you?" and I says, "Yes, I'll fix it," and he says, "Here, hold the light," to Billy Clerk, he was the lad that was cutting trails with me. Billy -- Haeffy give him the lamp and down Billy goes -- he fainted. Jack -- "Holy baldheaded, is there not a man in the camp?" I said, "You hold the light, I'll do the rest." So we always had a big pot of water on top of a big round stove, you know, and there was a square top on it and a big dish of water there to have hot water to wash in. So I gets the wash dish and I washed it all out, gets warm water in it, and takes his foot out of the pail. I had oh some white rags there, and I splashed the water up on the blood and got it all off, and then I wiped the blood all off and the big piece was turned down and I had to take

all the, the flour off the other part of it and it was -- it was pretty near, he was bled pretty near to death, I guess. So I took that and I flopped it up here [informant uses gestures for this part of the narrative] and I took my silk handkerchief and I doubled it up, oh about that wide and I took and I brought it around over that -- like we'll say it was -- you'd come down and up this way, well I took the handkerchief and I put it here you know, and come right around and held it down tight, rolled it around and had a couple of little safety pins, put in the safety pins. So I said -- [interruption of conversation while tape is changed] -- couldn't get all the blood out of the handkerchief, you know, the blood coloured the handkerchief. So I went, put it back in my pocket again, and I didn't go back to the camp for -- till the next winter -- there was no work around here, we played hockey all winter, but the next winter we went back again. And, oh, about February some time, Mick Joe cut his toe -- I think he cut it pretty near off. So he said to me that night, he says, "Hey, have you got that silk handkerchief with you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Will you lend it to me, I cut my toe pretty near off." I said, "Yes, sure." So I give Mick the silk handkerchief, and I never seen it after -- I don't think he ever took his socks off to take it off. But that was the last of that handkerchief. But the blood won't go through it. (Tape 12:A and B)

In this narrative, the ability to heal is based on the possession of a silk handkerchief, and on being "man" enough to clean and dress the wound without flinching. Yet Harry related the incident in response to a question about curing people. It is curious too that his wife Vera used the phrase "stopping the blood on" someone, which in local parlance normally indicates the use of a bloodstopping charm. Such a charm exists within the family; it was used by Manuel, who presumably had received it from his mother, and was passed on to Loretta, who has never used it (Fieldnotes I, April 26, 1975). But this charm appears to be unknown by Harry.

When I questioned the informant on his experiences



with the supernatural, he showed the same willingness to discuss these incidents as he had shown with the previous topics. I asked him first to describe what had happened on the night his mother died, June 9, 1958. I had already heard this incident described by two of Harry's sisters who were present in the family home that night and had witnessed Harry's behaviour. He and Vera had spent part of the night with the ailing woman, and then had left for their own home to get a few hours sleep before returning in the morning. They came back much sooner than expected, just in time to witness Mary Kealey's death. Harry described the incident in this way:

H: I -- I -- I woke up, you know --

I: Uhuh.

H: -- and some -- well I was called to -- someone I thought was at the door and says -- I thought it was Vera first --

I: Oh, yeah.

H: -- says, "Harry," says, "if you want to see your mother living again, come right away." So I wo -- I woke you [his wife] up I guess, and we went out -- pretty near dead when we got there.

I: And you thought it was Vera's voice? You thought it was Vera's voice?

H: Well, I -- no, I thought it was her first, you know, I didn't --

V: He thought it was me that was calling -- to get up.

H: She called twice --

I: Uhuh.

H: -- before I answered.

I: Has anything --

H: I couldn't, I couldn't -- but the same voice, the same person, said about the same thing before to me.

I: When did it happen before -- was somebody else sick?

H: Out at home, I think -- I was living out at home that time.

I: Was somebody else sick then?

H: Someone died. I could pretty near one time tell when any of my friends were dying -- always dream about a grave or digging a grave or something. I don't -- I don't -- this last while there's none of that going on at all. But it -- always could tell if somebody of my friends was dead.

I: Uhum. It was usually in a dream, was it?

H: Be dreams, yeah. You'd wake up -- dreams. (Tape 13:A)

This narrative was followed by three others, all of which related to the sighting of ghosts. The first of these was the familiar story of the ghost on the Borough Road.

H: Oh yeah. I seen ghosts a couple or three times.

I: Did you? Tell me about it.

H: Well, I -- this one is -- I seen it right out here in the -- the gulley out -- you know pa -- after you're going down at --

I: Uhum.

V: Henry Spencer's.

H: At H -- at Spencer's there?

I: Yeah.

H: I was in at a dance in here at Sl -- at Sloan's, that house on the far side of the road there, you know, that Vera showed you down there?

I: Yeah.



H: And when I was going out that morning, I was going along the road there, horse jumped -- I had a driver [a light shaft horse]. He jumped up on the bank there. "Get down -- get back down out of here!" I sees a woman dressed in white, she had on a big white hat, and I pulled the horse back down, I wasn't to her yet, you know. But that time, where Henry Spencer was, that was a deep gulley there, it was me that filled that all up with clay working on the road here, and I sp -- \_\_\_\_\_ the horse down and stopped. I says, "Are you going for -- do you want to get on and go for a drive, go -- take you home?" So -- just you could hear "Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh", [informant gestures with his hand, dropping it down towards the floor, and makes a thumping noise] right down to the ground.

I: Oh, you could hear a sound?

H: Well, eh -- I wouldn't like to say who I thought it was but I -- might have been her too. But I wasn't a bit afraid.

I: No. When it happened, did you think you recognized the figure? Did you think you knew her when you saw her?

H: Yeah, I thought I knew her, you know, when I drove beside her, you know, I thought I knew the woman.  
(Tape 13:A)

Harry added that at the time of the sighting the woman had been dead for only a short while.<sup>5</sup> This narrative was followed by descriptions of two occasions when Harry had sighted wraith-like figures along the railway track at night.

Harry's attitude throughout our discussion of his various abilities and experiences was very matter-of-fact.

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<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of the white female ghostly figure as a traditional element in British and Irish folklore, see Jane C. Beck, "The White Lady of Great Britain and Ireland", Folklore, LXXXI (1970), 292-306. Helen Creighton treats similar figures in Bluenose Ghosts, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1957, pp. 177-206.

He accepted his psychic experiences as a natural part of life, knowing that such things happened to other people as well. During our conversation, in fact, he recounted experiences of two other people with omens and deathly figures, and related what he knew of the banshee -- that it used to be heard crying by a rock out behind Paddy Kealey's barn whenever a member of the Darcy family died (Mrs. Paddy Kealey's maiden name was Darcy) (Tape 13:A).<sup>6</sup> He also accepted his ability to find water in the same way; it was a talent given to him and he merely used it. In contrast to this attitude, he showed great pride in his healing abilities, and spoke of his experiences with curing warts and treating wounds as if these were true accomplishments on his part.

While Harry's attitude to all of the topics covered in our conversation implied total belief, he also exhibited a refreshing sense of humour. On three occasions during the interview, a humorous anecdote followed a serious discussion. In relation to curing warts, for example, he described the first time he had removed a wart: as a child in school, he had bitten a wart off his own finger in a fit of anger over

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<sup>6</sup>In her discussion of banshees, Lady Gregory refers to the belief that they are often connected with specific families. See her Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland Collected and Arranged by Lady Gregory: With Two Essays and Notes by W. B. Yeats, Gerrards Cross, Bucks.: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1970, pp. 170-179.

a reprimand received from a teacher. In this anecdote he showed his ability to laugh at himself, but in two others he poked fun at cousins who had tried to emulate him and had failed. One replaced a severed finger tip as Harry had done, but failed to replace it properly, so that the finger healed but remained crooked. Another cousin had, like Harry, sighted a ghost along the road when returning from a dance -- the ghost turned out to be a cow. This use of humorous stories reflects the informant's attitude to the topics under discussion. While he took them "seriously" in the sense of accepting them fully as aspects of reality, he felt no compulsion to be always "serious" about them, any more than he felt it necessary to be always serious about life.

While Harry has an air of unassuming self-confidence in discussing all of his abilities, it appears that his image as healer is the most important to him. Among his brothers and sisters, however, he is viewed chiefly as a psychic, although his water divining abilities are equally well known, and his wart curing known to a lesser degree. They know nothing of his image as a healer. In fact, when I mentioned Harry in this context to several members of the family, they pointed out that it was Manuel who could stop blood.

Another interesting contrast appears in their diverse views about the source of Harry's powers. He sees his knowledge and his talents as a sort of legacy, a sharing in the wisdom of past generations. He obviously has a great deal of

respect for the early settlers and the Indians who lived in harmony with nature and possessed a vast store of knowledge that is disappearing in modern times. This view was probably inspired by the older members of the family, possibly chiefly by his mother whose childhood in an old Ontario settlement left her with a strong sense of tradition. An incident from Harry's own life reinforced this image of the Indian as possessing exceptional wisdom -- an Indian saved his life in the bush when he was a young man (Tape 12:B).

His brothers and sisters, however, connect Harry's abilities with another incident in his life. As a very young child, he sucked the sulphur heads off a boxful of matches. The local doctor predicted his death, but the child suffered no ill effects. This miraculous escape and Harry's "special" nature are somehow connected in the minds of his siblings. Although no one ever states a direct causal relationship, the incident is always described in any conversation about Harry's talents or experiences. Whether the other members of the family came to this conclusion on their own, or whether it was influenced by their mother, it is difficult to say. But she too had had psychic experiences (Fieldnotes I, October 29, 1975). The others admit that she gave Harry special treatment after the accident, and encouraged them to do likewise on the grounds that he "would not be with them long." Possibly Harry too was influenced by this treatment to view himself as different from the others. Whatever the influencing factors,

the image remains, both in his own view and in that of his siblings.

Gladys McLaughlin, mystic

Gladys, the sixth child in the informant family (see photo page 101), has a strong image of herself as possessing the same psychic powers as Harry. While her siblings do not deny the genuineness of some of her experiences, they accord her no status at all in this field. Because Gladys's experiences have tended to be more directly religious in content than Harry's, I have used the term "mystic" in relation to her. She herself would simply say that she has "seen things" or that "things" have happened to her.

Gladys described her various experiences during an interview at which her sister Agatha was also present. The interaction as the three of us discussed the various incidents is very typical of the conversations which develop when any such topic is mentioned. The first of Gladys's experiences occurred in 1931 when she was housekeeping for her brother-in-law, Fred McLaughlin, in the apartment above the village store, while her sister Lima was in hospital with her fourth child, Bryan. Gladys gave the following account of the incident:

A: Well then, what did you see the time Aunt Katie died -- in the sky?

G: Oh, I seen a cross. It was just like the cross is on the church here.



Figure 9: Gladys McLaughlin



A: Only it was in purple, you said -- sort of a purple colour.

G: It was -- just see -- well Aunt Lima, see, was in the hospital with the baby, she had a new baby -- which? I was minding Helena -- Dwi -- Bryan it was -- and I was keeping house for Lima. And I was looking out the window and Arthur McCarthy's wake was down at McCarthy's, see. I was looking out the window and this beautiful cross came in the sky -- just like the way Mama had a pair of prayer beads, and that same cross -- did you notice on the church the way that -- that's made? And that cross came right in the sky.

A: That's the shape of cross that Mother had in her hand when she died.

G: Yeah, yeah, same -- same cross. Oh, that little crucifix --

A: Yeah.

G: Yeah, but Mama's beads, remember, was the same -- same shape as this over here [informant gestures towards the church across the road] --

I: Oh, yeah.

G: -- and that came in the sky, and I run out to Fred McLaughlin -- he was sitting in the rocking chair -- and I said to Fred, "Oh, I'm after seeing the beautifullest cross," I said, "in the sky," and the phone rang and it was to tell Ma Katie Cuddihy was dead.

I: That was Aunt Katie Cuddihy over in the States.

A: It rang down in the store, I guess, and he went --

G: Fred run down into the store to answer the phone.

I: Oh, that was up above the store.

G: That was either a cross for --

A: Arthur.

G: -- for Arthur, or maybe it was that there'd be a church here, or it was for Aunt Katie Cuddihy.

I: Uhum.

G: That's true. Oh, there's lots of things I -- I could



tell you that made -- (Tape 8:B)

The shape of cross to which Gladys referred, a Latin cross with the four terminals decorated in a roseate effect, was frequently used for metal crucifixes up until the time of the Second World War. When the Venosta church was erected in 1943, the steeple was topped with an illuminated glass cross of a similar shape. Both the future site of the church and the McCarthy home lay in the direction of Gladys's gaze.

The above experience was known to Agatha; the following was unknown to her, although I had heard it once before from Gladys in an informal conversation.

G: Now I remember well, I used to think that nuns and priests was just like, put on this earth, you know, like, you know -- and -- well, till I got, like, like, grew up --

I: Yeah.

G: -- you know what I mean, I used to think -- so anyway, I -- like \_\_\_\_\_ [informant gives name of a local family] -- I thought then, well, just be something that their kids, priests and doctors -- priests and nuns and all this, they must be awfully good people -- sure they're no better than anybody else. So anyway, I used to imagine this, like you know. So this day, out at the farm -- Grandma McLaughlin was dead -- and you know, in the back of our shed out there was the old toilet, eh?

A: Uhum.

G: I guess I told you that before -- and I went to -- I was baking pies and things for the men coming in, you know, and you'd have no time to think on religion or dead or anything, only get that damn dinner ready and get pies made and get wood in your stove. And I run out to get some chips to put on a real good fire, to get the potatoes and -- I was baking pies, I used to have pies all the time that time -- and there was -- oh, a beautiful smell went by -- oh, my God, it was -- the swellest smell I ever -- of a wind went by me and there

was like a voice says, "You don't have to -- you don't have to be a nun or a priest to get to heaven." That's right -- I'm not telling you a word of lie --now isn't that funny now? And I wasn't --

I: What kind of smell was it -- like a -- flowers? Could you describe it?

G: Oh, the grandest -- lilies of the valley or something like that -- oh, beautiful, beautifullest smell I ever smelled.

I: Yeah. What were the men doing haying then, was it haying time or --

G: Oh, it was -- I don't know if it was haying time or it was harvest or what. I know I had a lot of men anyway, I just don't know what it was. But the place it was, in a woodshed, in a dirty old woodshed, and the toilet -- you know what that smell --

I: Yeah.

G: -- and this was a -- oh the dearest, oh -- cool, nice --

A: You can smell it yet.

G: Eh?

A: You think you can smell it?

G: Yeah, something like that perfume Papa gave --

A: Yeah.

G: -- Grandma years ago, I often think of them smells, like --

A: Uhum.

G: -- that, that bottle of perfume comes to my mind, like the beautiful perfume -- that was lilies of the valley. But that, that's what I mean, I wasn't thinking --

I: No.

G: You know, I wasn't even thinking about religion or nun or -- or priest or anything, just to get and get that work done, have my table sat when the men'd come in for dinner. So that was kind of odd. (Tape 8:B)

When I first heard of this experience, I was reminded of the "odour of sanctity", the beautiful smell associated with holy people in many saints' legends.<sup>7</sup> The odour seemed particularly appropriate with reference to the message Gladys received; in Catholic dogma, anyone who attains heaven is a saint, whether or not officially canonized by the church. While the phrase "odour of sanctity" is familiar to most Catholics of the informant's generation, since it recurs in printed lives of the saints, it is generally understood as a metaphor for a state of advanced holiness. It is highly unlikely that the informant would know that any connection exists in Christian legend between sainthood and pleasant smells.

The most recent of Gladys' major experiences with psychic or supernatural phenomena occurred at the time of her mother's death in 1958, and forms an interesting parallel to Harry's description of his own experience on the same occasion. At the time of the incident, early on Monday morning, Manuel, Lima and Gladys were sitting up with their mother in her bedroom on the ground floor of the family home. Fred Kealey was out in the barn doing the morning chores; his wife and children were asleep upstairs. Harry and Vera had

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<sup>7</sup>For an examination of this phenomenon, see C. Grant Loomis, White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend, Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1948, p. 54.

presumably already gone home, but were soon to return.

Gladys gave the following account in answer to my question about the incident:

Oh, yes, sure when Mama died, someone called me -- you know that -- well Lima and Manuel -- the girls all had went to Ottawa [meaning her other sisters, Mona, Agatha and Loretta], and about something to six, I guess it was, in the morning, or maybe it was, well it would be between like five and six -- see, Grandma died about fifteen to six, I think it was. And Manuel says to me, "You know, Gladys," -- I had the candle in Grandma's hand -- Manuel was at the foot of the bed and Lima was sitting on the organ stool -- was it the organ stool? -- with -- fanning Mama or something. And Manuel said to me, "You know, Gladys, I wish you'd go and make me a cup of tea," he said, "I'm awful thirsty and hungry." So I went out and I turned on the stove -- had they the electric that time? The fire was on anyway, and I made a cup of tea, and I went to the freezer -- I made Lima and Manuel and I cup of tea -- and I had them on the dining room table -- I went to the freezer and I went to -- I opened the door and took out the milk bottle and just went to come to pour it into the tea on the table and someone said, "Gla-dys!" [informant calls the name, prolonging each syllable] And I was so stunned -- it was just like we often used to shout and the echo over the barn -- like over the mountain -- it wasn't just "Gladys", it was "Gla--" and I was stunned, I didn't know what to do, and I went and looked up the stairs and I went in and I couldn't hardly speak, and I thought the best thing I can do, I says, "What do you want?" [informant calls the question, prolonging each syllable] out loud like that. Manuel said to Lima, he says, "Did you -- who's calling Gladys?" He says to Lima, he said, "Lima, who called Gladys?" (Tape 8:B)

At this point, Gladys and Agatha entered into a discussion of the incident, establishing the exact physical location of all the participants and eliminating all possible rational explanations. Finally, Gladys gave her own explanation of the experience: "I often think the gates of heaven was open -- that's the way I often thought -- and maybe some voice -- " She suggested two possibilities: that the voice

might have been that of a close childhood friend who had died of tuberculosis as a young woman; or that of "little" Agatha, Manuel's twin sister who had died in 1899 at the age of four months. It is interesting to note that Lima gives this same latter explanation for the voice heard by Harry at the time of their mother's death. When questioned she said that she had no memory of the incident described by Gladys.

At several points during the interview, Gladys suggested that she had had other experiences similar to these, but she did not recount any, except for a brief reference to seeing a cross on the moon, given in answer to my question. This incident had occurred while I was a child living in Venosta, and her report of it had been met with a mixture of doubt and belief on the part of her brothers and sisters.

Gladys's failure to achieve status within the sibling group, in spite of the fact that her experiences are in some measure accepted as genuine, appears to be based on two factors. In the first place, the role is reserved for Harry who was marked as a special person from his earliest years, and who lived up to this designation through the exercise of his talents as a diviner and a psychic. In the second place, Gladys's obvious tendency to overlook possible rational explanations in the interpretation of events encourages others to doubt her judgment. On one occasion several years ago, she told me about mysterious music that had been heard on the previous Christmas morning. She

suggested a supernatural explanation for the incident, even though she knew that an electronic musical system had been installed in a nearby church; at the present time, she accepts this latter explanation (Tape 8:B).

Because of her failure to gain status within the family group, Gladys tends to be defensive about her experiences. The repetition of such phrases as "That's true," and "I'm not telling you a word of lie," indicates an expectation of doubt. In anticipation of this reaction, she tends to choose her audience carefully before discussing supernatural phenomena, and after finding a sympathetic audience, often carries on an entire conversation in hushed conspiratorial tones. Tape 8:B is a good example of this. Her defensive attitude contrasts sharply with Harry's openness and self-confidence in discussing similar topics.

Gladys also lacks Harry's sense of continuity with the past. While he gains support from the consideration that his experiences are not unique, either within the family or within the broader community of man, Gladys exists in isolation, vainly trying to convince her brothers and sisters that she does indeed possess psychic powers.

### Summary

Two of the factors which influenced the achievement of specialist status in oral skills can again definitely be seen at work here. The general area of psychic experience is seen as one of family specialization; thus the particular

talents of Harry, such as wart curing and well divining, do not require specific family precedents for their acceptance, since his nature is seen as being in accord with the family image.

Age is again an important determining factor; it allowed Harry to establish his status as expert before Gladys was old enough to provide a challenge. In addition, he gained a further advantage by developing his talents at an early age. He restored his severed fingertip as a young child and was finding wells while still a teenager; Gladys, by contrast, had her first major psychic experience at the age of twenty-six.

A third factor discussed in relation to oral skills, that of sex, is again possibly at work here, but its influence is not as obvious in relation to psychic skills. Because of their strong Catholic background, the members of the informant group might have been predisposed to accept a man rather than a woman as a specialist in supernatural matters. As children they received all religious instruction from priests, since there were no nuns in the community. Moreover, their male-dominated society might have influenced them to view a person who claimed psychic experiences as wise if male, but hysterical if female. The importance of stereotyping on a sexual basis is very difficult to determine in relation to psychic skills, however, since the informants could not divorce such a subtle matter from the



personalities of the individuals involved.

Finally parental influence appears to have been an important factor in relation to psychic skills. The special treatment afforded Harry as a child, coupled with his mother's approval of skills which she in some measure shared, and her general inclination to favour sons over daughters set him apart from the others at an early age, and could not help but influence the view of him held by his siblings.

## V

### MANUAL SKILLS

#### Family traditions in manual skills

As has already been noted, many members of the informant group are currently involved in some form of traditional hand craft. Their current interests, however, must be considered in relation to two fairly widespread family characteristics: a high level of competency in activities requiring creativity and manual dexterity, and an energy for physical work bordering on compulsion. Nor have their energies or abilities lessened with the advancing years. Although all but the youngest three are now past retirement age, all remain highly active, either continuing in their lifelong careers, or exchanging a full round of farming, housekeeping, or child-raising duties for a full-time involvement in various favourite crafts and hobbies.

The list of activities is long -- carpentry, welding, butchering, harness making, cooking, dressmaking, upholstering, knitting, crocheting, embroidery, tatting, rug hooking, mat braiding, quilting, oil painting. Some of these, such as the various forms of needlework, have been longstanding family interests. Others, such as welding and oil painting,

have been introduced by members of the informant group.

The various informants admit that two of their members do not share this family leaning towards involvement in manual skills. One of these is Paddy, a heavy equipment operator by trade, who lives in Ottawa; he freely acknowledges his incompetence in any activity requiring manual dexterity. The other is Nellie who, although an excellent cook and dairy woman, never shared her sisters' interest in needlework. In spite of the fact that they admit that all of the others are exceptionally good at their own particular interests, only two individuals have gained status in relation to the execution of a manual skill -- Fred Kealey as a harness maker, and Agatha McKale as a needlewoman.

#### Fred Kealey, harness maker

Since the decline in the use of the work horse in eastern Canada, the craft of harness making has experienced a similar decline.<sup>1</sup> The few remaining craftsmen now cater chiefly to those who maintain draft horses for horse draw competitions or in some cases for plowing matches, although these are mainly tractor events at the present time. Fred Kealey (see photo page 113) is one of a handful of harness

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<sup>1</sup>A general description of work harness and the tools used to produce it can be found in J. Geraint Jenkins, Traditional Country Craftsmen, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, pp. 201-213. Apart from nostalgic treatments in the popular press (see Footnote 3, page 128, for such an example), no Canadian literature is available on this subject.



Figure 10: Fred Kealey, holding a pair of  
brass-decorated bridles

makers still operating in the Ottawa Valley, and is well known among the horsemen of the district, both as a craftsman and as a fellow horseman, having been actively involved in horse drawing competitions throughout the region as participant, organizer and judge.

Within his own family as well, the images of harness maker and horseman are closely linked, and Fred is the acknowledged expert on any matter pertaining to horses. Both his general interest in horses and his particular interest in making harness are seen as following in family tradition. I was told during the course of my fieldwork that all the "old Kealeys" were great horsemen (Fieldnotes II, March 4, 1976). More immediately, the father of the informants had shown an early interest in the animals. There still exists in the family home a clock which John Kealey had won in 1880 for coming first in a horse race in a neighbouring village (Fieldnotes II, November 2, 1975). As an adult, he had maintained this interest by purchasing in 1913 a purebred Belgian stallion. The horse, although it died shortly after its owner in 1919, has achieved legendary status within the family; Fred showed me the importation and pedigree papers, while Harry proudly displayed a worn photo of his father and the animal.

There are also some family precedents for Fred's interest in making harness. A cousin, Jack Mulvihill, once made a complete set of work harness. When Fred's brother

Harry bought the Mulvihill farm in 1925, this set of harness passed into the Kealey family and some of it still exists on the family farm which Fred, as the youngest son, inherited. Harry himself could sew leather sufficiently well to make repairs, and Manuel, the oldest brother, once taught Fred how to make a plaited tie-line. This is a technique for plaiting the central part of a strip of leather in three or four strands without cutting the ends. Fred never mastered the technique with four strands, although Manuel, who had presumably learned the method in the lumbercamps, had.

Fred's own interest in working with leather dates to his early teenage years, when he re-stitched a set of work harness for his older brother to take to the lumbercamp.

Well, it was 1929, I was thirteen and -- that'd be about the first of November, I'd say, the weather was damn cold, and my brother Jackie was going to the -- to the shanty with his team on Monday morning, and he left Saturday morning to go to Campbell's Bay to see his girlfriend before he -- before he'd go to the camp, so I got the harness into the old back kitchen and I worked at them all day Saturday and Sunday -- part of Saturday night I lit the lantern and an old stable lamp -- I think I got two of them going and worked out in the kitchen all -- nearly all night. Got the harness all ready, I had a hell of a lot of sewing to do on them, and rivets, I didn't have too much -- too much to work with, I had an old awl and hemp and wax and a dull knife -- all I had. (Tape 11:A)

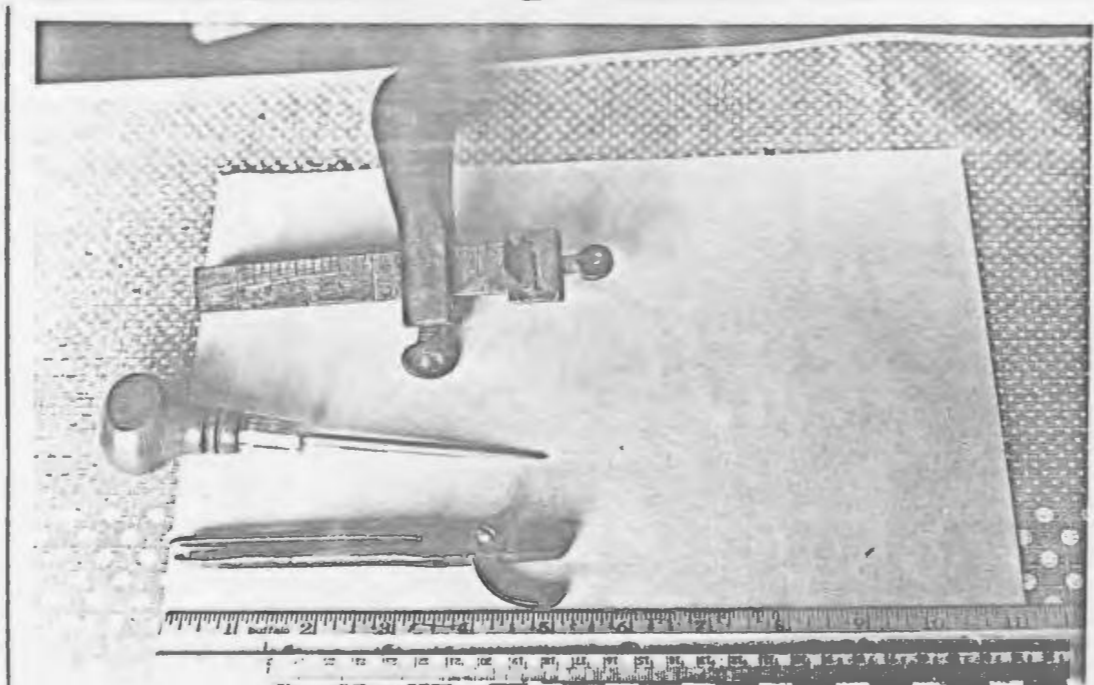
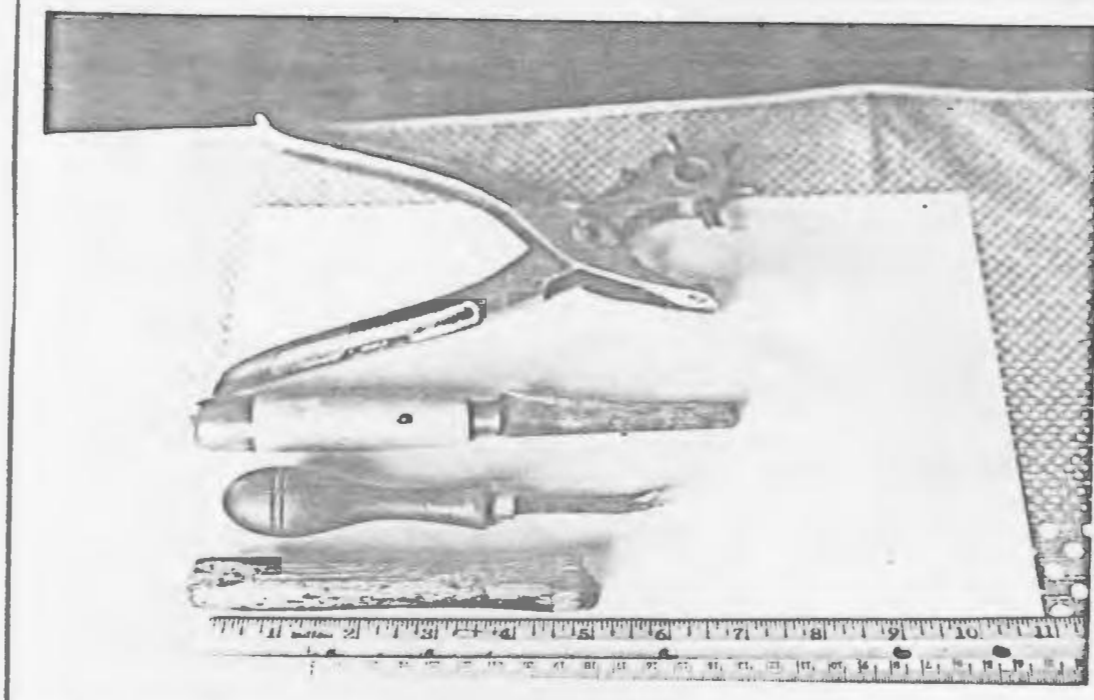
Fred made his first complete set of harness in 1937, when he was preparing his team for a plowing match in Venosta. This show set was decorated with brass, some salvaged off older pieces of harness and some bought in Ottawa; he had already acquired the habit of purchasing

leather or decorative materials any time he found himself in the city with an extra bit of cash.

In contrast to these very clear memories of his early work, the informant has only a vague notion of when he first sold a piece of leatherwork. When I inquired about this during the interview, he said it was ten, twelve, maybe twenty years earlier (Tape 11:A). Obviously this event was not a significant one, and he views it in terms of starting to fill orders for others, rather than just working for himself; it did not mark a change from amateur to professional status.

Fred's forty-seven years of experience at working with leather show clearly when he discusses his craft, or when he works at a piece of harness as he did during the interview (Tape 11:A and B; Fieldnotes II, November 2, 1975). Each piece begins as a design cut out of paper. Various shapes are considered until one is found which is appropriate to the purpose of the item of harness and suitable to the general appearance of the complete set. If at all possible, Fred likes to use original designs, and often spends a great deal of time considering various shapes before one is transferred to cardboard for use as a pattern. The outline of the pattern is then traced on the leather with a pointed or scratch awl. (For an illustration of the various tools and equipment used, see photos pages 117 to 119.) Although the informant has used brown leather in the past, he now





Figures 11 and 12: Tools used in the production of harness

[(from top of page) leather punch, leather knife, "sciver", "finisher", leather gauge, pointed or "scratch" awl, stitch groover]



Figure 13: Tools used in the production of harness

[(from top of photo, left side) small plane, knife sharpener, pliers, crooked awl, curved pincers, "sciver", stitch sinker, clamp; (from top of photo, right side) carpet tacks, scissors, black wax, spotter or spotting tool, brass stud, roll of black Irish linen thread]



Figure 14: Fred Kealey,  
seated at workbench of his own design,  
stitching a "backing"

works solely with black leather, since it retains its colour and sets off decorative pieces better than the brown.

The new piece is then cut out with a leather knife, a very sharp knife purchased at a leather supply store. If the design contains any sharp inner corners, these are rounded with a leather punch to prevent splitting. Once properly shaped, the edges of the piece must be treated. First a small tool called a "sciver" is used to bevel the edge of the leather. This tool is available commercially, but Fred uses one which he made himself by cutting a piece of metal to the required shape and inserting it in a discarded handle. Secondly, a wooden tool which he calls a "finisher" is pressed against the edge of the leather, thus flattening and strengthening it in order to prevent rolling. This too can be purchased, but the informant uses one which he made himself from hardwood, having shaped the working edge to the proper angle and having carefully smoothed the wood to prevent any scratching of the leather.

If the harness piece is going to be sewn, Fred marks the length of the line of stitching with his fingernail. Experience has taught him that this mark can later be smoothed out whereas a pencil or tool mark cannot. The line of stitching is itself then marked with a "stitch groover", a purchased two-pronged tool which can be adjusted like a compass to any depth of stitching. This is set to the proper depth and drawn along the edge of the leather, leaving a

groove which can be followed in stitching. Because the stitches are done within a groove, they are then below the level of the surface of the leather and thus less subject to wear. The two pieces to be stitched are then tacked together, using a hammer and carpet tack; the tack can easily be removed later and the remaining hole will soon disappear after a bit of rubbing with a fingertip.

The pieces to be sewn are then inserted in the clamp of the work bench. Fred currently uses a low bench which he himself designed. It features a wooden clamp slanted to the right for left-handed sewing and adjusted by a butterfly bolt; the low height allows him to sit comfortably for sewing. Previous to making this work "horse" twenty years ago, Fred used one that had been given to him by a neighbour; this bench had belonged to the man's grandfather, a farmer in one of the Loyalist settlements along the Saint Lawrence River. The early bench, which the informant believes to be at least one hundred and fifty years old, stands high off the ground and features a wooden clamp slanted for right-handed sewing and controlled by foot pressure on a lever positioned underneath the work area. While Fred treasures this piece of equipment and delights in showing visitors the hole worn right through the wood by sticking the awl into the bench to keep it handy, he prefers his own bench for its more comfortable and convenient design.

Stitching is done with a length of Irish linen

thread. Although the thread comes previously treated, Fred waxes it again by drawing it over a lump of wax; this makes it move more easily through the leather and also waterproofs it for greater durability. Through experimenting, he has discovered that linen thread is superior to nylon, which tends to cut the leather when the stitch is pulled tight.

For stitching, both ends of a length of thread are inserted in needles. By using two needles, one inserted from either side, every stitch is locked in; even if one stitch should break, the others will hold. This is one advantage hand-stitching has over machine stitching, where a broken stitch means the loss of a whole row of stitching. Before inserting the needles, the informant uses a pointed awl to make a hole in the leather. Each stitch is pulled very tight by means of sharp tugs on each end of the length of thread. The final stitch in each row is locked (by looping the thread in a half-hitch around the stitch), back-stitched, and then locked again, with the thread being trimmed off closely on top, but left with a short raw end underneath which will fray out and insure that the stitch is solid.

When the stitching has been completed, the tack used to hold the pieces in position is removed and the hole is rubbed over until it disappears. A "stitch-sinker", a tool devised by the informant from a bolt with a metal wheel inserted in one end, is then pressed along the line of stitching, right over the stitches. This serves to further sink the

stitching below the level of the leather, thus protecting it from wear, and also gives an even, finished look to the work.

Once the whole stitching process is completed, the raw edges of the leather are blackened with a commercially produced marking ink, which comes in powdered form and is mixed with water. Fred used to apply this with an old toothbrush, all but the end bristles of which had been trimmed off. Recently, however, he devised a better way of applying it. About a month previous to the interview, he had come across a used felt tip marker which came apart, and had filled it with blacking liquid. By sharpening the felt tip, he found it possible to do a more efficient and accurate job of applying the ink.

If brass studs are to be inserted in the leather, holes are first made with a "spotter" or "spotting tool", a commercially available metal tool which adjusts to the size of the studs being used. Finally, as the last step the harness is "dressed" or polished. Experience has taught Fred that paste shoe polish is the most reliable product for this use, since it will not stain the brass decorations and leaves a good shine on the leather. The brass pieces are treated with a commercial brass polish.

The only major problem faced by the informant in the execution of his craft is the difficulty of obtaining materials. Because harness used in horse draw competitions must have a fine appearance and also withstand tremendous



tension, only top quality leather can be used, and this cannot be obtained at the usual retail outlets. Moreover, brass ornaments are extremely scarce in Canada at the present time because there is no demand for them. The informant has temporarily solved these problems through a relationship with an Ottawa leather craftsman. The latter can obtain sides of English leather through wholesale contacts in Montreal. In addition, he allows Fred to use his moulding equipment to make brass ornamental pieces, charging only for the metal used.

Another relationship which has benefitted the informant is that with an elderly harness maker in Alexandria, Ontario. This man taught Fred a little known technique for invisible stitching, although he refused to share it with a Toronto saddler who had been given the contract to make a full set of harness for the Carlsberg Brewery show team (Fieldnotes I, October 28, 1975).

One of Fred's outstanding tendencies as a craftsman is his desire to innovate.<sup>2</sup> He is constantly in search of new designs, both in the structure of the pieces of harness and in the ornamentation. During the recorded interview, he showed me several patterns for one article, all with varied

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<sup>2</sup>The innovative drive of the traditional artist, often ignored by folklorists, has been pointed out in relation to oral performance by Gregory Gizelis in his "A Neglected Aspect of Creativity of Folklore Performers", Journal of American Folklore, LXXXVI (1973), 167-172.

shapes, and confided that he was working on a new design which would incorporate two parts of harness in one, something he had never seen done before (Tape 11:B). This search for originality extends to the ornamental parts of his product; he is constantly on the watch for simple outlines of animals or plants which can be used to adorn brass pieces.

The informant's attitude to his craft is clearly discernible in any conversation about his work. He is concerned with good workmanship above all other aspects. This shows itself in his painstaking attention to small details which may be undetectable but which will affect the durability of the article -- locking stitches, water-proofing thread, using only the strongest part of the hide for any article which must withstand tension, carefully following the grain of the hide in cutting out patterns. The fact that he accepts orders for renovating old harness as well as making new ones is an indication of his concept of the value of good work. Several years ago he renovated a complete set of harness for a friend who was preparing a team for a horse drawing contest. This meant taking the set apart by painstakingly removing all previous stitching, then sewing it up again, being careful to sew in the same holes as before to prevent the leather between the holes from ripping. Old leather is harder to work with than new leather because of its dryness, but Fred had no hesitation in

accepting the job and speaks of the work with the same pride that is evident when he discusses his own creations.

Another indication of his insistence on careful workmanship is seen in his criticism of the sloppy techniques used by some tradesmen. Most harness makers now sew by machine, jumping from the end of one row of stitching to the start of the next without cutting and locking the threads; as a result, when one stitch breaks, the whole row gives and has to be resewn. This is a method used by two harness makers in the Ottawa region; they do not fare well under Fred's sharp criticism.

The informant's attitude to his craft is also apparent when he discusses harness in relation to the horse wearing it. As a farmer, he has always taken good care of his own harness, believing that a horse works more efficiently in comfortable, well-fitting harness. As a judge of the "Best Dressed Team" in local horse drawing contests, he looks for good fit first and then for a pleasing appearance; the prize is given, he is quick to point out, for the best dressed team, not for the fanciest harness.

In discussing design and appearance, Fred is quick to criticize ostentation or lack of proportion. His aesthetic sense is apparent when he discusses some of the work he has seen over the years, as in the following excerpt from our conversation:

Now I just remarked a guy at Maniwaki -- well it was at Blue Sea, just this side of Maniwaki -- no, it was at

Farley, yeah at Farley, at a horse drawing. And he had, I'll bet you, a thousand dollars worth of decorations -- brass, all brass. But it was just threw on, you know, it was splashed here and there -- there'd be -- there'd be probably something there where he'd have a row of round spots or something, and then he'd have a row of squares right inside them or something, you know, an -- and -- or maybe a horse's h -- head, you know, those horseshoes with the horse's heads on them, you know? And have them hanging some place where, you know, probably stuck on with a rivet, you know? There was no design, just a splash, and when you'd be a distance from it, the whole horse looked brass, you know? The glare -- there was no sign of leather at all. (Tape 11:B)

As can be gathered from the many details given above, the informant is extremely knowledgeable about his craft, and can discuss any aspect of it with clarity and self-confidence, freely expressing his opinions and describing his innovations with a justifiable pride. However, when asked about the medium itself, he is at a loss for words, an indication of his deep feelings for leather as a means of creative expression.

I: You like working with leather. Have you always liked it?

F: Oh, I love -- I love the smell of it...

I: Do you like working with leather enough that you might have liked to work at that full time, make a profession of it?

F: Oh, yeah, uhuh.

I: You don't get tired of it?

F: No, I never get tired of it. (Tape 11:B)

During an earlier informal conversation when Fred had found it difficult to verbalize his feelings, he went to a kitchen drawer and pulled out a carefully preserved copy of Weekend

Magazine which contained an article about a Sackville, New Brunswick, harness shop.<sup>3</sup> It was obvious that he wanted me to read the article because it contained something he could not express. When I did so, I realized what he meant. The article contained a reference to the magical and mysterious smell of leather, which seems to be the quality which draws the informant to want to create with this medium.

While his brothers and sisters acknowledge that Fred is very good at working with leather, they view his knowledge of the craft as an adjunct to his knowledge of horses in general. Most of them have seen very little of his work, since a great deal of it is done for farmers from other communities. While they do not deny him status as horseman and harness maker, they really have very little understanding of what his work involves, and no awareness whatsoever of his total involvement with the craft. In fact, and in direct contrast to his own view, they relate him to singing much more readily than to harness making or horsemanship.

None of this, however, is of any consequence to Fred, since he does not relate to his siblings in terms of harness making any more than he does in terms of story-telling, as we have already seen. Within his craft he has gained the respect of two men whom he really admires, the

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<sup>3</sup>Stuart Trueman, "The Last of the Collar Men", Weekend Magazine, Vol. XXIII, No. 45 (November 10, 1973), 2-9.

Ottawa leather craftsman and the Alexandria harness maker. Moreover, he enjoys convivial and rewarding relationships with many horsemen throughout the Ottawa Valley. This is recognition enough in a field where sibling opinions do not matter at all.

Agatha McKale, needlewoman

Like her brother Fred, Agatha showed an early interest in a manual skill: at the age of eleven, she stole some material which her mother was saving for other purposes and made herself a dress. Fortunately the dress was a good fit and Mary Kealey, instead of punishing the child, welcomed her assistance in the task of providing clothes for the family. From that time on, Agatha shared in the various forms of needlework practiced within the family, and soon distinguished herself as a superior seamstress, along with her older sister Mona. Although all of the girls participated in the various needlecrafts, it was these two sisters who shared the major part of the sewing work with their mother (Tape 4:A).

Next to making clothes, quilting was the most important skill acquired by the girls of the family. With twelve children as well as numerous relatives and friends who visited frequently, there was always a need for bed coverings. In addition, the girls had to be provided with bedding for their "hope chests". This meant the production of an average of five quilts each winter, when the absence

of male family members and the lessened agricultural activity left time for such tasks.

A second important winter activity was the making of rugs and mats, necessary furnishings in houses lacking central heating and modern insulation. These floor coverings were of two kinds, both made from recycled materials. Pulled rugs, rectangular in shape, were made by pulling loops of material through the holes in a piece of burlap, the edges of which had been bound to prevent fraying. The burlap was obtained from potato sacks and the material from cast-off clothing, cut into strips. The only equipment necessary was a wooden frame to hold the burlap and a metal hook to pull the loops of material; Mary Kealey used the two shorter pieces of her quilting frames along with two other narrow boards for the frame, and her son Manuel made a hook for her out of old curling tongs. The other form of floor covering, the braided mat, required no equipment other than needle and thread. It was made by braiding three strips of material two to three inches wide into a plait which was then shaped into a round or oval coil and sewed in position to form as large a mat as desired. Cast-off clothing was also used for this floor covering.

In addition to making these house furnishings, the girls also learned to knit, crochet and embroider. Through knitting, they supplied mittens for the younger children and socks for the boys of the family, as well as clothing for



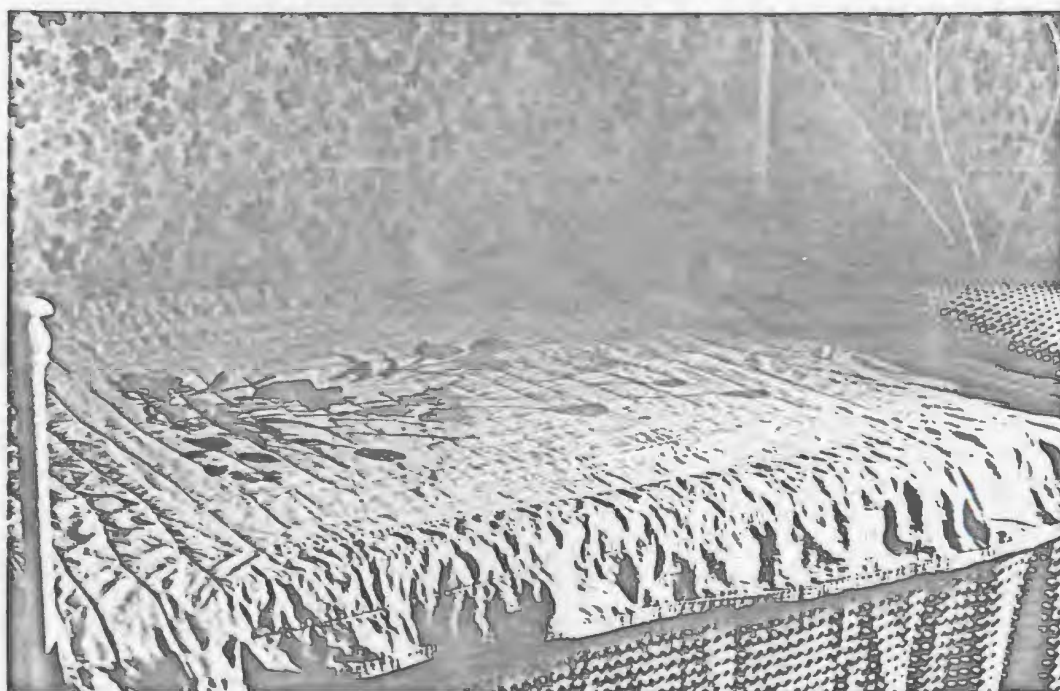
themselves. They crocheted woollen tam-o-shanters for winter wear and cotton filet mesh yokes for nightdresses or lingerie. Crocheting was also used for decorative edgings on various household articles, and for lace doilies. Embroidery was used to decorate everything from table runners and pillow cases to guest towels and handkerchiefs, as was the fashion of the day. Agatha, like her sisters, began by copying patterns from older crocheted or embroidered articles around the house, and later learned to recreate patterns by following pictures or sketches in newspapers or magazines.

By the time she married in 1943 at the age of thirty-six, Agatha already had twenty-five years experience at a variety of needlecrafts. Then she moved to Ottawa and started to work professionally as a seamstress, holding a variety of positions until her retirement in 1972. During her years of employment, Agatha acquired new skills -- fur tailoring, upholstery and drapery making -- in addition to practicing old ones. In working professionally as a seamstress, she was following in a family tradition set by several members of her mother's family who had had similar careers. Her mother had worked for an Ottawa department store before her marriage in 1898, and Agatha's older sister Mona had held a similar position both before her marriage and again later when her children were grown.

Since her retirement, Agatha has devoted most of her

time to the practice of old crafts and the acquisition of new ones (see photos pages 133 and 134). During the winter, which she spends in her Ottawa apartment, she makes an average of five quilts which are usually given to the children or grandchildren of her brother Fred with whom she has maintained a particularly close relationship over the years. These quilts are done in a modified form of the traditional method. Large square blocks of a uniform size (generally ten to fourteen inches square) are cut from ends of drapery material which the informant stockpiled during her final years of employment with a drapery firm. These are arranged in diagonal stripes and quilted to a plain or printed cotton backing by machine; her small apartment would not accomodate quilting frames, and handstitching would not stand up to automatic washing as readily as machine stitching.

In the summertime, Agatha lives on the family farm, taking care of the garden and helping with seasonal household tasks. During this period she usually makes one or two braided mats for the farmhouse bedrooms or bathroom, relegating the previous summer's mat to boot-scraping duties at the back door. Her method in making these mats has not changed over the years. Jersey-like fabrics are still favoured for their elasticity and felt scallops are still sewn to the outer edge of the round or oval mat whenever the material is available. This is the only type of floor covering made regularly by Agatha; she has made one hooked



Figures 15 and 16: Crafts by Agatha McKale  
[(above) patched quilt; (below) quilted comforter]



Figures 17 and 18: Crafts by Agatha McKale

[(above) braided mat being sewn by informant; (below) quilted cushion top being stuffed by informant]

rug in recent years, but it was done in wool rather than the traditional rags, and the design was stamped on purchased burlap backing.

Throughout the year, the informant keeps some crocheting handy as lap work, usually assembling bedspreads, cushion covers, ponchos or sweaters from a series of "granny" squares made in either genuine or synthetic wool. She no longer crochets in cotton since lace edgings and handmade lingerie are no longer fashionable. For a similar reason she has abandoned embroidering table runners or centrepieces with cotton floss in favour of the more currently popular wall hangings and pictures in coloured wools on burlap or woolen backgrounds. Agatha has prepared some of these items from packaged kits given to her as presents, but she has also invented her own designs.

In addition to the practice of these crafts, Agatha utilizes the skills acquired during her years of employment whenever anyone in the extended family requires the assistance of a seamstress, tailor, upholsterer or drapery maker. She is frequently invited to spend a few days visiting a relative for the purpose of renovating old furniture or making new furnishings or clothing, and such invitations are greeted with enthusiasm on her part.

Since her retirement, the informant has acquired a variety of new skills. Some, such as macramé and oil painting, have been learned through formal study at courses

given in the Senior Citizens' apartment complex where she lives. Others, such as the construction of numerous small decorative items, she has picked up on her own through imitation of articles seen in shops or depicted in magazines; she does not follow patterns for the latter, since she has no patience for following instructions, but simply figures out on her own how to achieve the desired effect. In trying new crafts, the informant usually makes one or two preliminary samples for display in her own apartment, and then makes several others as gifts for relatives before tiring of the activity and deciding to try something new. Her interest usually centres on whatever is the most recent handcraft to achieve popularity; it wanes when too many others of her acquaintance take up the activity. In addition to trying a wide range of popular hobby crafts, Agatha has developed some techniques on her own, such as painting scenes on bottles wrapped in string, an indication that she shares her brother Fred's tendency to innovate.

Agatha also resembles Fred in the extent of her knowledge about the skills which she practices. During our taped conversation about traditional family handcrafts, she described in detail the various techniques which she observed and learned during her youth (Tape 4:A and B). In addition, she possesses a wealth of practical information on tailoring, upholstering and drapery making, drawn from her years of professional experience.

While Agatha, by general consensus, is the family needlework expert, she is not the only practitioner of traditional or contemporary crafts. Her older sister Lima still makes quilts and mats; during a recent winter she produced seven of the former and three of the latter, in addition to keeping her grandchildren supplied with mittens. The two youngest sisters, Florence and Loretta, are also highly active. They continue to crochet, knit, sew and embroider as they have all their lives, and also have recently taken up needlepoint, crewelwork, oil painting and various other forms of decorative crafts (Tapes 4:A and B; 20:A; and 24:A).

However, it is Agatha who is the acknowledged expert in the field. It appears that the combination of her early leaning towards various needle skills, which was endorsed by her mother, and her professional career in related trades has earned her this position. Nevertheless, it is a position she has gained only since the death in 1961 of her sister Mona who was four years her senior. By the time Agatha was beginning to help with the family sewing, Mona had established her expertise, and as early as 1928 had reinforced her position by getting a job as a seamstress in Ottawa. These were the only two of the girls to achieve both maternal and public approval of their skills, and to gain status in activities related to needlecrafts.

Agatha takes great pride in the status she enjoys



within the family. She has a certain sense of exclusiveness about her talents, especially with reference to her younger sisters, giving them little credit for their creative work and often pointing out that she had mastered some craft long before they had even attempted it. However, she shows a great deal of admiration for Lima's activities, expressing amazement that age has not dulled the latter's interest in needlecrafts. Agatha also heartily encourages any younger family members who show interest in learning her skills; obviously she does not view them as competition. However, more important to Agatha than her status as expert is the fact that she can achieve a feeling of self-worth through the execution of her abilities for the benefit of others. This has been an especially important factor since the death of her husband in 1963; her life now appears to have meaning only in terms of giving assistance to other members of the family and it is chiefly through help in various domestic and decorative crafts that this assistance is tendered.

### Summary

As with oral and psychic skills, we see the same factors at work in relation to the achievement of specialist status in manual skills. Family precedents are again important with specialist status being acknowledged in skills seen as areas of family interest and expertise. Traditional sex roles have been followed by each of the experts discussed in choosing their respective fields of

interest, but their attainment of expert status within these areas has not been influenced by sex. Age is a determining factor in a circumstantial way; circumstances prevented Agatha from achieving status until after the death of her older sister. Fred, in spite of his position as youngest in the family, was able to achieve status because no older sibling had shown an interest in his particular field of specialization. Finally, approval from outside the sibling group appears to be a factor here, with maternal approval being supplemented by public approval in the form of financial remuneration in the case of Agatha's needlecrafts. In contrast, maternal approval was not an apparent factor in Fred's achievement of status as harness maker. But at the same time his siblings view his leatherwork expertise as being second to his singing expertise, an activity which was highly sanctioned by his mother -- and this despite the fact that Fred has achieved wider public acclaim for his manual work than anyone else in the family.

## CONCLUSION

From this examination of status holders and status seekers within this large sibling group, it is apparent that specialization is a dominant characteristic. It appears that this trait, which other scholars have said to be typical of a large family, was here heightened by the early death of the father, forcing the children to abandon hopes for advanced education and guiding them into traditional activities which insured their economic survival and their emotional and mental health within a conservative rural culture.

Within the sibling group, the achievement of status in any field of specialization is regulated by a system of discernible rules, rules which pertain more to the group and to the extended family than to the individual's own abilities. Thus his image of himself does not necessarily correspond to the view of him held by his brothers and sisters, who may deny his claim to specialist status, or ascribe status in a field which is not his major interest.

The skills in which status can be gained are limited in several ways. Areas of general activity in which all members of the community participate are not prestigious and do not merit special status. Activities are further limited to areas which are perceived as fields of family specialization. This automatically restricts an individual

to traditional activities in which previous family members have had an opportunity to establish their expertise, and bars from the achievement of status anyone involved in trades related to modern technology (i.e., welding, operation of heavy equipment), or in activities related to contemporary society (i.e., local politics).

Skills meriting status are further restricted on a sexual basis. Because of the rigid system of sex roles in operation in their society during their youth, the informants' interest, and subsequently their achievement, was limited to fields deemed appropriate to their sex.

Age is a further important determining factor. It can serve to directly regulate who attains specialist status, as in the case of the role of family historian where advanced age is a prerequisite. It can serve to limit an individual's field of specialization to one which is deemed appropriate to his age. Moreover, an individual's relative chronological position in the family can severely enhance or limit his chances of attaining status in any particular field. The advantage falls to the older siblings who have the best opportunity to create a lasting impression of their talents among the total group of brothers and sisters. Younger siblings are at a disadvantage, both because the family group splinters as older siblings marry and their audience is thus reduced; and also because unless they can find a field not already dominated by an older sibling, they will

usually be barred from attaining status, at least until the family specialist dies.

Parental approval of both the individual seeking status and of the activity is another important factor. Because of the early death of the father of the informant family, the mother's influence was all important. All of the status holders within the group were active in areas which were of interest to her, either directly because she herself was occupied in the same activity or possessed the same talent, or indirectly because the activity provided economic assistance to the family. Moreover, all were favoured by their mother for reasons of age, health, or other circumstances. The influence of two other factors, public approval and sibling rivalry, appears minor in regulating the achievement of status, especially in comparison to maternal influence.

Once status is gained in a given field, it is maintained as much by the opinion of siblings as by the activity of the specialist. Of the specialists discussed, some are currently very active in their area of specialization, while others are only intermittently active or totally inactive; but this has no bearing on their image within the group, presumably because certain group benefits derive from the maintenance of the system. The self-images of the siblings are enhanced by association with an expert. The family image is likewise enhanced and family pride and

solidarity are promoted. A sense of continuity is gained from the perception of life as a series of repeated patterns as relatives follow one another in their interests; the individual's emotional security is thus increased. Finally, all of these positive effects act to offset the numerous minor grievances and difficulties which arise within any group of people who are in close contact with each other over an extended period of time.

This study of traditional expertise within one sibling group leaves many questions which could only be answered through comparison with other rural North American families. Is specialization in traditional activities always characteristic of the members of a large family, for example, or does this development depend on the talents of the individual children? In contrast to the findings here, Margaret Bennett-Knight, in her study of a Scottish-Newfoundland family, discovered that the lore of the parental generation was concentrated in one member of the sibling group; he became the chief active bearer of tradition and the specialist of his generation.<sup>1</sup> What were the factors which influenced this situation, and to what extent is the situation typical of the community?

Even within the family under consideration in this

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<sup>1</sup>"Some Aspects of the Scottish-Gaelic Traditions of the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland", M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1975.

study, there are further possibilities for continuing the examination of specialization through successive generations. Is the status of the informants maintained only by their siblings, or do their images as experts persist throughout the extended family? To what extent are family areas of specialization perceived and upheld by the next generation, now largely urbanized and enjoying educational and economic advantages unknown to their parents? Are the expert roles of the parents currently being assigned to children and grandchildren, whether merited or not? In addition, the body of family lore could itself be studied in terms of structure, function, context, etc., as it passes from one generation to the next.

Obviously there is much work to be done in the broad field of family folklore before we can claim to have reached an understanding of the dynamics of various family systems as they relate to traditional culture. Over the past two decades, research in the social sciences has shown that the importance of the nuclear family as the predominant North American type had been previously overestimated, and that extended family ties are still of vital significance in both urban and rural settings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For discussions of this view, see the following works: Elaine Cumming, and David M. Schneider, "Sibling Solidarity: A Property of American Kinship", American Anthropologist, LXIII (1961), 498-507); Frederick Elkin, The Family in Canada, Ottawa: The Vanier Institute of the Family, 1971, pp. 87-93; Philippe Garigue, Analyse du comportement familial, Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1967, pp. 121-131; Howard H. Irving, The Family Myth: A Study of the Relationships between Married Couples and Their Parents, [Toronto]: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1972.



Studies such as this of the extended family therefore remain important, and not simply because this family form is seen as a prime bearer of tradition within our society. Within the field of Canadian folklore, it is particularly important that we study the traditions of rural families, long settled on the land, for it is these people who have the truest sense of our culture and the keenest desire to preserve it.

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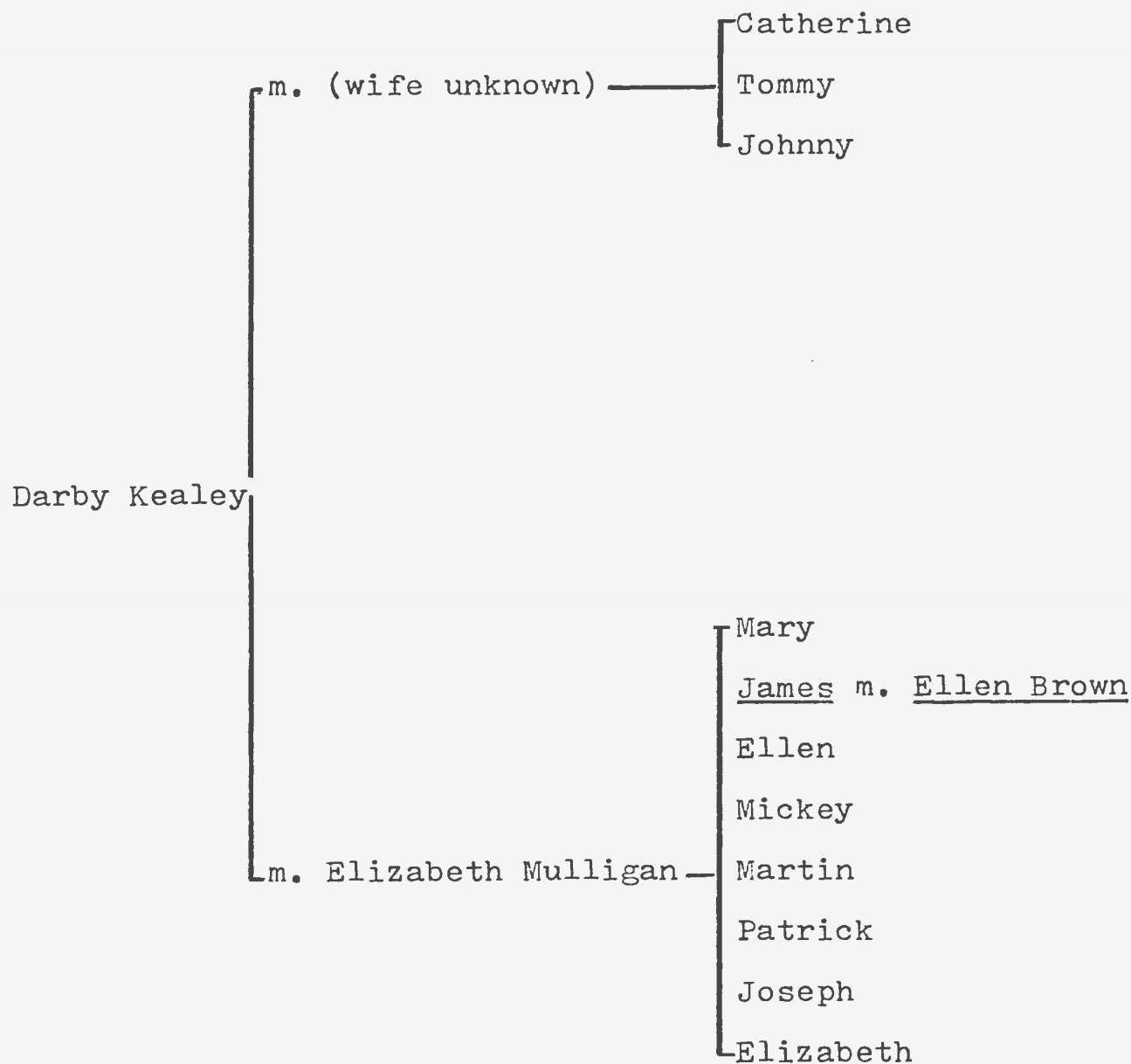
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## APPENDIX: THE INFORMANTS

## Figure 19: Genealogy

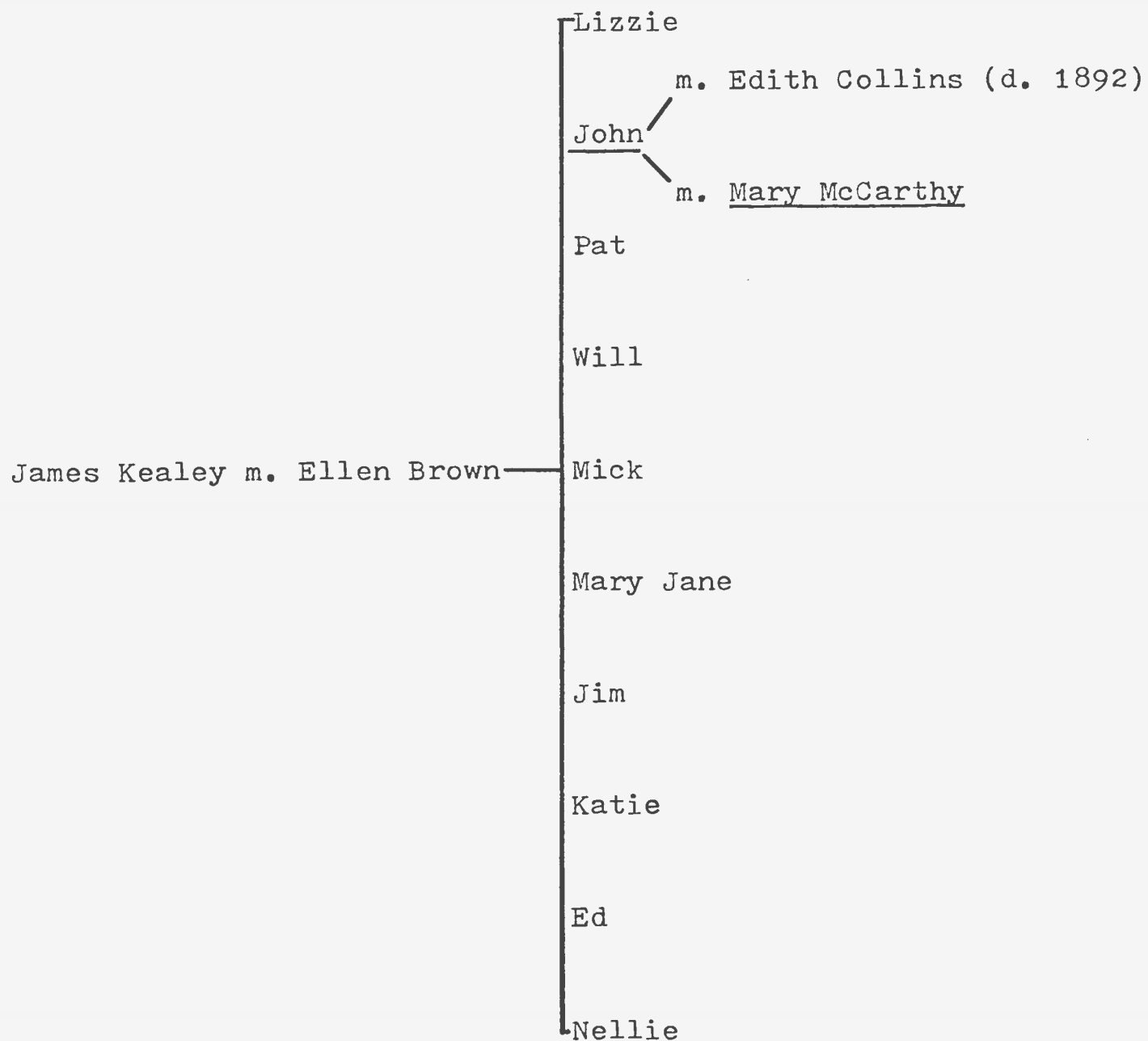
## Part 1: The Grandparental Generation

[Grandparents, great-aunts and  
great-uncles of the informants]



## Part 2: The Parental Generation

[Parents, aunts and uncles  
of the informants]





## Part 3: The Informant Generation

Manuel (twin) m. Lillie Montague  
Agatha (twin) (d. 1899)

Lima m. Fred McLaughlin

Harry m. Vera Brennan

Mona m. Lornie Doucette

Nellie m. Jerry McLaughlin

John Kealey m. Mary McCarthy—Gladys m. Wilfrid McLaughlin

Agatha m. Ray McKale

Jackie m. Myrtle Monaghan

Paddy m. Olive Labelle

Florence m. Elmer Smith

Loretta m. Charlie Hendrick

Fred m. Hazel Kealey

## Part 4: The Writer's Generation

Manuel m. Lillie Montague — Larry  
 Anne  
 Albert  
 Charles

Lima m. Fred McLaughlin — Earl (d. 1944)  
 Muriel  
 Helena  
 Bryan  
 Florence  
 Howard  
 Dwight

Harry m. Vera Brennan (no children)

Mona m. Lornie Doucette — Jack  
 Laurel

Nellie m. Jerry McLaughlin — Marie  
 Doris  
 Viola  
 Lois  
 Norma  
 Hazel  
 Audrey  
 J. J.

Gladys m. Wilfrid — Jim  
 McLaughlin Irvin  
 Alma (twin)  
 Alvin (twin)  
 Lorraine  
 Lionel  
 Terry  
 Janet  
 Jean

Agatha m. Ray McKale (no children)

Jackie m. Myrtle Monaghan — Teresa  
 Elaine  
 Bruce  
 Gilda  
 Joan  
 Arthur  
 Robert

Paddy m. Olive Labelle	Basil Ralph Marilyn Sharon Stanley Danny
Florence m. Elmer Smith	Sylvia Marjorie Nelson Lenore Mary John Michael
Loretta m. Charlie Hendrick	Faye Marion Sheila Colleen Della
Fred m. Hazel Kealey	Brenda Earl Heather Lynn Susan Douglas

Biographic sketches and list of traditional materials  
collected

Lima: Rose Lima Kealey, born August 22, 1900. Married June 26, 1922, to Fred McLaughlin, merchant, of Venosta. Mother of seven children (one deceased). Resident of Venosta.

History: family

Childlore: children's recitation

Custom: foodways, social life, rites of passage (shivaree, wake)

Song

Material culture: needlecrafts (knitting, crochet, sewing, quilting, mat braiding, rug hooking, embroidery)

Harry: James Henry Kealey, born October 21, 1901. Married August 26, 1936, to Vera Brennan of Low. No children. Resides on farm located on Borough Road, just west of Venosta.

History: family

Belief: supernatural manifestations, folk medicine (healing, wart curing, charms, herbal lore), omens

Song

Narrative: supernatural legends, anecdotes

Occupational lore: lumbering (lumbercamp construction, food, entertainment), well divining, beekeeping

Nellie: Helen Violetta Kealey, born March 18, 1904. Married October 29, 1928, to Jerry McLaughlin (brother of Fred), farmer, of Venosta. Mother of eight children. Resident of Venosta.

Custom: foodways, social life

Song, song collections

Occupational lore: agricultural and dairy practices

Gladys: Gladys Jane Kealey, born May 7, 1905. Married August 2, 1932, to Wilfrid McLaughlin (brother of Fred and Jerry), farmer, of Venosta. Mother of nine children. Resident of Venosta.

History: family, community school

Childlore: games, children's recitations

Custom: foodways (recipes), social life (community concerts)

Song, song and poetry collections

Belief: supernatural manifestations, omens, weather lore

Narrative: supernatural legends

Agatha: Mary Agatha Kealey, born February 15, 1907. Married July 13, 1943, to Ray McKale of Low, who died in 1963. No children. Resident of Ottawa.

History: family, community

Childlore: rhymes, games

Custom: calendar customs (religious and social observances), social life (picnics, box socials, house

dances, bees, bouillons, weddings), rites of passage  
(christening, First Communion, confirmation, marriage,  
wake, funeral)

Belief: folk medicine (herbal lore, treatment of animals),  
omens, divination, weather lore

Song, song collection

Dance: square dance calls

Narrative: märchen, supernatural and murder legends,  
anecdotes

Occupational lore: agriculture (poultry)

Material culture: needlecrafts (crochet, knitting, sewing,  
quilting, mat braiding, rug hooking, needlepoint,  
embroidery)

Jackie: John Fidelis Kealey, born December 21, 1908. Married  
October 10, 1939, to Myrtle Monaghan, of Thurso, Quebec.  
Father of seven children. Resident of Venosta where he  
operates a welding shop. Mayor of the Township of Low.

History: family, community

Narrative: jokes, anecdotes

Paddy: Patrick Basil Kealey, born May 24, 1910. Married  
September 8, 1937, to Olive Labelle of Chapeau, Quebec.  
Father of six children. Resident of Ottawa where he  
works as a heavy equipment operator.

History: family

Occupational lore: lumbering

Florence: Catherine Florence Kealey, born April 24, 1912.

Married September 20, 1937, to Elmer Smith, hydro worker, of Low. Mother of seven children. Resident of Low.

History: family

Childlore: rhymes, games

Song, poetry; song and poetry collections

Narrative: märchen

Material culture: needlecrafts (crochet, knitting, sewing, mat braiding, tatting, embroidery, quilting)

Loretta: Anna Loretta Kealey, born January 15, 1914. Married May 20, 1940, to Charlie Hendrick, farmer, of Chelsea, Quebec. Mother of five children. Resident of Chelsea.

History: community (Assyrian peddlers)

Childlore: frightening figures

Custom: foodways

Song, song and poetry collections

Narrative: märchen, legend (local treasure legend), anecdotes

Material culture: needlecrafts (crochet, knitting, sewing, mat braiding, rug hooking, quilting, embroidery)

Fred: Michael Frederick Kealey, born February 8, 1916.

Married July 17, 1942, to Hazel Kealey (his second cousin, once removed) of Venosta. Father of six children.

Resides on family farm on eastern outskirts of Venosta.

History: family, community

Childlore: rhyme

Custom: foodways, social life (dances, visiting practices)

Song

Narrative: märchen, legends, anecdotes, jokes

Occupational lore: lumbering, agriculture (horse drawing contests, butchering)

Material culture: leatherwork (harness making)

Language: expressions, traditional insults, naming practices







