

# Voices

Fall–Winter 2005  
Volume 31: 3–4

The Journal of  
New York Folklore

## Sixtieth Anniversary Issue

Accordion  
Traditions

The Saugerties  
Bard

From Fleece to  
Sweater

Campus Tunnel  
Legends



NEW YORK  
FOLK  
LORE  
SOCIETY

# From the Director



Folklorists are writers. We write every day: monographs and scholarly articles, field notes, festival and event brochures, exhibit texts, grant applications, final reports, press releases, proposals. In fact, I would say that time spent writing is more than fifty percent of any folklorist's annual cycle of work. The essentials of folklore—the ethnographic material—are fundamental to a great story. As any fieldworker can attest, entering into the personal experience of another individual is expansive and illuminating. The everyday becomes novel when viewed from the viewpoint of the uninitiated. The job of the folklorist is to translate that experience to those who may not get the opportunity to go through it themselves and to help the reader to find meaning in the experience.

The history of folklore scholarship is replete with examples of good writing. The founding of the New York Folklore Society's *New York Folklore Quarterly* in 1945 acknowledged the multitude of folklore materials and the many talented writers in the field of folklore. Benjamin Botkin, former head of the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress and a New York Folklore Society founder, encouraged the publication of folklore for a popular audience, as did founders Louis Jones and Harold Thompson. In the first half of the 1900s, folklorist Zora Neale Hurston wrote novels based on her fieldwork experiences, while at the same time publishing scholarly articles on African American folk culture. Contemporary folklorists, including Edith Cutting, Betty Belanus, Kirin Narayan, Joanne Mul-

cahy, and many others, have published poetry and fiction that draws upon ethnographic materials gathered in the field. Within the academy, folklorists have found their unique niche in designing and offering writing classes that draw upon student experience.

It was therefore entirely appropriate for the New York Folklore Society's 2005 Field Trip to be devoted to the craft of writing. This two-day exploration of the intersection of traditional narratives and culture with fiction and creative nonfiction writing was cosponsored by the Hudson Valley Writer's Center and City Lore. The meeting theme was especially fitting, as the New York Folklore Society celebrates sixty years of publishing in 2005.

The New York Folklore Society remains in the forefront of a creative movement. The impulse in 1945 to publish the folklore of New York State for the people of the state is continued today through this publication, *Voices*. The editors of this publication encourage your submission of scholarly writing, as well as nonfiction, fiction, poetry, memoir, and other forms of creative literature.

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## From the Editor



This issue of *Voices* marks sixty years of publishing the journal of the New York Folklore Society. Our unbroken record would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of generations of New York Folklore

Society staff and board members and the many authors who generously contributed their fine essays and reviews for over half a century. It has been rewarding for all involved in the publication process to see the fruit of our labor in print.

Representing a wide spectrum of folklore scholarship, research, and public programming, the articles in our anniversary issue range from historical research on a nineteenth-century balladist, documentation of a North Country knitter, and accounts of a family seder tradition in Manhattan and an ice fishing event in Whitehall, to scholarship about the accordion music of Italian Americans in western New York State and legends common to university campuses. But the unsung heroes of our journal are the anonymous reviewers who ensure the high quality of these articles, a standard that has never diminished. Our reviewers have been generous with their time and abilities, as have our regular columnists: Varick Chittenden, Marty Cooper, Lynne Ekfelt, Tom van Buren, and Steve Zeitlin. Their columns on timely topics form the backbone of *Voices* and appear without fail in every issue.

Most importantly, we never lose sight of the centrality of folk artists and our readers, without whom we would have nothing to write about and no one to write for. A special thanks to each of you who, in your own way, has contributed to ensuring that all voices are honored and can find a home in our journal. ▼

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***"I am not one who says that folklore is a panacea to cure the world's ills, [but] wisely used, it can bring about greater understanding and mutuality."***

—Louis C. Jones, *New York Folklore Quarterly* IX (1953)



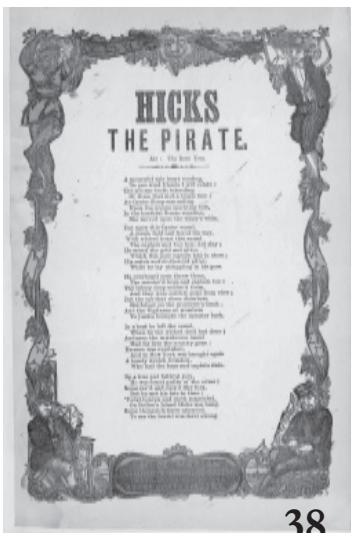
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Cover: Young Nellie Barsocchi with her Ranco Antonio accordion, 1930. Courtesy of Rose Caccamise.

# New York Folklore Society News

## Mentoring Support for 2005

The New York Folklore Society, in partnership with the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) and with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, offers technical assistance and professional growth services to the folk arts field through its Mentoring and Professional Development Program. For program details, please visit our web site, [www.nyfolklore.org](http://www.nyfolklore.org), or call (518) 346-7008. The following organizations and individuals received support from the New York Folklore Society in 2005:

### *Akwesasne Iroquois Traditional Quilters:*

Florence Benedict and daughters Salli and Rebecca met in New York with Montreal-based Mohawk quilter Carla Goodleaf Hemlock, attending a quilt show under Hemlock's guidance and receiving instruction from her in pattern, color use, and embellishments. The family, which quilts collaboratively, will pass the teaching on to other Akwesasne quilters.

*City Lore*, New York City: City Lore Folklorist Elena Martínez engaged computer specialist Richard Levine to install an audio production program on City Lore office computers and instruct staff members on how to use the program for dubbing and distribution of interviews and oral histories recorded on City Lore's new minidisk recorder.

*Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*, Rochester: Singers' session coordinator Chris Brennan brought *sean-nos* (old-style) traditional Irish singer Treasa Ní Catháin of Red Hill, Pennsylvania, to New York to lead a workshop for Rochester-area traditional singers to enhance group members' knowledge of vocal techniques and introduce additional Gaelic-language material to their repertoire.

*Manhattan Country School Farm*, Roxbury: Farm director Virginia Scheer consulted with Marist College professor Neil Larson to learn more about Catskill regional stone

house construction in preparation for a public program she is planning about the 1828 Walter Stratton House, a stone building that the Manhattan Country School acquired in 2001.

### *Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center*, Bronx:

Executive and program directors Madaha Kinsey-Lamb and Deirdre Hollmann consulted with the Smithsonian's Diana N'Diaye to plan fieldwork initiatives, programs, and a documentary film project on the folk arts genres of African American, African, and Caribbean teens and families in their service area.

### *North Tonawanda History Museum*, North Tonawanda:

Director Donna Zellner Neal consulted with folklorist Claire Aubrey to acquire further knowledge of folklore approaches as the museum plans an ethnic heritage celebration for North Tonawanda. Aubrey oriented staff to ethnographic fieldwork methods, multiple folk festival models, and other options in multicultural program development.

### *Roberson Museum and Science Center*, Binghamton:

Folk and traditional arts curator Catherine Schwoeffermann consulted with Karen Tausig-Lux in planning an exhibit on the life and art of Joseph Mender, a Lithuanian-born New York folk carver and painter whose art is part of the Roberson's permanent collection. The exhibit will highlight Mender's walking sticks, miniature paintings, photos, and other objects from his life in Lithuania and in upstate New York.

### *Traditional Arts of Upstate New York*, Canton:

Varick Chittenden consulted with Jane Beck, executive director of the Vermont Folklife Center, regarding board development and strategic planning.

### *Young Indian Culture Group*, Manhasset:

Executive director Rathi Raja attended the Chicago Ramayana conference at Northern Illinois University in June 2005 for information and mentoring related to future

storytelling sessions and workshops the Young Indian Culture Group plans to offer.

## NYFS Awarded Documentary Heritage Grant

The New York Folklore Society was recently awarded a grant from the Documentary

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## Voices

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*Voices* is available in Braille and recorded versions. Call the NYFS at (518) 346-7008.

The New York Folklore Society is committed to providing services with integrity, in a manner that conveys respect for the dignity of the individuals and communities the NYFS serves, as well as for their cultures, including ethnic, religious, occupational, and regional traditions.

The programs and activities of the New York Folklore Society, and the publication of *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, are made possible in part by funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

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# Knitting It Together:

## *A Case Study of a Sweater*

BY JILL BREIT

As a widely practiced craft, knitting provides an excellent medium for study of the dynamic of individual expression within group standards. When knitting garments, artists balance the desire to make a personal statement against shared notions of what constitutes a “good” garment. Knitters work with the standards of two different groups in mind: those who make garments and those who wear them. In this article, a fiber artist in northern New York reveals her criteria for excellence in fiber work through one sweater made as a birthday gift for a friend. By describing the sweater and the decisions entailed in making it, the artist articulates aesthetic and technical preferences and relates them to the preferences of those around her. The sweater embodies the values of friendship and simple living embraced by many fiber artists.

When Anne Burnham of Parishville, New York, turned sixty in May 2004, she asked her friend Lamar Bliss of Holland, New York, to knit her a replacement for a shell-spined cardigan she had worn for years. Bliss is a knitter and also a spinner. By responsibly asking Bliss to knit the sweater, Burnham was requesting a gift of handmade yarn, as well as of the finished piece of knitting. Bliss was happy to comply: her sheep provide plenty of fleeces, and she spends most of her spare hours engaged in one stage or another of the wool production process. Although she is a twenty-first-century woman, Bliss’s gift to Burnham mimics in

process what women in the preindustrial period routinely did to clothe their families.

In this paper, I will trace the steps Bliss took to produce the cardigan for Burnham. By describing the cardigan and explaining the choices she made in its construction, Bliss articulates the artistic values embodied in its creation. By evaluating her work, she also places herself within the context of an extended community of fiber artists. To make the case that Bliss as a fiber artist both conforms to and diverges from the standards of her community, I will draw on interviews I have conducted with other knitters in northern New York.

### Knitting as Traditional Practice

Knitting as a traditional practice fits solidly within even the most conservative definition of folk culture. Most knitters learn directly from family and friends, make utilitarian objects, and accept the standards of their community as guides to form and color. The advent of web sites devoted to knitting has enlarged knitters’ communities, but not replaced personal lessons and local knitting groups. There has never been a time in American history when people didn’t knit. Through peaks and valleys of popularity, a faithful core of knitters kept working, passing on skills and aesthetic criteria.

Given this fact, it is surprising that so few folklorists have studied the craft. Perhaps Linda Pershing is correct that the field mistakenly feels that enough has been said about “centuries-old and widely variable practices” of needlework (1992, 334). Very few folklorists have written about knitters at all; even fewer have honored knitters.



Anne Burnham models the cardigan Bliss made for her as a sixtieth birthday gift. Photo: Lamar Bliss

The nearly 300 National Heritage fellows recognized in the twenty-two-year award program include an impressive number of quilters and weavers, but no knitters. This absence belies the prevalence of knitters in American society.

As Anne Macdonald aptly demonstrates in her social history of knitting, substantial numbers of American women have knitted for numerous reasons throughout the last century (1988). Economy, virtue, fashion, politics, and charity have all played a part in performance and perception of knitting. Prior to the availability of affordable mass-produced textiles, need was the major impetus. When industrialization removed necessity from the equation, women continued the practice for a variety of reasons, ranging from frugality to a desire to be creative. Published pattern books from the past one hundred years trace the evolution of the ideal woman in terms of what she will wear and what she will make for loved ones. Although men have knitted at certain periods in American history, knitting remains a gendered activity. When men choose to knit recreationally, as they have begun to do in larger numbers recently, they are still perceived as anomalies.

Knitting's popularity tends to run in cycles, with varying motivations underlying upsurges at different times. During the world wars, many Americans took up knitting needles to provide for soldiers on the front lines. In the 1950s, it was popular for college-age women to knit argyle socks for prospective spouses. Back-to-the-landers took up knitting in the 1970s to associate themselves with the activities of simpler times. In each case, contemporary periodicals created and fostered enthusiasm for knitting according to a formula that suited the times.

Popular interest in knitting is currently at a peak. In Manhattan and other large cities, knitting cafes are a phenomenon. The yarn industry targets young professionals who knit stylish scarves out of expensive fibers, such as cashmere, during their lunch hours. Throughout the United States, there are after-school knitting clubs attended by both boys and girls. Yarn shops host themed knitting parties.



These steel combs are used to straighten wool fibers in preparation for spinning. Running the wool through the combs also removes any debris left after washing. Photo: Jill Breit

Until recently, knitted items as objects of display were unusual except at county fairs and church bazaars. It is increasingly common, however, for the work of textile artists to be shown in art museums and galleries and as installations in public spaces. Maine artist Katharine Cobey uses knitting as a medium for sculpture, draping and molding knitted fabric to create large three-dimensional displays. Kathryn Alexander of New York State makes tapestries, as well as garments noted for the wildness of their design.

While specific intent varies considerably among knitters, certain themes appear repeatedly in discussions of the craft. Stress relief is the most common reason new knitters give for taking up needles. The rhythmic repetition of motion in knitting suits many who seek a meditative practice. One knitter I know told me, "When the world is too much with you, you need a little knit" (Carl 2003). Bliss describes her knitting sessions as peaceful interludes.

Easily portable, knitting is a perfect activity for people on the go, a way to fill idle moments riding the train or waiting in a doctor's office. The rhythmic motion of knitting is mostly a matter of feel, a type of muscle memory. Many knitters watch

television or do something else while they knit, because they do not have to concentrate on the work to know how it is proceeding. Unless a pattern is particularly complex, knitters can feel how a piece is progressing and where they are in the process. They will feel in their hands whether or not the tension in the piece is consistent.

Many knitters report on the sensory experience of their craft. Yarns are colorful and they often smell good, but most of all they feel good. Knitting is a tactile activity. All the knitters I have interviewed eventually speak about the feel of the work. Ninety-year-old Annis Holmes has knitted steadily all of her adult life. She told me, "I just love yarn. I have a good feeling with it in my hand. Yarn makes me happy" (2002). For most knitters, whether or not a fiber feels good in the hands is an important factor in the decision to use it in a project. Knitters speak in terms of whether or not a fiber has "good hand." Literally, this means that a given fiber is pleasant to hold in one's hand. The fibers will be smooth, the heft of the yarn right. Knitters judge right away when picking up a skein of yarn whether or not it will feel good to knit with it. Some compare handling yarn to the satisfaction of petting a dog or cat.

Bliss thinks it is possible that the calm-

ing affect reported by many knitters is attributable not just to the steady motion of knitting, but to the sensation of yarn moving across the skin. As a professional massage therapist, she is well aware of the benefits of touch. Although she highly values the touch of fiber, Bliss more often emphasizes the quietness of knitting. Metal knitting needles make a gentle clicking sound when struck together, but many contemporary knitters use bamboo, wood, or nylon needles, eliminating even that click. For Bliss, the tactile quality of knitting is most important as a way to gauge how comfortable the final garment will be. She takes great care at each stage of garment production to insure that the user will find her work pleasant on the skin.

### **Making a Cardigan: From Sheep to User**

Bliss likes to make things and has done so from the time she was a young girl. She asked an aunt to teach her to knit when she was seven, but she had already learned other craft skills, such as sewing, by that time. Knitting became one of several skills Bliss could apply to creating items she wanted. During an intense fascination with macramé in the 1970s, knitting nearly disappeared from Bliss's repertoire, but she continued to turn out a sweater occasionally. Always willing to learn a new technique, Bliss during those years learned to spin from a colleague at the public radio station where she worked as an announcer and producer.

Bliss lives in an old farmhouse on twenty acres of land. Her partner had kept goats on this property for a number of years, and when all but one of her goats had died, they got a sheep to keep it company. Over time, two more sheep joined the first. This small flock keeps the fields around Bliss's house from going to scrub, and she likes to see them in the pasture. Owning sheep became the impetus for Bliss to turn her attention in earnest to spinning and knitting.

When you ask Bliss why she has chosen spinning and knitting as her primary creative outlet, she says, "I don't know. It's just there. I have those sheep: there's

this pile of fleece. Every year they drop another fleece on me, and you have to do something with it." As the couple acquired sheep, they may have given some thought to using the fleeces for yarn production, as the three sheep present a palette of natural colors for Bliss to work with: white, mottled gray, and dark brown. These colors can be used separately or blended to make various shades of gray.

The sweater Bliss made for Burnham is an Aran cardigan made from a rag wool combining one strand of white and one strand of soft gray wool. Aran knitting, more commonly referred to as Irish knitting, is characterized by the way in which cables and other stitch patterns combine to create a textured surface. Although Aran knitting originated in the British Isles, it has been adopted by knitters all over the world. Aran sweaters are almost always knit in a solid color, usually off-white, to highlight the texture of the knitting. For the purposes of design, the body and sleeves of Aran sweaters are divided into vertical panels, each panel displaying a different pattern of stitches; a large center panel is typically flanked by smaller panels, in which patterns move symmetrically out from the center. As in many textile traditions, the patterns are named. Ethnic and regional variations in pattern names are common.

Bliss is very interested in the formal elements of her fiber work. She considers her art to be mathematically and technically challenging. She controls the final product by taking charge of each step required to make it. When Burnham asked Bliss for a handmade sweater, she set in motion a chain of activities. Shearing the sheep is the one step of yarn production that Bliss does not handle herself. Each May she hires a shearer to remove from her sheep the coats of wool they have been growing since the previous summer's shearing. After the coats of wool are off the sheep, Bliss undertakes each stage of yarn preparation herself, rather than send the fleece to a commercial establishment, where it would be processed and turned into skeins of yarn. This adds considerably to the time investment she

makes in her garments.

Bliss was not responsible for choosing a pattern for Burnham's cardigan. Burnham asked her to reproduce a sweater that had been tested and found worthy. This is not the usual way for knitters to approach garment construction. Most knitters work from published patterns. As they gain experience, knitters often become comfortable enough to make variations on published patterns or to combine different patterns. Some knitters like to make their own patterns, an option that even inexperienced knitters can now consider, thanks to the availability of knitwear design software. Like vernacular builders, knitters who design patterns work with a corpus of "problems already solved" (Hubka 1986). There are a limited number of ways to attach sleeves, for example. Bliss thinks of knitting as a process of building. She is always aware of the three-dimensionality of it. I asked Bliss if she ever views her knitting as an engineering project: "Oh, yeah, yeah; it is." As she was knitting Burnham's cardigan, she always had in mind how the pieces would have to fit together to make the whole.

### **Technical Standards of Production**

As a spinner and a knitter, Bliss meets the demands of separate folk communities. Although there is certainly some overlap, many spinners do not knit, and the majority of knitters do not spin. Each activity requires a different set of skills. The cardigan Bliss made is subject to judgment on three levels: how well did she process the wool she used, how well did she spin her yarn, and how well is the knitting done? As many folk art scholars have noted, skill in execution is often the arbiter of excellence. Lack of short fibers and plant debris indicates that Bliss is effective at handling the tools for eliminating them. Yarn that is consistent in smoothness and thickness indicates aptitude with the spinning wheel. Excellent knitting requires consistent tension and even stitches, as well as a pleasing design.

While Bliss appreciates the praise of

those outside the fiber community, she subjects her work to the scrutiny of her peers. It is their approbation she ultimately seeks. She does this formally by entering items she has made in county and state fairs. Two years ago, a vest Bliss made for her aunt took honorable mention at the New York state fair. The recognition was nice, but blue ribbons are Bliss's aspiration. She regularly attends fairs to scrutinize the work of other fiber artists, to see where she can improve, and to get a sense of what the judges look for. A competitive spirit fuels her efforts at excellence.

Bliss rarely joins spinning or knitting meetings, preferring to work alone, but she never works without awareness of how her efforts might be received by other fiber artists. Vlach has said of folk artists, "Certainly, artists may work alone, even in seclusion, but they will work within a socially sanctioned set of rules for artistic production which they expect will insure the acceptability of their completed pieces" (1992, 20). This is true for Bliss at each step of garment production. While she doesn't choose to gather regularly with other fiber artists, she anticipates how her work will be received within the community of fiber artists. She welcomes feedback even in the most casual setting: occasionally Bliss will knit in public, and she loves it when other knitters approach her to comment on what she is doing. In turn, Bliss has no hesitation about approaching a knitter in public to ask about the project and to respond to it.

In studying textile traditions in eastern Newfoundland, Gerald Pocius investigated aesthetic criteria for making hooked mats. He uses a methodology similar to that used by Ruth Bunzel to study pueblo pottery (1929): he asked women who made mats to tell him which mats were good and which were not. Pocius felt you could not study an artist without first investigating the community in which that artist worked. He found that technical skill was the most important factor: "Women in all communities felt a 'good' mat or quilt was one that was well made. Cosmetic evaluations were always secondary" (1979, 56).

For Bliss, it is very important that anything she makes be well done. She wants her products to reflect that she has mastered the best techniques for the job. "I want to make the improvements that make it a better garment. If I can avoid pills, boy, that'd be great. So, I go learn a whole new technique in spinning and in fiber production in order to avoid pills." The fact that the new technique is more time-intensive does not deter her. Trying to understand particular characteristics of different varieties of wool intrigues Bliss. Each of her three sheep has different qualities to its wool, and she experiments to see how she can make the most of each fleece's distinctive features.

Bliss is willing to rip out sections of knitting that do not meet her expectations. The techniques of knitting are deceptively simple. To knit, one minimally needs two needles, string, and the ability to knit and purl. The most elaborate pieces of knitting in the world are still just variations on knit and purl. However, many things can go wrong as the fabric develops. Applying incorrect pressure will result in fabric that either puckers or sags. Dropped stitches will leave holes. Misplaced stitches disrupt a pattern. Many knitters have told me that learning to "rip," or undo sections of knitting, is one of the most important steps in becoming a proficient knitter. In the process of knitting and unknitting, artists develop a grasp of the engineering inherent in the technique. The difference between an adequate piece of knitting and an excellent one lies in this grasp. As one knitter commented, "I want it to look handmade, not homemade. Anything worth doing is worth doing right" (Berard 2002).

### **Aesthetic in Practice: Choosing a Design**

Northern New York is noted for the same brand of conservatism associated with New England. This is not surprising, since northern New York was settled by descendants of early New England settlers. The sensibilities of residents in the northern part of New York State differ markedly from those of residents in the

southern part of the state. A preference for understatement expresses itself in the North Country's knitting community. As one knitter commented, "In the woods, the culture is not to stand out, to blend, not to be too flashy" (Barsuglia-Madsen 2002). In an exhibit of North Country knitting I curated in 2003, the visitor favorite was a solid blue pullover ornamented only with a subtle band of raised stitches around the chest.

Bliss comes from an extended family of Saint Lawrence County residents. A native of northern New York, Bliss has internalized these conservative preferences. In describing her tastes, Bliss mentions another native knitter, Barb Klemens. Noted for her predilection for simple, unadorned garments, Klemens ran a yarn shop in Canton, New York, for fifty years. Bliss remarked:

I see lots of sweaters that have fancy flourishes to them. . . . Frankly, I don't really like those things. I'm kind of like Barb Klemens. Something that is going to look good no matter what decade I wear it in—I like that. I like something that is very classic, something with good clean lines, although my favorite sweater is very baggy, and I snuggle up in it. That's the other thing I go for: is it comfortable, something to snuggle up in?

Within parameters of group taste, Bliss has preferences of her own. She's fascinated by patterns in which stitches meander across the fabric to make the design. Straight lines of cables, common in the region's sweaters, bore her. She likens them to the bland appeal of sweet candy canes. Cables are interesting to her when they wander and intertwine to form lattice patterns or similarly complex designs. Bliss appreciates the decorative possibilities of knitting and is always on the lookout for ideas. She makes a habit when she sees a sweater she likes of breaking it down in her mind to determine which features in it make it attractive to her. She loves to watch patterns unfold as she knits a piece. Before starting work on a project, Bliss knits many



sample swatches, testing patterns and yarn to see what will work for an item she has in mind.

Designs of sweaters are not the only way Bliss expresses her standards. Repeatedly in speaking of her work, Bliss emphasizes comfort over appearance. When I first interviewed Bliss, she was really enthusiastic about knitting socks: “The joy has been the socks because they feel really good on the feet” (2002). She knits her socks on small needles to assure a dense, hard-working product, even though her hands object to the strain. She does not use the coarser wool of her dark brown sheep by itself in a sweater, explaining that the result would be “like a Guatemalan sweater that you can exfoliate your skin with when you put it on.” She loves the luster of pure Romney wool from her gray sheep. In making Burnham’s cardigan, Bliss chose to twist this wool in because it feels so nice on the skin, even though white would have shown the pattern off better. By making this choice, she compromised on the visual clarity of the sweater for the sake of physical comfort: “I wanted to make this more like a snuggly sweater instead of just, oh yeah, that’s pretty.”

Bliss’s cardigan may be exquisitely made, but it is not precious. It will not be an heirloom, hidden in a closet to be worn occasionally. Although its solid construction guarantees a long life, the garment will wear out and require patching along the way. Many would shudder to think of a sweater requiring 200 hours of labor being worn casually, but that is part of the pragmatism associated with knitting in Bliss’s community. Knitting instructor Susan Carl asserts: “Sweaters should be worn. A hole can always be fixed” (Carl 2002). For some knitters, making those repairs is a responsibility of thriftiness, another virtue prized in northern New York. Mennonite knitter Arlene Yousey remembers that, in her household, “worn portions of garments were reknit. This was part of stewardship, mandated by God” (2002).

For Bliss, the usefulness of knitted items sets them above objects made purely for decoration. To make this point, she contrasts

knitting with Ukrainian-style painted pysanki eggs: “It’s nice to look at a pysanki egg, but okay, given the choice between an egg and a sweater, really, which would you choose? It’s got to be the sweater. It’s got to be the socks. They can be so much more incorporated into your life, and the egg is always going to sit on a shelf.” Bliss’s ordering of value is by no means universal. Another person might prefer the egg, reasoning that it is rarer, since sweaters are readily and inexpensively available in the store.

Bliss rarely follows published patterns. Since she is fascinated by the process of engineering garments, she likes to figure out the stages as she goes. Bliss enjoyed copying Burnham’s old cardigan. She teased sections of it apart to determine how it was put together. The biggest puzzle for Bliss was a pair of knit-in pockets on the front of the original cardigan. She had never made pockets before, and it took her several evenings to grasp the technique. Bliss might have saved herself time by referring to a book or asking other experienced knitters how to set the pockets in, but she prefers the challenge of working it out herself. She especially enjoys the detective work of looking at antique pieces to uncover what a knitter had in mind when she was working. She likes to envision the anonymous knitter: “It’s so neat looking at a sweater to see what that person did.” As she knit the cardigan, Bliss regularly checked the fit by slipping pieces of it on herself.

Bliss did not feel obligated to reproduce the model exactly. While the original was off-white, she used a rag wool. In some of the panels of the cardigan, she substituted stitch combinations that she liked for ones she did not. In her opinion, reproducing Burnham’s cardigan meant faithfulness to form, not decoration. This attitude was consistent with Burnham’s. Burnham is a professional potter who makes dinnerware and other functional pieces. She appreciates utilitarian qualities, but also wants art to reflect its maker. She wanted her original cardigan replaced because it was the most comfortable sweater she had ever owned. She requested that Bliss mimic the fit and feel of the original. Bliss

retained all attributes of the cardigan that contributed to this end. For example, she carefully studied the shaping of the shoulders on the original cardigan and shaped the shoulders in just the same fashion, even though the method differs from her usual shaping method. Burnham gave Bliss license, however, to change some elements of the pattern to combinations she would enjoy watching unfold. The final product incorporates a new textural quality, but fits just as the old did.

## Expressing Values in Fiber Work

Working with fiber as she does satisfies Bliss on an intellectual, analytical level. She is especially drawn to activities requiring geometric precision: macramé, painting pysanki eggs, knitting. When asked to describe a pattern on a sweater, she has a hard time doing it in a gross sense. She sees patterns at the level of individual stitches, so describes them in terms of how the stitches move through them. Tracing her fingers over stitches in Burnham’s cardigan to show how they shift to form the texture, Bliss becomes increasingly animated about the motion contained within the panels. The fiber work she does also satisfies her on a larger level: “It thrills me that you can start with something that looks like fog, and turn it into something warm and protective.”

For Bliss, keeping sheep and making usable items from their wool is part of a life-style choice. Quiet contemplation is important to her and is something she is engaged in as she spins and knits at home. As we toured her backyard one afternoon, Bliss joked that in kinship with the slow food movement, she’s an adherent of the slow clothes movement. This was not the first time I had heard this from a fiber artist. Joanne Seiff, a spinner and knitter in Bowling Green, Kentucky, explained it this way: “I also believe in sort of the slow food movement and slow everything movement, in that I feel like our society is too rushed, and spinning is a way to deconstruct what we own and make it more valuable” (2003).



As Bliss knitted a birthday cardigan for her friend, she regularly tried on sections of it to gauge its fit. Photo: Jill Breit

The slow food movement is a global grass-roots movement that originated in Italy. The message of this movement is that modern life is too busy and fast paced. Proponents advocate a return to leisurely meals made with locally grown products and eaten in the company of family and friends. Their philosophy includes a host of other lifestyle choices favoring simplicity. Simplicity and time to pay attention are two things Bliss values highly. She would likely agree with Seiff's assessment that understanding what goes into the production of goods makes it difficult to take them for granted.

Bliss has arranged her life to be able to

give uncounted hours to her art. She does not like to keep track of the time she invests in her projects and only did so in this case at my request. A massage therapist, she set her office up at home in order to avoid commuting. She schedules appointments around other activities in her life. She and her partner grow a lot of their own food, as well as flowers. When talking about the place of fiber work in her life, Bliss comments that she likes to watch the sheep, that it's a good way to use the land, and that she enjoys introducing her clients to the sheep. The sheep have names: Adonis, Star, and Mildred.

The house in which Bliss lives is testimo-

ny to the creative capacity of its occupants. The spaces overflow with the products of their efforts. They spend much of their time at home making things, and these things decorate most of the surfaces in their house. Bliss very consciously chooses elements of her life to satisfy her own idea of what constitutes a good life. Necessity is not the motivation for her spinning: "I don't need to do it. I make enough money; I could go off and buy yarn like anybody else." Like Seiff, she enjoys the peacefulness of the activity—"It's just been calm and quiet," she remarks—and she takes pleasure in the fruits of her labor.

Bliss's cardigan embodies her values. It is a product of an intimacy she has with her land and the animals that live on it. As Bliss says, "There's nothing quite like putting on a garment when you know the animal that it came from, and you've seen it all through the process." It is this "relating to the materials through all the senses" (Hardy 2004, 181) that prevents Bliss's work from becoming an abstraction. Bliss's fiber work asserts her belief that time does not equal money, a rejection of the capitalist formula. Further, it serves as an expression of her commitment to family and friends. She often mentions the pleasure of making things that will keep her loved ones warm. This expression of values through knitting has been studied by folklorist Peggy Yocom in Rangeley, Maine. The women she worked with made clothes for dolls, making choices in the process that adhered to tradition and reacted to change. In doing this, Yocom concluded, they "clothe the dolls in their own values" (Yocom 1993, 129).

Making things by hand is one element in Bliss's formula for peace of mind. She feels engaged, calm, and connected as she works through each step of making a garment. Knowing the eventual user of the garment enhances her sense of well-being. It pleases her that a niece and nephew called her this past spring to ask if they could have more handmade socks for Christmas.

## Conclusion

I asked Bliss if she considered her cardigan folk art. “I think you’re nuts,” was the answer. Is it fine art, then? Bliss distinguishes this way between the two:

If I were really good, I’d like to call it fine art. Folk art just seems like it’s venerable, and fine art seems like it’s a goal to work towards—like to really make something that’s really, really good. Nobody sets out to be a folk artist.

In responding to the question of whether or not the cardigan she has made is folk art, Bliss’s own identity is called into question. If nobody aims to be a folk artist, presumably people do aim to be fine artists.

Ann Ferrell has written that, for a piece to be considered folk art, the “object must grow out of some kind of tradition: of process, of materials, or of collective aesthetics” (1999, 10). Bliss’s cardigan qualifies on all three grounds. The sweater was made using the same techniques and materials knitters have used for thousands of years. Functionality outweighed appearance in design decisions. Bliss worked within the parameters of acceptability in the fiber community in which she learned and continues to work. The sweater was made as a gift for a friend, who speaks of it in the same terms Bliss does. And it springs quite naturally from the environment in which Bliss has chosen to live. Bliss’s commitment to working with fibers stems partly from the satisfaction of each step of the process and partly from satisfaction with how it connects to other aspects of her life.

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Jill Breit is a folklorist whose favorite stomping ground is northernmost New York State. She is currently engaged in research on the aesthetics of back-to-the-land architecture.

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# Winters Just Aren't What They Used to Be!

BY VARICK A. CHITTENDEN

Fifty years ago, when I was a kid riding the school bus every day, my elders would often say, “You young ones have it really lucky these days. When I was your age, we had to walk to school, rain or shine. A mile and a half. Each way!” Isn't nostalgia great? So it seems it is with the weather—specifically, for us, winter. “Winters just aren't what they used to be.” We hear that all the time in the North Country. I'm no meteorologist; I don't even watch the Weather Channel unless some pretty serious stuff seems to be headed our way. But I do remember the ice storm of January 1998. How could anyone here forget? It was disastrous for most of the Northeast, and we were hit hard in the North Country. The whole region went off the grid for at least a week; some people were without power and their roads were impassable for at least a month. The storm will inspire stories to be told for at least half a century. At the time, however, there were comparisons to an ice storm in the 1940s that some recalled being so bad, it took out most of the apple orchards for miles around and froze the apples with ice so thick that they couldn't be harvested!

Then there was the blizzard of January 1977. Buffalo made the national news, as seventy-mile-an-hour winds blew snow in drifts up to thirty feet in a matter of hours, and the city came to a standstill for days. But in the rugged Tug Hill region south and west of Watertown, where lake-effect winds often drop the greatest total snowfall in the state—over 300 inches per year in Montague—the blizzard of 1977 was just another winter storm. Stories among old-timers there likely hearkened back to Real Winters, like the blizzard of 1888 or even 1816, the year with no summer.

For my own satisfaction, I have searched through the diaries of my great-great-grandfather Elisha Risdon, a Vermonter who moved to northern New York in 1803 and lived out his life in Hopkinton as a farmer.



A man walks on a Main Street sidewalk in Canton, New York, circa 1950. Photo courtesy of the Town and Village of Canton Historian's Office.

A great observer of life in general, his entries about winter in the North Country of his day include many meditations on cold temperatures:

1819: December 5<sup>th</sup>, Sunday, severe cold. Mrs. R. and Angeline gone to meeting. I have no greatcoat. I cannot sit in a cold house without one. December 31<sup>st</sup>. Very severe weather for cattle that have no shelter. I fear some of my cows will almost or quite perish before Mr. Coolidge gets the hovel built. April 24<sup>th</sup>. We are having a Siberian spring on the back of a Siberian winter.

Risdon also penned several revealing passages about snow:

1812: March 29<sup>th</sup>. The snow fell about ten inches. The snow is about three feet deep. 1819: December 20<sup>th</sup>. Snow about eighteen inches. Set off for my hunting camp. . . . The snow is so deep I can't hunt. 1836: February 13<sup>th</sup>. The Indians call February the “Snow Moon,” meaning that more snow falls in that month than in any other. We are buried in snow. The papers state that the snow is four or five feet deep in Oneida County, and also in the eastern

states. The snow here is about two feet.

My own favorite commentaries about upstate winters are the photographs you can find in family albums or old local newspapers. Of course, we all know that a camera doesn't lie, but it certainly might stretch the truth. My brother remembers climbing on top of a snow bank in front of our house and having his picture taken from below at an angle to make it look like he was above the second-story windows of the house. My sister has a collection of photos taken in the 1970s during a sudden blizzard in Fort Drum. The photos show military vehicles unearthing cars completely buried under drifts of snow. Good stories, even tall tales, make winter—and many other things—much easier to bear. Especially if we don't have to walk a mile and a half to do it any more!

Varick A. Chittenden is professor emeritus of English, SUNY Canton College of Technology, and executive director of Traditional Arts in Upstate New York (TAUNY). Photo: Martha Cooper



# We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us

BY STEVE ZEITLIN

**Bee Cool.** The words emblazoned on a van in front of a neighboring house, spelled just that way, refer to an air-conditioning service run by our most colorful neighbor, a giant of a man, often seen riding a tiny motorized scooter up and down the block. On a blistering day last summer, we talked on the sidewalk. “I’m working from 6:00 a.m. to midnight every night,” he said. “Everyone in New York City needs their air conditioners repaired. You know the funny thing, Steve? I don’t even have air conditioning in my house. I don’t have time to install it. I told my wife to handle it—you do it, I said. I gave her the name of the best air-conditioning system and told her I would pay to have it installed. She called the national distributors, and what do you think they told her? There’s only one company that installs these air-conditioning systems in your area. It’s called Bee Cool.”

In the metropolis of my mind, this story lives in the same neighborhood as another tale, this one from the venerable pages of a 1966 issue of *Southern Folklore* (“The American Circus as a Source of Folklore: An Introduction,” 30.4:296). Once, in the lore of the circus, lived a man who was deeply depressed. He consulted a social worker and completed a year of therapy. When the social worker saw that she could do nothing with him, she suggested a renowned psychiatrist. He visited the famous analyst and spent two years on the couch. When he remained despondent, the psychiatrist said to him, “I can do nothing for you and have only one last suggestion. You must visit the Barnum and Bailey Circus to find the only human being who may be able to lift your spirits. You must seek out the great clown Grock.”

The man dropped his head into his hands and muttered, “I am Grock.”

Unlike the story of my neighbor, this circus tale has been traced back to the seventeenth century, when it was told about Bolognese Harlequin Domenico Biancholelli. Yet in both stories, a person

sets forth to find someone or to accomplish a task but discovers that what he is seeking is none other than himself or herself. The journey is revealed as a quest. It’s an “It’s Yourself” story, as I’ve taken to calling these kinds of tales.

Stories, I find, are useful tools for thinking about the world. Perhaps because I am a folklorist, It’s Yourself stories speak to me about the folklore enterprise. I have long realized, for instance, that we are not studying the folks we interview and celebrate so much as collaborating with them. Much of my work as a folklorist is about documenting cultural forms, but much of it, too, is about connecting with kindred spirits from other walks of life and working with them on a deep and personal level to accomplish shared ends. The Beatles were fond of saying that their manager Brian Epstein didn’t discover the Beatles; the Beatles discovered Brian Epstein. Likewise Alan Lomax didn’t discover Muddy Waters; Muddy Waters discovered Alan Lomax—and I imagine both discovered some of themselves in one another. Many of the singers and storytellers we “discover” are themselves folklorists of sorts, who have in turn collected stories and songs their whole lives.

These stories remind me, as well, that ultimately, we are the ones who have to do the heavy lifting: the only ones who can lift our own spirits like the clown Grock or, on many occasions, even install our own air conditioners. In another It’s Yourself story, told to me by folklorist Amy Shuman who heard it years ago from the great Israeli folklorist Dov Noy, a Good Samaritan is interested in learning more about the family of Moishe the Water Boy from the next town, who celebrate a wonderful Passover seder. In years past the family left the door open and poured a glass of wine for the prophet Elijah, as is traditional, but this year they had a vision that he would actually

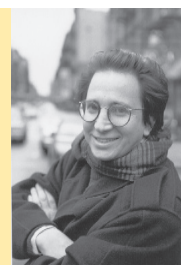
appear. So the Good Samaritan visits the seder, buys many items for the Passover table, and enjoys the traditional celebration with Moishe’s family, although he notes the Prophet never arrives. When the Samaritan returns home, a friend runs up to him with some astonishing news. “Did you hear that, in the next town over, the Prophet Elijah visited Moishe the Water Boy’s family this year?”

As folklorists, we often think of ourselves as the outsiders, documenting a culture—only to find that it is up to us to work with the community to fight back against the myriad outside forces acting upon their lives and traditions. In lending a hand, we may think of ourselves as outsiders, but we are drawn into the community and become part of the process. I’m reminded of a story told to me by record producer Michael Schlesinger. “At one time, years ago,” he told me, “I was interviewing the great fiddle player Tommy Jarrell, and I asked him, ‘After you’re gone who will be left to pass on these stories and this music?’”

And he answered, “Well, you’re listening to them, aren’t you?”



Steve Zeitlin is the Director of City Lore. He welcomes any variants of these It’s Yourself stories ([steve@citylore.org](mailto:steve@citylore.org)). The title of this column is taken from Al Capp’s comic strip, *Pogo*.



# A Method to Our

BY MIRIAM L. WALLACH

As a child, I spent the holidays with my cousins who lived in Manhattan. Passover, eight days long coupled with weeks of intense holiday preparation, was always the biggest “to do.” The two seder meals, on the first two nights of the holiday, each present the opportunity for a family and friends to partake in a lavish meal, retell the story of the Jews in Egypt, and enjoy each other’s company.

In accordance with Jewish dietary law, meat and milk are not eaten together, so meals are therefore meat or dairy, but not both. Traditionally, the seder meals are filled with meat dishes. Chicken soup, veal, roasts, and the like all adorn the beautifully set table. With no expense spared—as Jews on these nights are supposed to fancy themselves kings—course after course of various delicacies is served.

In my family, though, that’s not how it happened. While the first seder was certainly a meat meal, it was the second night that to many seemed quite unusual. To me, it was perfectly normal. We bucked tradition. We were rebels without a cause.

Deviating from the expected Passover fare, our second seder was filled with dairy delights. Instead of chicken soup with matzo balls, we had cream of potato and leek soup. The main dish was poached salmon with a sour cream sauce, roasted new potatoes, and other trimmings. For most of the year, my mother was and remains best known for talents outside the kitchen, but come Passover, her cheesecake and strawberry shortcake were anticipated by every member of the family.

To outsiders, it was a very strange family tradition—even sacrilegious. I would explain that once we removed the seder plate with

its shank bone from the table and changed the tablecloth, we were free to eat all the milk, cheese, and matzo pizza we wanted. People didn’t accept the argument as valid: after all, it was a break with tradition, and it is tradition that has kept the Jewish people going for centuries. This, however, was our tradition, I explained, and it—like the story that accompanies it—is rooted in our family’s history.

My great-grandfather, Rabbi Aaron Charney, a learned and well-respected man who was affectionately known as Papa Charney to his children and grandchildren, was a pulpit rabbi in Bayonne, New Jersey, from the 1920s to the 1960s. Although the town is bereft of Jews today, it once had a

thriving Jewish community, including many kosher butchers, a Jewish day school, and nine Orthodox synagogues. One of those Orthodox synagogues, Beth Abraham—long since demolished—was where Papa was rabbi. He was also the chaplain of the Shomrim Society, an association of Jewish firefighters and police officers with a membership of about seventy-five men, all of whom were invited to my great-grandparents’ home for lunch on the first day of Passover.

Every year, this great group of burly men would descend on the Charney home for lunch. According to Jewish law, a day really begins the night before and then ends at sundown. While the midday meal took place on the first day of Passover, the first seder had



Author using the kugel pan to prepare the seder meal, April 2005. Photo courtesy of Stephen Wallach.



Rabbi Aaron Charney. Photo courtesy of Barry Eisenberg.

happened the night before. Consequently, the second seder was the meal served right after the lunch for which the firemen had joined my family.

Grandma Miriam, Papa's wife and my namesake, was the quintessential Jewish mother and homemaker. Catering this large meal, even if it had been an option, would not have been acceptable. In order to serve such a large number of men, she decided that the menu must be meat. She prepared huge quantities of meat and potato kugel, cooking

the meat to make it tender enough to eat with a spoon, since the only utensil that Grandma and Papa had enough of for such a grand group were spoons. This meal was part of the Charney Passover tradition every year that my great-grandparents lived in Bayonne, until the end of their lives when Grandma was too frail to grate potatoes for the kugel. The large oval, green metal kugel pan that she used for this meal became an heirloom that my mother received when Grandma Miriam died and that she has since passed on to me.

It is weathered and faded, but still strong.

The rationale for the dairy seder should be obvious to those who have eaten a good potato kugel that has been baked in a pot of oil and rendered chicken fat for hours. Simply, it became an issue of digestion. My ancestors could not fathom eating another heavy meal just a few hours after the kugel lunch. A dairy seder seemed like the perfect solution: a delicious meal filled with culinary favorites, but ones that were easier on the system.

For decades, the dairy seder made its way into the homes of the children and grandchildren of the Charneys. While it might not have been the way it was meant to be done, it became the way we Charneys did it. Although we do not have a dairy seder anymore—all of us for various and valid reasons, having nothing to do with the invention of Tums—my cousins, siblings, and I all remember fondly those years we spent together at our dairy seder, drinking four cups of wine, asking the four questions, and shmearing our matzo with butter.



Miriam L. Wallach lives with her husband and three children on Long Island. She is a middle school language arts teacher with a master's degree in early adolescent education. She is currently working toward a second master's degree in English.

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## NYFS News, continued

Heritage Program of the New York State Archives. With this funding, we have expanded our technical assistance to include direct support for folklore collections and archives by circuit rider archivists, who consult and assist in processing folklore collections throughout the state. Receiving archival support in this grant year will be the Alan Lomax Archives, Buffalo State College's Vietnam-era veterans collection, City Lore, Crandall Library Center for Folklife, Long Island Traditions, and the Madison County Historical Society, as

# The Underground Seen: *Tunneling Legends on College and*

BY VINCE DEFUSCIO  
AND  
CHARLIE McCORMICK

This article documents and analyzes the legends on American college and university campuses about underground steam tunnels. A comparative reading of these legends and a more focused inquiry into one campus's tunnel legend indicates that the narratives provide an identity for the institution and a rite of passage for the undergraduates who tell or enact the tunnel legend.

The rabbit hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder what was going to happen next . . .

'Well!' thought Alice to herself, 'after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house!'

—Lewis Carroll,  
*Alice in Wonderland*

## Introduction

One of the bestselling books of 2004, *The Rule of Four* by Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason opens with a group of college friends deciding to break the stress of studying and thesis writing with a game of laser tag in the steam tunnels that crisscross the underground of Princeton University's campus. The characters recognize these tunnels as being strictly off-limits according to the

official rules of the university. Several pages into the story—after encounters with rats and dehydration—the young men emerge from the tunnels having escaped (only barely) being caught by school authorities. The book is new, but the story is old. Colleges and universities across the nation have rich traditions surrounding their institutional tunnels. It is the literal and symbolic underground of higher education into which this essay plunges.

This essay documents and analyzes legends about college tunnels. Taking our own Cabrini College campus and its legend of a secret tunnel as the point of departure, we argue that tunnel legends are important on college campuses because they serve as expressive resources for creating a distinctive institutional profile and their telling or enactment creates a rite of passage experience for undergraduates. These seemingly distinct uses are in fact complementary: in both cases, tunnel legends build identity. While the legends do not do this work of identity alone, they are one of the key ways in which academic institutions and the students who

attend them come to understand how they are unique.

## A Secret Tunnel at Cabrini College

Freshmen entering Cabrini College are treated to late-night ghost stories about the campus. For years, tales of hauntings have been passed from class to class, generation to generation, effectively scaring new students each time the stories are told. Web sites perpetuate a tradition of Cabrini's haunted past and present, as well (see White 1998). The stories resonate with students because the campus environment—although idyllic in its woodland setting—and particularly the Elizabethan architecture of the Mansion lend themselves to ghostly stories. Horace Trumbauer (1863–1938), architect of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, designed the estate that is now Cabrini College, and Mr. J. W. Paul Jr. moved into the Woodcrest Mansion in 1901. In 1925, the Mansion was sold to the Dorrance family, who maintained the estate as their private residence. The estate was purchased in 1953 by the college's sponsoring order, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Woodcrest Mansion served as the Villa Cabrini orphanage until 1957, when Sister Ursula Infante opened Cabrini College. Today the building is home to several of Cabrini's administrative offices, including the president's office, the



business office, and the Office of Institutional Advancement. While the Mansion is a hub of activity today, it nonetheless casts a haunting presence over the campus because of its architectural connection to the past.

The ghost tales build off the family histories—real and imagined—of the estate that today is Cabrini College. The tales often revolve around the tension between a father and daughter, precipitated by her taboo love for the poor stable boy who worked for the family. This love was doomed and, predictably, ends with the lovers' deaths and (in some versions) the death of the child their illicit affair produced. The legend of the college's secret tunnel complements these stories. In some versions, the tunnel—supposedly running between the Mansion and Grace Hall (the original stables for the estate)—allowed the daughter and stable boy to carry out their liaisons.

The first collector of Cabrini's tunnel legends was an English professor trained as a folklorist who arrived on campus in the 1960s. Today, professor emeritus Carter Craigie remembers:

Supposedly, the tunnel ran from the basement of the Mansion all the way up to what is now called Grace Hall. Just *why* the tunnel had been built was a mystery to all my informants. There was something vague about the need for the tunnel during snowy winters, but that was about all. . . . I remember that, at the Grace Hall end, there had supposedly been an old oil portrait of a man (I never knew his name) leaning against the tunnel wall. But here's the interesting part: to look at this portrait made you go insane, at least temporarily (that is, for a matter of a few days). Upon "coming to," some boy (nameless, again) who had looked at the portrait couldn't remember anything of the past two to three days since he had gone down into the tunnel. (Craigie 2003)

Beyond simply collecting variants of Cabrini's legend, Craigie added some of his own. Several years into his academic career, he organized a student darkroom in the basement of the Mansion. He remembers in vivid detail that a suitable spot for a

tunnel was down there. And perhaps there was a tunnel there. Regardless, as a master storyteller, he helped make the story of the tunnel legendary:

The spot we chose [for the darkroom] was on the Grace Hall side of the Mansion basement in what looked like the old tunnel! At this point in time, however, the end of the tunnel had all fallen in, and it looked definitely unsafe to go even a few steps into it. Our darkroom occupied the first ten or fifteen feet but you couldn't go any further. . . . I remember big spiders' cobwebs and *lots* of dirt and crumbled down stone work! It wasn't too much later that the college's maintenance department put up plywood walls to close off even the little room we had formerly occupied. (Craigie 2003)

Even if the tunnel could no longer be viewed, it could be experienced through the retelling of the tunnel legend. To hear Craigie tell it, this experience was highly sought after. He recalls:

Each year's incoming freshmen, upon hearing me tell the stories, wanted to go look for the tunnel. It got to the point that [a former] college president . . . called me on the telephone to ask that I not tell the tunnel part of the Cabrini legends anymore, as she didn't want kids downstairs in the Mansion's basement searching for the tunnel. I complied with her request, but somehow word always seemed to slip out, usually from the older students who would come back to hear the legends year after year. I also used to tell the legends in the Mansion dining room at what was then called Parent's Weekend; older sisters and brothers would always bring up the tunnel part, even though I never mentioned it. (Craigie 2003)

Today, Cabrini's tunnel legend continues to resonate among students. For example, one student reported that he was told during orientation that the tunnel was needed by a butler who had to move between the buildings on cold days. He continued that the tunnel became haunted and, therefore, was filled in by the school. A female student reported

that her friend's father worked in facilities maintenance at Cabrini; he said that once there had been tours of the tunnel. Lights helped people move through the tunnel. According to the student's father, the lights would go out randomly, and visitors would "get freaked out." They ended up sealing the tunnel because it was said to be haunted.

Haunted or not, something is strange about the Mansion's basement. Facility personnel and college historians alike are baffled by the strange temperature variations within the basement. Similarly, there seems no feasible explanation for how coal entered the home and ashes were removed. Most puzzling of all is a padlocked stone room in the basement that apparently leads nowhere. Just four walls. It serves no clear purpose. Could it be the entrance to a concealed tunnel?

The one person who could answer definitively—the former director of facilities and the current director of construction and renovation, Michael Caranfa—refuses to do so. In both e-mail and face-to-face encounters, he managed both to debunk the tunnel legend and encourage it. He confirms that there are tunnels (or "pipes") that go from the Mansion to Grace Hall. These pipes carry water, cable, and fiber-optic lines under the main road and its shoulder. He admits, "Although the story of the tunnel has been around for years, I am afraid it is more apocryphal than fact. . . . I admit that when we give the annual Mansion tour to visitors we allude to the fact that there may be a tunnel and keep the mystery alive" (Caranfa 2003).

Other staff at the College readily deny that a secret tunnel ever existed at Cabrini. The telephone operator at Cabrini of some thirty years sees no reason why one of the original families would have needed to put a tunnel between the house and the stables, and the former director of alumni affairs and unofficial college historian thinks the tunnel is unlikely, too. While she has heard students talk about a secret tunnel for several decades, she has never seen evidence confirming the existence of a tunnel. Similarly, Cabrini's archivist does not believe there is a tunnel under Cabrini College, and she has Trum-

# Vince Explores the Legend of Cabrini's Tunnel

One afternoon, I was talking to fellow undergraduates about my interest in the College's tunnel. Everyone began to tell stories about the tunnel. It did not take long before five of us decided to look for it in the basement of the Mansion. It was not hard to gain access to the basement, as the Mansion is open nearly everywhere. We entered the basement through a secluded door near the kitchen. Although there were five of us looking, we could not find any signs of the tunnel in the basement. Admittedly, we got scared pretty quickly. The smell of one hundred years of settlement—wet, dank concrete walls—and cobwebs made it feel more like an abandoned prison than the basement of a prestigious home. Still, sneaking in and out of rooms in the basement was a rush. Lights were on in the basement's small rooms. We imagined we were going to get caught by a facilities worker and end up getting in trouble. Maybe the facilities worker had simply run to the bathroom. We were all silently thinking, When would the facilities worker return? How would we explain that we were looking for a tunnel, not stealing something from the basement?

In fact, we came across a facilities worker whose office was in the basement. Fortunately, he did not assume the worst about us, so we asked him about the tunnel. He said he had no idea if there was a tunnel or not and offered to show us around. He showed us the elevator entrance in the basement. He showed us the old switchboard, full of wires and leads. Then he said, "Well, I'll show you where people think the tunnel is." He brought us to the furthest corner of the Mansion basement and pointed down. Beneath a layer of wooden "No Parking" signs lay a concrete slab large enough to cover up the mouth of a tunnel. He claimed that there was an identical slab somewhere in the basement of Grace Hall. Our adventure was just beginning.

We thanked the worker, who left to get back to work. So up and out of the basement we climbed, heading for Grace Hall. Like the Mansion's basement,

the basement in Grace Hall is segmented into smaller rooms. There are several entrances and areas in which to get lost. To get from one side of the basement to another, we had to go up to the ground level and then go down a different flight of steps into the next section of basement. Just by chance, we stumbled upon the right section of the basement. It was unlocked, and a staircase took us down into a cold and damp darkness. The stairs were rickety, and the walls were cement. There was writing on the walls, yearbook-like signatures and messages from students who had been here before us.

It was dark, even with the lights that were placed sporadically about. One of my friends used her cigarette lighter for more light. It did very little to help the situation. If anything, the faint flickering of orange and yellow shadows simply added to the dramatic and eerie ambiance that already surrounded this place. The facilities worker had told us what to look for: There would be a room, then another. Between the two rooms, a giant pipe divides the walkway. We crossed the pipe using a bench as a bridge. No light bulb illuminated the room, but still, we could see it. There, at the furthest corner of the room, was a concrete slab—the same size as the Mansion slab. I imagined it was aligned directly with the basement of the Mansion. It seemed like we had found our match. Just then, the basement got to us, and like bullets fired from a machine gun, all five of us turned and ran. We ran tripping over each other; we ran screaming as cobwebs stretched across our faces; we ran pushing each other out of the way and pleading "Wait up, wait for me!" We ran and ran and ran, scrambling over that enormous pipe we so carefully crossed before. Finally we emerged from the basement, running up the rickety steps and throwing the door open. No one saw us enter, and no one saw us leave.

bauer's original blueprints for the Mansion and the stable to strengthen her position. She nevertheless concedes that people will keep believing in the tunnel because "It's fun! It's damn fun!" Clearly, the idea of the tunnel makes people secretly hope it is there even when they know better than to believe it is.

### **Building Institutional Identity**

Tunnels exist for practical reasons on college and university campuses. Tunnels vent potentially harmful fumes or steam away from people; they carry cable that wires hi-tech lives; and they pipe in water and remove waste. On northern campuses, tunnels transport students across campus on snowy or icy days. Beyond their practicality, legends about tunnels saturate American campuses because they transform the generic experience of college into a distinctly local experience. In the process of developing an institutional identity, college employees, alumni, college publications, and students generate these legends—just as they do at Cabrini. The legends are important because, in an environment where colleges and universities are so similar in function, people look for distinctiveness in the college experience that justifies the time and money spent on a degree from one place instead of another. Tunnel legends are not the only way colleges and universities create an identity, but they are an important vernacular means of doing this work.

Tunnel legends deliver a distinct identity by localizing a generic story line, incorporating specific elements from the college or university into the narrative (the oil painting in Craigie's version of Cabrini's tunnel legend, for instance). At Georgetown University, the tunnels are supposedly the location for secret meetings that extend, geographically and politically, all the way to the White House (Caughman 1999). In the 1970s at the University of Arizona, avers the student newspaper, "A monkey from the Central Animal Facility got into the tunnel system after escaping from its cage and wasn't captured for four to five months." Facilities employees claim still to be nervous about encountering a monkey

running around the tunnel (Wells 1998). As new students gain insider's knowledge of these tunnel legends—what is described in Texas A&M University's school newspaper as "volumes of whispered lore passed down" (Carter 2000)—the distinctiveness of their institution seems confirmed.

The irony of this localization is that the underlying plots of the legends are predictable across institutions. One typical plot involves the playing of pranks in the tunnels. At Stanford University, a student supposedly entered the Hoover library on campus "via the tunnels and performed three impromptu midnight carillon concerts" (Flattery 2000). At the University of Michigan, it is rumored that students used the tunnels to turn off the hot water at the president's residence (Berkowitz 2002). At Swarthmore College, it is believed that students used tunnels to break into a building and swipe the bagel cart (Wright 2001). Another recurrent plot is the association of the institution's tunnels with the playing of dungeons and dragons, a fantasy role-playing game. The University of Houston and the University of Arizona both report that their tunnels were used for the game. Yet another predictable plot is that the tunnel was connected to the Underground Railroad in the years before the Civil War. Illinois College claims that, although "no records exist" and the tunnel can no longer be accessed, it "was said to have been used during the years of the Underground Railroad" (Taylor 2000). The same claim has been made for the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater tunnel system and a college prep school in the Hudson Valley, the Hoosac School. The claims are localized, not unique, but the institutions claim a distinct identity because of their tunnels.

### **Building Individual Identity**

Tunnel legends not only transform the experience of college into a distinctly local experience, but also help individual students form their identities as they come of age. They do this by serving as rites of passage. This is important because while modern American society has many coming-of-age experiences, which teach initiates compe-

tencies, it has fewer rites of passage, which provide initiates capabilities (McCormick 2004). In the industrial and post-industrial world, being competent—knowing how to be who one is supposed to be rather than discovering who one might be—provides the clearest track for individual success and social harmony. Formal education, for example, for the majority of students in modern American society, is the most formative coming-of-age experience, teaching students who they should be and how they can perform their roles effectively and efficiently. It is a context where the impetus to discover one's capabilities—to experience a rite of passage—is minimized. Absent socially sanctioned and organized rites of passage, adolescents will initiate themselves or each other through auto-initiation and peer-initiation (Foster 1996). One of the ways adolescents initiate themselves is through tunnel legends. The prevalence of coming-of-age experiences and diminishment of rites of passage begins to explain why, at Stanford, a student would bemoan the perception that "Palo Alto closes down . . . [at] two o'clock in the morning" and why she would head underground to enact tunnel legends. The student continues: "It becomes a choose-your-own-adventure where the campus is what you make of it" (Hurt 1997). She is expressing the desire for a rite-of-passage experience. A similar desire is reflected at the University of California, Los Angeles, where entering the tunnel system is dramatized as ritual initiation: "The darkness is punctured by a solitary 100-watt light bulb hanging overhead, but . . . interlopers trek on, ignoring the sweltering 110-degree heat. Suddenly, they stop: in front of them lies a crudely drawn sign welcoming them to Hell" (Rosen 1986). In *Wired* magazine, too, the desire for initiation and recognizing one's capabilities is reflected in the explanation as to why people enact tunnel legends: "Across America, people are hacking their way through the underground passages and hidden crawl spaces of colleges and universities—a kind of urban spelunking that pits the true hacker's spirit of exploration against an unmapped and frequently risky landscape" (Scott 1993). In the Cabrini account, a similar sense of testing

one's capabilities is evident. Actually hunting for tunnels or exploring may intensify the experience of the tunnel legend as a rite of passage, but tunnel legends remain rites of passage whether they are told or performed.

The tunneling tradition, like other rites of passage, offers the experience of transformative potential, although the nature of this transformation varies from legend to legend. At Georgetown University, the University of Wisconsin, and Virginia Tech, for example, tunnel legends speak to the most dramatic of transformations: death. If you go into the tunnels, students believe, you are almost certain to die because they are dangerous places. While no deaths have been reported due to the dangerous conditions of a college's or a university's steam tunnels, the perception persists. At other institutions, like Vanderbilt, the transformation is less final but still significant: it results in expulsion. In other words, the transformation occurs in social status. This is one of the fears expressed in Vince's account. That this social transformation is still significant is reflected by the warning of a tunnel explorer at Louisiana State University to other would-be tunnelers: "If you have a nice scholarship, stay in the dorms at night" ("Tunnels," 1999). Another variation of social transformation that is possible while tunneling is being arrested. At the University of Michigan and at New Mexico State University, students reportedly were arrested for exploring the tunnels.

Rites of passage foreground individual transformation through narrative and dramatic performances. These performances mark the actual internal transformation that the

individual experiences: the revelation of the individual's capabilities. In other words, rites of passage enable individuals to experience who and how they might be. Rites of passage provide this experience in the context of trials and tests that demand individuals be more than they are in everyday life. As this essay's epigraph suggests, this is Alice's experience on her fall through the tunnel towards Wonderland. Because it has transformative potential—plummeting downward underground towards an uncertain end—the experience changes her. Folklorist Simon Bronner (1990, 167) argues that most legend-trips (that is, excursions based on local legends) at colleges and universities serve as rites of passage, because they help students transform themselves from dependent students to independent adults through the challenge the legend presents. Tunnel legends, in particular, almost always have a challenge (particularly a physical challenge) as a central theme. One web site notes that college students explore the tunnels running underneath their campuses precisely because they "are always off limits, and that is part of the lure—to do something 'forbidden'" ("Steam Tunnels," 1996). Ironically, and in an effort to keep students out of the tunnels, institutions themselves heighten the perceived challenge of (and therefore desire for) tunnels by declaring them unsafe and off-limits. A similar institutional message is transmitted at Georgetown University, the University of Virginia, Texas A&M University, Northwestern University, and Memphis's Christian Brothers University.

In rites of passage, an individual's capa-

bilities frequently are revealed through the experience of disillusionment and disenchantment (McCormick 2004). On college and university campuses, disillusionment and disenchantment are central in accounts of tunnel legends, even in Vince's narrative on (the lack of evidence for) Cabrini's tunnel. For example, Vanderbilt University's *Vanderbilt Hustler* received permission to send reporters into the university's network of tunnels to "debunk the myths surrounding them" (Underwood and Wells 1995–6). The typical mode of debunking is to render the once-mysterious tunnels almost entirely utilitarian. There was not only the challenge of exploring and conquering the tunnels through legend-telling or the enactment of the legend, then, but there was the mental challenge of disenchanting them. Bob Jones University, the University of Virginia, Texas A&M University, Rhodes College, and Christian Brothers University have all entertained attempts to disenchant their tunnel legends. The process of disenchanting the legends reveals to the individual that he or she can exercise control, create knowledge, and manifest power in an environment—the bureaucratic and institutional college or university—that otherwise foregrounds how little power the individual student actually has.

Tunnels on college and university campuses—including Cabrini College—should not warrant the attention they receive from students. As one student newspaper reported: "Not much exists down in the steam tunnels except high-voltage cabling, pipes, and a few entrances to buildings around campus" (Hurt 1997). What is intriguing about tunnel legends is that they hold students' attention just the same. A University of Virginia student offers some insight: "I don't think I know anyone who enjoys frat parties and also goes steam tunneling. I have a lot of friends in fraternities and sororities, but I just would not take them down there. I don't think they could appreciate it, because you need a weird type to go down there, someone who finds it invigorating. It's one of the dangerous things you can do but still be safe" (Tsai 2001). Fraternity and sororities provide their own rites of passage (although they

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provide many coming-of-age experiences, as well). The UVA student notes that absent this sanctioned rite of passage, students will initiate themselves. Tunnel legends provide this initiatory moment—this introduction to one’s capabilities—by posing as taboo knowledge or a dangerous experience that can be disenchanting, however temporarily, by a capable individual.

## Conclusion

Tunnels crisscross the underground of colleges and universities across the nation. The size and use of these tunnels—whether simple water and electrical pipes or something larger—remain the stuff of legends. Legendary though they are, tunnels on college and university campuses seem to provide institutions, like Cabrini College, distinction. Tunnel legends serve a similar identity-building function for individuals by offering a rite of passage. Telling or enacting these legends reveals students’ capabilities, as students come to know or to explore what institutional authorities would rather forbid and as students experience the disenchantment of realizing that the tunnels are not as magical and mysterious as they once believed.

Colleges and universities are drawn to the underground. It is a richly symbolic landscape that may be used to understand one’s world and one’s life above ground. This happens at Cabrini College as readily as it does at other institutions. Make no mistake: our study of the significance of tunnel legends on college and university campuses is not exhaustive. More stories remain to be mined. What these tunnels are all about remains hidden—but not too deep. It can be seen just below the surface of things.

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# Tyke's Ice Fishing

BY RUBY MARCOTTE

I recently had the pleasure of having lunch with some good friends, Alex Mangel, Yvonne Lind, and Gail Strickland in Whitehall, New York. We were there to interview a local man named Steven Phillips, but called Tyke by many. I had heard about Tyke, the owner and operator of Tyke's Bait Shop on New York Route 22 in Whitehall, but more importantly, I was interested in the story behind an ice fishing contest that he has been hosting for the past twenty-eight years on South Bay, Lake Champlain, just north of Whitehall.

There is no trouble getting him to talk about what has turned into a most

satisfying endeavor with the local parents and children. Tyke's goal has been to provide a way for families to spend a day together doing something that is a hobby for many in the area. While listening to Tyke talk about the people who have participated in the ice fishing contest year after year, one thing is clear: Tyke loves children.

A lot of work has to be done before the big day. New York state troopers, game wardens, and many volunteers—some who participated in the ice fishing contest when they were kids—plow the snow from the ice and drill hundreds of holes. In 1976, the first year of the contest, about forty

Boy Scouts and a few girls participated. Tyke asked one little girl, "Did you catch a fish?" She looked up at him and replied, "No." "Well," Tyke says, "there is nothing worse than seeing a little girl with a sad face." So he went back to his house and returned with fifty one-dollar bills. Tyke climbed up on a snowbank and threw the money into the wind. The kids all scattered and caught the money as it came down. Tyke invited the ones who caught two or three dollars over to the hot dog stand; he wanted to tell them something. "Now you boys are Scouts, and I want to see what kind of men you are. Some of those girls didn't get any dollars. What do you think



Steven "Tyke" Phillips (standing) admires a contestant's catch. Photo: George Ward



Tyke's Bait Shop in Whitehall, New York. Photo: George Ward

ought to happen?”

The boys shared the dollars with some of the girls, and the Lucky Buck was born. “Now that shows a little love, right there,” Tyke told them. From then on, Tyke would go to the bank and get crisp new one-dollar bills and sign each one with his name and date, to be handed out to young and old alike. His Lucky Buck has become his trademark. I think he asks everyone he sees if they have one, and if they say no, he pulls out his wallet and hands them a personalized Lucky Buck.

My friends and I decided to attend the 2005 event. At the water's edge a little trailer is set up, and volunteers give out free hotdogs and hamburgers. Tyke adds, “The kids can have all the beer they want—as long as there's a root in front of it.” A big hit of the day is always the generator-powered cotton candy machine operated by Jack Eggleston, the local judge, and Joe Hamlin. They work nonstop for hours providing kids and adults with a delightfully sticky confection.

As the kids fish, they bring their catch to a trailer that features photos and mounted prize fish from years past. Jeff Hamlin, Joe's son and a former child contestant, is on hand

to help. Jeff's two young daughters are in the contest this year, making them the third generation to fish in Tyke's contest. At the trailer kids from two to sixteen count out the fish they have just caught and put them in a tub. Size doesn't matter: the fish range from hardly bigger than a minnow to many inches long. Participants are given a bright orange ticket for each fish caught. These tickets are very important, because later in the contest, the tickets will be randomly drawn for gracious gifts, bought with the love of children in mind. I notice that as the afternoon winds down and the contest is about to close, Tyke goes around asking all the kids if they caught a fish and got a ticket. If they hadn't caught any that day he would lead them up to the trailer and pick a fish out of the tub. Then he would say, “Here, catch.” The children would put out their hands, catch the fish, and Tyke would give them an orange ticket to assure that they would get a prize later on. Tyke wanted to guarantee that every—yes, every—kid who participated would win a prize. He and his volunteers would scout around the stores for prizes all year long, buying bicycles, stuffed animals, and fish poles, children's outdoor equipment, camping gear, and more fish

poles.

While the fishing is going on outdoors, inside a local restaurant at the South Bay boat launch, preparations are being made for the grand finale of the day. It is here that all of the contestants will gather to receive their prizes while parents, grandparents, and friends look on. When Tyke enters the room, there is no doubt that he is much loved for the years of dedication he has put into the ice fishing contest. He is quick to point out that the reason everyone is there is because of the kids, and he gets started right away giving out the prizes. The joy, anticipation, and excitement on all of the children's faces is priceless. They wait for their turn to be called to the front of the room for the prize of the day. I can hear a little girl about four years old behind me, who has just won a teddy bear. She comes back to her dad and says, “But Dad, I wanted a fishing pole. Can't I trade the bear in and get a fish pole? I want to be able to go fishing with you.” The teddy bear is gladly exchanged for the fish pole, and all is well with the little one.

It is evident during our conversation over lunch that one thing motivates this eighty-three-year-old man. He just plain loves children. “I like to teach the kids about love,” Tyke says, “and I've always loved kids.” The day of fishing may be cold and blustery, but because of Tyke's love and generosity, there is a warm place in the hearts of all those who attend Steve “Tyke” Phillips's Ice Fishing Derby for Kids.

Ruby Marcotte is a traditional artist descended from the Sacandaga Valley Abenakis, French Canadians, and eighteenth-century New England settlers. She is assistant director of the Black Crow Network, a not-for-profit educational and cultural organization. She is active in her community, serving as municipal historian for the town of Day in northern Saratoga County.

# Spaghetti with Kimch'i

BY LYNN CASE EK FELT

Ask most kids what their favorite food is and you'll probably get answers like "spaghetti" or "pizza." Ask Shin Tupper's son Joshua that question and you'll get the same replies, except that he likes his spaghetti and pizza topped with kimch'i. Kimch'i, a mixture of fermented vegetables, is a staple of Korean cooking, so much so that every meal includes at least three constants: soup, rice, and some form of kimch'i. While pizza with shrimp-flavored fermented cabbage might not be to everyone's taste, it is a fine example of the American melting pot at work on traditional foodways.

When Shin Tupper came to North Carolina in 1988 with her U.S. Marine husband, she never expected to find herself in Pierrepont, New York. But a divorce and remarriage brought a self-described city girl to a rural town whose inhabitants tend to distrust anything new, especially in the culinary line. Luckily her husband and his family were the exception. They really loved her Korean cooking and enthusiastically encouraged her to keep her traditions alive. But it wasn't easy.

Without a nearby Asian grocery, Shin depended on visits to Korea every two years to replenish her supply of staples. Although shopping here for Asian items is easier now, she still prefers to buy many things in her favorite shops in Korea, where she is familiar with brand names and with the quality of fresh ingredients. But some things just weren't available. Older immigrants taught her to gather bracken fiddleheads because they closely resembled ones from home. She learned that Coke and ruby red grapefruit juice make good meat tenderizers for bulgogi. She'd never before gardened, but she began to grow Korean cucumbers and napa cabbage so that she could make her kimch'i. Then she took a job in dining services at St. Lawrence University. Shin began to feed her family American-style breakfasts before hurrying off to spend her days serving up Larryburgers. But when she got home to start dinner, the burgers were still replaced by mung bean pancakes, fried

bean curd, and—of course—soup, rice, and kimch'i. Slowly her cooking changed a bit to reflect American foodways, but the kimch'i was not negotiable.

The fact that many Korean immigrants are women like Shin, already married to Americans, might lead one to think that they would be more quickly assimilated into mainstream American culture than were immigrant groups who came over as entire families in earlier times. But several factors help keep the Korean traditions alive and flourishing. There are now over 400 Koreans in Watertown and at least three Korean churches: Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist. North Country Koreans travel up to two hours to attend church in Watertown on Sundays and to socialize at church activities during the week. In the late 1990s, Shin joined the newly formed Korean Methodist church in Watertown, finding a community largely of women, many of whom had also made their way to the North Country by way of military marriages. These close-knit church communities are strong supports to members trying to retain their culture and language.

Since family is paramount in Korean culture, most of the women in the church log considerable flying time traveling back and forth to see their parents, and relatives come here for long visits. Shin's parents will be spending October through December in Pierrepont because they want to see snow, something her father remembers from his childhood near the Korean demilitarized zone. This close family feeling and the extended visits with relatives help Korean immigrants keep their traditions alive.

Finally, in spite of the women's movement, women still do the bulk of the cooking in most American households. This means that they have a better chance of preserving their culinary heritage, especially when encouraged by their husbands and children, than would a similar group of male immigrants who married American women.

At this point Shin's daughter Hannah is too young to be concerned with cooking. It

## Bulgogi

1 pound well-marbled beef tenderloin or sirloin. (Shin often places her beef in mashed kiwi fruit, Coke, or ruby red grapefruit juice to tenderize it overnight.)

1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 tablespoon sesame oil  
1 tablespoon sesame salt\*  
Freshly ground black pepper  
4 medium green onions, coarsely chopped  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, finely chopped  
1 tablespoons water or white wine

Cut the beef into thin slices about 3 inches square and 1/8 inch thick. This can be done at the butcher shop. Marinate the beef in the remaining ingredients for up to one and a half hours. Traditionally, this meat is broiled at the table over charcoal. It can be broiled in the oven, pan-broiled, or cooked on an outside grill as well. Since it is so thin, it will cook quickly, so be careful not to overcook it.

\*To make sesame salt, heat sesame seeds gently in a heavy pan until they turn brown and swell. Pulverize the seeds in a mortar with one teaspoonful of salt per cup of sesame seed.

will be interesting to see in years to come which of her mother's recipes she keeps in her own file, which she modifies to include more readily available ingredients, and which she replaces entirely with American dishes. Her future husband's ethnic background and tastes may play a role in those decisions, but I like to imagine that spaghetti topped with kimch'i will be a treasured family recipe for

Lynn Case Ekfelt is retired from her position as a special collections librarian and university archivist at St. Lawrence University. She is the author of *Good Food Served Right: Traditional Recipes and Food Customs from New York's North Country* (Canton, New York: Traditional Arts in Upstate New York, 2000).



# “Thinking Culturally: An Insider’s Perspective”

## *A Panel from the New York Folklore Society’s Writing Folklore Conference*

The following is a transcript of a panel presentation from the New York Folklore Society’s Field Trip, “Writing Folklore,” held in collaboration with the Hudson Valley Writer’s Center and City Lore, Inc., on September 24, 2005. The session was held at the Warner Library in Tarrytown. Support for this conference was provided by Poets and Writers, through support from the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

### **Panelists**

Moderator: *Tom van Buren, Westchester Arts Council*

Tom van Buren, Ph.D., is the staff folklorist for the Westchester County Arts Council, as well as a staff member at the Center for Traditional Music and Dance.

*Joanne Mulcahy, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon*

Joanne Mulcahy, Ph.D., teaches and directs the Writing Culture Summer Institute at the Northwest Writing Institute of Lewis and Clark College. Her publications include *Birth and Rebirth on an Alaskan Island: The Life of an Alutiiq Healer* and several essays.

*Kevin White, State University of New York at Oswego*

Kevin White is a Ph.D. candidate at SUNY–Buffalo’s Center for the Americas. A member of the Haudenosaunee Mohawk tribe, his dissertation is a study of Native American narrative and issues in its presentation to a non–Native American audience. He is currently employed at SUNY–Oswego.

*Kirin Narayan, University of Wisconsin at Madison*

Kirin Narayan, Ph.D., is a professor of anthropology and languages and cultures of Asia at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Her books include *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching* and the novel *Love, Stars, and All That*.

### **Tom van Buren**

We start off today with personal perspectives of major participants in the conference. The theme is “Thinking Culturally: An Insider’s Perspective.”

Last night Kirin Narayan gave a wonderful reading from her latest work reflecting

on her own biographical experience: her biography of her own personal experience of growing up in India and of being bicultural. One thing that struck me was talking about one’s experience in one’s own family and upbringing and processing the cultural information and experience that comes down

through one’s ancestors and environment. I was also the youngest of four in a family that brought together a lot of different perspectives, from the Middle East to the Hudson Valley. And I’ve been working most of my professional life in folklore and applied ethnomusicology, in presenting others and being the outsider, but at the same time working a lot with immigrant artists who themselves are outsiders here. So there’s a whole interesting dialogue back and forth about who’s the outsider, who’s the insider, and ultimately when a presentation happens, you hope and strive to have the artists or the tradition bearers be as much relating from their inside experience. I’ve been an insider here, yet traveling between so many worlds, I’m never quite sure who’s inside and who’s outside. I look forward very much to hearing what the panelists have to say on this subject, and I hope that you will participate with questions and comments of your own.

### **Joanne Mulcahy**

Thinking culturally. As Tom mentioned, I did fieldwork in Alaska and also with a Mexican *curandera* in Oregon that I’m working on a book about. But I have written extensively as an “insider” about my own Irish–American family, mainly in creative nonfiction. But what I really want to do is to lay out some thoughts that were important to me in thinking culturally in a general way.

*Joanne leads the group in a reading of Naomi Shabib Nye’s poem, “The Man Who Makes Brooms.”*

So you come with these maps in your head  
and I come with voices chiding me to  
“speak for my people”  
and we march around like guardians of  
memory  
till we find the man on the short stool  
who makes brooms.

I am starting with the idea of “the maps in our heads” as kind of a cultural framework, and the notion of who has to “speak for their people” and act as “guardians of memory” and all the parts of the poem that are so provocative for me in thinking about culture. This poem really provokes me to think about the things that have been most meaningful in my understanding of culture: the idea of the individual and the collective, the idea of cultural encounters, and how we know who we are through encounters with others, and the kind of emergent and spontaneous quality of that. Also, to think culturally is to have to hold very contradictory views at the same time in your mind and to realize that they have to coexist and sometimes can’t be reconciled.

So I wanted to just tell a few stories not so much from my fieldwork experience, but stories that embody for me some of those ideas. One of them is from when I was a graduate student in anthropology before I began to study folklore. I was getting my master’s and had just come from living and working on Kodiak Island, where I started out as a waitress and worked in the community. Deciding to study culture was a natural outgrowth of living in this community, where I had become very attached to a group of women. When I got to graduate school there was a person on the faculty who suggested to me, “Wasn’t it really just a bit bleak, these Eskimos eking out a living? And wouldn’t I want to consider another culture that was more exotic and symbolic?” I was stunned by the implication (and this will sound very odd to folklorists) that there were certain cultures that matter more than others, that they’re more worth studying or more important in some way.

This spiraled into a depression and triggered the sense that I was in the wrong place. I got a job working for a place called the Center for Independent Living, which helped elderly

people in their homes. Through that job I was sent to a trailer park on the outskirts of Madison, Wisconsin, to work with a family in a very low-income area. The woman worked in a grocery store and her husband was a recovering alcoholic who wasn’t working. They had three children, and they had taken in their great-grandmother who was dying. She was literally a shriveled woman dressed in black, laid out on what looked like a cot in the center of the room. And this family had the most extraordinary rituals, stories, and ways of caring for this woman.

This became a high point of my year in graduate school, going to this trailer once a week. When the woman died, the young woman had been saving these dried rose petals—and I have to say this was through one of the bleakest winters I’ve ever spent in Wisconsin. It was so cold that it made Kodiak Island, Alaska, look like the banana belt. It was just in every way an utterly bleak time for me. This young woman had saved these dried rose petals in a jar so that when the great-grandmother died, she created this trail to heaven for her children to follow to say good-bye to their great-grandmother.

It was so powerful, and it made everything that I was learning in graduate school about ritual and story and performance completely alive for me in a way that nothing before really had. It opened me up to really thinking about my own family in new ways, to thinking about the cultures I was working with in Alaska, and subsequently I’ve hearkened back to it as a moment of real illumination.

I’m sure we all have experiences of that kind of cultural encounter, where we saw something in a new way. So I think that’s really the only story I’ll probably tell right now. Thank you.

### **Kevin White**

Thank you. When I start to think about culture, or thinking culturally, and what it means to me, an insider’s perspective, this is actually what most of my academic work has been geared towards: analyzing all the stories that have gone, have been gathered, before me. And what’s fascinating about it to me is looking at it as a member of this group

that’s studying somebody else, as an insider of this group that may have been trained by somebody else that was an outsider of the group. It’s a really weird place to be, because most of these writings are dated from the 1890s through the early 1900s. And as I started to struggle with this I began to realize that one of the interesting points of question for me was how my life has impacted my interpretation of this material.

These stories were gathered in the 1890s into a big time of change in the historical relationship between the U.S. and the American Indian. The Indian was the vanishing race in that these stories were being gathered to preserve that race in text. And there’s always that tension between orality and textuality, but we don’t talk about how those gatherers’ lives shaped them and their collection and their gathering of the information. I think that’s one thing we confuse . . . oral historians and folklorists and even mythologists. We don’t look at how our own lives shape how we are looking at other cultures.

My Ph.D. teacher has come up with a great line that he and I have debated quite often, and it’s about our imprint on the story itself. And that was something that becomes interesting between the 1890s, through the 1930s, 1950s. There’s this big shift to find the one right, accurate version of this story. In my case I’m working with the creation story, the cosmology of the Iroquois. There are forty written versions of it, and there’s this quest in the field of anthropology and within mythology and even folklore about who’s got the right version, and if there’s any variations in the versions it becomes a storyteller’s self-promotion.

I don’t think that’s right.

The storyteller had a very difficult job in my perspective to narrate this ancient story in a contextualization that would make sense and be meaningful to his audience, including this gatherer, and we don’t look at that enough. And when we begin to struggle with that, it becomes this fascinating tug and pull on it.

I look at how my stories are shaped within my own life. I’m an urban Indian. I wasn’t raised on the reservation. I **cannot** tell you why the Lakota believe the way they do, why

a Hopi believes the way they do. That's not my culture group. But I can tell you what my imprint on the versions of the creation story that I have read are as a modern-day Indian. And that's one thing that was fascinating: this tension between those that had gathered the stories and their quest for the one right story or one correct version, and the pragmatic world view of the Haudenosaunee. We understood everybody came to that story, from young to old—in one place, in one point in time, at that one instance—and understood the story in the way they were going to. That's another thing we don't debate enough about, is that this type of storytelling for us was meant to excite a dialogue. It was meant to engage in a discussion.

My version and interpretation is not going to be the same as yours, nor should it be. But that's how we dialogue, that's how we discuss, because what else is there to be doing during the winter months? Especially in places like Oswego. We get snow, and it's deep and it's cold, and you hang out and you hunker down and you tell stories, and that's how the fish grows from this big to this big, so that's when we begin to look at these kinds of things. It's each generation's imprint on that story that makes it unique for that generation, and that's where I think it becomes fun to look at for me.

I've gone through coursework being kind of fractured in a lot of ways, because I think as an American. Sometimes I think as a Haudenosaunee person, which is different—when you really get into the nitty-gritty of it—than what somebody would call an Iroquois person. But I also think as an Iroquois person. I'm a veteran of the military, so there's that kind of thinking that goes in there. All these facets have shaped how I have an outlook on life. And so I'm very conscious of the role, because usually if I'm going to get somebody's story, there's a reason behind that, there's something in that, that is fascinating, that I want to hear, that I want to stew about, and I want to ponder.

It's fun trying, because even when I teach the students I teach every semester, they

always want me to interpret what it means for some other kind of tribal culture. I can't do it. It's just not in my perspective to do that, because it's a different culture. There's a different set of beliefs. There's a different set of belief structures. How we believe things and why we believe things, and that's where the interesting points in philosophical outlook in the world we live in lie.

The man I work most with in my dissertation is Hewitt, and he was a Tuscarora man that ended up being prolific. He produced ten thousand pages of documentation and only published a handful of pages, or a few hundred pages, I should say. He was one of the few people who went out and learned all six languages and gathered at least four versions of the creation story in the original language, but then he imprinted by trying to validate it through Western culture. He used biblical language, which is fascinating . . . you know, because we didn't speak that way. "Thou should go do this." But that's the way he did it. There was a method to his madness. He was trying legitimize the Indian in an era when the Indian was illegitimate, not accepted. And he was trying to show the similarities and the grasps that are there for the cultures to embrace in the conversation, and yet for the most part these books remain now on bookshelves that hardly anybody studies. It's interesting, because now it's my turn to ponder these great stories and try to figure out what I think they're saying and where I think they're going to go in the future. So I think that'll be where I conclude for right now.

#### Kirin Narayan

As Kevin mentioned, not having the answers yet, I was thinking the whole issue of ethics is really a space where there never seem to be fixed answers because each situation kind of makes you rethink it all afresh. What is your human responsibility? What is your scholarly responsibility? And I always think of Rilke's exhortation in *Letters to the Young Poet*. "Live the questions. Sometimes if you live them long enough, you might live your way into an answer." But the basic thing is living the questions, and I think one can never feel the smugness of arrival in this space.

I just had a bit of a jolt of anxiety earlier

*As part of the NYFS's recent Writing Folklore Conference, Steve Zeitlin led a writing exercise based on the beginning prompt "I am." Here is one participant's submission.*

#### Eating Alone

I am from fields of manure and wheat,  
from cow corn high enough to hide  
in, from  
creek beds of violets, daffodils

I am from stone springhouses, from  
bottles of milk and cream  
shuttered, cool in August noons

I am from smokehouses, from  
hooks and hatchets, from  
blood and feathers

I am from farms with two houses,  
the small one for grandfather and  
grandmother  
when deep-veined hands drop from  
tractors, from

cauldrons of corn meal mush  
I am from winding staircases and attics,  
from  
gauzy curtains in summer's night  
breezes

I am from jar after glass jar of tomatoes,  
green  
beans, peaches, and applesauce, but  
I am also from chow-chow, dried corn,  
horseradish, scrapple

shoo-fly-pie, schmeerkase, sauerkraut,  
soupe, and  
all those other foods you  
won't eat with me

—Margaret Yocum

when Ellen asked if this might be taped. I was going to tell a story that's based on my first book, so it will say: "Oh, am I going to get it right in the way that it was told in this book?"

So I am taking you back to my first formal fieldwork, which was when I was a graduate student in Berkeley, and I had not intended to do this as my dissertation. It was something I wanted to do with the old holy man, *sadhu*, one of the people who Rahoul, my brother (who I mentioned to you yesterday), went to live with. Rahoul

went to live in Swamiji's ashram, which was on a mountain top near Nasik. Swamiji very much believed in working with children. He said, "With adults it's often too late, but if you start with children, you can really change the world. If you want to change the world, start with children."

So I had been very intrigued with Swamiji's use of storytelling as a form of religious instruction. When I was a little kid, he seemed like a Scherherezade among *sadhus*. And being a graduate student, I felt that I had some of the analytic tools to record some of this, and also he was old and in not terribly good health, so it was just first intended as a summer project. And people told me you know, "This is too close, somebody you've known since your childhood. You don't really want to be a scholar here." But then there was such wonderful material at the end of one summer that I had spent in Nasik with a tape recorder at my knee, and Swamiji was meeting people in his *darshan*, or audience, public audience hours, that I went back a following year and spent some more months.

And at one point in the course of the second year—I was sitting there very serenely—he came up with this parable. He said, "*Mataji*, think about this, mother." (I was like a mother, like all women were.) He at this point was in his sixties, often talking through a mouth full of tobacco, and so it makes transcription sometimes a little hard, and lying in an aluminum deck chair with a big tub of bananas under it, you know? And people would come and go, and he said:

So think about this, *mataji*.  
Suppose you and I are walking on a road together.  
A little child has shit in the road.  
We both step in it.  
I just wipe my foot, and I move on.  
But you . . . **you're** a scholar, so you have to look around.  
So what was that? *Kirin pretends to look down at her foot*.  
Ooooooh, something brown. *She nipes something off her foot*.  
Something sticky. . . . *Kirin pretends to smell an invisible substance on her hand*.  
**"Oh, Shit!"**  
You lie awake at night thinking, What

is it?  
What was the cause of it?  
What is the meaning of it?  
You don't get a good night's sleep.

This really caused me to stop short and see the parody of what everybody has taken for granted. Everyday reality had to me become this object of very earnest scrutiny.

And another occasion, Swamiji was giving kind of a disposition very informally about how so much was becoming a business. He said even religious teachings are becoming a business. I'm sitting there listening—there's not really a folk narrative going, so I'm not paying that much huge attention—and all of a sudden, I'm being drawn into this. He says:

And this *mataji* here,  
this woman here,  
you're taking all these stories on tapes,  
and you're going to go to America,  
and people are going to ask you:  
"What is *Bhagwan*? What is God? What is *Bhagwan*?"  
And you know you're going to tell them things, and you're taking all of this material to do a business with it.

And I kind of really weakly protested, "No, Swamiji, I'm not going to do a business." But I realized even as I said that that, yes, this was becoming my academic currency. This was something that would allow me to write my dissertation, get a job, and of course have the credentials to sit here at this table at this moment.

And he said, "Don't just take these stories; understand them."

And I think, again, this brings up the whole issue of the insider versus stepping aside to see what you can take out of it in terms of thinking about culture, which is often the stance that we take as scholars, as to thinking **with** culture—where it's becoming part of you. And as a religious teacher, Swamiji was most interested in my own growth as a human being, not necessarily in the grand things I might say in scholarship.

In fact, when I took my dissertation back to him, and was quite pleased with myself—the big, bound, red auspicious dissertation—and gave it to him, he sort of

flipped through it upside down, and he said, "Oh yeah, we'll put it on the altar . . . now let me teach you how to make *poha*, which is a nice snack."

So, it was just something I had done. I said, "Do you want me to tell you what's in this?" He said, "No, I can see from the shine on your face you did a nice job, so let's get on with the next thing of cooking." So, also a reminder that projects which can be such a weighty and self-important mission are just a passing moment in the lives of the people who we work with.

Now I'm using these illustrations in a situation where people had told me I was too close to remind us all of how it's really hard to say what is an "authentic insider," because there are so many planes that allow us to identify with and simultaneously set us apart in any situation that we're working with people. On one hand, yes, I had grown up partly in Nasik where Swamiji was and had known him for many years. But I wasn't a *sadhu*, a holy man. I wasn't of his age or his gender or his spiritual preoccupations.

And this is something that I've thought about in many of the other contexts in which I've done fieldwork, the moments when you are really drawn close and feel the warmth of fellow feeling, and then the moments at which you are really revealed to be someone with quite a different agenda among which is the scholarly one, different preoccupations. And one of the awkwardnesses I'm sure you all feel is when you might feel that in traversing those boundaries, back and forth, between being such a close insider that your presence isn't even noticed, to being the one who's stepping apart and commenting on it and asking the meaning and the cause of it and thinking about representing it, is what are you also betraying in some sense? Especially in my work with Kangra women in the Northwest Himalayas, I've really had to go back sometimes and think, "No, that was told to me as a friend. It wasn't told to me as an anthropologist." Luckily with things like phones now I can, if I'm writing something, call people and say, "Would you mind if this went in?"

So the  going ethical issues aren't just

# Cultural Democracy: What's It Good For?

BY TOM VAN BUREN

In a welcome development, ethnomusicologists working in the public sector are increasingly reflecting and writing from a theoretical standpoint on the lessons of their work. Anthony Seeger, former director of the Archive of Traditional Music at Indiana University and more recently of Smithsonian Folkways recordings, has been a strong voice for such work within the discipline, which has only recently given serious consideration to its public sector. Folklorists have enjoyed a more hospitable environment for such in-quiry, but folklore's focus on folk culture has tended to steer scholars away from discussions of the wider culture and institutional and political priorities and toward the concerns of marginal or niche cultures. As the corporate culture tightens its hold on the mainstream media and the margins shrink, all workers in the vineyards of community-based arts would do well to share the wisdom of their labors and sharpen the focus of their advocacy.

Ethnomusicologist James Bau Graves' new book, *Cultural Democracy: The Arts, Community, and the Public Purpose* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 2005), is just such an effort. Graves codirects the Center for Cultural Exchange, formerly known as Portland Performing Arts, a leading regional traditional arts organization. He has been working in southern Maine since the early 1990s with community-based collaborations that support and present traditional artists.

Published with the tagline "how America shortchanges art and communities, and what can be done about it," the book examines key American cultural issues in the light of participation in traditional arts. Drawing from his fieldwork and his experience presenting folk and traditional arts, Graves compares the assumptions of both commercial culture and elite institutional culture to those of home-based ethnic cultural manifestations. The conclusion that America shortchanges the arts in general should come as no surprise. In

2000 Canada exceeded the level of U.S. per capita direct support for the arts by a factor of seven, France by nine, and Germany by a whopping fourteen (117). Support in the United States has dropped in real value since then. Such figures are mirrored by similar disparities in humanitarian foreign aid.

Why does this matter? We in America have grown inured to a lack of community in society. We have lost touch with a sense of shared values in what Graves calls the "public purpose." There is little remaining consensus on the value of education, health care, avoiding crippling debt, mutual civility, the administration of justice, and so forth. Those working at non-profit institutions, who are also keen observers of the cultural ramifications of globalization and commercialization, can scarcely help but reflect on the changing sense of public space and purpose. As politics get increasingly nasty and exclusionary, we would do well to consider what is left of the cultural middle ground as it applies to our work in the folk arts.

Graves' central purpose is to delineate what makes the arts resonate for different cultural communities and to elevate cultural practices that derive their meaning from the shared experience of community and tradition, as opposed to the abstract value of art objects on the printed page, behind the proscenium of the stage, or out of reach on a museum wall. His argument empowers—at least in concept—locally rooted culture. It is also a meditation on Graves' experience with all levels of public presentation, from participation in funding panels, to public programming, to the mediation of competing agendas affecting a given culture.

The first portion of the book focuses on the dichotomies within community culture. Later chapters deal with practical issues in supporting and presenting community-based arts, highlighting problems and making suggestions for improvement. These practical issues include funding, educational work, the mediation role of arts programmers, and both

negative and positive aspects of globalization (particularly the growth and empowerment of transnational communities). The final chapter lays out four key lessons that sum up Graves' accumulated wisdom. According to Graves, culturally empowered communities require 1) regular access to master traditional artists; 2) "prominent and public platforms for demonstrating and celebrating the vitality of their artists and their heritage" (209); 3) "continual exposure to the stimulation and cross-fertilization of encounters with other cultures, both related and distant" (210); and 4) both comprehensive and long-term support.

The book at times reads like a litany of references, quotations, and examples from both Graves' own work and experiences from the wider field; perhaps more examples appear than are needed to make the good points central to the thesis. With judicious use of the index and systematic perusal, however, one can glean extensive and varied information, while still following the basic argument of the book. Despite its subject of cultural democracy, the book is squarely aimed at the cultural professional. As valid as most every point and example is, community-based cultural advocates and tradition bearers might have difficulty wading through the text. The book's lessons might be lost on the readers most central to the kinds of cultural dialogue it calls for. Certain sections stand solidly on their own, as meditations on issues in cultural presentation and at times as cautionary tales. As a reflection of the work of public sector folklorists in this time, *Cultural Democracy* deserves a place in the emerging canon on traditional arts programming and analysis in the

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# An Accordion Story:

## *Following the Trail of Roxy and Nellie Caccamise*

BY CHRISTINE F. ZINNI

In 1997, I returned to the upstate region where I was born and began working on a series of video documentaries about Italian American traditions. In the process of interviewing people in my Southside neighborhood of Batavia, I was struck by the shared memories of music that carried over the streets. Following this echo to Roxy's Music Store, I learned about an important dimension of regional history and the protean character of the rural musical experience. Taking an actor-action-centered approach to life history narratives, I found this accordion story disclosed some of the many meanings of folk and fame in people's everyday lives. The accordion story as I see it—with the help of the musicians who were involved—is about the ways in which history, culture(s), and music(s) are emergent phenomena, produced through dynamic interactions between individuals and communities.

### **Accordion: from the Italian, *accordare*, to be in tune.**

Giant bellows and keyboards form an accordion at the entrance to Roxy's Music Store in Batavia, New York. Roxy Caccamise is no longer around, but a steady stream of aspiring musicians, seasoned performers, and parents with their children stop in to chat with his daughter Rose about music. Adjacent to the piano section, a wall of laminated newspaper clippings, articles from trade journals like *Accordion World*, and sepia-tinted pictures testify to her family's roots and their dense web of interpersonal connections.

These images are a reminder of how music-making—or what ethnomusicologist Charles Keil calls *musicizing* (“sounding, singing, dancing, celebrating; our ability to participate with each other in life”)—is a dynamic process where vital currents flow from one person to another to shape local events that intersect with larger cultural histories. Customers learn how a second-floor music studio on Jackson Street grew to become an accordion school on Main Street in

less than five years; they find out that many of Nellie and Roxy's students are still playing at local venues, that some have gone on to garner national awards and international renown.

Lining the upper portion of the store's back wall, placed underneath stained glass windows salvaged from St. Joseph's church, is an assortment of accordions that project a kaleidoscope of colors, shapes, and sizes. Each instrument has a different history, but the majority share the common heritage of being manufactured by Italian American companies. Not all of the visitors tune into the fact the Caccamise family were agents for highly prized accordion brands like Excelsior, Soprani, Guilletti, and Italo-American, nor do they always register the names of Roxy and Nellie's protégés: Charles Magnante, Pietro and Guido Diro, Pietro Frosini, Frank Graviana, Joseph Beviano, Dick Contini, Anthony Gallarini, Eugene Ettone, and Russ Messina. What

comes across to any person, however, who spends time at Roxy's is that there is a story there.

In their prodigious work on Italian immigration, *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience*, Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale suggest some of the ways music has been entwined with Italian identity. The authors maintain music was the art most closely associated with Italians in the first waves of Italian immigration to *l'America* in the late 1800s. Mangione's allusions to a legacy of stage performers and musicians became a working hypothesis for my research and efforts to create a video documenting the significance of the accordion story to life in the rural upstate region.

In what ways could a material object, a piano accordion, hold a key to the socioeconomic and political history of Italian Americans in western New York State? Could a musical instrument be a marker for cultural identity, a means of crossing the tracks and bringing the margin to the center stage, and a medium of assimilation at one and the same time? In the story of how the piano accordion came to towns in the region, I found that answers to these questions were not separate from the parts people played in the creation of musical spaces, as the confluence of musicians, people, and circumstances and the vital current that flowed through them—music—were all intricately bound together.

One beginning to this story is in the town of LeRoy. Built up along Route 5,



Promotional photo of Roxy in "peasant" dress, circa 1935. Courtesy of Rose Caccamise.

the well-worn old Indian trail ribbons out from the eastern door of the Oneida peoples near Syracuse to the western door of the Haudenosaunee near Fort Niagara. By the early part of the twentieth century the prosperous town was home to the Jell-O company, a canning factory, a cotton mill, and an airport. By the 1920s it harbored a

sizable community of roughly a thousand people of Italian descent hailing from a variety of *paese* in the *Messogiorno*. Following other *paesani* from Valledormo, Sicily, Giuseppe Caccamise immigrated to the region at the turn of the century and opened a grocery store on LeRoy's Pleasant Street. One of the few things Giuseppe brought with him on

the voyage from Palermo was a prized button accordion made by the expert craftsmen of Castelfardido, Italy. Relatives and friends remember Giuseppe playing his twelve-bass button accordion at backyard gatherings and local social events and teaching his son Roxy how to play a number of traditional folk and popular songs. But a player's range was limited with the button accordion, and Roxy yearned to play the versatile new piano accordion that had chord buttons for all major and minor keys on the left, and three or more chromatic octaves on the right.

Unable to find many teachers of the piano accordion in the rural upstate area, after studying classical piano technique with a local graduate of the Eastman School of Music Roxy began traveling to the flourishing metropolis of Rochester to meet with the famous James "Jiggs" Carrol, also a graduate of Eastman and the leader of group called the Harmonicats. Jiggs, who was later to become the celebrated arranger for the Mitch Miller orchestra, convinced Roxy to play popular as well as classical and folk music. Roxy was sold on becoming a professional musician, but as he stated in an interview with the LeRoy paper some years later, "My own father thought accordion lessons were such a luxury it was a joke. I dug ditches and worked on farms to get money for lessons. Then when I was in my late teens, I was finally able to purchase an accordion. And used to spend seven or eight hours a day practicing."

Ethnomusicologist Jim Kimball tells us that by 1910, "across New York State the piano had become the principal accompanying instrument for dance orchestras," but by the thirties "things had changed considerably." According to Kimball, "Everything seemed faster, microphones had arrived . . . violins were still around, as were pianos (though not so reliably maintained). . . . Important new instruments to western New York dance bands included piano accordion, guitar, and tenor banjo." These facts were perhaps nowhere better evidenced than in the musical experience of Roger Kelly and his extended family, whose four generations have entertained regional audiences for



The accordion school, with Nellie, Roxy, and Jimmy Cirrillo, 1938. Courtesy of Rose Caccamise.

more than a century. A dramatic illustration of the cross-fertilization of diverse musics in the region, Roger's Irish heritage and musical history became entwined with that of Italians on the day Roxy came by to visit his brother Woody. Although Roger's forte was the popular piano and guitar, his brother Woody had been playing the button accordion since he was ten years old. Eager to learn the piano accordion, Woody purchased one from Roxy. As Roger put it:

Roxy's the guy started accordions around here. He gave Woody lessons, he started everybody. Roxy had an old Chevy coupe with a rumble seat and he put accordions in there.... He'd bring 'em over and he get you started, and he'd sell 'em an "accor-ding" and give 'em a lesson. He'd get 'em started,

then he'd send another guy around. Roxy had the candle burning on both ends. He was always going here in the early '30s,'33, '34.... He had everybody playin' accordion.

Roger also describes the accordions as "magical things" with their inland mother-of-pearl and ivory, their deep crimson, cobalt blue, and jet black casings glistening in the sunlight. From the picture Roger paints, it seems clear that Roxy was selling more than material objects; he was also selling dreams.

Down the road a piece in the town of Perry, Roxy did a good job of convincing the parents of the young Joe Gambino and his neighbor, Sandy Consiglio, that the piano accordion was the thing of the future: an instrument that could launch their sons'

fame and fortune. Joe's parents might have been persuaded, but their son wasn't. "They had to look for me under the bridge ... on Saturday. That was lesson day, see?" says Joe, recalling his aversion to the discipline of practicing.

In nearby Mount Morris, the musical Passamonte brothers remembered the sound and look of the piano accordion capturing peoples' imagination. Nick Passamonte recalls a musician named Dutch Longini being the first in the area to buy a piano accordion. "Then," says Nick, "everyone had one. My brother Jim ... we would get together at [brother] Gus's barber shop—Gus cutting hair and others playing and challenging one other." Cousin Joe Gambino and his neighbor Sandy Consiglio would come over to play at family gatherings. Joe



La Barbera, who lived up the road on Stanley Street, also worked for Roxy for a spell selling accordions. He started up a successful dance band with his wife and sons.

This brings us to yet another place where we could begin this story: the point where a female accordionist enters the picture. Spending the early part of the Depression years on the road selling accordions and accordion lessons, Roxy was trying out an accordion in a well-known Wurlitzer store in Niagara Falls, when a Polish musician came up to him. Impressed by Roxy's playing, the musician informed him that there was a girl in town who was also a great accordionist. Would he like to meet her? Roxy's reply in effect sealed his fate, as the Polish musician organized a jam session the following day and invited the girl.

Nellie Barsocchi was only fifteen years old when she met Roxy, but she had already established a reputation in Niagara County as a wunderkind on the accordion. Known as a boom town and regional entertainment hotspot, Niagara Falls was the site of numerous manufacturing companies drawing cheap electric power from the Schoellkopf power station; the majesty of the falls also attracted scores of tourists who could take the New York Central Railroad to the heart of the town's lively club scene. One of the biggest musical draws was the Carborundum Band. Broadcasting its performances coast-to-coast on CBS radio every Saturday from the famed ballroom of Hotel Niagara, the highlight of their popular radio program came at the tail end with the sound of the regional landscape—"rushing water from the falls"—wired to the station from a live feed.

The director of the band, Dr. Edward D'Anna, had become a national celebrity and, like numerous other musicians featured in the area's establishments, was of Italian descent. One of the first persons to recognize and believe in Nellie's talent, he became a patron whose "good word" managed to land various gigs for Nellie and her father, not only at the famous Ray-Ott supper club

but also at the Lewiston country club, where father and daughter played table-to-table, entertaining patrons with popular Italian songs, along with American standards like "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and Irish tunes such as "My Wild Irish Rose" and "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." Whenever D'Anna showed up at the clubs where Nellie was performing, he would request traditional and popular Italian songs like "O Sole Mio," "Tesora Mio," and his favorite: the melancholic strains of "The Spring Serenade," or "Veridana Serendana" as it is known in Italian.

Nellie's father, like Roxy's, was wild about accordion music. Emigrating from Tuscany in 1910 at the age of sixteen, once he had secured a good-paying job as a welder at Niagara Falls's Rolling Works, Andreas Barsocchi ordered a 120-bass accordion from Castelfardido. When Nellie was eight years old, he sent to Italy for a sparkling 48-bass Ranco Antonio accordion, overlaid with shiny pink mother-of-pearl. After saving dimes toward the purchase of the instrument, Nellie recollected how "it arrived in three parts to avoid stiffer custom duties" and how adept her

father was in assembling it. Once she had progressed to playing "difficult" music, he converted the instrument to an eighty-base by giving it a row of "dominant seventh." Starting out by entering numerous amateur contests like the one at Amedola Theatre, where she and her father received \$5.00 as first prize, by her early teens Nellie exhibited all the makings for a successful stage career. She was enamored of the repertoire of famous Italian accordion artists from New York City, like the composer and arranger Pietro Diero, whom she had seen on stage in Toronto's Eaton Hall when she was twelve years old. When Roxy met Nellie that fateful day back in 1933, she was not only able to play Diero's most difficult compositions, but also had mastered some of the techniques of Pietro Frosini, an artist who developed what later became known as the "bellows shake." She was regularly commissioned to play before bigwigs like the Rands, owners of Marine Trust Bank, and others members of Buffalo's high society circuit. Along with Italian operettas such as "Il Trovatore," her repertoire included well-known American



Roxy greeting Lionel Hampton at the Jackson Street store in Batavia, New York, 1946. Courtesy of Rose Caccamise.

marches, overtures, and folk and popular music. Newspaper accounts regularly praised her virtuosity and her physical beauty. The Buffalo *News* reported on her performance of the Trieste Overture at Shea's Buffalo Theatre, describing her as a "vision dressed in a pink evening gown."

Located on the outer perimeter of the Genesee river valley, only fifty-some miles down the New York Central tracks from Niagara Falls and Buffalo and a short hop to LeRoy, the big city of Rochester, and points east, Batavia was the exchange point of three railroad lines, with a population of nearly twenty thousand. Close to rich mucklands and boasting the "black gold" of agricultural prosperity, farm work, machine shops, and a shirt factory, the rural outpost furnished plenty of jobs for a Polish and Italian immigrant population in the thousands.

Nellie remembered how she and Roxy started out with two accordions in the 1930s: the Superior that her father had traded in for her well-worn Ranco Antonio, and Roxy's Italo-American. Renting studio rooms in Mount Morris and Geneseo where they gave lessons on weekends, the couple put most of their energies into a claim they staked on West Main Street in Batavia. Eventually handing over the responsibility of teaching students in the outlying districts to one of their star students, Jimmy Cassiano, Roxy and Nellie focused on growing their Batavia studio-*cum*-music store. It quickly became a social center and gathering place for regional musicians and music lovers, prompting Roxy years later to tease fellow LeRoyans that he had to "go West" to find success.

Characterizing their beginning as "barter days" with customers trading coal, vinegar, tomatoes, and other useful goods in exchange for lessons, the couple became successful dealers of prestigious lines of accordions, including Excelsior, Soprani, Guiletti, Superior, Italo-American, and Hohner. Roxy and Nellie marketed themselves as teachers, concert accordionists, and specialists in classical and folk music. In 1939 they seized another moment and

Roxy playing a prized Gola accordion in a Hohner advertisement that ran in several magazines in the mid-1960s. Courtesy of Rose Caccamise.

ventured to start an accordion school, which quickly attracted local and national acclaim. As ambassadors of the piano accordion and Italian style, the couple taught their students a variety of Italian folk tunes, tarantellas, mazurkas, and polkas, as well as classical songs, waltzes, sonatas, overtures and Tin Pan Alley hits. Their instruction afforded the sons and daughters of Italian immigrants the opportunity to perform at venues ranging from Polish weddings to country-and-western gigs to concert halls. The students' mastery of different musical languages on the accordion catapulted them into a larger public sphere,

where they could demonstrate the versatility of instrument and artist alike.

Coinciding with the heyday of the national accordion craze, Roxy and Nellie's rise to musical stardom and the success of their accordion school not only marked the transition of Italian music from backyards to concert stages and orchestra halls, but also a shift in the representation of working class Italian Americans. By the late 1940s the electronic media of radio and TV, along with the outreach of the recording and movie industries, made fame seem within the reach of many a son and daughter of Italian immi-



grants living in the countryside. With talent, *corragio* (courage), and a little luck, they could become stars and move beyond the confines of their ethnic neighborhoods. Building on the legacy of Italian opera singers, popular vocalists, and stage performers from earlier decades, the modern media served to etch even more deeply the associations between music and Italian identity—often bringing the musicians and music from the margins to center stage.

The currency of accordion music was confirmed in the kinds of venues where Roxy and Nellie were asked to perform. Booked into gigs at political events and rallies like the famous Old Barn restaurant and Richmond Hotel in Batavia, playing for Eleanor Roosevelt and for the governor of New York, Herbert Lehman, the couple loomed large in the cultural landscape of the region. Stimulated by a sense of place, in his “spare time” Roxy composed songs like the “Jackson Street Polka,” “LeRoy March,” and “Friendship Polka,” which were performed in local nightspots, at regional civic events, and on the national stage by friends, students, and compatriots. In *Accordion World* magazine, jazz marimba great Lionel Hampton once heralded Roxy’s “Jackson Street Polka” as “the best polka I ever heard.”

In the mid-1940s the Caccamises broadcast a weekly program from Batavia’s WBTA radio. Following the example of popular Italian radio shows airing from Rochester and Niagara Falls, their program featured requests and dedications but also went one step further. Opening with original compositions by Roxy like “My Friendship Polka” or duets with Nellie and female accordionists and protégées like Dolores Penepento, the program showcased the proficiency of young accordion students performing in a range of musical styles, from Italian folk and popular to Tin Pan Alley, marches, country-and-western, and classical. Audiences became well-versed in numerous musical traditions, as the strains of “Speranze Perdute” flowed into the “Blue Danube Waltz.”

Over the years, Roxy and Nellie had learned a lot about the relation of produc-

tion to promotion. Their work organizing regional seminars on accordion music and involvement in the school and stage provided a service to students and community, but it also illustrated a fact underscored in trade publications like *Accordion World*: accordions were a “Big Business.” The Caccamises were part of a tight network and intricately involved in promoting their musical subculture. Accordion masters like Charles Magnante, as well as manufacturers like Guilletti, would regularly send the couple greeting cards and mention them by name in articles and on radio programs, and when the Caccamises started organizing local media events, a multitude of accordion artists and jazz stars eagerly came and performed.

At friend and local entrepreneur Charles Mancuso’s theater in Batavia, national celebrities shared the stage with the Caccamises’s forty-member accordion band. Serving to promulgate the idea that Italian identity was intricately tied to music, while also demonstrating the way performers had achieved mastery of several musical languages, these media events blurred boundaries of class and race. Playing to packed houses and to fans traveling long distances from neighboring cities, the retinue of accordion stars at Roxy and Nellie’s staged events shifted lines between town and country, putting the township of Batavia in a cultural league with the surrounding cities of Buffalo and Rochester. By the sixties, the couple could take pride in their national acclaim and their success at passing on their knowledge to a host of musical prodigies. Providing their students with a way of entertaining others while showcasing a diversity of style(s), accordion music offered not only a participatory space for interactions inside local Italian and Polish communities, but also recognition for musicians of ethnic descent. In this regard, accordion music supplied an entrée into the worlds “across the tracks,” regular travel, and a wealth of experiences.

Rooted in their civic ties and local connections, the accordion story the Caccamises helped bring to towns in the region continued to resound both locally and globally. On the local level, the couple’s reputation

as ambassadors of accordion music and Italian style served to influence local politics and support their school, while in turn, their work with students increased their national prestige. Encouraged to enter regional and national competitions, a number of Roxy and Nellie’s students, including Joe Robusto, Marilyn Strogen, and John Torcello, won national and international championships. Over the course of his lifetime, Joe Robusto garnered over one hundred first-place trophies and medals and was New York State accordion champion five times, Accordion Olympic National Reserve champion four times, and national champion one time. Marilyn Strogen also won the New York State championship and became a well-known accordion teacher in the Midwest and Hawaii. After landing a job touring with Luciano Pavarotti, John Torcello went on to work in Hollywood pictures, becoming a famous recording artist and entrepreneur. On the global stage, a high point in the Caccamises’s own personal story came in 1971 when Roxy was asked to represent the America Accordion Association as a judge for the world accordion championship in Bruges, Belgium, an event in which John Torcello competed.

Roxy and Nellie’s school and advocacy of accordion music influenced not only the future and fate of individual students, but also the character and way of being of the community at large. Local musicians and residents attest to how the Caccamises and their students put Batavia on the map as an “accordion town.” By the fifties and sixties the most popular bars and restaurants sported dance halls and clubs, and according to Joe and Virginia Gambino, Roxy and Nellie’s “progeny” were playing ’em all. Joe might have run when he first saw Roxy coming, but by the 1950s, he was out there—way on top of the bridge. Alluding to the impact on his everyday life of his beloved Chordovox accordion and other instruments purchased from Roxy, Joe claimed, “Without the accordion I wouldn’t have existed.... There was not one place I didn’t play in ... hotels, clubs, you name it. I played in ’em all.”

The relevance of accordion music in the lives of second-generation Italian Americans

living in the Genesee Valley was illustrated in the testimony of yet another student of Roxy's, Sandy Consiglio. A butcher by trade, Sandy Consiglio spent his days cutting meat, but long stretches of his nights were devoted to practicing the accordion. Sandy owns every record of the Italian American star, Charles Magnante; in developing his own style, he took inspiration from the celebrity's riffs and arpeggios. As Sandy recounts it, the greatest thrill of his life came one day in 1957 when Roxy asked him "to do him a favor and pick Magnante up at the airport." Returning to Roxy's house, Sandy asked Magnante to play Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee." Awed by the maestro's finger work, he asked, "Mr. Magnante, how do you DO it?" Magnante volleyed back the question, "How many hours do you work?" "Eight," Sandy answered. "Well, you work eight, and I practice eight," said Magnante, simultaneously apologizing for the luxury and explaining the demands of stardom.

In music as in life, things change. By the mid-sixties, rock and roll and cool jazz were "in," and Roxy found himself selling more guitars than accordions. Third-generation descendents of the regional musicians went on to become renowned celebrities in larger, and sometimes even foreign, cities. Tom Monte, Gus Passamonte's son, croons out Sinatra tunes to big crowds in Rochester and the sons of Sam La Barbera—Pat, Joe, and John—have become international jazz artists, composers, and arrangers.

Although Roxy and Nellie are no longer around, strains of young people practicing their music still sound through the store, now run by daughter Rose. Across a wide swath of counties, our local accordion stars continue to draw on their folk traditions to create a "usable past," inspire younger protégés, and move audiences of all ages to dance—demonstrating the continued power of live music individually performed, actively participatory, and communally celebrated.

### In Memoriam

Nellie Caccamise passed away on September 15, 2005. Rose is carrying on the family leg-

acy by arranging musical and cultural events in downtown Batavia. A virtual tour of the Caccamise store is available at <http://www.roxys.com>.

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Christine F. Zinni is an adjunct lecturer at the State University of New York at Buffalo; she also served as project manager of technology-in-education grants from the university to develop new media for teaching oral history. For several years, she has worked in tandem with folklorists Karen Park Canning and Daniel Ward to document the traditions of Italian Americans in the upstate region. This article grew out of a video documentary, which became part of the 2000 Local Legacies project at the Library of Congress. An earlier version was printed in 2004 by the Genesee-Orleans Regional Arts Council in the program booklet "Passing It On: Continuing Traditions in Our Communities."

# A Digital Travel Checklist

BY MARTHA COOPER

I am about to head off to Europe for the tenth time in twelve months. After several exasperating instances abroad where I wasted far too much time tracking down plugs, chargers, or batteries after forgetting mine, I have created a digital travel checklist. Like everything else about digital photography, traveling with digital cameras has its good and bad points. The biggest advantage is that airport X-rays won't damage capture cards. X-rays pose a serious problem with film, since the effects are cumulative and airport personnel are often surly about inspecting film by hand. On the other hand, one drawback of traveling with a digital camera is that—unlike film—pixels are ephemeral, and safe storage on the road can be challenging.

Here is my basic list of the photography equipment I carry when I travel. There are numerous brands and options, but these are my choices:

**1. Camera bag:** I like a bag with a waist strap to take the weight off my neck and shoulders, and one with a large enough outside pocket to hold a small strobe unit. Cameras, lenses, and capture cards go in the bag. To protect from dust, a serious problem with digital cameras, carry your camera body in a separate case or sealed bag that you keep closed when not in use.

**2. Backpack:** I carry everything I will need for photography in my hand luggage. My laptop goes in the backpack, as well as miscellaneous unbreakables such as batteries and chargers.

**3. Camera bodies:** I always carry two, in case of loss or damage.

**4. Lenses:** For pleasure shoots, I carry a wide-angle zoom and a telephoto zoom. For professional work, I carry too many lenses to list.

**5. Strobes:** I carry two Nikon digital strobes designed to work with my cameras.

**6. Laptop:** I use a Sony Vaio with plenty of space on the hard drive to upload photos and a built-in CD burner and card reader. Wireless capability is important if you want

to e-mail photos along the way, as most internet cafes do not allow you to attach your own external drive to send attachments.

**7. External Drive:** I have two 50 GB LaCie pocket drives for backing up photos. I first upload cards onto the laptop, and then transfer a copy of the files onto the external drives.

**8. Capture cards:** I have eight cards, mostly 512 MB and 1 GB.

**9. Cases for capture cards:** I prefer small cases, which hold four cards each.

**10. Card reader:** I use the built-in reader on my laptop and also carry a separate card reader, in case I want to transfer photos to someone else's computer.

**11. Chargers:** Almost all chargers now work from 100 to 240V, so an electrical current converter is no longer necessary. I carry separate chargers for my computer, for my camera batteries, and for AA batteries. Take it from me—remember your chargers!

**12. Plug adapters:** Different countries have different electrical sockets. Be sure to bring adapters for your plugs. I always take a few extra ones, after forgetting the plug in a hotel socket on more than one occasion. It's also nice to be able to give one of your extras to a friend who forgot hers. There is no need to buy the expensive sets. Most hardware stores sell single plugs for most European countries cheaply.

**13. Batteries:** I have four rechargeable camera batteries, several sets of rechargeable AA batteries, and a five-hour battery for my laptop in addition to the standard one.

**14. CDs:** These are useful as another way to back up photos or even to take to a local camera store for printing. (I do not yet carry a portable printer—maybe next trip.)

**15. Photoshop or other software:** I like to view photos along the way and sometimes make adjustments, although I always save the original JPEGs since it's difficult to calibrate a laptop monitor accurately. Sometimes I bring copies of software on CDs, in case I have to reinstall along the way.

**16. Mouse:** I find it easier to work in

Photoshop with a mouse. I used to bring a mini-mouse, but realized that a full-sized one isn't that big and is infinitely more comfortable to work with.

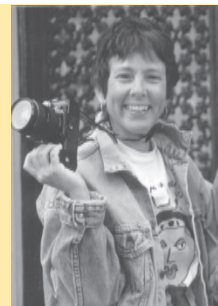
**17. Rubber air puffer:** It's impossible to keep dust from getting into a digital camera when you change lenses. You must be vigilant in cleaning the CCD, or you will spend a lot of time when you get home working with the clone tool in Photoshop to repair the damage. It is expensive to have the CCD professionally cleaned and risky to do it yourself, because it scratches easily and is expensive to replace. The easiest way to clean the CCD is to put the camera on a long exposure, such as thirty seconds, click the shutter, remove the lens, and puff vigorously with a rubber bulb. I use a camera accessory called a Hurricane Blower. It is very affordable at \$6.00. Confirm the results by shooting a white wall at f/16 and checking for dark spots, and then puffing again. Do not use canned air.

**18. Small flashlight:** A flashlight is very useful if you shoot at night, in darkened rooms such as clubs, or at stage performances.

**19. Manuals:** I always bring all manuals for my cameras, strobes, and laptop, as they are indispensable if you forget how something works or have to troubleshoot.

**20. Cell phone:** Finally, I carry a mobile phone with a removable card, which allows me to change cards in each country and make calls at local rates. Of course, bringing a phone means carrying yet another charger.

Martha Cooper is the director of photography at City Lore. Her images have appeared in museum exhibitions, books, and magazines. If you have a question that you'd like her to address, send it to the acquisitions editor of *Voices*.



# Square Dance Caller: Ken Lowe, 1922 to 2005

BY KAREN CANNING

**Kenneth C. Lowe**, lifetime resident of western New York and one of the best square dance callers in the state, died on July 3, 2005, in Warsaw, New York, at the age of eighty-three. Born on April 21, 1922, in Nunda, Ken continued in the farming tradition of his family, owning and operating a dairy farm with his son for many years in Covington. He held the offices of justice of the peace (1974–9) and supervisor (1979–97) for the town of Covington and also served on many committees of local government and as chairman of the Association of Counties. He was a member of Pavilion United Methodist Church.

Ken began calling for dances in 1939 at the age of seventeen. He entertained people for over sixty-five years as a square dance caller with the Checker Boys, the Ex-Checks, and Kelly's Old Timers bands. He was well-known for his clear voice and sense of humor and maintained lifelong friendships with the musicians with whom he worked. In 1998 Ken mentored Eric Kelly in square dance calling, supported by an apprenticeship grant

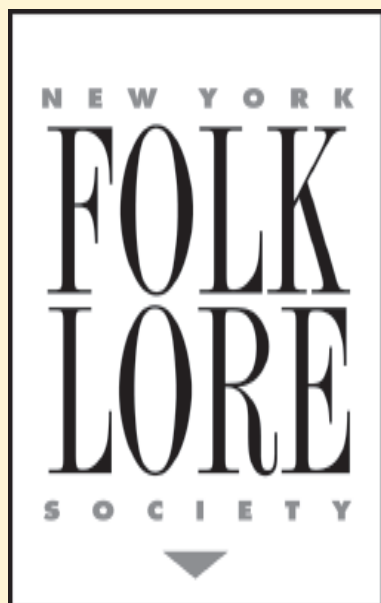


The Checker Boys in the early 1940s. Left to right: Keith Morgan, Lynn Rowley, Elmer Brewer, Woody Kelly, and Ken Lowe. Courtesy of Doug Kelly.

from the folk arts program of the New York State Council on the Arts. Eric is the nephew of Woody Kelly, who founded Kelly's Old Timers in 1950, and he continues to lead the band today.

Ken is survived by his wife of sixty-two years, Frances, a son and two daughters,

grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. At his memorial service Ken was remembered by many people, one of whom was Doug Kelly, son of Woody Kelly and bass player for Kelly's Old Timers. More than anything we could add, Doug's words capture Ken's contributions to music, community, and



To continue to receive *Voices*  
and enjoy the full range of  
New York Folklore Society  
programs,  
become a member!

See page 48 for more information

*This eulogy was read at Ken's memorial service on July 8, 2005, in Pavilion, New York.*

## Remembrances of Ken Lowe

BY DOUG KELLY

As firstborn in the Woody Kelly family, I was always privileged to be exposed to all of the music activity that was an everyday part of our lives. It never really meant a whole lot to me at the time, as I guess it would be with most kids back then. Unfortunately I couldn't appreciate the talent of so many of the music people, which I had grown accustomed to seeing from time to time. Ken Lowe was one of those.

My earliest recollection of Ken and Fran was probably a picnic I remember that we had over at Keith Morgan's house on Wyoming Road. I remember a big willow tree in the back yard and several picnic tables that Margie Morgan had done up in anticipation of Fran Lowe's fantastic potato salad, which she had Ken deliver to one of the tables in a bowl about the size of a truck wheel. I think the main course was hot dogs and hamburgers, but I wouldn't bet my life on it. I do remember that potato salad, though.

Now I don't know why this is important, except that most functions I remember with the Lowes back then involved good times, good food, and music. There was Keith and Margie of course, Uncle Roger and Aunt Lois, Elmer and Theresa Brewer, and maybe some more. After we ate, there was always music. Ken would call some square dances and sing a song or two.

At this early age, I can remember what a funny guy Ken was. My dad, of course, had a long association with Ken that went from the Checker Boys in 1939 or so through their political careers that went on for years. And they were always friends. This was the first band they worked with, Elmer Brewer's Checker Boys. They played on WBTA radio in Batavia Friday nights to provide music for the Ralston Purina radio show.

When Dad died in 1982 there was a demand to keep Kelly's Old Timers going. We needed a caller, and Ken was always willing. It was evident that he

enjoyed calling the dances as much as we enjoyed playing the music. Fran always came with him; there was no need to guess about their fondness for each other. Ken became a regular part of our group and kept 'em swinging up and down until his health let him down a couple of years ago.

We had the good fortune to play at fiftieth wedding anniversaries that either Kenny, Dad, or Roger had done the weddings a half-century earlier. Ken was one of the best callers in the area, and his history took him from parlor dances of the 1930s to Harry Pankow's wedding reception at Salvatore's Italian Gardens in Buffalo, a fancy banquet house that I'm sure had never seen a square dance.

Through all of this, his ability to manage dance situations and work with our band that—to say it politely—might be slightly unpredictable at times was an example of his great talent. His sense of humor was always present at dances, which he sometimes related in old farm lingo, where he might notice some old boy who walked “like he had thrown a shoe,” or he might call out to see if there was a harness maker in the house to help keep a couple in the set.

I remember some old records I have at home that were recorded by Roxy Caccamise in 1940 at Dolittle Hall in Wethersfield Springs. Ken closed the evening as follows—I will quote him as best I can. He said:

This is Kenny Lowe saying goodnight for now, for Elmer, Woody, Keith, and Lynn, from Dolittle Hall in Wethersfield Springs. We're the Checker Boys, Wyoming County's square dance specialists, from up Wyoming County way, where we turn the moon up at night with a crank and the grass grows green in the center of the road.

Above all he was a loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, farmer, neighbor, civic leader, caller—and he was our friend. I mentioned to his daughters that I know that Dad

# Murder and Mayhem, Tra-La!

## The Saugerties Bard

BY JOHN THORN

I have lived in Saugerties, New York, a village situated between the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains, off and on since the mid-1970s. Only in the past year, however, did I attempt an idle late-night Internet search for “Saugerties” in the splendid American Memory collection of the Library of Congress. Of the twenty-five hits, ten were linked to nineteenth-century song sheets about murders and riots and prize fights by the otherwise nameless “Saugerties Bard.” The game was afoot; I had to find out more. As it turned out, the life story of the Bard, an itinerant folklorist named Henry Sherman Backus, has itself taken on folkloric dimensions: what was strictly factual has become jumbled up with romantic twaddle, especially around his melancholic demise. It seemed to me that the songs, early on dismissed as doggerel, were very good indeed and more worthy of attention than the composer. What was his place in the long tradition of balladry and broadside, the people’s press? Was he, like Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie, a moralist in musician’s clothing? Or was he a mere entertainer and narcissist, a Catskills comic before his time? Read on. The verses interspersed below are from the Saugerties Bard’s ballad, “The Murdered Pedlar,” printed in Catskill in 1854.

On August 1, 1854, a peddler of German-Jewish origins, an itinerant peddler of German-Jewish origins, was on the village of his home and home to one hundred, during which he had sold lace. Arriving in Greenville too late to make the Austin Line stage coach to Coxsack, he was prepared to wait for the next one until he crossed paths with an inebriated thirty-year-old alumnus of Sing Sing prison, who had likewise missed a stage from Albany to Durham and was walking east.

*On the Plank-Road, in Greenville town,  
A Jewish Pedlar was shot down.  
Ah, by a wretch, called Warren Wood,  
Who shot the Pedlar in cold blood.*

*With murder rankling in his heart  
From the Empire City did depart,  
Arm'd with revolver, six-barrel'd true,  
With which he shot the peddling Jew.*

1131 Walker Street in New York City. He had Williams was able to give while clinging to life, he said that his assailant had come up to him and, after some perfunctory repartee, said, “You are a foolish fellow to take the stage; if you walk down with me, we can get there before the stage does, and you will save your money.” Persuading the peddler to stop at taverns along the way on this hot summer’s day, Warren Wood inquired how much money the peddler typically made on such a trip. “I said sometimes one, and sometimes two hundred dollars; as we came near the bridge, about half way down the hill, Wood stepped back, and I saw him pull a pistol from his pocket; he fired it and shot me down; the ball entered my back, and

passed through my body, so that the doctor took it out of my abdomen; he shot again, twice, striking me about the head; I fell on the road, and he took me by the legs and threw me off the bridge and threw down my pack; he then dragged me to one corner, under the bridge, and asked me what I had in my small box, and I told him nothing but spectacles; he then threw stones on me, and went away” (“Greene County,” 1853).

*When first he shot, the Pedlar cried,  
Whate'er you want shall be supplied.  
His pocket-book to Wood he gave,  
In hopes by this his life to save.*

*Again he shot! O, cruel man!  
What mortal can your feelings scan.  
Infernal spirits astonish'd stood,  
Awhile to gaze on Warren Wood,*

*Who did the Pedlar's head then pound  
As he lay bleeding on the ground,  
Until he thought him truly dead,  
And then the monster quickly fled.*

In an affidavit following his capture in New York City, Wood admitted he had shot Williams “two or three times” but denied other seemingly less pertinent details. “The peddler handed me his pocket-book; I never asked him for it; neither did I pile any stones on him, or ill-use him. If he went off the bridge, he must have fell off himself; I did not throw him off.” Tossing his revolver into a swamp, after which he “felt somewhat easier,” Wood paid a local farmer the large sum of “one gold dollar, a fifty cent piece



and two quarter dollars” to drive him to Catskill Point. From there he crossed the Hudson, took the train to Tivoli, and then the express to New York, where he arrived near midnight that same Friday (“Greene County,” 1853).

In Gotham he hooked up with his paramour, Emma, who noted that he had more money at hand than was usual; on Saturday, with the ill-gotten gain, they visited the Great Exhibition of Art and Industry at the Crystal Palace—on the site of today’s New York Public Library—which had opened its doors to the public barely a month earlier, and a Daguerrean parlor where the capture of Emma’s likeness was to aid in the capture of her lover. When Wood was apprehended in New York, he had among his possessions several items that indisputably belonged to the peddler. Hauled back upstate, before being incarcerated at the Catskill jail, he was brought before the dying Williams, who could not be moved from his bed at Moore’s Tavern near Greenville.

*Back to New York he sped his way,  
To promenade with Ladies gay.  
In Cherry Street they did him take:  
He now his pleasure must forsake.*

*Though filled with dread and guilty fear,  
Before the Pedlar must appear,  
Thou art the man, the pedlar said,  
As he then raised his dying head.*

*I know that coat, the boots likewise—  
A dying man will tell no lies,  
To Jail the murderer then was sent,  
His awful crimes there to lament.*

Hiram Williams died on September 2 and was buried after services at the Albany synagogue. The charge against Wood was no longer for attempted murder. In the trial that took place on November 25, he was convicted and sentenced to hang on January 20, 1854. In between those two milestones in Wood’s wretched life, a ballad was printed in the job shop of the Greene County *Whig*. That ballad, quoted throughout this article, was composed by Henry Sherman Backus, a sometime Saugerties resident who may have felt an affinity for Williams, as he too

was an itinerant peddler, although his pack was filled with songs rather than notions. Publishing under the pen name of the Saugerties Bard, Backus specified that “The Murdered Pedlar” was to be sung to the tune of “Burns’ Farewell,” an air of distant times that was known to anyone who had spent a bit of time in a saloon or roadhouse. Though an accomplished musician who accompanied his recitations with fiddle and fife, Backus never composed original music for the ballads he published, as the convention in the ballad business, unlike the bustling sheet music trade, was to supply buyers with lyrics to tunes they already knew.

*In Christ, the Saviour of mankind,  
Repentance he may truly find:  
O, soon he will suspended be,  
To pay the law’s just penalty.*

*A faithful Jury did convict,  
The Sheriff must the law inflict,  
The penalty to justice due,  
To all the guilty, as to you.*

*No costly gems or diamonds bright,  
Disarms the law or aids his flight,  
Nor thousand tons of shining gold,  
Yet for a groat Wood’s life was sold.*

*No more, poor man, while here you stay,  
The birds will chaunt their cheering lay,  
Or friendly neighbors greet again  
The wretch that bath the Pedlar slain.*

*On January next, the twentieth day,  
The Sheriff must the law obey,  
Upon the gallows him suspend,  
And thus poor Wood his life will end.*

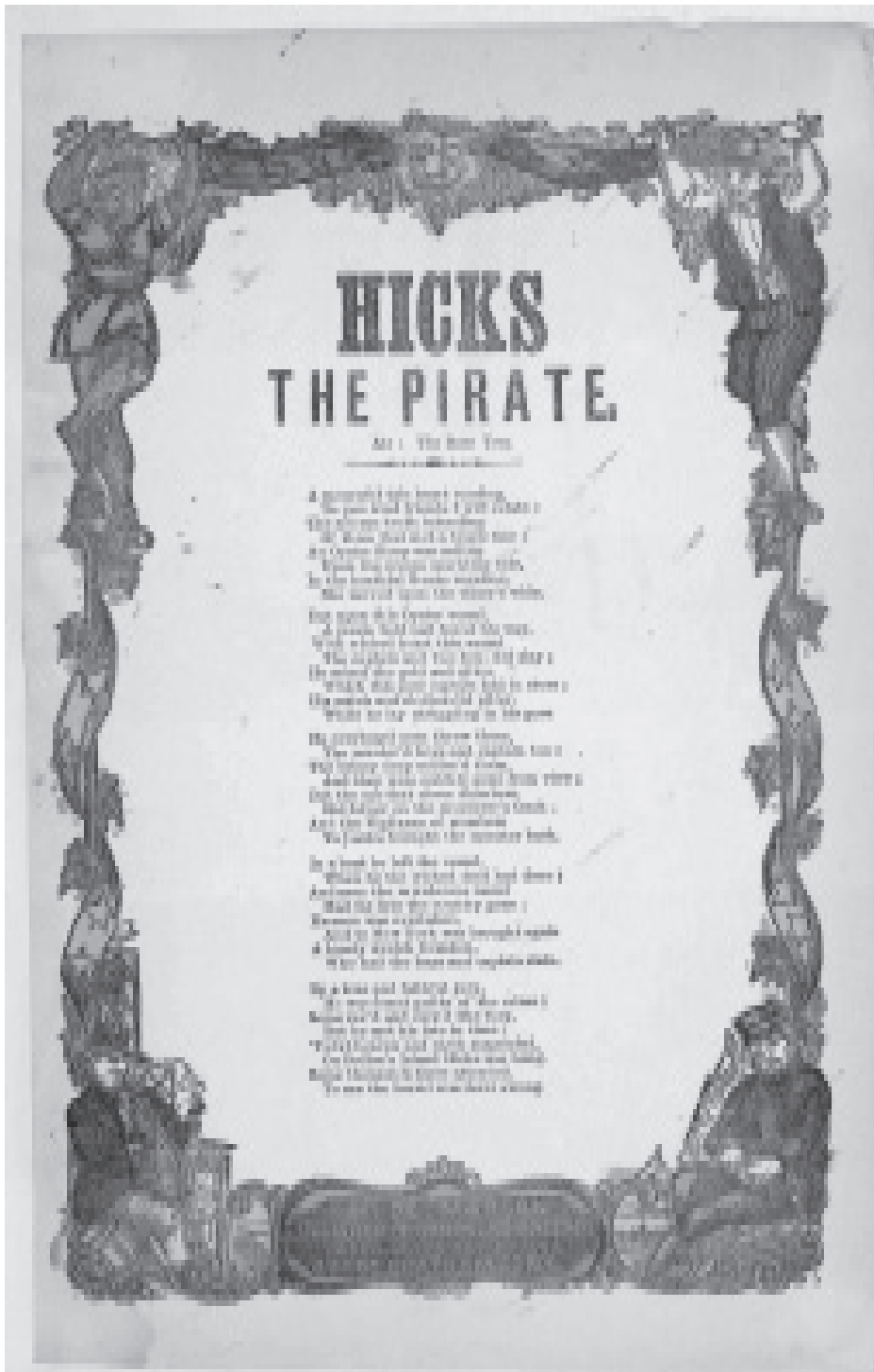
*Let all a solemn warning take,  
And every wicked way forsake,  
For soon we all will ush’rd be  
Into a vast eternity.*

On the day that he was appointed to meet his Maker, only twenty minutes before being led to the Catskill jail’s rigged-up gallows, Wood made a long and rambling statement, the essence of which was that yes, he shot the peddler, but he didn’t know what he was doing or why. Then he attacked the integrity of his attorney, the officers who arrested him in New York, a reporter for the New

York *Herald*, and one other: “A man from Saugerties has written some verses about me, and they have been published by the publishers of the Green[e] County *Whig*, and circulated over the country at sixpence apiece. I want to ask one question, and that is, if a man in my situation is not entitled to sympathy, rather than to be held up to ridicule and abused in that way? . . . Those degraded, low, mean, miserable verses are not worthy of the respect of any man, and I am sorry that anyone claiming responsibility [by which he meant the editor of the *Whig*], should suffer his press to give to the public such verses, and shamefully abuse me.” Mr. Ward, the editor, concluded his story of the execution and the strange scenes preceding it with Wood “suspended by the neck until he was dead. His body hung fifteen minutes, when it was taken down, placed in the coffin, and conveyed in front of the jail, where the spectators might view it. The body was buried about 2 o’clock, in the village burial yard” (“Execution of W,” 1854).

The brutal detail is offered here because life was more short and brutish then, with death and retribution the stuff of everyday concourse and consequently grist for ballads and folklore, too. Murder, disaster, tragedy, and sorrow were the stock in trade of the Saugerties Bard. Henry Backus was beginning to earn a reputation as a folk balladist, an honored practitioner of the people’s press that links seventeenth-century one-sheets and broadsides to nineteenth-century penny dreadfuls and dime novels, on up to story songsters Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Bob Dylan. Backus was perhaps a better social historian than he was a poet, but he was a master of brevity, able to tell a story that would go straight to the heart in a way that myriad columns in the newspaper could not.

While ballads have traditionally been about the proximity of the rose and the briar—love and death—the Saugerties Bard found his calling in the briar patch, perhaps because life had strewn few roses in his path. His existence, which commenced on February 4, 1798, in Coxsackie, New York, has been festooned with so many garlands



Broadside of the ballad “Hicks the Pirate,” published in March 1860. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

of whimsy if not outright fakery that it is difficult to separate the man from the myth. His death on May 20, 1861, followed by a pauper’s burial in Saugerties, concludes a tale so sad that it is a pity Backus himself could not have used it as a subject. In between those dates, he endured the death of his father in the War of 1812, became a schoolteacher, wed, had children, buried

his wife and one of his children, became estranged from the others, and spent some time in the insane asylum in Hudson (today that city’s public library).

It is a life worth recounting in brief, but engaging as it may be, the romantic figure of this balladist—a combination of poet, moralist, entertainer, lunatic, and

huckster—has received more attention from this century’s observers than the ballads themselves. The Saugerties Bard has become equal parts folklorist and folklore.

Composing sad songs about murderers and their victims, he pandered to the public’s taste for sensationalism with a winking touch of piety. As John Wesley is said to have grumbled before setting down his five directions for singing hymns, “It’s a pity that Satan should have all the best tunes” (Lomax 1934, vii).

As time wore on, the life of Henry Sherman Backus became less eventful and his balladry more so—and arguably more proficient as well. With his Saugerties family falling away from him in the 1850s he beat a path south to New York City, where he composed some of his most notable works. In the latter half of that decade he wrote ballads about famous murders (for example, the unfortunate Dr. Burdell and his scheming wife), riots (notably the July 4, 1857, fracas involving the Dead Rabbits, Plug Uglies, and Bowery Boys, brought to screen in Martin Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York*), and executions, especially those of the antisocial lad James Rodgers and my personal favorite, the “pirate” Albert Hicks. Some of the Saugerties Bard’s ballads, notably “Uncle Sam’s Farm” and “The Dying Californian,” have conventionally been assigned to other pens, but nineteenth-century writers gave credit to Backus. Full lyrics survive for most of them, as do MIDI versions of the tunes or—in a handful of cases—newly recorded versions.

Backus was something of an entrepreneur, paying job printers to run off his ballads, then selling them from his pack as he roamed from town to town. He even produced a now exceedingly scarce *Ulster County Almanac for 1855*, which he promoted with an advertisement in the *Saugerties Telegraph*: “[It] contains besides a good calendar some of the best effusions of the author. The bard will present it to the inspection of the public as soon as issued and probably sing most of the ballads as he is wont to do, accompanied by instrumental music. The approach of the *Almanac* will be announced by music from

fiddle and flute” (qtd. in Jones 1942, 141).

Benjamin Myer Brink, in his *Early History of Saugerties*, wrote in 1902:

All through the counties of Ulster and Greene, at least, was he well known in the years from 1835 to 1860; and often was he seen all down the Hudson River valley, and even upon the streets of New York, and westward along the Mohawk he had occasionally wandered, and into Canada. He was harmless, eccentric, impulsive, and at times incoherent, with a faculty for impromptu rhyming. . . . The writer can see him now pass by, clad in a suit of gray, with long gray locks covered with a cap. (310–1)

Louis C. Jones offered another view forty years later: “Although Backus died in 1861 a few old people in the Saugerties area still cherish him among their earliest memories. Mr. J. H. Kerbert, a bard himself, recalled him with remarkable clearness. I have in my possession a drawing made from memory by Mr. Kerbert, which shows Backus in his big hat, with long hair, grizzled beard, peg-leg, and cane” (1942, 140).

But how did this son of Greene County become the bard of Saugerties, in Ulster County? This has been a mystery that eases a bit through genealogical research—only recently simplified by the digitization of federal, state, and local records—yet is by no means settled. Henry’s father, Electus Mallory Backus (1765–1813), and mother, Sabra Judson Backus (1764–1838), had both been born in Connecticut, where they wed in 1784. They relocated to West Camp, New York, sometime before 1787, and thence to Coxsackie. Of their eleven children, all but one lived to adulthood and married—so Henry, the seventh, would enjoy a cornucopia of nieces and nephews, a fact difficult to gibe with his later solitary life and death.

Electus Mallory Backus was a military man by election, before the outbreak of war in 1812. Commissioned as major of the First Light Dragoons in October 1808, he would die in action at Sackett’s Harbor in June 1813. (For decades thereafter Sabra Backus petitioned Congress unsuccessfully

to provide her with a widow’s pension.) Henry’s younger brother Electus Jr. would also become a military man, matriculating at West Point and serving with distinction in the Mexican and Civil Wars. According to Brink, Henry too “grew to manhood with a passion for what concerns a soldier. He possessed a peculiarly correct ear for martial music, and in early years was an efficient teacher of the fife, the drum, and the bugle. Later he taught school, and coming to Saugerties he married a Miss Legg, with whom he lived for a number of years. After her death his mind received a peculiar bias and he began to lead the life of a wandering minstrel” (1902, 312).

According to Pauline Hommell, a Saugerties schoolteacher and historian who wrote an anecdote-laden profile of Backus in her 1958 volume *Teacup Tales*, Miss Legg was an orphan. In Hommell’s ghostly tale “The Face at the Window,” she contrives this comment from Cornelis [Cornelius] Post to Backus, recently arrived in Saugerties to accept a position as schoolteacher: “You’ve been seeing our neighbor’s cousin, Alida Legg. Ach, but she is good to feast one’s eyes on” (1958, 34). Hommell was not above inventing dialogue and spooky stories, but I do not suspect her to have been a fabricator of basic fact. Katsbaan Church records show that an Alida was born to Lodewijk Smit [Anglicized as Lodowick Smith in the 1800 census] and Neeltje Post on March 3, 1799, and when she was baptized seventeen days later, her sponsors were William Legg and Debora Post. Born to Alida’s parents five years earlier had been Debora Smit, sponsored by Petrus Post and Debora Post (Katsbaan Church records, entries 1830 and 2203). According to Hommell, Alida wed Henry in the early 1820s and died in May 1845, although *Teacup Tales* makes no mention of children.

Other sources give Mrs. Backus the name Eliza or Ann Eliza—possibly Anglicizations, possibly a confusion with Henry’s older sister Eliza. Alida/Eliza is also given a maiden name of Legg, which she might well have taken upon her adoption. In the 1830 census the age of Henry “Baccus” of

Saugerties is listed as over thirty but under forty. He has one daughter older than five but younger than ten. His wife is listed as over twenty but under thirty, close enough to the truth and perhaps flattering. Burial records of Mountain View Cemetery show that their daughter Sara Ann died June 6, 1830, at the age of one year and twelve days (Poucher and Terwilliger 1931). In the 1840 census Backus, still residing in Saugerties, presides over a household of six females: two daughters under five, two more between five and ten, another between fifteen and twenty, and his wife. Yet in the 1850 census, he shares an abode only with laborer Abraham Wing, age fifty-eight; he himself is listed with no profession. At some point in the 1840s he is said to have spent time in the lunatic asylum in Hudson. The likely dispersal of his daughters to other homes following his commitment or the death of his wife might have driven any man to despair; it sent Henry Backus on the road.

So may we conclude that the Saugerties Bard’s odd demeanor was born of trauma? Or might it have been at least in some measure calculated? In *The Catskills* Alf Evers wrote, “Local eccentrics found the [Catskill] Mountain House an irresistible target and they often served to brighten a dull day. Among them was Henry Backus, ‘the Saugerties Bard, a Cosmopolitan, a Travelling Minstrel,’ as he was inscribed on the hotel register. Backus sang songs he composed and sold printed copies of them to guests. He put together a Mountain House ballad in 1856” (1972, 458). Clearly eccentricity was a solid marketing tactic then as now; Backus may have been the Tiny Tim of his day, ridiculed by his audience but laughing all the way to the bank. Certainly his mind was sufficiently composed to produce lyrics that generally scanned and always told a story.

Reviewing his list of songs, it is clear that the “Catskill Mountain House Ballad,” printed June 30, 1856, marked very nearly the end of Henry Backus’s rural phase. His brother Electus had been installed as the army’s superintendent of general recruiting services at Fort Columbus on Governor’s

Island in New York harbor. He and his brother had seen little of each other for decades, but the Saugerties Bard nevertheless boldly headed south to the city of lights and shadows. In the four years remaining to him he would publish at least fifteen (and perhaps many more) ballads with the three prolific New York song-sheet publishers, Andrews, Wrigley, and De Marsan. Indeed, no one knows precisely how many song sheets, slip ballads, and poetical broadsides the Saugerties Bard may have composed or published, and additional ones may yet be identified, especially those that may have been printed in newspapers but not distributed as broadsides.

Living in New York and Hoboken, Backus, nearing the age of sixty, did some of his best work. There were the songs about famous riots (“The Great Police Fight [Riot at City Hall], June 15, 1857”), boxing matches (the 156-round affair celebrated in “Bradley & Rankin’s Prize Fight for \$1000 a Side”), and especially notorious villains such as Mrs. Cunningham (“Dr. Burdell, or the Bond Street Murder”), Francis Gouldy (“Heart Rending Tragedy”), and my favorite murderer, Albert W. Hicks (“Hicks the Pirate”), the man who for a few months pushed Abe Lincoln and secessionist rumbling off the front page.

Hicks was a waterfront thug, not a pirate, who in March 1860 was drugged by a rival gang member and woke up to find himself “shanghaied” onto the oyster sloop *E. A. Johnson* and bound for Virginia. Knowing from past practice just what to do, he murdered the entire crew—the skipper Captain Burr and the brothers Watts—with an axe, gathered up their clothing and valuables, and threw them overboard. Managing the sloop badly as he turned it back toward New York, he collided with the schooner *J. R. Mather*, outbound for Philadelphia. Hicks lowered a boat piled high with his victims’ belongings and made for shore at Staten Island. When the wrecked *E. A. Johnson* was brought ashore awash in blood, Hicks’s day of reckoning neared. Chased from New York to Providence, Hicks was apprehended, tried on federal charges of piracy on the high seas, and won a nickname that he took to his grave . . . and

## Songs of the Saugerties Bard

- The Powder Mill Explosion at Saugerties, New York.* 1847.  
*The Dying Californian.* ca. 1850.  
*Uncle Sam’s Farm.* Air—Walk in de Parlor and Hear de Banjo Play. ca. 1850.  
*Dunbar, the Murderer.* 1851.  
*The Burning of the Henry Clay.* 1852.  
*Explosion of Steamer Reindeer. On the Hudson at Malden, September 4, 1852.*  
*The Burning of the Reindeer, September 10, 1852.*  
*Whipoorwill, or American Night-bird: A Poem.* 1852.  
*John Mitchel, Irish Patriot in Exile.* Air—Hail to the Chief. ca. 1853–4.  
*The Murdered Pedlar, Catskill.* Air—Burns’ Farewell. 1854.  
*The Baptist Preacher or the Drowned Woman and Child, Kingston, May.* Air—The Rose Tree. 1854.  
*My Heart’s in Old ‘Sopus Wherever I Go.* Kingston. June 1855.  
 “Catskill Mountain House Ballad” [original title unknown]. June 30, 1856.  
*Dr. Burdell, or the Bond Street Murder. Which Took Place Jan. 30, 1857, in the City of New York.* Air—Burns’ Farewell. 1857.  
*The Great Police Fight (Riot at City Hall), June 15, 1857.* Air—Root Hog or Die. 1857.  
*Dead Rabbits’ Fight with the Bowery Boys. July 4, 1857.* Air—Jordan. 1857.  
*The Murdered Policeman, Eugene Anderson, Who Was Shot by the Desperate Italian Burglar, Michael Cancemi, Cor. of Centre and Grand Streets, July 22, 1857.* Air—Indian Hunter. 1857.  
*The Bellevue Baby Mrs. Cunningham’s Adopted.* Air—Villikins [and His Dinah]. 1857.  
*Mrs. Cunningham and the Baby.* Air—Villikins and His Dinah. 1857.  
*The Cunningham Baby. Or The Heir from Over Jordan.* 1857.  
*That Baby on the Half Shell.* 1857.  
*Bradley & Rankin’s Prize Fight for \$1000 a Side. At Point Abino, Canada, August 1, 1857.* Air—Old Virginia’s Shore. 1857.  
*The Queen’s Telegraphic Message, and President Buchanan’s Reply, Hudson. August 18, 1858.*  
*The Thirtieth Street Murder. A Horrible Tragedy.* Air—Burns’ Farewell. 1858.  
*Heart Rending Tragedy, or Song No. 2 on the 30th Street Murder.* Air—Meeting of the Waters, or Indian Hunter. October 26, 1858.  
*Execution of Rodgers.* 1858.  
*The Press Gang.* Air—Tom Haliard. 1860.  
*Hicks the Pirate.* Air—The Rose Tree. March 1860.  
*The American Flag.* n.d.  
*Warren’s Address. To the American Soldiers Before the Battle of Bunker Hill.* Air—Bruce’s Address. n.d.  
*Pocahontas.* n.d.  
*Johnny Bull and Brother Jonathan.* Air—Yankee Doodle. n.d.  
*Four Germans Drown’d in Rondout Creek.* n.d.

beyond.

There would be no schoolboy mewling for this hardened criminal who, with a twenty-first-century sense of commerce, hired a writer to make his confession suitably blood-curdling to sell to a publisher, with the proceeds to go to his widow. This will give the picture: “I have killed men, yes,

and boys too, many a time before, for far less inducement than the sum I suspected I should gain by killing them; and I had too often dyed my murderous hands in blood in days gone by, to feel the slightest compunctions or qualms of conscience then” (“Execution of H,” 1860). Ah, they

don't write 'em like that today, and more's the pity!

Convicted of the triple murder, Hicks was slated for execution on July 13, 1860, at a gallows constructed on Bedloe's Island (also known as "Gibbet Isle") out in the harbor, where the Statue of Liberty has stood since 1886. His procession from jail to gallows took on the aspect of a circus, and a general holiday atmosphere prevailed. Excursion boats had been lined up beforehand for the twelve thousand spectators (a *New York Times* estimate) to have a memorable outing: "HO! FOR THE EXECUTION" read the headline on one classified ad (1860). Peanut vendors and lemonade stands did a brisk business to the beat of the fife and drum. The thirsty "imbibed lager-beer," reported the *Times*, and in rowboats there were

**HO! FOR THE EXECUTION.—THE BEAUTIFUL and commodious steamboat CHICOPEE will leave this City on FRIDAY MORNING, for the purpose of affording all on board an opportunity of witnessing the execution of John Hicks, the Pirate. The boat will lay near the Island until the ceremonies are over. This will be a fine chance for sea captains and sea-faring men generally to view the exit of one of the most atrocious of these scourges of their profession. The CHICOPEE will afterwards run up the North River as far as West Point, taking in a view of the Great Eastern. The boat will leave the foot of Spring-st. at 8 o'clock A. M., Paterson Dock, Jersey City, at 9, and Pier No. 4 North River, at 9½ o'clock. Refreshments on board. Tickets, \$1 each.**

"ladies, no, females of some sort, shielding their complexion from the sun with their parasols, while from beneath the fringe and the tassels they viewed the dying agonies of the choking murderer" ("Execution of H," 1860).

Soon after Hicks was buried, grave robbers stole his body, spawning a long-standing rumor that he had somehow defeated the hangman and was running around wreaking havoc under an alias. In fact, his body had been sold to medical students. Within months of the hanging, P. T. Barnum's American Museum featured a wax image of Hicks among its other notorious figures. The Great Showman's

newspaper ad described his sundry marvels ("Amusements," 1861):

Not these alone attention draw; Figures  
in wax are found;  
Classic and modern; Christian Sage and  
heathen of renown;  
All characters whose names have a very  
familiar sound.

A Mummy here, a Judas there—a  
"Tommy" done up brown;  
A John Brown or an Albert Hicks—a  
Lambert and his wife.  
The Siamese Twins and Albert  
Guelph—all true to life.

"Hicks the Pirate," the Saugerties Bard's ballad published right after the hanging, marked the end of a tradition. Songs about solo murderers would soon pale before the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of our

best in blue and gray. The young Henry Backus had not embraced the military as his father and brother had done; he would not do so now. Out of fashion and perhaps increasingly addled, he headed back north. "During the winter," according to Brink, "he was hardly seen" (1902, 314).

On Monday, May 13, 1861, Backus slept in an old shed in Katsbaan outside a hotel maintained by James H. Gaddis, who found him the following morning, emaciated and unconscious. The Bard was taken to the village of Saugerties, where he was fed, charged with vagrancy, and taken to Kingston's jail. There he lingered unattended until he died on May 20. His body was

given a pine-coffin burial in Saugerties. Few members of his extensive family had stood by him in life; none now came in death. His remains were placed, in Pauline Hommell's aptly chosen words, "into the six-foot cavity which is the common portion of all the sons of Adam" (1958, 37).

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John Thorn is the author and editor of many books. He lives in Saugerties. He writes a column for the *Woodstock Times* and *Kingston Times* called "Wake the Echoes," in which an earlier version of this article originally appeared. *Voices* will welcome John Thorn as a regular columnist in 2006.

# Poet Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman Receives National Heritage Award

BY ETHEL RAIM

**O**n June 15, 2005, the National Endowment for the Arts announced the 2005 recipients of traditional arts. Among the twelve winners was Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman, Yiddish singer, songwriter, and poet. This is the first time that a Yiddish writer or singer has received the prestigious National Heritage Award. The fellowship includes an award of \$20,000, a ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and a concert performance showcasing the artists and their work. Culturally active in the New York area for over fifty years, Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman has been a key figure in maintaining Yiddish traditions in America and has played a central role in reviving and inspiring interest in Yiddish song and poetry among a new generation.

Beyle was born in 1920 in Vienna, Austria, but was raised in Chernovitz (Cernauti), Romania. Her mother Lifshe Schaechter-Widman was a businesswoman and an

admired traditional Yiddish singer with a prodigious repertoire; her father Benyumin, an intellectual active in the Yiddish cultural world of the city. Beyle studied art in Vienna from 1936 to 1938, and married Dr. Jonas Gottesman in 1941.

Before the war, Chernovitz was one of the centers of Yiddish culture in Romania: the capital of the Bukovina, a region whose Jews were sensitive both to the older traditional Jewish folklore and to the co-territorial folklore of Ukrainian, Romanian, and German speakers. At the same time, the Jews of Chernovitz forged a modern Yiddish culture using those folk materials; local Yiddish poets Itzik Manger and Eliezer Shteynberg are prime examples of this cultural complex. This synthesis of tradition and innovation informed Beyle's performance of folksongs and her songwriting craft in the post-war period.

Beyle survived the war in the ghetto in

Chernovitz and then lived in Bucharest and Vienna, before arriving in the United States in 1951. She settled in the Bronx, New York, where she lives to this day. Beyle worked as a teacher in the 1950s and 1960s in the Yiddish *shuln* (afternoon secular Jewish schools) in the Bronx and also wrote a number of musical plays. Several of her children's songs from this period became popular in the Yiddish schools in America; three of these were recorded on the CD *Di grine katsbke* ("The Green Duck," 1997).

In the mid-1960s she began to write Yiddish poetry and soon established herself as one of America's premier Yiddish poets. She cofounded the *Shraybkrayz* (writing circle) of the Yiddish student organization, Yugntruf, where she served for many years as the elder mentor for the participants. Beyle's original Yiddish songs that she began to write in the early 1970s introduced compelling new material for the next generation of performers, which included singers who were eager to express themselves with songs outside of the usual canon. These poetic works reflected themes that had rarely appeared in Yiddish songs: a contemporary woman's perspective on life and nature, daily life in the big city, and the distressed position of Yiddish culture after the Holocaust.

When the now twenty-five-year-old renaissance in Jewish klezmer music and Yiddish song began to take root and branch out among American Jews and non-Jews alike, Beyle's large repertoire of older traditional Yiddish songs that she had learned from her mother, her modern Yiddish urban songs that she learned in Chernovitz, and the performance of her own songs drew many leading singers to



Photo: Martha Cooper. Courtesy of City Lore.

her door in the Bronx. As new singers performed her songs and she herself taught and performed, Beyle made her mark on the Yiddish repertory through such popular festivals and cultural workshops as the Yiddish Folk Arts Program (“Klezkamp”) and Buffalo on the Roof in New York, “Klezkanada” in Montreal, Canada, and the Ashkenaz Festival in Toronto, which have become the new centers of Yiddish cultural creativity.

Perhaps more importantly, she has served as an important link between the Old World and the New World, so that new performers and students of Yiddish song can understand the past of this tradition and see a living inspiration for new creations in the present and future. In 1998 City Lore inducted her into its People’s Hall of Fame, saying, “Her compositions have helped spur a revival of Yiddish song.” After the release of the songbook and recording *Zumerteg* (“Summer Days,” 1991), and *Af di gasn fun der shtot* (“On the Streets of the City,” 2003), acclaimed Yiddish singers such as Theodore Bikel, Michael Alpert, Adrienne Cooper, and Lorin Sklamberg began to perform her songs. Today, singers and klezmer groups all over the United States, Canada, Europe, and Eastern Europe have recorded her songs.

Beyle’s contribution to her community and to the wider public has indeed enriched all our lives, and we offer her our heartfelt and enthusiastic congratulations.

## Looking at Everyday Life

***Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices***, by Roger D. Abrahams. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. 286 pages, introduction, index, \$47.50 cloth.

No matter how long folklorists work in their chosen field, they can benefit from the reflections of a wise teacher. Roger Abrahams is one of the wise ones: an eloquent theorist whose studies of African American and Caribbean culture have influenced the development of folkloristics since the early 1970s. We are fortunate to have a distillation of his warmth and insight in this wonderful book.

*Everyday Life* analyzes a wide range of expressive forms, including the “ways in which ordinary Americans keep company with one another, in casual and serious talk, at play, and in performance and celebration” (2). While the term “ordinary” might seem to downplay individuals’ talents, it does not pose that problem here. Readers find ample evidence of the uniqueness and value of people’s expressive behavior in *Everyday Life*.

Figures of speech, riddles, stories, and other genres based on the principle of goodwill comprise the book’s first section, “The Many Forms of Goodwill.” Linking texts with contexts through the philosophy of Kenneth Burke, Abrahams shows how folklore offers both insight and comfort. Riddling, for example, “atomizes the death problem as a life riddle; by providing solutions which emphasize the triumph of life, riddling uses devices of confusion to create an atmosphere of clarification” (37). In this statement the poetics of life crisis come through with compelling clarity.

Storytelling offers other kinds of resolution, including expression of the disruptions and invasions of everyday life. Abrahams explains that stories about holdups, rapes, and assaults show that we have played a part in the “ongoing drama we call life, having experiences which are sufficiently typical that we use them both to establish our humanity and to make a bid for group membership, even when the group is as evanescent as a queue or other chance encounter” (77). Stories about bad moments combine therapeutic self-expression with social dynamics, letting narrators choose a role such as hero, stoic, or clown.

The book’s second section, “Goodwill Tested,” examines more complex forms of communication. In the chapter “Just Talking/Taking License,” Abrahams

discusses how folklorists have developed performance theory in relation to communication studies and linguistics. Games, festivals, and rituals are, he says, not artistic performances, although folklorists can use performance terms to describe them. He challenges folklorists to develop appropriate methodologies for games, festivals, and rituals, while making use of the insights developed by scholars of performance.

The third section, “Social Imaginaries,” considers how individuals and groups handle boundaries of cultural difference. Abrahams helps us understand why people enjoy watching fights and face-offs, with succinct, witty summations like “Hostile encounters yield as good a high as a demolition derby” (163). Ethnic slurs such as “gringo” indicate, he concludes, that ethnic border disputes still exist. In Texas, for example, “the slur and the slam, the stereotype joke and the big games held between the rivals are all part of a conflict that everyone knows exists and expects at any time to turn into a battle” (165).

The book’s last section, “Terms for Finding Ourselves,” looks closely at keywords that have emerged in the shifting cultural landscape of globalization. Ethnicities, identities, creolizations, and diasporas are all analyzed in detail. Abrahams makes an important point about folklorists’ roles as supporters of cultural difference: “Not only are we conservators of the old ways and, by extension, of human variety, but we have admitted to profiting from the very peoples we have chosen to bring out of the cave, the forest hideaway, the mountain retreat” (257). Not all folk performers come from secluded places, but those who enter a performance arena at a folklorist’s invitation merge their own goals with the goals of their host. We need to think carefully about our own motivations, considering their impact on the people who agree to share their performances with audiences.

In his acknowledgments, Abrahams thanks friends and colleagues—Lee Haring, Alan Dundes, and others—for engaging in dialogue with him about everyday life over a long period of time. Others such as Diane Goldstein, whose *Once Upon a Virus: AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception* (2004) was recently reviewed in *Voices*, have similarly acknowledged the importance of interaction with colleagues in developing ideas. Along with the other

words of wisdom in Abrahams' book, these acknowledgments teach us to listen carefully to our colleagues. Everyday life, both inside and outside the academic realm, offers many moments of illumination for the folklorist.

—Libby Tucker, Binghamton University

### ***Listening for a Life: A Dialogic Ethnography of Bessie Eldreth through Her Songs and Stories***

by Patricia Sawin. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2004. 254 pages, photographs, index, \$19.95 paper.

Patricia Sawin effectively synthesizes theories of folklore, feminism, and discourse to present a view of the public and private selves of North Carolina storyteller and singer Bessie Eldreth. *Listening for a Life* is a layered work that leads the reader to become a part of the multiple dialogues it contains.

The introduction serves to situate this work within the field of folk studies and its sister disciplines. This chapter also introduces Bessie Eldreth with a basic chronology of her life, which frees Sawin from a conventional chronological representation of Eldreth through the rest of the book. Chapters two through seven present five different aspects of Bessie Eldreth's self, arrived at through the dialogic fieldwork relationship between Sawin and Eldreth. Sawin conveys these aspects of Eldreth with sections of transcribed interviews, which she analyzes using information obtained during additional interviews, as well as theories drawn from folklore, feminist studies, and discourse studies. The author admits to the "intentionally inconsistent" organization of these chapters, which allows each part of the book to be taken as its own whole. Yet the chapters are not so disjointed that the work reads like several different books, rather than a united whole.

The underlying notion of dialogue that plays such an important role in this book is not confined to the dialogue between ethnographer and subject. The author examines dialogue's role in Eldreth's life, from her conscious telling of tales to the unconscious choices she makes when selecting songs for performance. Sawin demonstrates that all dialogue interacts in a way that goes beyond intertextuality, transcending individual speech events. She suggests that the present dialogue occurs not only between individuals involved in a conversation, but also among other speakers in prior and future conversations.

Sawin highlights the versatility of folklore's methodologies and theories, while acknowledging the limitations that have historically been placed upon the

field's practitioners and their subjects. In particular, she addresses issues of locality and regionalism by examining why Eldreth does not consider herself—nor should she be considered—a representative of Appalachian culture. Sawin not only explores the history of representations of Appalachian culture, but also uses Eldreth and recent scholarship to question the very existence of a separate and unique Appalachian culture.

Thankfully, Sawin avoids the trap that some reflective scholars have fallen into of turning their published research into autobiographies. The author admits her biases towards and preconceptions about her subject, while at the same time striving to depict the selves that Eldreth wants to project. Sawin further acknowledges that Eldreth's assumptions about her as a researcher and as a person colored the information imparted by Eldreth, and as a result hold equal weight in the outcome of the work. *Listening for a Life* is firmly grounded in its ethnographic purpose, and the many related issues explored by Sawin do not detract from it.

Some theoretically dense parts of the book may prove difficult for lay readers, as they assume a certain familiarity with the field of folk studies. Because of the rich references to the theoretical and methodological history of the discipline, however, and the effective way in which Sawin navigates them, the book is an ideal academic text. Those unfamiliar with ballad scholarship will welcome the readability of the chapter on Eldreth's repertoire and performance. Taken as a whole or in parts, *Listening for a Life* provides something for scholars in many areas of the discipline, including feminism, theory, fieldwork, narrative, belief, and performance.

Both academic and public folklorists will appreciate Sawin's exploration of issues of representation—issues that have been echoing through the discipline for over a decade. In *Listening for a Life*, Sawin vividly illustrates that the motives of folk performers do not always coincide with those of event organizers or fieldworkers. She asks the questions that many folklorists now ask, challenging the field's existing models of representation and discourse.

—Claire E. Aubrey, Niagara County

### ***The Long Island Sound: A History of Its People, Places, and Environment***

by Marilyn E. Weigold. New York: NYU Press, 2004. 267 pages, photographs, \$25.95 cloth.

Marilyn Weigold, professor of history at Pace University, has published a new edition of her book *The American Mediterranean: An Environmental, Economic, and Social History of Long Island Sound* (1974), revised to include several recent developments in the Long Island Sound's complex history. Weigold traces the history of this national estuary from a political and economic perspective, chronicling the growth of transportation, industry, and population from the precontact period to the late twentieth century. Sadly, Weigold does little to illuminate the lives of ordinary people during this lengthy span, despite recent research in the area by historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and folklorists.

Weigold begins her work with a discussion of the encounters between European colonists and indigenous peoples on Long Island and Connecticut, accepting outdated claims that settlers paid for the lands they later occupied. These "contracts" have been questioned by many scholars, including anthropologists John Strong and Gaynelle Stone, studying indigenous cultures in the region. Weigold goes on to the various battles fought during the Revolutionary War, examining the strategic military plan that turned Long Island into a key battleground between patriots and Tories, often dividing families and communities. With the Revolution over, Weigold turns her attention to various transportation issues, including the growth of steamboats and railroads, and the accompanying commercial traffic that led to the establishment of New London and other ports. She gives us a glimpse of Long Island's and Westchester's emerging leisure classes, treating the mansions of Mamaroneck's Orient Point and Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill in Oyster Bay, as well as the historic Larchmont Yacht Club.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, we learn about the traditional fishing and whaling industries—from an industrial perspective. While Weigold discusses the menhaden industry, which provided ground-up fish for use as an agricultural fertilizer well into the twentieth century, she fails to include any first-person accounts or family histories of the industry, nor does she examine how technology changed the fishermen's means of harvesting and processing. In her discussion of whaling she again misses an important opportunity to include first-person accounts, such as the many diaries of captain's wives housed in local archives, which were the subject of a major historical exhibit at the Cold Spring Harbor whaling museum. A similar fate befalls traditional oystering, an industry that continued to dominate the sound's economy until the



late 1990s, with the appearance of the mysterious brown tide. While most baymen harvested oysters as part of their occupation, none of their voices are heard in this book. Weigold instead focuses on the planting and harvesting processes, the kinds of dredges used, and the water quality on both Long Island and Connecticut shorelines.

Other chapters examine the growth of Long Island's "Gold Coast," with a comprehensive discussion of the mansions and parkways built by industrialists like William K. Vanderbilt, as well as the guests they attracted in the 1920s, including the Prince of Wales and Charles Lindbergh. In her treatment of new communities built, including Munsey Park on Long Island, Weigold fails to look at the experiences of estate workers and how segregation played an important role in the North Shore's development, despite numerous studies by local historians and cultural ethnographers, including Elly Shodell's groundbreaking work on estate workers and my own work on Great Neck Plaza. Similar gaps are found in Weigold's attention to various Westchester communities, leaving general statements like "the masses were making inroads" (119) begging for more description and analysis.

Weigold describes major transportation projects, such as the extension of the Long Island Railroad and the creation of the Robert Moses's parkway system, as well as the failure of Moses's proposed cross-sound bridge from Oyster Bay to Rye. Again, however, no first-person accounts are offered; the author relies solely on newspaper accounts and planners' proposals. She would have been well-advised to include one of the many letters written to the editor of local newspapers to give voice to the opposition. The same can be said of her discussion of the successful opposition to the Shoreham nuclear power plant on Long Island, as well as the creation of the Long Island Pine Barrens reserve.

In conclusion, Weigold has reissued a book that, while comprehensive in its scope, lacks the very voices of their times that enliven our understanding of history. While many scholars, young and old, embrace the voices of people of all backgrounds, Weigold ignores diverse perspectives, focusing on the "movers and shakers" and their accomplishments. As someone who grew up on the Westchester side and now lives on the Long Island side, I did not recognize the stories presented, nor the voices of Long Island Sound residents, past and present. Thankfully, there are new publications and exhibits that address these critical gaps.

## Submission Guidelines for *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*

*Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore* is a membership magazine of the New York Folklore Society ([www.nyfolklore.org](http://www.nyfolklore.org)).

The New York Folklore Society is a nonprofit, statewide organization dedicated to furthering cultural equity and cross-cultural understanding through programs that nurture folk cultural expressions within communities where they originate, share these traditions across cultural boundaries, and enhance the understanding and appreciation of folk culture. Through *Voices* the society communicates with professional folklorists and members of related fields, traditional artists, and a general public interested in folklore.

*Voices* is dedicated to publishing the content of folklore in the words and images of its creators and practitioners. The journal publishes research-based articles, written in an accessible style, on topics related to traditional art and life. It also features stories, interviews, reminiscences, essays, folk poetry and music, photographs, and artwork drawn from people in all parts of New York State. Columns on subjects such as photography, sound and video recording, legal and ethical issues, and the nature of traditional art and life appear in each issue.

### Editorial Policy

**Feature articles.** Articles published in *Voices* represent original contributions to folklore studies. Although *Voices* emphasizes the folklore of New York State, the editor welcomes articles based on the folklore of any area of the world. Articles on the theory, methodology, and geography of folklore are also welcome, as are purely descriptive articles in the ethnography of folklore. In addition, *Voices* provides a home for "orphan" tales, narratives, and songs, whose contributors are urged to provide contextual information.

Authors are encouraged to include short personal reminiscences, anecdotes, isolated tales, narratives, songs, and other material that relates to and enhances their main article.

Typically feature articles range from 1,000 to 4,000 words and up to 6,000 words at the editor's discretion.

**Reviews and review essays.** Books, recordings, films, videos, exhibitions, concerts, and the like are selected for review in *Voices* for their relevance to folklore studies or the folklore of New York State and their potential interest to a wide audience. Persons wishing to review recently published material should contact the editor. Unsolicited reviews and proposals for reviews will be evaluated by the editor and by outside referees where appropriate. Follow the bibliographic style in a current issue of *Voices*.

Reviews should not exceed 750 words.

**Correspondence and commentary.** Short but substantive reactions to or elaborations upon material appearing in *Voices* within the previous year are welcomed. The editor may invite the author of the materials being addressed to respond; both pieces may be published together. Any subject may be addressed or rebutted once by any correspondent. The principal criteria for publication are whether, in the opinion of the editor or the editorial board, the comment constitutes a substantive contribution to folklore studies, and whether it will interest our general readers.

Letters should not exceed 500 words.

### Style

The journal follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Consult *Webster's Third International Dictionary* for questions of spelling, meaning, and usage, and avoid gender-specific terminology.

**Footnotes.** Endnotes and footnotes should be avoided; incorporate such information into the text. Ancillary information may be submitted as a sidebar.

**Bibliographic citations.** For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**Language.** All material must be submitted in English. Foreign-language terms (transliterated, where appropriate, into the Roman alphabet) should be italicized and followed by a concise parenthetical English gloss; the author bears responsibility for the correct spelling and orthographics of non-English words. British spellings should be Americanized.

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Unless indicated, The New York Folklore Society holds copyright to all material published in *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*. With the submission of material to the editor, the author acknowledges that he or she gives *Voices* sole rights to its publication, and that permission to publish it elsewhere must be secured in writing from the editor.

For the initial submission, send three paper copies and a PC-formatted disk (preferably prepared in Microsoft Word and saved as Rich Text Format).

Copy must be typed double spaced, on one side of a sheet only, with all pages numbered consecutively. To facilitate anonymous review of feature articles, the author's name and biography should appear only on a separate title page.

Tables, charts, maps, illustrations, photographs, captions, and credits should follow the main text and be numbered consecutively. All illustrations should be clean, sharp, and camera-ready. Photographs should be prints or duplicate slides (not originals) or scanned at high resolution (300+ dpi) and e-mailed to the editor as jpg or tiff files. Captions and credits must be included. Written permission to publish each image must be obtained by authors from the copyright holders prior to submission of manuscripts, and the written permissions must accompany the manuscript (authors should keep copies).

Materials are acknowledged upon receipt. The editor and two anonymous readers review manuscripts submitted as articles. The review process takes several weeks.

Authors receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their contribution appears and may purchase additional copies at a discount. Authors of feature articles may purchase offprints; price information is available upon publication.

### Submission Deadlines

Spring–Summer issue December 1

Fall–Winter issue June 1

Send submissions as Word files to Felicia Faye McMahon, *Voices* Editor, at the following address: [mcmahofr@stu.lemoyne.edu](mailto:mcmahofr@stu.lemoyne.edu) (preferred) or 374 Strong Road, Tully, NY 13159.

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