FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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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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American Folklife Center publications (including *Folklife Center News*), a calendar of events, collection guides, general information, and connections to a selection of other Internet services related to folklife are available on the Internet via the LC MARVEL Gopher Server and the LC Web World Wide Web Server. LC MARVEL is available through your local Gopher server. Or use your Gopher Client Software to connect to marvel.loc.gov. From the main menu, choose "Research and Reference," then "Reading Rooms," then "American Folklife Center."

LC Web is available through your local World Wide Web service. The Center's home page can be accessed from the Library's main menu. The direct URL for the Center's home page is: http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife

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Folkline, an information service providing timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, is available through both the above Internet servers and by telephone. For the telephone service (available around the clock, except during the hours of 9 A.M. until noon each Monday, when it is updated), dial: **202 707-2000**

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS
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Folklife Center News publishes articles on the programs and activities of the American Folklife Center, as well as other articles on traditional expressive culture. It is available free of charge from the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, Washington, D.C. 20540-4610. *Folklife Center News* does not publish announcements from other institutions or reviews of books from publishers other than the Library of Congress. Readers who would like to comment on Center activities or newsletter articles may address their remarks to the editor.

EDITOR'S NOTES

The bill "to provide for the establishment of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress," Public Law 94-201, was signed by President Gerald Ford on January 2, 1976, the first working day of the Bicentennial year. It had been nearly a hundred years since Congress recognized the importance of folk culture with an act to continue the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution in 1897. This year has seen a renewed debate in Congress on the role of the federal government in cultural programming (particularly in connection with funding for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities).

In this issue of *Folklife Center News*, Alan Jabbour offers the first of a two-part retrospective on the American Folklife Center. He reviews the history of the legislation creating the Center and describes the major accomplishments of the field documentation projects the

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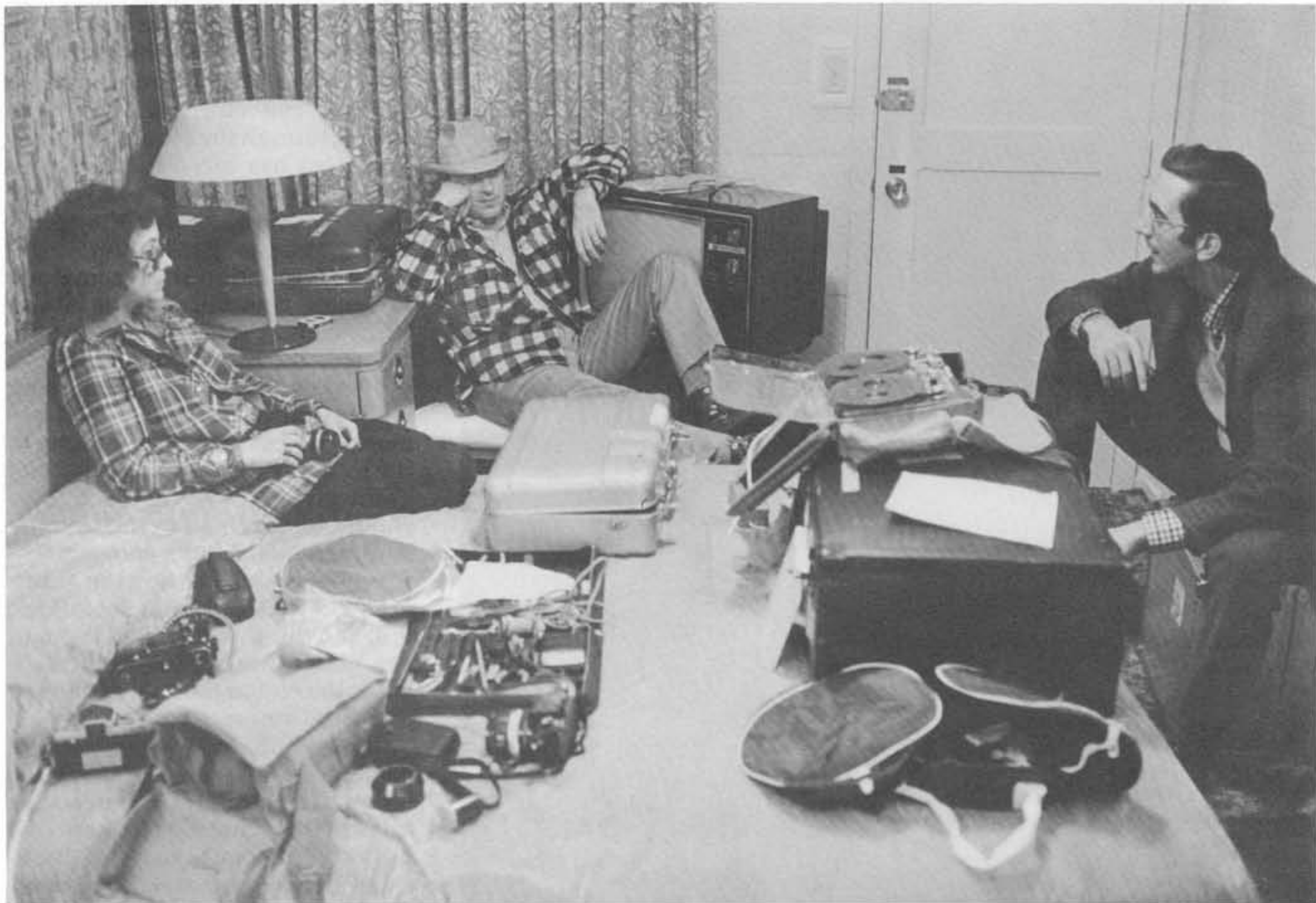
Cover: Fannie Lee Teals with her red, white, and blue Bicentennial quilt. American Folklife Center, South-Central Georgia Project, 1977. (6-17617-29A) Photo by Beverly J. Robinson

The American Folklife Center: A Twenty-Year Retrospective



Linda Gantañaga, Howard W. Marshall, and Alan Jabbour discuss fieldwork plans at a motel in Winnemucca, Nevada, 1978. Paradise Valley Folklife Project. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer

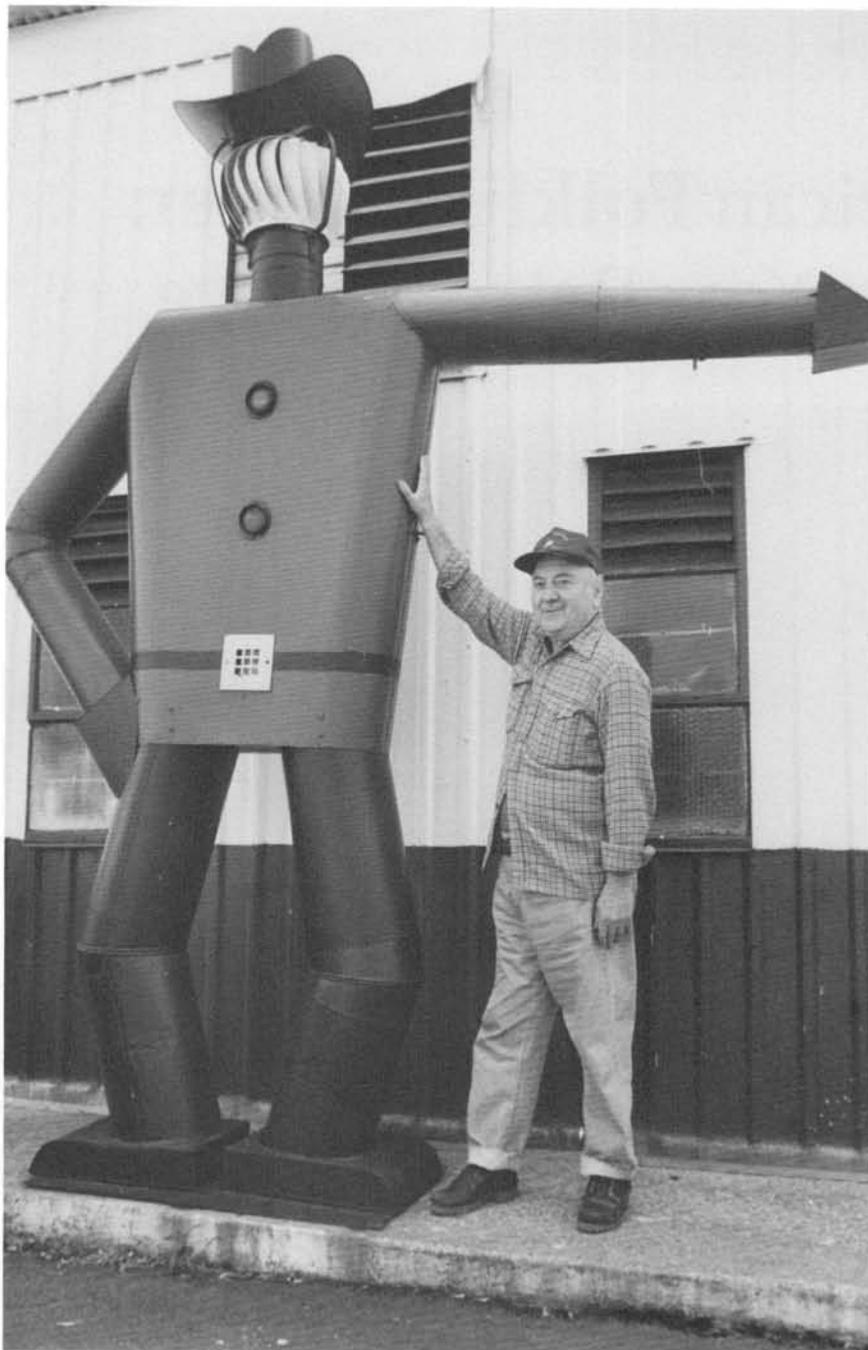
By Alan Jabbour

The American Folklife Preservation Act

This year is the twentieth anniversary of the birth of the American Folklife Center. The American Folklife Preservation Act, Public Law 94-201, passed both houses of Congress at the end of 1975 and was signed into law by President Ford on January 2, 1976. Twenty years is a generation, by some systems of reckoning, which invites reflections on the course of the Center's development—and the state of folklife itself—as we approach the millennium.

The bill that ultimately created the American Folklife Center was originally inspired by the Festival of American Folklife, first presented by the Smithsonian Institution in 1967. Conceived by the Smithsonian's Secretary, S. Dillon Ripley, and its director of performing arts, James Morris, as a way of making the museums "come alive" on the National Mall, the festival was created by Ralph Rinzler, who brought to the challenge his previous experience with the Newport Folk Festival. Its success drew the attention of members of Congress, and a bill was drafted that, after several years of debate and negotiation, resulted in the creation of the Center.

The legislation had an impact even before its final enactment. It was initially drafted to create a



Occupational folklife expert Archie Green stands beside "Mr. Dixie" at Dixie Sheetmetal, Falls Church, Virginia, November 1995. In the 1970s, Green walked the halls of Congress to lobby for the creation of the American Folklife Center. Photo by David A. Taylor

grant-giving foundation, but its grant-giving provisions drew opposition from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, which had been created in the 1960s to provide grants in the cultural sphere. The endowments argued that their legislation already provided a mandate for grants dealing with "folklife"—the term was then novel in the public sphere, but *folklore* had a venerable history in both public programs and the academy in the United States. Folklorists advocating passage of the legislation retorted that, since the endowments favored "elite culture" over "folk culture," a third agency committed to folk culture was necessary to balance the cultural equation. The endowments protested that they had already given grants dealing with folk culture; the folklorists insisted that they had not, and that in any case they lacked the expertise to determine whether they had.

The debate triggered by congressional consideration of the legislation led Nancy Hanks, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, to call a formal meeting on the subject, and then to launch the Folk Arts Program at the Arts Endowment in the spring of 1974. That program has had a profound effect on the development of folk arts programming around the country. Unfortunately, though the Humanities Endowment has hired folklorists to serve on its professional staff, it developed no comparable program during the past generation.

The legislation itself remained in Senate committee until late in 1975. Sen. Claiborne Pell, who chaired the committee and had been a key sponsor of the enabling legislation for the two endowments, had grown sympathetic to the folklife bill but felt that federal grant-giving for cultural activities should be confined to the existing endowments. After a compromise was negotiated deleting the grant-giving provisions from the folklife bill, Senator Pell reported it out of committee, and it passed the Senate at the end of the first session of the 94th Congress.

On balance, many factors were conjoined in passage of the legislation. The intrepid advocacy of folklorist Archie Green kept the bill alive through years of backstage debate and steadily broadened congressional support for the concept. The argument that the bill would right the balance culturally, counteracting the elite bias of the two endowments, proved effective, advancing the legislation while simultaneously pressing the endowments to pay more serious attention to folk cultural traditions. The conjunction of the bill with the approaching Bicentennial of the American Revolution was likewise helpful, for the celebration of the Bicentennial in 1976 took a grassroots turn, emphasizing the variety of local, ethnic, and other cultural traditions as strands in the fabric of the nation. The 1970s in general were a period of in-

creased attention to "roots"—those aspects of heritage that lie between the individual and the nation, and that connect individuals to communities while defining the nation as a whole pluralistically.

The definition of folklife in the American Folklife Preservation Act anchored the Center firmly in the expressive culture of the family, ethnic, religious, occupational, and regional groups that make up America. When the Senate suddenly appeared about to move on the legislation, Archie Green, the bill's key lobbyist, anxiously contacted a Senate aide with the sole purpose of modifying certain phrases in the legislation's definition of folklife. The aide later expressed wonderment that the critical issue in the final moments was refining the concept, not arguing for more money. But the definitions and justifications of the act, apart from shaping the direction of the Center, have influenced other federal agencies, state legislation, and even the legislation of other nations in the twenty years since passage of the act.

Birth of the Center

The legislation had originally conceived of a foundation within the Smithsonian Institution, but for a variety of reasons the host agency became the Library of Congress, which since the 1920s had built a famous archive of folk music and folklore. The Library had supported the legislation from the outset, but final passage of the bill caught the institution in a moment of transition between retiring Librarian of Congress L. Quincy Mumford and the new Librarian, Daniel J. Boorstin. Arrangements for launching the Center were undertaken by Elizabeth Hamer Kegan, who had served the Library for many years as Assistant Librarian of Congress. A reception was arranged in honor of the legislation's passage; the board of trustees was appointed by the Speaker of the House and the president pro tempore of the Senate; Dr. Boorstin convened the board for its inaugural meeting, during which it elected distinguished folklorist Wayland D. Hand as its first chairman; and in September of 1976 the Librarian appointed me as the director. I had formerly served as head of the Library's Archive of Folk Song and had been director of the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts from 1974 through 1976.

Starting up an office—especially one with no precedent in government—has its special administrative challenges. One must, for example, fashion job descriptions for positions that have never before existed, such as "folklife specialist." Early staff appointments to the Center included secretary Paula Johnson (now at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History); research secretary Carol Armbruster (now with the European Division of the Library of Congress); secretary-editor Brett Topping (who later accepted a position at the National Museum of Women in the Arts); folklife specialists Carl Fleischhauer (now with the National Digital Library program of the Library of Congress), Elena Bradunas (now residing in Hawaii), and Howard W. Marshall (now at the University of Missouri); executive assistant Eleanor Sreb (now retired); deputy director Ray Dockstader (now retired); secretary (now administrative assistant) Doris Craig; and researcher (now folklife specialist) Peter Bartis.

At the end of the first partial fiscal year of the Center's history, not all the funds for staffing could be spent, so equipment was purchased for the purpose of future fieldwork. A bit of money still remained, so the Reverend Howard Finster of Summerville, Georgia, was commissioned to paint two signs and two paintings in honor of the Center's creation. Reverend Finster, who has subsequently become nationally famous, calls the commission his first recognition outside of Georgia. The two paintings hang in the director's office today—when they are not being exhibited by various museums around the country.

Early Initiatives

One of the first initiatives of Librarian Daniel J. Boorstin was to open up the main front entrance of the old Library of Congress building, now known as the Thomas Jefferson Building. For years the main entrance, which opens into the Great Hall and the Main Reading Room, had been closed as an economy measure. Opening the door, for Dr. Boorstin, symbolized making the Library a more open and accessible institution. Since the American Folklife Center had been created just as he arrived at the Library, he suggested that the Center sponsor a public event on the plaza in front of the main entrance to vivify its grand opening. The Center responded with a noontime concert on September 23, 1976, featuring Washington bluesmen Big Chief Ellis, John Cephas, Phil Wiggins, and James Bellman. The concert was arranged by Richard

It is hard to believe that it has been twenty years since I worked at the Archive [of Folk Culture] as a volunteer . . . . I remember feeling that I was working at the center of a large network of colleagues. Every day someone interesting stopped by to look at materials at the Archive, or wrote or called with a question. . . . I also learned about "invisible colleges" though I did not yet know the term. I discovered how important it is to maintain connections with a wide variety of people who are separated geographically but united by their interests. You were the center of that particular invisible college—the Archive had information everyone wanted, and you were always available to help people discover resources that would enrich their projects.

Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas
February 2, 1996

Board of Trustees Meeting, September 1, 1976. From left to right: Ned Danson, David Voight, Alan Jabbour, Wayland Hand, Daniel J. Boorstin, and Elizabeth Hamer Kegan. Library of Congress photo

K. Spottswood—now the host of a weekly folk-music program on Washington's WAMU-FM—who at the time was completing his editing of the fifteen-volume record series *Folk Music in America*, issued by the Library in celebration of the Bicentennial. The event was so successful that there was an immediate clamor for more concerts on the front steps of the Library. Thus was born a twenty-year series of programs on what was dubbed "Neptune Plaza," in honor of the fountain featuring Neptune between the plaza and First Street.

The Center's next initiative was more ambitious and again drew upon the ideas and energies of Dick Spottswood. On January 24-26, 1977, the Center sponsored its first conference, on the subject of "Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage." The conference sought to highlight the importance of the vast corpus of ethnic recordings produced by American commercial recording companies in the first half of the twentieth century. Though scholars and collectors had paid attention to the "hillbilly records" and the African-American "race records" of the same era, the stunning variety of recordings from various ethnic groups in the United States had not been collected, archived, analyzed, or reissued. They represented an untapped trove of heritage, and the gathering of scholars, collectors, ethnic record producers, and others was calculated to bring this heritage to the attention of a wider audience. The conference was augmented by an exhibit on the subject and an evening concert featuring Texas border singer Lydia Mendoza and the Polish Highlanders of Chicago.

In retrospect, the ethnic recordings conference succeeded in the longterm results for which it was designed. A few years later the Center published a book drawn from the conference, *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage* (1982). A further outgrowth of the conference was Spottswood's discography *Ethnic Music on Records* (7 vols.; Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), a monumental work of scholarship assembled with assistance from the Library's Information Technology Services office and still maintained and updated as a Library computer database. In the years following the conference, many ethnic records from the early twentieth century were reissued, fueling a renaissance of interest in and performance of any number of ethnic music traditions in the United States. The initiative was the Center's first major undertaking, and it illustrates how the Center from its inception established and cultivated points of continuity between itself and the Archive of Folk Song, which had preceded it at the Library.

The first full year of the Center's operations was 1977, and in that year it launched two field documentary projects, the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project and the South-Central Georgia Folklife Project. They set into motion a pattern of field documentary projects that has characterized the Center's work for the two decades of its existence. Both projects were arts-connected. The Chicago project, coordinated by Elena Bradunas, responded to a request from the Illinois Arts Council, which had been mandated by its state legislature to begin a program in support of ethnic arts

and asked for guidance on the networks and artistic traditions of Chicago's many ethnic groups. The Georgia project, coordinated by Howard W. Marshall, responded to an invitation from the Arts Experiment Station, based at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and operating programs in an eight-county area of south-central Georgia.

Though one was urban and one rural, both projects emphasized the importance of documenting artistic traditions professionally, using sound recordings and still photography, with an eye both to creating public products and to building an archive for the future. In this respect they bore the imprint of the Center's media specialist, Carl Fleischhauer. Both projects also were designed with the strategy of leaving behind a permanent position in the region after the Center's work was over.

The Chicago project led to a lengthy final report with recommendations to the Illinois Arts Council for future programming. At the same time, the contributions of project photographer Jonas Dovydenas were highlighted in the exhibition and catalog *Inside Our Homes, Outside Our Windows*, which opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1979 and later traveled to the Library of Congress, then to Springfield, Illinois, Milwaukee, and (with the help of the USIA) Dubrovnik. The Georgia project took another tack. After the fieldwork was completed, the Center held a series of workshops in the region to report to local citizens on the results of the fieldwork. A booklet of photographs entitled *Sketches of South Georgia Folklife* was distributed to workshop attendees. The archive for the Chicago project includes extensive manuscript materials, 342 sound recorded tapes, 8,000 black-and-white photographs, and 3,700 color transparencies. The Georgia collection is similar but somewhat larger and includes video recordings. A reference archive of the collection was prepared for an institution in the project area—a customary procedure in later projects.

The South Georgia Project had one further product not foreseen when the project was planned. In

Center folklorist Elena Bradunas with Lithuanian weaver Kazys Bartasius and his wife, Ida. Chicago Ethnic Arts Project, 1977. Photo by Jonas Dovydenas

I interned at the Library during those golden years when each intern received a stack pass. In the evenings, after the Archive was closed, I used to sit in the stacks in front of the GRs or the GNs, losing myself in folklore books . . . . In those evenings I learned not only about folklore, but more importantly about the way our culture preserves and organizes knowledge. . . . I learned to be selective and find the best book on the subject, and how to edit my research topics to a manageable scope. I learned—and I believe Joe [Hickerson] pointed this out to me—that if I really wanted to, and set my mind to it, I could write a book someday and get it copywritten and it would wind up on these shelves, too. . . . I always loved that Amy Lowell poem on the Library—didn't she say something like, "Where but here are we Americans so symbolized?" There was something so damned chaotic and democratic about the whole thing, and for me, the Archive was the crowning glory of this astonishing institution. . . . For many years they had sheltered the Archive of Folk Music to preserve culture which didn't make it into books, helping to fill at least some of the gaps in the scholarly record. And the staff at the Archive treated a letter which asked after the words to a song "my grandfather used to sing" with the same courtesy as a letter from a noted scholar.

Kathleen Condon
Brooklyn Children's Museum
Brooklyn, New York
January 31,1996

First Lady Rosalyn Carter visits the exhibit Folk Art and Folklife, one product of the South-Central Georgia Folklife Project, at the Library of Congress, January 1978. From left to right: Ruth Boorstin; Amy Carter; Librarian Daniel J. Boorstin; Mrs. Carter; and Michael Carrigan, the Library's exhibits officer. Library of Congress photo

1978 the Center drew upon the results of the project to create a photographic exhibit on South Georgia folklife. The idea cross-pollinated with an Atlanta-generated exhibit on Georgia folk art, "Missing Pieces," and the Library's exhibits officer, Michael Carrigan, decided to fill the entire ground floor of the Library's Jefferson Building with both exhibits. The First Lady and Amy Carter helped open the double exhibition. Rev. Howard Finster, who had sent his art by Greyhound bus to help launch the Center not long before, still talks about the Georgia contingent's hair-raising airplane ride to Washington to see the exhibition.

The Center and the Archive

On November 17-18, 1978, just over two years after its creation, the Center organized a symposium on the Archive of Folk Song in honor of the Archive's 50th anniversary. Implicit in the celebration was the fact that a few months earlier, on July 31, the Archive had been transferred from the Library's Music Division to become part of the Center.

Founded in 1928 within the Music Division, the Archive made important contributions to ethnography, folklore and folk music research, public programming, and cultural documentation and preservation in every decade of its distinguished history. Its heads included Robert W. Gordon, John A. Lomax, Alan Lomax, Benjamin A. Botkin, Duncan Emrich, Rae Korson, Alan Jabbour, and Joseph C. Hickerson. Though originally named the Archive of American Folk-Song, it had begun documenting folk music beyond the borders of the United States as early as 1935, when Alan Lomax recorded in the Bahamas, and by 1940 it had expanded its documentary scope well beyond folk music into folklore, verbal arts, and oral history. Since the 1950s it had been named simply the Archive of Folk Song.

The 50th anniversary symposium marked a turning point for the Center's development. The legislation specifically authorized the creation of an archival center for folklife. Center field projects were rapidly generating a large new archival corpus of documents in several media. It made no sense to duplicate the efforts of an existing archive within the Library by creating a separate archive for the Center. Further, the Center staff believed in a cycle of activity moving from field documentation to archival preservation and access to public programming. Lacking an archive meant lacking a critical stage in that cyclical process. At another level, so long as the Center was separate from the Archive, it was in a real sense separated from its institutional history within the Library and seemed extraneous to the institution. The conceptually logical and economical solution was to merge the Archive of Folk Song with the Center, at once making the Center whole and wedding it to the history and mission of its host institution.

Joining the Archive fully to the Center was a long process. Initially it was simply an administrative matter: the three staff members of the Archive—Joseph C. Hickerson, Gerald E. Parsons Jr., and Patricia Markland—were transferred to the Center roster. But in time each "part" of the Center inevitably began to influence the other. The first

Four heads of the Archive of Folk Culture assembled for the Archive's 50th anniversary celebration, November 16-17, 1978. From left to right: Alan Jabbour, Rae Korson, Joseph C. Hickerson, and Alan Lomax. Library of Congress Photo

important step toward integrating their missions was changing the name of the Archive. In 1979, reflecting both the historical broadening of the Archive's purview and the Center's need to deal archivally with all aspects of folklife, the name was changed to the Archive of Folk Culture.

Field Projects, East and West

One way the Center immediately changed the Archive was by infusing into its collections the multiformat documentary results of field projects representing a panoply of folklife traditions. Field projects were a major activity of the Center over its first two decades. They may have seemed to represent a new direction, but in reality they restored an activity that had characterized the Archive in the 1930s and again in the 1970s. Looked at in that light, the Center's innovation was not in instituting fieldwork, but in expanding it to include not only music but verbal arts, material culture, occupational

Joseph C. Hickerson and Gerald E. Parsons, at the Archive of Folk Culture, 1975, when it was still part of the Library's Music Division. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer

traditions, and other aspects of culture not documented by the Archive in an earlier generation. Similarly, the basic tools of documentation expanded to include not only sound recordings but photography. And finally, the process of fieldwork expanded from the classic one or two workers to teams of several professionals working in close interaction. Yet the ideal of fieldwork—generating a permanent body of knowledge for the archive through documentation in the field—can be said to characterize the whole history of folklore and folklife activities at the Library of Congress, from the Archive's inception in 1928 through the Center's work in the last quarter of the century.

The early field projects mounted by the Center in Chicago and South Georgia were followed by a project in 1978 in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. The area is legendary for its musical traditions—well represented in the early recordings of the Archive of Folk Culture—but that was not why the Center chose the Blue Ridge for a major project. Instead, the choice of locale was made by the Center's partner in the project, the National Park Service. The director of the Park Service, William Whalen, had been named by President Carter to the Center's board, and discussions began on collaborating to study the folk cultural traditions within and surrounding a national park. Planning focused on two possible sites, Olympic National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway; the Blue Ridge Parkway was finally selected.

The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project focused on a band of counties bordering the Blue Ridge in northwestern North Carolina and southwestern Virginia. The project team documented a wide range of Blue Ridge traditional life, from festivals and jam sessions through church services and religious narratives to crop harvesting and food curing. In comparison to the Center's 1977 projects, the Blue Ridge project was more comprehensive: artistic expression remained the central focus of the documentation, but the sweep of fieldwork was broader than in South Georgia and much broader than in Chicago. A perusal of the photographs reveals not only music, dance, crafts, preaching, stories, and community celebrations, but beans drying in the back window of a car in a parking lot, Mexicans harvesting cabbages, and teenagers at a drive-in. The Center was merging the Archive's tradition of artistic documentation with the concept of ethnography.

A goal of the Blue Ridge research was to provide the National Park Service with knowledge of the living cultural traditions along

Terry Eiler (with camera) and Bob Fulcher videotape Veoma and Josh Easter, Surry County, North Carolina, as they peel apples for drying with the assistance of field researcher Wally Macnow (left). Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project, 1978. (BR8-16-20543-26) Photo by Lyntha Scott Eiler

[The Archive of Folk Culture] holds a special place in my heart. I discovered it somewhat by chance, as a high school student seeking refuge from the daunting formality of the [Library's] Main Reading Room. Years later I rediscovered the Archives as an intern. Inspired and guided by Joe Hickerson and Gerry Parsons, I undertook many tasks—filing, researching public inquiries, transcribing field recordings, answering phone calls. Each job became another entryway into the treasures of American culture contained within the Archives. Each accomplishment gave me a growing sense of connectedness to the singers, collectors, and researchers who had come before.

Harold A. Closter
National Museum of American History
Smithsonian Institution
January 30, 1996

the Blue Ridge Parkway for use in park interpretation and planning. The Park Service has a long-standing interest in traditional culture, but cultural interpretation had often been filtered through a lens that, in the Center's opinion, sometimes made traditional culture seem solely a function of the historical past. Countervailing with a vigorous portrayal of the presentness of culture—no less alive, dynamic, and developing for being traditional—was perhaps the central thrust of Center documentation in such projects.

The Blue Ridge work yielded two significant products, both reflecting the tenor of the fieldwork itself. *Blue Ridge Harvest*, edited by Carl Fleischhauer, provided a balanced photographic statement not only about the project but about the texture of culture and community in the region. It is, surprisingly, a rare instance of a photographic publication making a balanced, comprehensive statement about American grassroots culture. *Children of the Heav'nly King* is equally unusual, presenting a specific subtheme of the project, religious expressive traditions. Edited by project coordinator Charles K. Wolfe, its two long-playing recordings, coupled with a lengthy textual and photographic booklet, bring together not only religious music but sermons, prayers, religious narratives, and (through the photographs) religion in the cultural landscape. No such multimedia statement on American religious expression had appeared before, to the best of our knowledge, but its influence is discernible on later publications from other institutions. It provided no little satisfaction to Center staff that subsequent visits revealed both publications in the homes of many Blue Ridge citizens.

In 1978 the Center launched its first Western project. Center staff had been eager to expand the Center's westward purview, and the national media were just beginning to focus, under the headline "Sagebrush Rebellion," on the feelings of national neglect, federal encroachment, and cultural endangerment in the ranching country of the inland West. Walking into a sagebrush rebellion carrying a federal banner might seem imprudent, but Center staff wanted to try their documentary skills on traditional ranching and felt that the rising concerns about the future of ranching in the West provided a potential policy backdrop for Center fieldwork. The quest for a site narrowed to Nevada, and then, in consultation with Nevada university colleagues, to an old and multi-ethnic ranching community in the north-central part of the state, Paradise Valley.

Paradise Valley was the first Center project that stretched fieldwork beyond a single season. It also became the first project to include extensive documentation with 16-mm film. The principal ethnographic subject of the motion picture film was a trail drive bringing cattle from the mountains down to the home ranch of Les Stewart in the valley. Stewart was himself a close observer of tradition who had documented traditional ranching practices on 16-mm film in the 1940s and often provided his own narration when he screened the film for 4-H classes and other groups. Carl Fleischhauer responded with a strategy of documentary collaboration: he not only recorded Stewart's contemporary narrations for the older films but showed him sequences of the newly shot footage and filmed his insider's commentary on the buckaroo arts captured therein.

Despite the Center's emphasis on the importance of planning products for each project, the Paradise Valley work was begun without a clear product in mind. As it turned out, it has been one of the most product-rich Center efforts. That was a time when exhibitions attracted a great deal of energy within our field and in Washington. Howard W. Marshall, the Center's project coordinator, had persuaded Smithsonian colleague Richard Ahlborn to join the field team, and soon a plan was afoot to produce an exhibit featuring their work. The final result was an unusual collaboration: the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History presented the exhibit *Buckaroos in Paradise*, and the Library published the companion volume of the same title.

In 1983 the Center produced a comprehensive exhibition on *The American Cowboy*, and the section on contemporary cowboy life featured the Paradise Valley collection again. President Reagan presided over the opening of the exhibition in the Library's new Madison Gallery. One of the highlights of the exhibition, an interactive display using a videodisc produced by Carl Fleischhauer, presented the film sequences shot with Les Stewart and his hands in Paradise Valley. It marked the first use

of what are now referred to as "new technologies" for public presentation by the Library.

After the exhibition, the Center took the technology a step farther, publishing a double-sided videodisc with a lengthy booklet entitled *The Ninety-Six Ranch*. The title names Les Stewart's ranch, and the disc features his ranch both today and through his 1940s film. In fact, the publication encompasses more than a single ranch; it is a multimedia encyclopedia of Paradise Valley in film, photograhy, and recorded sound. Over a decade later, another facet of the project—the architecture of Paradise Valley, with special attention to the traditional Italian stonemasonry dotting the valley and the West generally—received attention in Howard W. Marshall's book *Paradise Valley, Nevada: the People and Buildings of an American Place* (1995). Perhaps the Paradise Valley collection will next appear online, continuing its productive history as a documentary collection into the next century.

> *We were really delighted to see the enormous works done by the Library of Congress at Washington during our visit in August 1990. The Folklife Center is no doubt a resource house of folklore of this world. We would like to be associated with this center.*
>
> *Sila Basak*
> *Reader, Department of Bengali*
> *Susilkar College, University of Calcutta*
> *May 31, 1991*

Cultural Conservation

The Blue Ridge and Paradise Valley projects both drew the Center into the array of cultural issues associated with what is sometimes called "land-use planning." In addition, the Blue Ridge project was the first of a series of collaborations between the Folklife Center and the National Park Service. The second was not so successful.

In 1979 the Center was approached by Park Service officials regarding the possibility of mounting a research, programming, and planning effort in the counties along the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. The waterway, which was already under construction, was to run through northeastern

Korean dance students waiting to perform at a Silver Spring, Maryland, nursing home, photographed for the Center's Ethnic Heritage and Language Schools Project, 1981. The study of cultural transmission as it takes place through regular, formal activities grew out of the 1977 Chicago Ethnic Arts Project, where researchers were struck by the number of activities organized for young people by some of the city's ethnic communities. Photo by Lucy Long

Harvesting cranberries at Haines's bogs in Chatsworth, New Jersey. Pinelands Folklife Project, 1983. Photo by Joseph Czarnecki

Mississippi and southwestern Alabama, connecting the Tennessee River with Mobile Bay. Funds were available through the Department of the Interior to conduct what are termed "mitigation" efforts to counteract any adverse impacts of the project on the region's cultural resources. "Cultural resources" were generally understood to consist of historic buildings and archeological sites; the Center saw the project as an opportunity to broaden the concept to include living cultural traditions. But though construction was already underway, part of the project was not yet funded. Some environmentalists continued to oppose it, and the Center found itself drawn into controversy within the field of folklore and folklife studies about whether accepting mitigation funds lent support to a public works project the ultimate fate of which was not yet determined. In the end, the Center withdrew. But the withdrawal did not signal the end of either the Center's involvement with the National Park Service or its exploration of the connections between living cultural traditions and the large family of activities and issues involving historic preservation, natural conservation, and land management. In fact, a new opportunity presented itself within a year.

Federal historic preservation responsibilities, which comprise an important cluster of cultural programs and activities, are managed principally within the National Park Service in the Department of the Interior. In 1980 the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives began consideration of a bill amending the National Historic Preservation Act, which is perhaps the most important piece of national legislation dealing with historic preservation. An early draft of the new legislation included a clause calling for a study of the relationship between living cultural traditions and the preservation responsibilities of the federal government.

I immediately got in touch with House Interior Committee staffer Loretta Neumann to discuss the clause. In the ensuing months, the Center was an active ingredient in the parleys, negotiations, and hearings that characterize the course of a bill through the Congress. In the end, the clause remained essentially intact:

> *The Secretary [of the Interior], in cooperation with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress shall, within two years after the enactment of this Act, submit a report to the President and the Congress on preserving and conserving the intangible elements of our cultural heritage, such as arts, skills, folklife, and folkways. The report shall take into account the view of other public and private organizations, as appropriate. This report shall*

include recommendations for legislative and administrative actions by the Federal government in order to preserve, conserve, and encourage the continuation of the diverse traditional prehistoric, historic, ethnic and folk cultural traditions that underlie and are a living expression of our American heritage. (National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980, Title III, Section 502)

The bill passed in the waning days of the 96th Congress, with the Carter administration departing and the new Reagan administration preparing to arrive. Washington waited for the dust to settle, but early in 1981 I met with Bennie C. Keel, departmental consulting archeologist for the Department of the Interior, and we resolved to collaborate in fulfilling the mandate provided by the new legislation. The proposed study needed a fulltime coordinator, so Ormond Loomis was borrowed from the Florida Folklife Program. A committee of independent consultants was constituted from the fields of folklore and folklife, anthropology, archeology, and historic preservation, and the drafting of the report began.

Exactly how the title of the final report came to be is a little mysterious. But it was clear to many of us that "intangible elements of our cultural heritage" would not suffice. The term *intangible* (which came from the world of archeology and historic preservation, where tangible culture is the focal subject) is problematic in that it defines something by what it is not. Further, there was a strong sentiment within the Center staff—corroborated by our independent consultants—for making the report deal with the entire system of working with culture, not just a portion of it.

Sophia Pargas, on break, crochets at her work station in the computer sub-assembly area, Wang Laboratories, Lowell Massachusetts. Lowell Folklife Project, 1978. (LFP-TR-B392-3) Photo by Tom Rankin

> ***[The American Folklife Center] not only houses unique collections . . . it supports scholarship, research, education, and public awareness of our vastly diverse traditional and folk cultures. People all over the country depend upon the staff and collections of the Center.***
>
> ***Paddy Bowman***
> ***Alexandria, Virginia***
> ***June 21, 1995***

These matters must have been on our minds one day when a group of Center staff convened to discuss the report (still at an early stage of preparation) with Ormond Loomis. The question arose about giving the report a stronger, more positive title. A few words and phrases were kicked around. Then someone said "cultural conservation"; none of us can now remember how it came up, or from whom. We all murmured the phrase, then looked at each other. Our new phrase was positive and focused; it provided an umbrella under which the various disciplines concerned with cultural action could unite; it chose a noun that resonated with the dynamic ecological models of natural conservation, as opposed to the static images of freeze-frame preservation; and finally, it alliterated. The phrase stuck, and *Cultural Conservation* was the title of the final report. Today, more than a decade later, the term has a life of its own and is cited by scholars and cultural specialists from many fields as a descriptive banner for their collective mission.

The Center's next project, in the Pine Barrens of southern New Jersey, carried the concept of cultural conservation a major step farther. The *Cultural Conservation* report had sought to bring into a working relationship all the key professional fields of cultural endeavor—

The American Folklife Center is, perhaps more than any other organization in the country, the guardian of America's folk culture. . . . All over America our regional communities, our local music and dance forms are threatened by the awesome power of the mass media. As Alan Lomax himself has written, "if we continue to allow the erosion of our cultural forms, soon there will be nowhere to visit and no place to truly call home." The American Folklife Center works with communities and ethnic groups to ensure that their culture is documented for future generations and remains a viable legacy for generations to come.

Steven Zeitlin
City Lore
New York, New York
June 21, 1995

folklore and folklife studies, archeology, historic preservation, and planning. But though the study appropriated the term *conservation*, the report did not give as much attention as it might have to the world of natural conservation, ecology, and environmental research. The Pinelands Folklife Project remedied that earlier neglect.

The Pine Barrens of South Jersey were the subject of much environmental discussion in the 1970s and early 1980s, culminating in legislation creating the Pinelands National Reserve to protect the special environment of the region, from its pristine aquifer through its endemic species and archeological and historic treasures. The reserve was to be managed, not as a park or wilderness set-aside, but as a dynamic environment where people had always lived and would continue to live. The Pinelands Commission, made up of representatives from federal, state, and local governments, would manage the gradual and orderly development of the region to ensure that its unique features are not obliterated by suburban development, industrialization, and other forces.

The commission promptly sponsored research on everything from the endemic species to the archeological and historic sites of the Pine Barrens, in order to factor knowledge of "natural and cultural resources" into a long-range planning process. But somehow no one thought to study the living cultural traditions of the region today. The Center's Pinelands Folklife Project, launched in 1983 under the direction of Center staffer Mary Hufford with assistance from several state agencies, sought to correct that oversight.

Folklorists Howard W. Marshall (left) and Ray Brassieur examine furniture at the Fred Albert House, a typical mid-nineteenth century Acadian house moved by the Madawaska Historical Society to St. David Village, Maine. Maine Acadian Cultural Survey, 1991. (MAP-DW-B017-17) Photo by David Whitman

The Pinelands Folklife Project was broad in its sweep, and it probed the interstices of what are normally thought of as "nature" and "culture." It is not surprising that the fieldwork revealed a connection between the natural resources and the cultural traditions of the region. What is surprising is the depth of that connection. Some "natural resources," like white cedar, have been managed by human tending throughout the historical era—making them as much cultural as natural resources. Some endemic species seem to owe their existence to the periodic burning of the land, which has been going on at the hands of humans since prehistoric times. Contemplating the Pine Barrens, it is hard to say precisely where culture leaves off and nature begins.

The project had two tasks: to make recommendations to the Pinelands Commission about incorporating project findings into long-range planning, and to share the findings more broadly with the general public—including especially the people of the region. The first product was *One Space, Many Places: Folklife and Land Use in New Jersey's Pinelands National Reserve.* Designed as a report to the Pinelands Commission, it fulfilled the first task and contributed to

Folklife specialist Mary Hufford with Randy Halstead, who buys and sells ginseng grown in the Central Appalachian region, October 1995. Hufford interviewed Halstead for the Appalachian Forest Folklife Project. Photo by Lyntha Scott Eiler

the second as well. It has been a popular volume within the region and has also found its way into classrooms and onto planners' desks as a model for dealing with similar issues in other regions. But something more was called for to fulfill what the Center took to be its public mandate. Happily, the project had stirred great interest among various New Jersey agencies, and the New Jersey Historical Commision, New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and New Jersey State Museum eventually collaborated in a major exhibition and companion book, both entitled *Pinelands Folklife* and both drawing heavily on the fieldwork of the Center and the vision of the Center's project coordinator, Mary Hufford. Among the visitors to the exhibition at the state museum in Trenton were thousands of citizens of the Pinelands, excited and, we hope, empowered by the public evocation of their traditions and way of life.

A 1985 project in Utah permitted the Center to experiment further with the connections and compatibility between folklife and historic preservation. The Grouse Creek Cultural Survey focused on a single community in northwestern Utah. Its field team was composed of folklorists, historians, and architectural historians representing several Utah cultural agencies. Its goal was simply to demonstrate to historic preservation offices that a multidisciplinary field team would yield a deeper, fuller portrait of the salient cultural features of a community—in this case, a community of Mormon buckaroo traditions, lying on a cultural fault line between the Mormon farming belt and the ranching traditions of the Great Basin.

The Park Service Connection

Cultural conservation as a working concept has had many facets for the Folklife Center. So has the Park Service connection. The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project connected with the National Park Service's management of national parks; the cultural conservation study and the Grouse Creek Cultural Survey connected with a different network of professionals, both within and outside of the National Park Service, concerned with archeology and historic preservation. The Center's next project, in Lowell, Massachusetts, opened up yet another dimension of cultural conservation to be explored with another network of professionals connected with the Park Service—planners.

Lowell, as an early mill town, is prominent in the history of American industry; it is perhaps less prominent as a multi-ethnic contemporary city. Like other such cities, it was in economic decline for much of the twentieth century, but it was blessed by community leaders who united to begin planning the town's renewal. The planning led to the creation of Lowell National Historical Park, and it also led to the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, which was to work in coordination with the park but embraced directly the broader goal of community redevelopment. The Commission engaged the Folklife Center in a project to identify, document, and

plan programs addressing the ethnic and neighborhood traditions of Lowell.

Lowell was not the Center's first urban project. It had begun with an initiative in Chicago in 1977, and in 1979 it had undertaken a folklife field survey of Rhode Island, a heavily urban state. Center staffer Peter Bartis, who had worked on the Chicago project and directed the Rhode Island effort, served as the key staffer for Lowell. The project brought to the fore the relevance of folklife to cultural planning for a city, just as the Pinelands project had pressed for the inclusion of folklife in planning for a rural region. Community cultural planning is a cornerstone in the architecture of cultural conservation, as envisioned in the Center's policy study of that title. From the mid-1980s on, a number of Center field initiatives explored in fuller detail the implications of the idea.

The Maine Acadian Cultural Survey of 1991, undertaken again at the invitation of the National Park Service, assessed and documented the cultural traditions of the St. John Valley in far northern Maine. Center staffer David Taylor, himself a Maine native, directed the project. Congress had passed legislation mandating attention to Maine Acadian cultural heritage under the auspices of the Park Service, and the survey's charge was to define the boundaries and character of the region (a valley dominated by Acadian French traditions), enumerate its prominent cultural resources, and prepare a report laying the foundation for future regional efforts. It is noteworthy that the Maine Acadian project followed the precedent of the Grouse Creek Cultural Survey by defining itself as a "cultural survey," not a "folklife survey." The Maine legislation cited "folklore," but the Center found it more important to show a reach and breadth of expertise, redefining "cultural heritage" in the process, than to labor to assert the importance and define the boundaries of "folklife."

Two projects in West Virginia, both directed by Mary Hufford, continued the trends discernible in the Pinelands, Lowell, Grouse Creek, and the St. John Valley. The

Field Documentation Projects and Cultural Surveys

Chicago Ethnic Arts Project
April-July 1977
Coordinator: Elena Bradunas

South-Central Georgia Folklife Project
July-August 1977
Coordinator: Howard W. Marshall

Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project
July-September 1978
Coordinator: Carl Fleischhauer

Paradise Valley Folklife Project
seasonal visits 1978-82
Coordinators: Howard W. Marshall and Carl Fleischhauer

Rhode Island Folklife Survey
July 15-December 31, 1979
Director: Kenneth S. Goldstein
Coordinator: Peter T. Bartis

Montana Folklife Survey
July 1-September 15, 1979
Director: Barre Toelken
Coordinator: Carl Fleischhauer

Ethnic Heritage and Language Schools Project
Spring 1982
Coordinator: Elena Bradunas

Pinelands Folklife Project
September-November 1983
Coordinators Sue Samuelson and Mary Hufford

Grouse Creek [Utah] Cultural Survey
summer 1985
Coordinator: Carl Fleischhauer

Lowell [Massachusetts] Folklife Project
June 1987-June 1988
Coordinators: Peter T. Bartis and Douglas DeNatale

Italian-Americans in the West Project
March 1989-October 1991
Coordinator: David A. Taylor

The Maine Acadian Cultural Survey
January 1991-January 1992
Project Director: David A. Taylor
Field Coordinator: C. Ray Brassieur

New River Gorge [West Virginia] Folklife Project
December 1991-May 1992
Coordinators Mary Hufford and Rita Moonsammy

Working in Paterson [New Jersey]
summer 1994
Coordinator: David A. Taylor

Appalachian Forest Folklife Project
May 1994-
Coordinator: Mary Hufford

first was the New River Gorge Folklife Project, undertaken in conjunction with a congressional expansion of the New River Gorge National River (a national park). Its report and recommendations dealt with a proposal to establish a crafts and folklife center at a site within the park. The second, entitled the Appalachian Forest Folklife Project, is exploring traditional culture along West Virginia's Coal River with particular attention to regional cultural knowledge and use of the natural environment. In it, the Center finds itself in a mediating role between scientists concerned about evidence of forest health or sickness and local people who represent the only ample reservoir of knowledge about the subject.

Finally, a recent project in Paterson, New Jersey, in connection with an urban history initiative in New Jersey mandated by congressional legislation and administered by the National Park Service, has returned to the urban planning model exemplified by the earlier Lowell project. The Paterson work, however, has shifted from an ethnic emphasis, as in Lowell, to a focus on occupational traditions in a city that, since the dawning of industrial America in the late eighteenth century, has symbolized the importance of manufacturing and the concomitant importance of labor and small business skills and traditions.

The American Folklife Center is the heartbeat of efforts across the nation, efforts made by people of very diverse ethnic groups and walks of life, to conserve and transmit what is most vital in their heritage. . . . The agency conserves and makes available to scholars and to interested citizens priceless documents in our nation's history—recordings, photographs, manuscripts—and brings them alive through creative programming and outreach.

Harriet Feinberg
Cambridge, Massachusetts
June 26, 1995

From the New Jersey Pinelands on, these projects have explored a new approach to fieldwork. The Center found itself working in a world of planners and scientific surveyors, and its role has been to mediate between planners and local citizens by providing models through which local culture could be included in planning. Within the National Park Service, the planners represent a new generation of park professionals who have been gradually abandoning the acquire-control-and-manage model for national parks and exploring models for cooperation with local communities, operating on the premise that local people should be enlisted, not evicted. Their attitudes coincided with a clear trend in congressional legislation toward a new kind of park unit that blurred park boundaries, extolled partnership as a goal, sought cost-sharing with local and state governmental units and the private sector, and envisioned the living culture of citizens as a resource worth celebrating and conserving.

Folklife specialist David A. Taylor reviews color slides from the Working in Paterson project, 1991. Photo by James Hardin, 1996

Characteristics of Center Field Projects

Field projects, spanning as they have the entire first generation of the Center's existence, have in a sense defined the Center, just as field recording expeditions defined the great Lomax era of the Archive. The Center's fieldwork ranged from documentation of folk arts in the early years to immersion in community cultural planning in the later years. Broadening of purpose has been a clear trend, though the projects never lost sight of the power of expressive culture to define community life and values. Curiously, the trend within the Center's history parallels a noticeable broadening of scope in the Archive from the mid-1930s on. Perhaps there is an imbedded impulse in the professional occupation of folklore to broaden scope.

Nevertheless, certain recurrent features may be called the hallmarks of Center field projects, whether early or late:

- Use of teams working together in the field;
- Emphasis on professional documentation, including

high-quality sound recordings and professional photography;

- Attention to the full span of expressive culture in all forms;
- Interest in documenting the full range of everyday life;
- Development of publications, exhibitions, and other public products from the fieldwork;
- Cooperation with other federal and state agencies;
- Involvement of local people in defining the thrust of fieldwork and in developing plans and recommendations;
- Creation of large multi-format ethnographic collections as a major product of the fieldwork;
- Creation of reference archives in regional repositories;
- Strengthening local capacity to continue the work in the future.

In a century that might fairly be described as the documentary century, the idea of documenting and preserving culture through the use of new technologies began the century in the realm of scientific and artistic experimentation, and ended the century as a mode of human intercourse so widely diffused as to become a generalized cultural mechanism. In the late twentieth century, documenting culture is culture. If something is important, one should take photographs, make sound recordings, or aim a videocamera at it; next, by subtle inference, documenting it symbolically affirms one's belief in its importance.

In this context, the Center has reflected, and at times anticipated, the larger trends in cultural documentation in the later decades of the century. Center field projects have both broken new ground and continued a tradition of folklife field documentation associated with the Library of Congress since early in the century. In the process, the field projects also provided a major infusion and caused a substantive transformation of the Archive of Folk Culture, adding over a half million items in various media to the Archive's collections. (To be continued)

Lindy Boggs, Judith McCulloh, and Robert Malir, at the February 1996 meeting of the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center. Boggs and Malir just completed their terms as board members and were presented with duck decoys carved by Leonard Burcham; McCulloh was elected the new chair of the board. Photo by David A. Taylor

EDITOR'S NOTES *from page 2*

Center has carried out over the past twenty years. In the second part, he will look at the growth and development of the Archive of Folk Culture and a number of the Center's programmatic activities and will consider the place of folklife on the national cultural scene "as we approach the millennium."

Documentary photographer Bill Smock filming a cattle drive, Paradise Valley, Nevada, for the Paradise Valley Folklife Project, 1979. A list of American Folklife Center documentary field projects and cultural surveys from the past twenty years appears on page 17. (NV-4367-28) Photo by Carl Fleischhauer

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