

Folklife Center News
Volume 27
No. 4

Spain's
Archive of
Mourning

Fall 2005

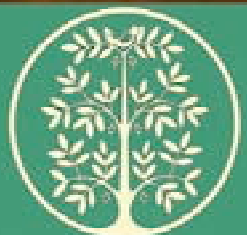
AFC
Visits
Utah

Gee's
Bend
Musical

Family
Reunion
Turns
100



American Folklife Center
The Library of Congress





The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by the U.S. Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

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The Website for **The Veterans History Project** provides an overview of the project, an online "kit" for participants recording oral histories of veterans, and a brief presentation of some examples of video- and audio-recordings of veterans' stories. The address is <http://www.loc.gov/vets>

The Folklife Information Service is a cooperative announcement program of the American Folklore Society and the American Folklife Center. It is available only on the American Folklore Society's server: www.afsnet.org The service provides timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities, and news items of national interest.

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Cover: Reverend John Wesley Roberts, one of three founders of the Roberts, Borders, Mauney, Howell, Briggs and Related Families reunion. This portrait was brought to the 100th reunion in 2005 as a treasured family object. Photo: Stephen Winick. Source: American Folklife Center.

We've Come This Far by Faith: An African-American Family Reunion Turns One Hundred



Librarian of Congress James H. Billington dined with Vivian Hewitt, who is a member of the reunion family, a special collections librarian, and a long-time acquaintance of Dr. Billington. Photo: Stephen Winick. Source: American Folklife Center

By Stephen Winick

From August 4 to 7, 2005, a team of ethnographers from the Library of Congress was accorded the rare opportunity to attend and document an African-American family reunion that has been celebrated annually for a hundred years. Started by freed slaves Wesley Mauney, John Wesley Roberts, and Eli Borders Roberts in 1906, the Roberts, Borders, Mauney, Howell, Briggs and Related Families reunion reached its century mark with the one hundredth reunion in 2005. The reunion was held in Charlotte and Shelby, North Carolina, and drew approximately five hundred family members to its various events. The Library of

Congress team attended four days of reunion events, conducted interviews, and gathered photographic, audio, and video documentation that will enter the permanent collections of the Archive of Folk Culture.

The family's connections to the Library of Congress and the American Folklife Center (AFC) date back to the Local Legacies project of 2000, for which individual members of Congress suggested events and traditions in their districts to be documented for AFC by local residents. Representative Melvin L. Watt, who represents the twelfth district of North Carolina and serves as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, is a member of this extended family and originally

submitted documentation of the reunion in 2000. Remembering this connection, reunion president Jean Humphrey invited the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James H. Billington, to give an address at their hundredth reunion. Dr. Billington in turn suggested that a team from the American Folklife Center accompany him to document the reunion. The team consisted of folklorists Stephen Winick and Catherine Hiebert Kerst (respectively writer-editor and archivist at AFC), writer-editor Josephus Nelson from the Office of the Librarian, and audiovisual technician Jonathan Gold of AFC. The team was aided in all its endeavors by reunion president Jean Humphrey, who prevailed upon the committee



After the reunion, AFC director Peggy Bulger (r.) and Stephen Winick (l.) presented Congressman Watt with a DVD copy of his interview with Dr. Billington. Photo: David Taylor. Source: American Folklife Center

and the wider family to help us document the event.

It quickly became apparent to the Library of Congress team that this large extended family has a better sense than most of its history and its future. For example, it is common for Roberts, Borders, and Mauney teenagers to know the names of their great-great-great-great-grandmother and six great-great-great-great aunts—the sort of deep genealogical knowledge very few people possess. The family has preserved two written narratives from patriarchs born into slavery, transcribed them, and published them in small editions for the family's use.

The family has preserved history, both oral and written, for generations. "I started going to family reunions when I was one, or probably even younger than that," Congressman Watt told Dr. Billington, in an interview collected at the reunion. "Every reunion I've ever been to, there is a reading of the oral history, or a presentation of the oral history. And then, thirty years ago or so, there started to be more of an emphasis on writing that history down, and documenting it, and researching it, and not just passing it down from generation to generation through the oral process."

The family's history was first recorded early in the twentieth cen-

tury by Eli Borders Roberts (1840–1933), Wesley Mauney (1849–1939), and John Wesley Roberts (1862–1951), all of whom had been born into slavery. Wesley Mauney and John Wesley Roberts were particularly important in that they left written accounts of their lives during and immediately after slavery. Roberts was emancipated as a young child, became an educated minister, and founded several churches. He wrote his own account in a large ledger book, which survives in the family today. Roberts also took dictation from Wesley Mauney, who had grown up in slavery without the benefit of education, but who nonetheless became a successful businessman. These early historical accounts have inspired contemporary genealogists and editors within the family, including Donald Sumlar, Leonard E. Mauney, and the late Sarah Stowe Williamson. The result is a very complete account of the family's history.

The dominant account among most family members traces the primary branches of the family to the "seven sisters," all of whom were daughters of a single matriarch, whose slave name was Sylvia or Silvy Fulenwider, and whose married name was Roberts. According to Wesley Mauney's 1933 narrative, known to the fami-

ly (after Mauney's own description) as the "PenPicture," the seven sisters—of whom Mauney's mother was one—"had over one hundred children that were sold in slave times and mygrated [sic] since, all over this country." Mauney himself, just one of those hundred children, had over one hundred descendants himself in 1906, when he and his two cousins founded the reunion. This gives a sense of how large and widespread the family already was in the early part of the century.

Still, there are disputes among various members and branches of the family. One alternate history, recounted to us by Rev. Sidney Roberts, a reunion committee member, holds that Silvy Fulenwider was not enslaved in Africa. In this account, she was a king's daughter, sent to America by her tribe, the Fulani of Guinea, as an ethnographer, charged with learning about American civilization and culture. Once she arrived here, as a free woman, she was enslaved and sold to Roberts. If this is true, it is doubly appropriate that her descendants should be visited by ethnographers from the American Folklife Center!

While family members may have divergent opinions about the family's origins, there is no question that the family's history is one of hard work, faith, and success. Their motto reflects this: "We've Come This Far by Faith." The Library of Congress team spoke with family members young and old, and all indicated that the history of achievement within the family was both an inspiration and a challenge to each succeeding generation, providing success stories and role models for every family member. For Congressman Watt, the model is his great-grandfather, Wesley Mauney. "Periodically, when I reach a fork in the road, when I get writer's block or speaker's block, one of the first places I go is to Wesley Mauney's PenPicture, and just read it," he told us. "Inevitably, something will come out of that PenPicture that stimulates an idea, gets me started again, reinvigorates me."

For other family members, a different ancestor might be the source

of inspiration. Marcia Foster Boyd, a Methodist minister, recalled her own experience. "When I was called to ministry over thirty years ago, I didn't know any women ministers. And my grandmother, Isabelle Roberts Ramseur, told me that there's Aunt Ida. There's Aunt Ida Roberts." Indeed, Ida E. Roberts, the wife of reunion founder John Wesley Roberts, was a rare example of a nineteenth-century African-American woman minister. Her husband wrote of her in 1933, "O my wife! She was a good gospel preacher, and one of the first woman preachers in this part of the state, and people far and near, white and colored came to hear her preach."

In a large extended family like this one, there is no shortage of data to collect, and the team from the Library of Congress brought back a wealth of materials: twenty-eight oral history interviews, ten hours of speeches, performances, and family events on digital video, and copies of eight documents of family history, including narratives of former slaves.

Among the most noteworthy of the speeches and other events were the opening and closing addresses given by Congressman Watt and his brother, Dr. Graham Watt, and the address given by Dr. Billington. The Congressman stressed family history and the connection to the past, telling the stories of Silvy Fulenwider and of Wesley Mauney, and describing his mother's own childhood experience. Dr. Watt stressed the family's future, calling for family members to work hard for positive social change, repeating the charge that "business as usual is no longer acceptable when wickedness abounds and selfishness reigns." And the Librarian of Congress praised the family for taking good care of its history. "This is a unique thing," he said. "It's a hundred years of a broad, inclusive extended family . . . a

wonderful American story of accomplishment and the bonding of people together over a long period of time. It's a story that hasn't been told often enough in the African-American experience." The events documented by AFC also included an art exhibit, a talent show, and a prayer service.

The oral history interviews were full of memorable stories told by lively, intelligent, and accomplished family members. The team spoke with ministers such as Reverend Boyd, professionals such as Dr. Watt, Patricia Bates, and Patricia Mauney, and young people such as Akintoye Moses and

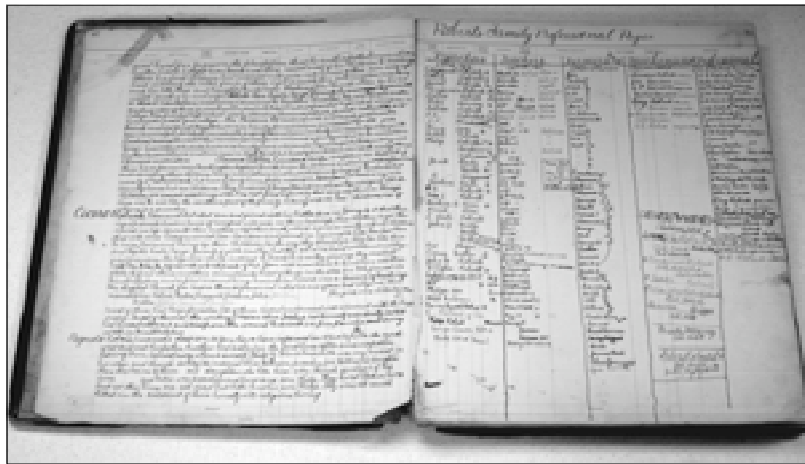
"jumping the color line." But after he earned his license, he jumped right back, using it to provide electrical contracting to the black community. "People talk about the integration of Charlotte in the sixties," he told Nelson. "I integrated Charlotte before that!"

Congressman Watt believes that the family might benefit from researching its white ancestors more fully. "I think a fascinating story from our perspective would be to go and find those Mauney and Borders and Roberts plantation owners, and trace them in parallel to us," he told Dr. Billington. "[We could] see whether they've kept a family history and tradition alive, and how it merges with or parallels our family history. I think maybe one or two of my uncles have gone and tried to sit down with some of the white plantation owners' heirs, and tried to make that connection, but that's a harder connection to make . . . there's a lot of denial going on there!"

Race relations in general was an important topic in many interviews.

Catherine Kerst recalls an interview with Max Howell: "It was poignant to hear him talk so movingly about discovering racial bias in the world outside of his home community," she said. "He told about driving from his home in Cleveland County, North Carolina, to Chicago each summer to visit his brother and to find work to help pay for school in the fall. The hardest part was the drive from North Carolina—where he knew where and with whom he could feel comfortable and be safe—to Chicago. En route, there was no place to rest or relax, no place to sleep or eat, and, at best, a sign that read, 'Go around to the back.' It was a chilling narrative that he told in an understated way, a quiet memory that spoke volumes."

Such issues were not the only subjects of discussion, however. In



This ledger book, containing the life history of reunion founder John Wesley Roberts, was brought to the reunion as a cherished piece of family history. Photo: Stephen Winick. Source: American Folklife Center

James Bradford Humphrey. In addition, we spoke with many family elders, including Albertine Foster, Kenneth Norton, and Vivian Hewitt.

One of the fascinating aspects of the family's history is often unspoken, but generally acknowledged by family members: the importance of white ancestors to the family's heritage. This came out particularly strongly in an interview conducted by Josephus Nelson, in which Leonard Mauney recounted his experiences as a young man. Mauney, who has very light skin and straight hair, was often able to "pass" for white. In the days of segregation, he used this to his own advantage, and to the advantage of the black community. When African-Americans were barred from earning a master electrician's license, for example, he did so by



Donald Sumlar (l.), a member of the Roberts, Borders, Mauney, Howell, Briggs and Related Families, prepares and maintains genealogical documents on the families' history. His reports were included in the 2000 Local Legacies collection. His 2005 update was not quite ready at the time of the August reunion, so he visited the AFC on Halloween to deliver them personally. Stephen Winick and Jennifer Cutting, dressed in their Halloween costumes, spoke with Sumlar and accepted the documents on behalf of the Center. Photo: Guha Shankar. Source: American Folklife Center

one memorable interview, I spoke with three women together: Edythe Prudence Holland Jones, Evelyn Mauney Watt Herron, and

and I never made fun of anyone again."

Gay recalled her days at the Lincoln Academy in Kings Moun-

tain, a private high school for the African-American community. The three are first cousins, and all grandchildren of Wesley Mauney. Jones, at eighty-nine the eldest of the cousins, had been raised by Wesley and his wife Naomi, and was able to give a firsthand account of her grandparents in their later years. She recalled Wesley Mauney as a stern but loveable figure, and a strong role model. Although he had high standards for his family's behavior he was careful not to pre-judge others. For example, despite his lack of formal education, he was quite precise in his use of language, and he expected his family to speak properly as well. Jones recalled an incident in which, too young to know better, she laughed when a guest in her grandfather's house spoke in a heavy dialect. When the guest left, her grandfather punished her for making fun of a neighbor, and she took this lesson to heart: "I have never forgotten it,

and I never made fun of anyone again."

Gay recalled her days at the Lincoln Academy in Kings Moun-
tain, a private high school for the African-American community. The school was so much a part of the family that she recalls an occasion on which she opened her yearbook and counted forty of her first cousins attending the academy in the same year! Herron, Congressman Watt's mother, recalled times when she and her cousins helped each other get through life's difficult moments, a topic that allowed her two cousins to participate as well.
In addition to the video footage and interviews, the team brought back copies of several documents. Most important among them is the *Roberts, Borders, Mauney, Howell, Briggs and Related Families Reunion Journal*, a beautiful souvenir book that is also a rich source of information. It contains transcriptions of Wesley Mauney's PenPicture and John Wesley Roberts's life history, as well as memories, photographs, and information on the family. The team also brought back Congressman Watt's prepared remarks, Graham Watt's prepared remarks, an exhibit catalog for a family art exhibit shown at the reunion, a directory for contacting family members, a program for a prayer service that contains several family biographies, and a book of poetry by family members. The audiotapes, videotapes, and documents are still being processed, but once this work is finished, an important collection will be available to the public in the Folklife Center Reading Room, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 to 5.



The family assembled for photographs at the 2005 Reunion's Saturday picnic. Photo: Stephen Winick. Source: American Folklife Center

AFC Field Recordings Come to Life in Andrea Frierson's *Soon of a Mornin'*



Carole Denise Jones and Bianca Jazzmine Ottley in a scene from *Soon of a Mornin'*. Photo: Carol Rosegg. Source: Susan Schulmann Publicity

By Jennifer Cutting

In an explosion of light, sound, and color, some of the American Folklife Center's (AFC) most important field recordings sprang to life on a New York City stage on September 13, 2005. The occasion was the opening night performance of *Soon of a Mornin'*, a new musical based on Robert Sonkin's 1941 field recordings of songs and speech from Gee's Bend, Alabama, held in the AFC's Archive of Folk Culture. The musical was written by Andrea Frierson, who in 2004 became the first artist, and the first African-American woman, to be selected for the Parsons Fund Award for Ethnography at the Library of Congress. Frierson's musical, one of the New York Musical Theatre Festival's "invited productions," was performed six times during the festival's run at the Lion Theatre in New York City. It is an excellent example of the inspiration that artists can derive from ethnographic collections.

The story of *Soon of a Mornin'* began more than four years ago, in the spring of 2001. Frierson (then Frierson-Toney) dropped by the Folklife Reading Room looking for something to write about. She remembers: "I didn't really know a lot about the American Folklife Center, but I knew I wanted to hear singing that was honest and unpretentious; sung from the heart, in the way that someone who is accustomed to being alone with—and humbled by—nature sings." As it happened, I was staffing the Folklife Reading Room's reference desk that day. After hearing that Frierson was interested in African-American historical topics, I immediately suggested that she listen to Robert Sonkin's 1941 field recordings from Gee's Bend, an impoverished and geographically isolated area of southwestern Alabama that was visited by a documentary team sponsored by the Farm Securities Administration (FSA).

Sonkin (1911–1980) was a professor of public speaking who also

undertook several important field trips for the Archive of Folk Song. He visited Gee's Bend to record sacred songs, and also learned about local people's reactions to the FSA project. (Another of Sonkin's Collections is online at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshhtml/tshome.html>.) What makes Sonkin's Gee's Bend collection particularly interesting is that he recorded in both the African-American and the white towns perched on opposite sides of the Alabama River, which had divided the two communities for over 120 years. On one side lived white landowners; on the other, sharecroppers who were descendents of slaves. The power of these recordings was not lost on Frierson. "I was so excited by what I saw in Arthur Rothstein's photographs, and what I heard listening to the Robert Sonkin field recordings of the Gee's Bend community, that I immediately returned to New York, got more clothes and prepared to extend my stay in D.C. by two weeks—which is how long it took me to make a written transcript of the field recordings. This became the source material for the musical."

Frierson was so captivated by the recordings that she continued to research the topic for three more years. In November 2002, when the tiny community came to national attention with the mounting of the "Quilts of Gee's Bend" exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York, Frierson found further inspiration. In 2003 she embarked on an expedition to Gee's Bend in order to interview its present-day residents herself.



A sharecropper's family at Gee's Bend in 1939. Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number LC-USZ62-117125.

In 2004 Frierson was awarded a fellowship from the American Folklife Center's Parsons Fund for Ethnography in order to research and adapt the African-American traditional music from the collection into a theatrical production. In a later interview she reflected on how the award helped her to get *Soon of a Mornin'* off the ground. "Certainly, everyone with whom I speak is impressed by the fact that I am a Parsons Award Fellow. And, truthfully, it gives my project credibility. Unfortunately, our collective cultural belief that 'bigger is better' often causes us as Americans to view [communities like Gee's Bend] as 'inferior' in some way, or less than valuable. When, in fact, the determination to survive and overcome adversity against all odds captures the very essence of what it means to be an American. The Parsons Fund Award helps to 'legitimize' in the public's eye the works it celebrates, and serves to remind the world of the value of each and every block of our collective American quilt."

Frierson likens the process of

creating the musical to piecing a quilt—which is, of course, one of the musical's themes. "One 'pattern' was the characters; another, the events that led to the Gee's Bend sharecroppers becoming farm owners; and another, their superstitions," she explained. "Initially, in listening and taking notes, I paid as much attention to what the speaker didn't say as what they did. And often, breathing patterns, stuttering, and/or nervous laughter was extremely informative in terms of creating character. Some characters came directly from the field recordings onto the stage, like Frank, the son, who was so full of hope and optimism. Others, like the mother, Sarah Mae, ended up being a composite of several of the Gee's Bend quilters I met and interviewed."

Throughout the process, Frierson says, the field recordings and photographs served as "a grounding force rooted in authenticity." Although most of the words and music in Frierson's production were composed by Frierson herself, the spirituals, hollers, chil-

dren's songs, and other traditional music she heard in the Gee's Bend recordings also found their way into the production, as did some of the personalities she heard on Sonkin's recordings and some of the images captured by Arthur Rothstein's camera.

"There are quite a number of sacred songs I discovered from listening to the field recordings of the people of Gee's Bend, and subsequently used," she said. "Game songs, as well; some recorded by the Lomaxes. A great deal of the dialogue came from the field recordings, as well. In one case, I built an entire scene around recordings I heard of everyone's visit to the new town doctor; a scene filled with nuance, as the tried and true folk remedies—and the women who administer them—clash head on with the nurse who practices western medicine and her anxiety over maintaining a sterile environment. Arthur Rothstein's 1937 photographs of the people of Gee's Bend had a major influence on me as a writer/creator, and informed my concept for the piece, overall."

Frierson explained some of her criteria for selecting songs from among the field recordings: "I had to first ask myself 'will this song illuminate the character? Will it advance the plot?' For example, there is a game song called 'All Hid' sung with all the innocence and playfulness one might expect. However, listen closer and the lyrics paint a much darker picture; one filled with fear and dread. 'Six 'lil horses in a stable' are frightened by the aggression of a 'neighboring' horse, and in another verse the narrator stands idly by as her father is knocked down by a devilish presence. For this reason I decided to use this song in *Soon of a Mornin'* to illustrate a pivotal event in Gee's Bend's history: in a crude and violent attempt to settle on existing debts, the family of a deceased cotton merchant who had been 'advancing' the Negro tenant farmers prior to his death, stormed through the town taking farming tools, seed, food, and farming animals—anything that wasn't nailed down—virtually leaving the Gee's Bend farmers to starve. In *Soon of a Mornin'*, Patsy, the young girl, sings 'All Hid' frightened and alone onstage, caught in the chilling aftermath of the invasion of the Gee's Bend community, with nothing left but the empty sound of howling wind."

The process of composition was largely completed by 2004. In the summer of that year, the Kennedy Center chose *Soon of a Mornin'* as one of four new musicals to be featured in their annual "Play to the Stage" theater festival, where Frierson debuted two of her musical's pieces on the Millennium Stage on September 5th. The year between that first fledgling performance and the full production's debut was a roller coaster of high hopes, near misses, disappointments, and such harrowing cliff-hangers as a producer pulling out two months before opening night. Luckily, a new producer stepped forward, and the play was ready for its September run.

On stage, the stylistic and instrumental versatility of music directors Bill Vanaver and Andy Teirstein supported the musical score's delicate balancing act

between African-American musical traditions and the traditions of Broadway. No stranger to the world of traditional music, composer/instrumentalist Vanaver is a professor of World Music and Dance at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, and has recorded for such labels as



Andrea Frierson. Source: Andrea Frierson

Vanguard, Elektra, Nonesuch, Philo, and Folkways. Teirstein is a composer, performer, and teacher who has written scores for several PBS and BBC films, and whose original musical theatre works have won him a Richard Rodgers Award and three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. During the production, the duo played a host of instruments, including banjo, fiddle, guitar, harmonica, jew's harp, viola, water stick, cajón, djembe, and piano. The resulting sound was so full that it could have been mistaken for an ensemble twice its size.

By the end of its six-performance run, Frierson's new musical had garnered enthusiastic reviews as well as feature stories in *Playbill* and *BroadwayWorld.com*. Photos from *Soon of a Mornin'* were prominently featured in *Time Out NY*. "In terms of mounting the show else-

where, I believe the best is yet to come!" Frierson enthused. "My literary agents told me that they feel the piece could do very well regionally, which is my belief, as well. I think it's quite possible that theatergoers in other parts of the country (outside of New York) are actually more likely to be receptive to the story of Gee's Bend farms and, in some cases, more nostalgic for the era of the Roosevelt Administration and the New Deal programs it implemented."

Also in attendance at the opening night performance of *Soon of a Mornin'* was Richard Nevins, president of Shanachie Entertainment, home to roots music labels Shanachie and Yazoo. "This musical shows how the Library of Congress's Archive of Folk Culture can play a dramatic role not only in preservation, but as an important wellspring—a source for creative work," Nevins commented. "Just as Aaron Copland drew on the Archive's field recordings for the creation of contemporary classical works such as *Rodeo*, here's an example of someone likewise drawing on the Archive's resources to inspire the creation of a new theatrical work. It was a joy to behold."

Editor's Note: Arthur Rothstein (1915–1985) was the first photographer on the staff of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), and visited Gee's Bend with the FSA in 1937. His photos are not part of the Sonkin collection; they were taken four years earlier than Sonkin's visit. However, they complement Sonkin's recordings and show some of the people Sonkin spoke with. The photographs, along with FSA photos of Gee's Bend by other photographers in the same era, form part of the Farm Security Administration–Office of War Information Photograph Collection in the Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division. Many of them can be viewed online at LC's American Memory site: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/>.

“Tradition Runs Through It: Environment and Recreation” Ninth Annual Field School for Cultural Documentation



Students and staff at the field school. Front Row (l-r): Sharon Kerry, Amy Newman, Rachel Adams. Middle row (l-r): Brenda Beza, Lisa Tolliver, Lisa Powell, Robyn Patterson, Raven Haymond (BYU Staff). Back row (l-r): Andy Jorgensen, Divya Kumar, Christina Bishop, Steve Taylor, John Murphy. Not pictured are students Heidi Spann, Jan Harris, and Jason Thompson. Photo: Guha Shankar. Source: American Folklife Center

By Ilana Harlow

Just a few miles up the road from the city of Provo, Utah, home of Brigham Young University (BYU), one suddenly finds oneself in a canyon replete with alpine scenery: snowcapped mountains, waterfalls, pine trees, and a gushing, sparkling river. Provo Canyon is home to two resorts: Robert Redford's renowned Sundance and a family camp called Aspen Grove. Additionally, there are two century-old residential communities in the Canyon: Springdell and Wildwood.

Driving along the roads that pass through the canyon, one is struck by the sight of many clusters of friends and family members engaged in diverse recreational activities: tubing, fly fishing, mountain biking, barbecuing, and group dating (more on this later). Late into the night, the landscape is dotted with campfires. There is even an outdoor Sunday church service at Wildwood in summertime. "You can't beat the architecture that God provided," is how it was put by Wildwood resident Scott Loveless when interviewed

by a team of AFC field school students.

Kristi Young, curator of the Wilson Folklore Archives in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at the BYU Library, determined that the many social, recreational, and spiritual uses of Provo Canyon for a varied array of individuals and communities would be a rich topic of investigation during the American Folklife Center's (AFC) ninth annual field school. AFC has developed a three-week, intensive field school model and partners each year with an academic or cultural institution to provide hands-on training in essential techniques for ethnographic fieldwork, and to document aspects of local cultural communities in the process. So it was that from July 17 to August 6, 2005, fifteen students from both the Provo area and elsewhere in the United States gathered at BYU for "Tradition Runs Through It: Environment and Recreation." They learned ethnographic documentation techniques, including interviewing, writing fieldnotes, photography, and sound recording, as well as research ethics; and they applied their new skills in documenting the cultural and physical landscapes of Provo Canyon. The work done by these students over a three-week period paves the way for additional research by BYU students participating in the Utah Heritage Project (which is another joint venture of the AFC and BYU) over the next year.

The field school was divided into two parts. For the first ten days, students had daylong classroom instruction. For the next ten

days they conducted fieldwork and prepared final presentations and an exhibit to which the community was invited. The attendance at the final program was standing room only.

Each student was assigned to one of five three-person fieldwork teams, each of which documented a particular aspect of Provo Canyon. The research topics were fly-fishing, courtship, canyon residential communities, a well-known local family that has lived in the canyon for over one hundred years, and the changing physical and demographic face of the canyon. Each team was assigned a faculty advisor. Staff listened to interview tapes, and reviewed fieldnotes and photographs, in order to provide personal feedback that the students could incorporate into their future fieldwork endeavors. Co-directors of the field school were Kristi Young of BYU and David Taylor of AFC. Other full-time faculty included Ilana Harlow and Guha Shankar of AFC and documentary photographer Rich Remsberg.

After the field school had ended, many students expressed an appreciation for the experiences they had been afforded and expressed their feeling that it would have a positive effect on their futures. "I loved my experience in field school!" wrote Christina Bishop of Utah. "I learned so much and it has actually sparked interest in furthering my education in this field of study. I felt that the entire atmosphere was one of acceptance and openness and I really appreciated that. I was impressed with everyone's dedication to their various projects and to their topics. I learned very much from my instructors and found their insights to be invaluable!"

"I loved the school," wrote Amy Newman of Utah. "It has been the highlight of my education. I learned so much that will help me in my career."

In an e-mail to field school faculty, student Stephen Taylor of Philadelphia wrote that the field school exceeded his expectations. He described the development of personal ties to Provo Canyon once he himself had experienced it with new friends, "... I felt a deep connection with the environment. Spaces that had never crossed my eyes or ears a month earlier now became important places in my life."



Helen Cragun of Springdell, Utah, addresses the students and staff of the field school: "The sentinel portals [the gates leading into Springdell] . . . when you go through them, you're in a different atmosphere. They allow me to come through and protect me . . . I just feel a calmness in Springdell." Photo: Guha Shankar. Source: American Folklife Center

And he elaborated upon his personal learning experience:

"When it came to preparing us to go out in the field, the demonstrations, hands-on training, and other advice were invaluable when we were actually in people's houses or back yards or shooting photos in the Provo Canyon. When the course really came to life was when we were placed into teams and given a chance to use the lectures we attended, the readings we'd read, and the hands-on training we'd received to go out into that 'field' about which we'd heard so much.

"My group studied dating in the Provo Canyon. The youngest people we interviewed were two seventeen-year-old women going into their last year of high school who explained that they travel into the canyon with groups of friends four or more times a week during the summer. Most of our other inter-

viewees were couples. All of the ones in their twenties and thirties told us stories of dating rituals in the canyon from first dates with large groups, to engagement stories in special places along the Provo River.

"The oldest couple we interviewed, who were in their eighties, gave us a different perspective: growing up on farms and working six days a week didn't give them much time to go up the canyon. In those days, the cars weren't always powerful enough to climb the mountain roads, and the roads themselves were either nonexistent or not very car-friendly. Going to the Provo Canyon for recreational activities was a special treat done with the family perhaps once a year.

"In two generations, the Provo Canyon went from a place that was hard to reach and was only reached on special family occasions to a recreational spot that local teenagers use in a way that challenges the assumption that all American teens just want to hang out in malls."

Participants in this year's field school were Rachel Adams (California), Brenda Beza (California), Christina Bishop (Utah), Sharon Carey (Virginia), Jan Harris (Utah), Andy Jorgensen (Idaho), Divya Kumar (Maryland), John Murphy (Utah), Amy Newman (Utah), Robyn Patterson (Utah), Lisa Powell (Kentucky), Heidi Spann (Utah), Steve Taylor (Pennsylvania), Jason Thompson (Utah), and Lisa Tolliver (New York).

Plans are underway for the Center's 2006 field school for cultural documentation. It will be held in partnership with Colorado College (the Center's partner for the 1994 and 1995 field schools), in Colorado Springs, CO. The tentative dates for the course are July 16 through August 5. Updated information, including course fees and application procedures, will soon be available on the Center's Website.

Recording Fish Tales: A Field School Participant's Experience

By Lisa Powell

Sitting on a wooden stool at the counter in Eddie Robinson's Fly Shop in Orem, Utah, listening to talk about fish caught on the Provo River, I finally felt inconspicuous. I had been sitting on that same stool for the past few days, trying to make myself as invisible as possible, despite the notebook and pen in my hand, camera around my neck, and the microphone and cassette recorder that my partner and I kept ready between us. We were gathering information about fly-fishing practices and traditions on the Provo River, and many of the fishermen we spoke with directed us to this very counter. Though we had arranged interviews with Mr.

Robinson and his staff, we learned much by being "shop rats," watching them tie flies and listening to their interactions with customers. The fishermen who passed through the shop either knew or wanted to know the Provo, and if they weren't calling to each other across the river, they were swapping data over the counter. Though my time in Provo was limited, and my chances of ever knowing the river like they do were slim, I still found their conversations intoxicating. I longed for a day when I would get to fish that river and stop by the shop with my own stories to share.

I spent time in the fly shop not only to learn about fishing, but also



Amy Newman (l.) and Lisa Powell flank Jack Roberts, one of their field school informants, during the opening of the exhibition created during the 2005 Field School for Cultural Documentation. Lisa Powell is a graduate student in American Studies at the University of Texas. Photo: Guha Shankar. Source: American Folklife Center

to learn and practice the process of cultural documentation. As a participant in the American Folklife Center's 2005 Field School for Cultural Documentation at Brigham Young University, I was one of fifteen students dedicating three weeks to acquiring skills essential for doing ethnographic research and archiving. Though I was very new to the study of folklore and the practice of documentation, I came to the field school with high expectations for what I would learn and do during the short time we were there.

In April 2005 I had presented a paper on traditions and ritual in a small women's group at a folklore conference in Oregon. I went to the

conference having had no training in anthropology or folklore; I had joined the panel at the suggestion of my social history professor. In part because of a reflective spirit brought about by the then-recent passing of Alan Dundes, much conference discussion took on the question of "what is folklore?" Being new to the field, I realized I needed to explore this question more myself. As I listened to other conference participants describe the fieldwork behind their studies, I also realized that, though my methods had not been unredeemable, I had a lot to learn about ethnographic documentation. When I found notice of the field school on the American Folklife Society Website, I applied immediately.

The field school promised to provide a concentrated dose of theory and practical training for collecting folklore. By providing us with coursework and equipment training, followed by the opportunity to do fieldwork and create a final display and presentation, the field school would help me learn to do ethnography right. I was particularly intrigued by the theme of the field school—"Tradition Runs Through It: Recreation and Environment in the Provo Canyon." I would begin graduate school in American Studies in the fall, and I hoped my own work would involve looking at national parks and public land use in the West. The field school's theme seemed perfect for exploring and learning applicable methodology in context.

The field school turned out to be



all that I hoped for and more. Our classes during the first half of the program, taught by instructors from the American Folklife Center and BYU, introduced us both to general theory and practices in folklore and to specific information we would need to know to work in and around the Provo Canyon. Our interactive sessions included learning to write fieldnotes, planning and conducting productive interviews, documentary photography, archiving materials, and ethics. We practiced using analog sound recording equipment and 35 mm cameras, documenting each other and willing victims around the BYU campus. We heard stories from those who lived and played in the Provo Canyon area, and we received useful information about the history and culture of the Utah Valley and Church of Latter Day Saints.

We took our inaugural trip into the Provo Canyon in the middle of our first week at the field school. Led by the director of the BYU archives, we stopped at places both popular and often passed by. We entered the grounds of a tiny power plant that looked surprisingly like a sanctuary; its shady grove of trees and elegant buildings had once harbored a school to build young men's character and knowledge of electricity. We drove to the top of SquaPeak, an elevated overlook where people build bonfires and local couples spend quiet time together. We visited long-time residents of small communities tucked between the highway and

"Generally there is a cooperative effort among those who are really dedicated fishermen on the Provo because they love the place, they value the environment, they realize that it's a fragile resource, they do not take it for granted." — Stephen L. Tanner, field school informant. Photo: Guha Shankar. Source: American Folklife Center

the mountains, and we explored a family nature retreat center near Robert Redford's Sundance resort. The tour was a dizzying trip of winding roads both literal and figurative, and we ended the evening with a cookout and bonfire. Sitting by the fire, looking up at the jagged top of the canyon meeting the starry sky while talking and singing and roasting sweet treats, I could easily see why the canyon was such a magical place for so many people in the area.

Though I learned much from the classes, practice sessions, and discussions with the faculty, it was the fieldwork that grounded their teachings in reality. The faculty divided the students into five teams, each focusing on a different aspect of Provo Canyon's history and recreational activities. For someone who has watched "A River Runs Through It" over two dozen times, my assignment to the fly-fishing team was ideal. After initial readings and discussions, we decided to explore the fly-fishing community and sense of place on the Provo. We contacted a number of fishermen who had been preliminarily interviewed before the start of the field school, and we met informants while walking along the banks of the Provo with our faculty advisor. These informants, and the local knowledge of a member of my team, guided us toward the fly shop.

Every interaction we had with a Provo River fisherman both inspired and humbled us. They possessed amazing skill and intimate knowledge of both a sport—perhaps better called an art—and a place. For many, fishing was an essential part of their family histories; we talked with a grandfather and grandson who both fished the Provo, a father who was beginning to teach his baby girl to fish, and a young man who had lost his own father at a young age but found his

life-long mentor in the man who taught him to cast and tie flies. For some, fishing was an element of their daily lives—they went out to fish on the Provo multiple times per week. Most spoke with reverence for the Provo River and the fish that swim in it; many also spoke of the history of human-induced change on the river, as the road through the canyon widened and more people came to fish, both encroaching on the river's natural course.

In addition to investigating the traditions of Provo Canyon communities, we as field school participants also constructed our own community. The field school provided a framework, some might say "excuse," for the students, faculty, and staff of the program to put aside our typical daily concerns as we worked together to collect information and understand others. Members of the field school community who were local to the area opened their homes and shared their local knowledge, helping those of us from out-of-town to navigate the area and feel truly welcome. We who stayed on-campus in the dormitories bonded over late nights typing field notes in the computer lab and telling stories from daily fieldwork as we brushed our teeth. All of the field school participants brought their own unique backgrounds and experiences to the program, and we learned much from working and playing together.

In my first few months of graduate school, I have already drawn extensively on my field school experience. I frequently refer to things I learned both in the classroom and in the field as I contribute to seminar discussions, and I've used the training in documentation to pursue my own research for term papers and ongoing projects. I know that other field school participants are having similar experiences, as I have also enjoyed the exchanges that have been part of the ongoing field school community. As I recall hanging out in the fly shop, recording fish tales, logging interview tapes, talking around bonfires, and seeing sunlight sparkle on the Provo River, I know I won't forget the lessons or the experiences from the field school anytime soon.

Mourning and Grief in Response to Terrorism: AFC Staff Members Address a Symposium in Spain



A spontaneous shrine erected in response to the 2004 Madrid subway bombings.
Source: Spanish Council for Scientific Research/Archivo del Duelo

By Cristina Sánchez-Carretero,
Margaret Kruesi, and
Guha Shankar

On April 8 and 9, 2005, cataloger Margaret Kruesi and folklife specialist Guha Shankar of the American Folklife Center (AFC) took part in a symposium in Madrid, Spain, entitled *Ethnographic Archives and the Social Construction of Memory*. The symposium arose from a collaboration between the AFC and the Department of Anthropology at the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC). This partnership began shortly after CSIC staff implemented the project “El Archivo del Duelo” (The Archive of Mourning)

as a means of documenting and preserving the spontaneous shrines that sprang up around Madrid soon after the attack on city train stations on March 11, 2004. Spontaneous shrines, which are created and maintained by ordinary people after accidents and disasters, consist of personal objects, artifacts, text, and artwork, often left on display in public places. They represent an important form of mourning and memorialization in modern Europe and America.

One of the main goals of the symposium was to fill the gap between ethnographic fieldwork and the procedures for archiving, organizing, and cataloging these unique materials. The other was to

discuss the role of ethnographic archives in the construction of memory. The symposium was structured in two sessions dedicated to methodological issues, with three roundtables discussing ethnographic research projects and archiving of primary source materials.

The conference was funded by the Fundación de los Ferrocarriles Españoles [Spanish Railways Foundation] (FFE) and CSIC. It was co-organized by the department of anthropology of CSIC and the Historical Railway Archive of FFE, and hosted by the latter at their headquarters, a nineteenth-century palace next to the Atocha train station. More than a hundred



Dr. Pilar Martinez Olmo (l.), director of Spain's Biblioteca de Filología (Library of Philology), shows artifacts to Kruesi and Shankar. Source: Spanish Council for Scientific Research

people attended the symposium, from eight regions of Spain. Attendees were mostly museum and archive professionals, librarians, and students. The event was widely covered by the media; reporters interviewed Shankar and Kruesi, and information about the conference was broadcast on Spanish radio.

The conference was opened by the president of the Spanish Railway Foundation, Carlos Zapatero, and the vice president of the CSIC, Montserrat Torné, who stressed the importance of the collaboration between archivists, museum and library specialists, and ethnographers. Afterwards, Felipe Criado, national coordinator for the humanities and social sciences of the CSIC, presented the "Archive of Mourning" project with an agreement officially donating the objects deposited at the train stations after the March 11 attacks to the Archive of Mourning. The first speaker, Montserrat Iniesta, an anthropologist who specializes in museums, gave an overview of ethnographic collections in Spain, and Mario Cotterau, from the Unit of Coordination of Libraries at CSIC, presented on the archival collections at CSIC.

The AFC session, "From Fieldwork to Ethnographic Archives: The Experience of the

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress," described the history of the Archive of Folk Culture and some highlights from its collections. The presenters focused on the AFC's September 11, 2001 Documentary Project, from the initial call to send in materials documenting experiences of September 11, through processing, to the work that went into making the digital collection available through the Library of Congress's American Memory Website.

Maggie Kruesi emphasized that in ethnographic collections, documentation is typically undertaken in multiple formats (e.g., sound recordings, photographs, moving images, and fieldnotes). All the materials provide context for all others; this reflects the intentions of the ethnographer/collector who collaborates with members of the community to generate detailed contextual data. She said materials are often fragile and complex, and that they should be processed, described, and cataloged together. She also highlighted cataloging tools now in development that may be useful for providing access to ethnographic materials. Guha Shankar concluded the three-hour session by discussing fieldwork and equipment used for documentation, as well as best practices and standards for digital preservation and reformatting. One point he emphasized was that researchers bear a responsibility to the communities they study, and that they should, therefore, ensure the information they collect now will be usable in the future. Among other things, that means staying abreast of rapidly changing digital technologies. Shankar pointed out that fieldworkers have to be aware of the complex nature of documentation technologies, but that developing solid techniques and skills as interviewers, photographers, and recordists was equally important.

After the AFC session, three roundtables addressed ongoing projects. Friday afternoon was dedicated to discussions of a project to exhume Republican common graves from the Spanish Civil War. Representatives of the project discussed the problems they are facing in the recording of oral histories from family members and survivors during their exhumation field trips, as well as the organization and preservation of materials. The first roundtable on Saturday morning, "The Construction of Railway Workers' Memories," was dedicated to the Railway Historic Archive. The last roundtable focused on "El Archivo del Duelo," whose purpose is the documentation and analysis of mourning processes and the public memorialization of grief after the terrorist attacks. This project was linked to the American Folklife Center at its inception, because it was modeled, in part, on AFC's September 11, 2001 Documentary Collection. In addition, "El Archivo del Duelo" has adapted AFC materials and methodology. This collaboration has been very fruitful and the CSIC is continuing it as the archive is being processed and catalogued. The collection includes approximately six thousand manuscripts including drawings, letters, and poems; five hundred artifacts, from T-shirts with graffiti to teddy bears; fifty thousand digital messages deposited at the "cyber-shrines" erected in the train stations; and three thousand digital photographs of the memorials and other demonstrations of mourning. The collection is now closed except for the oral testimonies series, which is still open. The debate at this roundtable posed questions regarding the specific challenges of this collection, the possibility of its being used for political ends, as well as practical issues including fundraising.

The contents of the roundtables, workshop, and the debates are accessible online at the Website of the symposium (<http://www.ffe.es/archivoy memoria>). The collaboration between AFC and the Archive of Mourning continues, as the processing and cataloging of these unique materials raise questions of interest to both parties.



On October 27, members of the Center's Board of Trustees and staff visited writer Genevieve Chandler Peterkin. Peterkin lives in the oldest house in Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina. Her mother guided folklorist John Lomax when he made a fieldtrip to the area in the 1930s under the auspices of the Archive of American Folk-Song, the AFC's precursor. The visit was part of a tour of the area and its cultural resources, led by Board member and local resident William Kinney (front row right, in blue jacket). A regular meeting of the Board was held in Georgetown, South Carolina, on October 28. Photo: Joanne Rasi. Source: American Folklife Center

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