



NEW YORK
**FOLK
LORE**
NEWSLETTER

▼

Advocacy on Two Fronts Your Help Urgently Needed

This year, public funding for the arts and humanities faces the most serious threats in its history. In Washington, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) are under sustained attack in the new Republican Congress; some on the Right in both parties are calling for the elimination of both agencies, many are calling for drastic cuts.

In Albany, Governor Pataki's budget calls for a \$6.8 million cut to the budget of the New York State Council on the Arts. That's 21% less than last year, and it takes us back to the funding level of 1975! Furthermore, the line items in the state budget that have guaranteed funding for the Folk Arts Program and the Decentralization Program are eliminated altogether. (Folk Arts provides funds for the NYFS and for most of the organizations and folk arts projects you read about in this newsletter. Decentralization funds lots of small, grassroots arts organizations all over the state and is administered by local arts councils.) The Governor also proposes a challenge grant program that is supposed to stimulate new local-government and private contributions to the arts; but since there's virtually no new money out there, what it will really do is siphon even more money from small organizations to the largest institutions. Finally, the budget drastically reduces NYSCA's administrative money, cutting up to 9 positions.

The situation is grim, but it is by no means hopeless. It is a challenge to everyone who cares about the arts and the cultural life of New York and the nation. **Working together, we can make a difference. So please pitch in. Now more than ever, your voice is critically important.**

This year, we have to fight on two fronts at once, the U.S. Congress and the New York State Legislature. Below, you will find information about what the cuts mean, how to contact your legislators, and what you can tell them.

Please read the rest of this article; **then call, write, or visit your legislators, and do it now! By the time you receive this, the process in Washington and Albany will be well under way, and there isn't a moment to lose.** Feel free to call me if you have any questions. Thanks very much for your help.

Here are two important points to consider:

- Most politicians don't know much about the NEA or NYSCA; in particular, they don't know that those agencies bring money and jobs into their districts and support organizations they and their constituents care about. If you tell them, they are likely to learn something that may influence their thinking.
- All politicians care what their constituents think, and the more personal the contact with them, the better: phone calls to a legislator's office are good; a personal letter is better; a visit in person is best. Politicians pay attention to the volume of responses, so get friends and relatives to write or call as well.

NEW YORK FOLK LORE NEWSLETTER

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New York Folklore Newsletter
Karen Taussig-Lux, Editor
1179 Maple Hill Rd.
Castleton, NY 12033
518-732-4074

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New York Folklore Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 130
Newfield, New York 14867

John Suter, Executive Director
Voice and FAX: (607) 273-9137
e-mail: JSNYFS@AOL.COM

New York Folklore
Egle Zygas, Editor
P.O. Box 48, Lenox Hill Station,
New York, NY 10021

Board of Directors:
Ellen McHale, President; Benjamin Salazar, Vice President; Peter Voorheis, Secretary/Treasurer; Charles Briggs, Amanda Dargan, Todd DeGarmo, Earleen DeLaPerriere, Kate Koperski, Judy Kugelmass, Mary Kay Penn, David Quinn, Daniel Franklin Ward.

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1995 FALL CONFERENCE SET NOVEMBER 10-12 IN COOPERSTOWN

This year, the New York Folklore Society will hold its annual Fall Conference jointly with the Cooperstown Graduate Association (CGA) in Cooperstown, November 10-12. The conference will focus on the training of folklorists and other cultural specialists for public sector work, cultural interpretation in museums and other settings, and issues of cultural diversity in the field of folklore.

Cooperstown, home of the New York State Historical Association (where the NYFS was based for many years) and the Farmers Museum (established by NYFS founder Louis Jones) is a lovely and stimulating venue for the conference. Many of the state's and the nation's pre-eminent folklorists are graduates of the Cooperstown Graduate Programs in Folklore and Museum Studies, and CGA is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, so the meeting promises to bring together many distinguished colleagues to discuss issues of great importance to the field.

We'll have more details for you in the next newsletter, but for now, please save the dates.

MENTORING PROGRAM DEADLINE APRIL 15

The Mentoring Program for Folklife and the Traditional Arts completed a very successful year in 1994 funding 18 consultancies around the state. The first deadline for 1995 is April 15. A brochure and guidelines (essentially unchanged from last year) will be in the mail shortly. If you want to be sure to receive one, contact us and we'll add you to the list.

The Mentoring Program, funded by a grant from the Na-

tional Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Program, offers opportunities for technical assistance and professional growth to organizations and individuals engaged in or planning folklife and traditional arts programs in New York State. The project provides consultant fees and travel costs for one- or two-day consultations between clients and mentors. Our intent is to enable organization staff or folk artists to develop or improve skills that will help them be more successful in their work.



Again this year, highest priority will be given to consultancies that directly benefit: 1) folk artists, or 2) community-based organizations in African American, Asian, Latino, Native American, rural or other underserved communities of the state. The application process is simple, and we can help you think through your project idea on the phone before you apply. So please don't hesitate to contact us if you are interested in applying.

FROM THE EDITOR

With this issue we welcome our new editor, folklorist Karen Taussig-Lux. In addition to her editorial responsibilities for the NYFS, Karen is a consultant on the Folk Archives Project.

Do you have a photograph of an installation, event, or fieldwork project you are currently working on or have recently completed? How about a contribution to our "Site Seen" section (sites or sights of interest encountered in the field)? Please submit it with a caption or paragraph. And keep us up to date on what you are doing and seeing!

We welcome comments on and observations about the newsletter and items that appear in its pages. Letters to the editor are published, space permitting.



**Karen
Taussig-Lux**
Photo by
Nicole Keys.

ARCHIVES PROJECT MANUAL AND SURVEYS AVAILABLE

In October, the New York Folklore Society released *Working With Folk Materials in New York State: A Manual for Folklorists and Archivists*. This 200-page looseleaf publication is being well received by folklorists and archivists in New York and around the country. You can use the form on page 11 to order a copy for yourself or your organization. If you already have a copy, please let us know what you think of it. We are eager to incorporate improvements and will send upgrades to current owners.

During this third phase of our Folk Archives Project, funded by the NYS Documentary Heritage Program, we are attempting to locate collections that contain documentation of folk culture, lore, and traditions. We have just sent out a survey form to several hundred people and organizations that we think might have such materials and that we missed in our 1991 survey. It is very important that the existence of valuable folklore materials be known and recorded so that we can develop programs and resources to ensure that the documentation of New York's folk cultural heritage can be preserved. If you have or know of folklore collections and haven't received a survey form, please contact us. Thanks very much.

Folklore and the People: Scenes From The NYFS 50th Anniversary Conference

Proceedings from the conference will be published later this year in *New York Folklore*, Vol. 21. (Become a member and you'll receive a copy as a benefit of membership.)

The conference began Thursday night, October 6, 1994 at the Albany Institute, the site of the New York Folklore Society's founding meeting on October 6, 1944. Following a reception and diner, Lydia Fish, Varick Chittenden, and Bruce Buckley read papers delivered at the original meeting by Louis Jones, Moritz Jagendorf, and Wheaton Webb.

The conference continued the following morning at the Sage Colleges Conference Center in Troy. Tom Porter performed the opening ceremony, engaging the conference participants in a beautiful and moving traditional Mohawk prayer.

ter and Onondaga singers and dancers.

On Saturday, the morning panel, moderated by Ellen McHale, looked at the intellectual history and theory of folklore in New York State. Jerrold Hirsch spoke about the contributions of Benjamin Botkin to the field of public folklore. Debora Kodish presented the theory behind her work with the Philadelphia Folklore Project in facilitating community-generated projects that address political and economic issues as well as artistic ones. John Roberts discussed regionalism and Afri-



Former New York Folklore editor Phil Stevens and NYFS board member Earleen DeLaPerriere. Photo by Nicole Keys.

can-American folkloristics in a paper about the early African American folklorist John Mason Brewer. The afternoon panel discussed the history of the NYFS and the field of folklore in the post-war period. Bruce Buckley gave an account of the early years of the Society during the era of Louis C. Jones, Benjamin Botkin, and Richard Dorson. Ellen Stekert reminisced about her connection with the society during her youth as a folk revival singer and her association with Cornell professor and folklorist Harold Thompson as a college student. Karen Taussig-Lux and Jessica Payne recounted the beginnings of the New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program, discussed the state of

by Vaughn Ward, offered a fascinating discussion about the relationships between traditional artists and those outside their tradition who collect or perform their work. The panelists were Tom Porter of Kanatsiohareke, a community of Mohawks living near Fonda, traditional Adirondack singer Colleen Cleveland, musician, teacher and author Nina Jaffe, and folklorist Robert Bethke.

That evening, a concert took place at the Sage Colleges Atrium. It featured music from the Adirondacks with Colleen and Jim Cleveland, Vic and Paul Kibler, and Vaughn and George Ward, as well as Mohawk music and social dance led by Tom Por-

can-American folkloristics in a paper about the early African American folklorist John Mason Brewer. The afternoon panel discussed the history of the NYFS and the field of folklore in the post-war period. Bruce Buckley gave an account of the early years of the Society during the era of Louis C. Jones, Benjamin Botkin, and Richard Dorson. Ellen Stekert reminisced about her connection with the society during her youth as a folk revival singer and her association with Cornell professor and folklorist Harold Thompson as a college student. Karen Taussig-Lux and Jessica Payne recounted the beginnings of the New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program, discussed the state of



Panelists Vaughn Ward, Colleen Cleveland, Tom Porter, Nina Jaffe, and Robert Bethke discuss "Who Inherits the Tradition." Photo by Nicole Keys.

The keynote addresses by Bess Lomax Hawes, former director of the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts and recent recipient of the National Medal of the Arts, and by Robert Baron, director of the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, set an appropriately inspirational and reflective tone for the conference with compelling assessments of the history and current state of the field of folk arts and folklore at the national and state levels.

The afternoon panel "Who Inherits the Tradition?" moderated



Former NYFS presidents Dan Ward, Lydia Fish, and Bruce Buckley with Vaughn Ward at the Saturday song fest. Photo by Nicole Keys.



Keynote speaker Bess Lomax Hawes. Photo by Nicole Keys.

the field now, and offered provocative thoughts on future challenges for public folklorists working in the state.

The evening brought a Jubilee Banquet, followed by a pass-the-mike session in which former officers and long-time members shared memories about their experiences with the Society. The conference ended late that night with a song fest, featuring the musical talents of the group. Highlights included George Ward, singing some of the marvelous Erie Canal songs he has uncovered in his research and Bess Lomax Hawes singing her classic, "Charlie on the MTA."



Keynote session speaker and NYSFA Folk Arts Program Director Robert Baron. Photo by Nicole Keys.

Folklife and Farm Life Forum at Delaware County Historical Association

Riki Saltzman

On Thursday, November 3, 1994, the New York Folklore Society co-sponsored a Forum on Folklife and Farm Life in Delhi, NY at the Delaware County Historical Association. Folklorists Riki Saltzman of Delaware County and Ellen McHale and Janis Benincasa of Schoharie County gave brief presentations about their fieldwork in progress on family farms in Delaware county and farm stands in Schoharie, Greene, Delaware, and Ulster counties. Presentations were also made by Sally Fairburn of the Catskill Center and the Farm Bureau; New Kingston farmer Betty Elliott, whose husband's family has farmed their land since 1818; Carol O'Beirne of the Catskill Center; retired farmers Clayton and Margie Warner of Deposit; Dorothy Maffei of the Pakataken Farmers' Market; and Melissa Ladenheim of Margaretville. Also taking part in the discussion about traditional family farms, farm stands, and community networks were John Suter, director of the NYFS; Steve Walker of the Documentary Heritage Program; and Mark Boshnak of the Walton Reporter. Refreshments for this event were provided by Antoinette Stump of Hamden, NY.



Saltzman led off the presentations by giving a brief introduction to the various projects on which forum participants were working. As part of the folklife program at DCHA, Saltzman has been directing a project on multi-generational family farms in the New York/Delaware watershed, exploring such topics as occupational folklife, family history, community ties, gender roles, technological impact, watershed regulations, and perceptions about changes in family farming tradi-

tions over the last century. Starting the summer of 1996, funding and volunteers from Earthwatch will enable this research to continue with in-depth fieldwork among selected farm families whose way of life is endangered by economics, watershed regulations, and the difficulty of farm life in general.

Ellen McHale and Janis Benincasa described their fieldwork with farm stands, cultural tourism, and the aesthetics of ver-



Farmstand at Story Farm, Kiskatone, NY. Photo by Phillip Harrington.

nacular architecture—a project supported by the Lila Wallace Readers' Digest Fund for Folk Culture. Working in conjunction with architectural historian Ned Pratt, McHale and Benincasa have examined farm stands as examples of regional identity. As Benincasa explained, with the advent of improved and accessible transportation in this century, farm stands have gone from self-serve picnic table setups to covered lean-tos to full-fledged markets. Farm stands and farmers' markets are increasingly attracting tourists interested in face-to-face contact between consumers and food growers.

Sally Fairburn, who works for the Catskill Center to facilitate relationships between farmers and

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Patience Has Its Virtues... And Waiting Its Rewards

Varick Chittenden



For 40 years, Veronica Terrillion has been creating a three-acre environment, complete with a log house and over 400 sculpted concrete figures. While each piece is idiosyncratic, the collection represents values shared in her rural neighborhood. Photo by Martha Cooper.

It was not until after the grand opening party for *Out of the Ordinary* at the Albany Institute for History and Art in January that I really had my first opportunity to see the exhibition all in one place. On the afternoon of the opening, I made it from Canton to Albany with only a few minutes to spare before the first guests arrived. We all know that at openings you never get to see the show. There are usually too many friends to see and too much good food to try. So it was for me that night.

I purposely returned to the Institute shortly after they opened the next morning to do my "private viewing" of the large exhibition. Months had passed since I had turned over my final script of text and labels to the staff of the Gallery Association of New York State [GANYS]. Contextual photographs were selected last summer, and the artifacts had been chosen and transported to Hamilton even earlier. Frankly, until a couple of days before my trip to Albany, I was feeling quite removed from all of it and predicted to myself that I would probably react like any other visitor to the museum.

Not so. I was hardly prepared that morning for the rush of thoughts and memories I experienced when I finally saw, all in one place, the one hundred plus great objects and the dozens of stunning photographs of artists working in their usual contexts. On the one hand, it all looked so simple. Under museum lights and with relatively short explanatory texts, what had been such a big deal? Finding 60 or 70 people who make wonderful things in all of New York State must not be that hard to do! And using such simple ideas as why and how people make things for themselves or their families really shouldn't take long at all. On the other hand, I then began to think of the long history of this

effort, of what we all were trying to do with it from the start, and of all the many folklorists and others who had contributed so much for so long to make it happen. Those realities seemed to make the exhibition very impressive.

When I got back to Canton the next day, I decided to consult my WordPerfect document file for this project. It only goes back to 1986, but certainly I remembered a conversation with Robert Baron [director of the Folk Arts Program at the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA)] at least three years earlier about his idea for an exhibition which would showcase folklorists' work already underway in so many places in New York. Having organized several small local exhibitions in the North Country and one large touring show in 1982 about our region's historical and contemporary folk art, my own interest had been piqued about what others were finding elsewhere in the state. Robert's suggestion took hold. I liked the idea, although who knew what or where or when to go from there?

The next four years were spent in the "network." We started with a small planning grant from NYSCA to gather together in Syracuse some folklorists who had been working with material culture

and exhibitions in a variety of New York communities. We began to discuss the feasibility of such an undertaking and to solicit ideas for interpretation, for programming, and for potential art and artists. I for one did not want

to produce yet another state survey, as so many other states had done in the previous decade. My consultations with others in the state had already suggested that we aim for something new and different to say about our work. Where better than New York? The Museum of American Folk Art, the Fenimore House Collection at Cooperstown, and numerous wealthy private collectors had focused for years on folk art objects and not the artists. Why not offer, in this new exhibition, what the growing number of folklorists working in the state were finding about the artists and communities they serve?

By 1988, I had created an advisory committee of folklorists with major exhibition experience—Jane Beck, Catherine Schwoeffermann, Gene Metcalf, Kay Turner, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. Early meetings led to ideas for a "cutting edge, humanistic reinterpretation" of folk art that would break new ground in our field. The emphasis on "community" and the struggles for recognition and empowerment in a "high art" world emerged as a theme. The problem with this approach, we learned much later,



Women at the Stuyvesant Heights Senior Citizens Center in Brooklyn gather frequently to work on highly innovative quilts derived from long-remembered African-influenced design and construction techniques. Photo by Martha Cooper.

was that the National Endowment for the Humanities still thought of our project as an art exhibition, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) saw us ignoring important questions of traditions and aesthetics, and no major private

The exhibition can be seen at the Albany Institute of History and Art until May 7. It will travel to the Roberson Museum in Binghamton, July 1 to December 1; the Castellani Museum of Niagara University, April to June 1996; the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, April to June 1997; and other locations yet to be determined.

funding source would consider either view.

After a year or so to think it over, and no money coming in to do much otherwise, I began to re-read some important early work about folk art, by Michael Owen Jones, Kenneth Ames, Barre Toelken, Henry Glassie, and others. Previously, my wife Judy had suggested that I keep the project simple—she knows me far too well!—to have a message that everyone will understand and to select objects to which people will respond. My gut feeling was that I would have to develop a concept about which I felt both comfortable enough to explain and enthusiastic enough to live with over a long haul. Gradually, I realized that my own longtime curiosity about most of the artists I had ever met—what they thought was “good” or “special” or “valuable” about their work and what their own family or community thought of their work—would make a compelling central thesis for this project. Besides, the idea of “community aesthetics” would probably appeal to the NEA Folk Arts Program for documentation and planning.

With the formation of a new advisory committee in 1990 and the beginning of interest by the Gallery Association in undertaking the project, we commenced the challenging task of seeking research funds to develop a script and making real selections for the exhibition. Previous funds from NYSICA had allowed me to set up regional meetings with groups of local folklorists in Saratoga Springs, Niagara Falls, Ithaca, and New York City to seek more programming ideas and to get realistic suggestions for artists to be included. What exciting times these were for me! As much time as I had spent before this talking with colleagues about the show, I had no idea of the variety and quality of materials with which we had to work.

With GANYS involvement and with little time to develop a good NEA proposal, our committee was joined by Meg Ostrum, Assistant Director of the Vermont Folklife Center and an experienced mu-

seum exhibition planner. In one fateful meeting in Hamilton in June 1990, the organizational plan which eventually became *Out of the Ordinary* emerged. The NEA grant of \$35,000 that fall—quite large for them—gave us both the necessary money and an important vote of confidence with which to proceed.

Because we thought we were finally on the right track, I requested and was granted a full year sabbatical from teaching from Canton College in 1990-91. Surely with the money from NEA and with other recent support from NYSICA toward costs of a catalogue and an accompanying video on public folk art in the state, we



Wood carver and dairy farmer Lavern Kelley from Oneonta next to one of his carvings in the exhibition. Photo by Nicole Keys.

would be able to find the major implementation grant in short order. And certainly I would be able to complete the script and all the curatorial tasks before I was to go back to the classroom in September. Nice idea, but wrong again!

Once we determined the scope of the show—over time our discussions varied from as many as 200 objects to as few as 50—and the special costs and concerns of a touring exhibition, a realistic budget was created for which I was not prepared. GANYS chose to concentrate on the exhibition. A publication, educational programs, and related activities would have to be developed elsewhere. After many failed attempts to find major funds from the big corporations and foundations which occasionally support “folk art exhi-



Varick Chittenden is the curator of the folk art exhibition, *Out of the Ordinary*. He is a professor of English at SUNY College of Technology at Canton and is the director of Traditional Arts of Upstate New York.

bitions,” I was almost ready to give up. A chance meeting with Selwyn Garroway at the spring 1992 Folk Arts Roundtable in Syracuse to discuss a simple letter of inquiry to the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund from GANYS began a course of action which resulted in a significant \$160,000 grant later that year. The rest is history. Much work by many people took place between then and now, however, to bring together this stage of the project.

The exhibition which opened in January is not mine. Instead, it is a tribute to the exciting and rich variety of visual folk art and artists in our state. It is also representative of the fascinating work folklorists do and the great contribution so many have made to a better understanding and appreciation of diverse communities and their expressive cultures in New York. That is what hit me when I went back to visit that Friday morning and what I hope will be its legacy for years to come.

While growing up at home, I would often hear the expression, “Patience has its virtues...and waiting its rewards.” Those folk! They always seem to know what to say.

Out of the Ordinary is sponsored by the Gallery Association of New York State in Hamilton, NY. It received major funding from the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts.



Tin man made by workers in Jim Heaphy’s shop on Geddes St. in Syracuse. Photo by Martha Cooper.

MAFA MEETS IN APRIL

The Middle Atlantic Folklife Association will hold its annual meeting on the campus of Ursinus College, Collegeville, PA, on April 21 & 22, 1995. This conference will be sponsored jointly by MAFA, the Pennsylvania Folklife Society, and the Society for Pennsylvania Culture Studies (formerly the Pennsylvania Folklore Society).

The theme for this year is Work/Occupational Folklore. The details for our meeting are still in the planning stages. However, we are hoping to arrange a tour of part of the Schuylkill River Heritage Park for the evening of Friday, April 21. If all goes as planned, this tour will be followed Saturday morning with a presentation on the Schuylkill River Heritage Park, focusing on a variety of topics such as the planning that goes into such a project, the interpretation of sites, the relationship of the project to its surrounding communities both current and historical, cultural diversity issues, and the role of folklorist and other specialists in the success of such an endeavor. A second morning session will involve papers exploring general issues of occupational folklore, and an afternoon session will be devoted to works-in-progress.

Pennsylvania Folklife is intending to publish some of the presentations coming out of this conference. We hope to include an introduction to the issues surrounding occupational folklore through several long papers. We also hope to show the diversity of projects that folklorists are involved in through a series of short, works-in-progress reports.

Coinciding with our meeting will be an exhibit at the Berman Museum of Art on the Ursinus Campus. This exhibit will include some of the Pennsylvania German artifacts that are part of the Berman Museum's permanent collection as well as some borrowed material.

Many people are working very hard on the preparations for this conference. We are hoping that you and many other members of MAFA will join us in what should be an exciting and productive conference.

For further information, please contact Tom Gallagher, The Pennsylvania Folklife Society, P.O. Box 92, Collegeville, PA 19426, (610) 489-4111.



Stanley Ransom

RANSOM RECEIVES COMMENDATION AWARD

Stanley A. Ransom of Plattsburgh has received a Certificate of Commendation Award from the American Association for State and Local History. Ransom was the only award winner from New York State out of 110 winners nationwide. His award was based upon his work as a folklorist and in recognition of his "outstanding achievements in the preservation and interpretation of local, state, and regional history."

Ransom was hailed for his two cassette tapes, "Down the Saranac," and "Adirondack Sampler," released in 1992 in celebration of the Adirondack Park Centennial. His tapes reflect years of research on historical songs of the Adirondacks, as well as composition of his own songs about the North Country.

Ransom also received the Certificate of Commendation in 1970 for editing the book, "America's First Negro Poet: the Complete Writings of Jupiter Hammon of Long Island." This book has been the basis for the establishment of Jupiter Hammon's birthday, October 17th, as a nationwide day of observance of Black Poetry Day.

Ransom is a retired director of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System in November, 1991. He is a member of the New York Folklore Society.

TO THE EDITOR

As the project director for "The Best of Both Worlds: Ethnic Resorts of the Catskills," I wish to respond to the article by Janis Benincasa in your last issue. It is important to correct several errors of fact or omission and, as well, to present another side of the discussion

about folklorists and museums.

First of all, I found it curious that only some of the consultants were named in the article. For the record, Juana Camacho conducted fieldwork in the Latino resorts, and the consultants at various phases in the project included Harvey Flad, Kenneth Jackson, Harvey Green, Richard Alba, Donna Braden, and Judy Endelmen. Kathryn Grover served as script editor. Equally important, DCHA's folklorist, Riki Saltzman, has been involved in this project since she arrived at DCHA in early 1993. She conducted additional interviews, located objects and trained staff to do other interviews. As well, she participated in script reviews and was primarily responsible for writing the project rationale for the successful proposal. Bertha Rogers, Monica Simpson, and Suzanne Etherington also conducted fieldwork.

Throughout the project, it was always clear that this was not just a folklore exhibit, but rather an interdisciplinary one, involving folklore, popular culture, history, cultural geography, and sociology; hence the diversity of consultants.

As for the larger issue about folklorists and museums: museums, like folklore, have standard practices and procedures. If folklorists are to participate as curators, educators, or consulting scholars in these settings, it is my strong belief that they have to develop an understanding of museum practices. They should understand about collecting information on objects for exhibit; about the interrelationship of objects, text, and photographs in the exhibit; and about the ways in which teams of specialists (scholars, designers, fabricators, educators and the like) work together to produce an exhibit. At the same time, I fully agree that museums, as well, have to develop an understanding of the standards of the folk field. I also believe that DCHA's record in producing folklife and folk arts exhibits over the last decade stands for itself. As an institution we have worked to gain that knowledge.

Is the exhibit neither ethnographic nor folkloristic? Visitors will have to make that decision for themselves. More important questions to me are, however, "What does the visitor learn about the Catskills? about ethnicity in American life? about their own lives?" Our goal here at DCHA is to produce intelligent, exciting exhibits for visitors, not to rigidly define our work so as to exclude any

NEW BOOKS

Tales From The Featherbed: Adirondack Stories and Songs

By Bill Smith
The Greenfield Review Press
Greenfield Center, NY (1994)
100 pages, \$12.95

The stories in Bill Smith's *Tales from the Featherbed*, give us Smith's kid's-eye view of World War II in rural St. Lawrence County, blending autobiography with the tallest of Smith's trademark tales so deftly one is not always certain which is which. Smith offers stories about the strongest man in the North Country, the bravest teacher in the world, Uncle John's muscle, and Aunt Lillian's hugs with genius for zany detail worthy of a latter-day Mark Twain. They are vivid, gentle, hilarious yarns from a man whose life and art are one thing.

Smith is New York State's best-known woodsman-storyteller. He travels extensively telling stories, singing songs, and selling pack baskets that he and his wife, Sal, make. His work can also be found in the anthology of Adirondack Tall Tales, *I Always Tell the Truth*. Bill and Sal reside in Colton, NY.

R.I.P.: Memorial Wall Art

By Martha Cooper and Joseph Sciorra
Henry Holt and Company
New York, NY (1994)
96 pages, \$19.95

Adapted from the introduction

Memory is triggered by contact with the objects and places associated with past events. This is one reason why so many who choose to remember set off on pilgrimages to battlefields, concentration camps, and Hiroshima. We erect monuments at these epicenters of suffering and sorrow in order to appease the voices who demand that we bear witness to their pain and our horror.

In New York, the young Latino and African-American men and women who have died and are dying in epidemic proportions in the city's battle-torn streets are commemorated by family and friends who commission artists to create murals on the sides of buildings. Painted

memorials continue to mark the site of a tragic death long after newspaper reporters and television camera crews have left the scene. The ongoing violence in the public sphere contributes to an overwhelming despair and necessitates a communal response to help neighborhood residents overcome their bereavement collectively. Memorial walls are reminders of, if not indictments against, civil society's inability or unwillingness to address the systemic poverty and the pervasive racism that promote the rampant flow of drugs and guns into inner-city communities.

Photographer Martha Cooper and folklorist Joseph Sciorra first came across memorial walls in the summer of 1988, the year these murals burst onto the urban landscape in a spray of vibrant color. As they talked with the artists about their creations, they became fascinated with this new genre of art, born from bloodshed and grief. Over the next 6 years they witnessed the tradition establish itself in the city in close relationship to the proliferation of handguns and violence.

Time and time again, people Cooper and Sciorra met in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx would cite a litany of murals scattered throughout their neighborhoods for the staggering number of people killed in street skirmishes. The city is at a grievous moment in history when African-American and Latin children, anticipating an early death, prepare for its arrival by approaching respected community artists.

In the fall of 1993, graffiti connoisseur and unofficial historian Francisco "Pops" Rivera took Cooper and Sciorra on a whirlwind tour through northern Brooklyn, expounding on the current state of violence and the merits of different artists' work on seemingly endless walls. The result is this powerfully moving book, which documents an exquisitely beautiful art form little known outside of its community. The authors integrate Cooper's masterful photographs with Sciorra's sensitive and well-crafted text to give a rich portrait of the artists, their clients, and the neighborhoods in which they live. Their book celebrates the artists' creativity, yet makes an eloquent protest against the racism, poverty, and violence that spawns the murals. "Turn the page," they invite their readers, "and witness a generation of sons and daughters—now gone."

BOOK REVIEWERS NEEDED

We are seeking qualified individuals who are interested in reading folklore-related books and writing reviews for *New York Folklore*. Books currently available are listed below. Address your request to the Editor, New York Folklore, P.O. Box 48, Lenox Hill Station, New York, NY 10021. Please specify which book(s) you are interested in reviewing as well as your area(s) of special interest. Requests will be filled on a first-come first-served basis. Book reviews are due two months after receipt of the book.



Les Cleveland, *Dark Laughter: War in Song and Popular Culture* (Praeger: Westport, 1994)

John K. Crellin, *Home Medicine: The Newfoundland Experience* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994)

Marilyn L. Haas, *The Seneca and Tuscarora Indians: An Annotated Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1994)

William Bernard McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and Their Tellers* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994)

James McClenon, *Wonderous Events: Foundations of Religious Belief* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994)

Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994)

Marion Nelson, ed., *Material Culture and People's Art Among the Norwegians in American* (Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1994)

Wayne M. O'Leary, *The Tancook Schooners: An Island and Its Boats* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994)

Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994)

ADVOCACY

continued from page 2

Federal Funding (NEA)

NEA is up for reauthorization (its permission to exist) this year, and it faces an appropriation battle as well. As you know, the attacks from the Right have been virulent—and ill-informed. Here's what you can do:

- **Good:** Call your Representative (202) 225-2131 and both Senators (202) 224-3121. Tell them you want them to oppose any cuts to the NEA or the NEH, and tell them you're particularly interested in the Folk Arts Program. You may also use the Cultural Advocacy Hotline (1-800-651-1575): for a fee (\$9.50 charged to your phone bill) mailgrams opposing cuts to the NEA, NEH, and CPB will be hand-delivered to your representatives in Washington.

- **Better:** Write your federal legislators (Hon. Name, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515; Hon. Name, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510).

- **Best:** Meet with your member of Congress and Senators (or their staffs) in their home offices. This is by far the most effective action, and it's usually interesting and sometimes fun. Bring friends, colleagues, a folk artist, with you; it's easier and more effective that way.

In your meetings or letters, be as specific as you can about what the arts, and folk arts in particular, mean to you in their districts. And tell them that local government and the private sector won't pick up the slack if the federal programs are cut—it's never happened before, and it won't now.

State Funding (NYSCA)

The same "good," "better," and "best" apply for the state—call, write, visit your legislators. You can get their local phone numbers and addresses from us or from your local League of Women Voters. Albany addresses are: Hon. Name, NYS Assembly, Albany, NY 12248; Hon. Name, NYS Senate, Albany, NY 12247. Also, be sure to write the Governor (Hon. George Pataki, Executive Chamber, State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224).

When you meet them or write, here are a few important points:

- The NYS Arts and Cultural Coalition (NYSACC) is calling for restoration of arts funding to last year's level of \$37 million. Add your voice to theirs.

- The proposed budget represents a 50% cut from 1990 levels, much more than most other agencies have been asked to absorb.

- A vibrant cultural life is essential to the health and vitality of the State and its people; it is not a frill.

- The arts are a vital industry in New York, a mainstay of tourism, and they attract new business into the state. Public money invested in the arts leverages private dollars and stimulates economic activity far beyond the original investment.

- The Folk Arts and Decentralization programs are the most grass-roots programs at the council; they bring money and cultural vitality into nearly every district. But they don't have powerful constituencies, and they are vulnerable and need the protection of the legislature. So urge your legislators to support restoration of those line items.

- NYSCA is already a lean, efficient bureaucracy; it has already been downsized dramatically and must not be cut further.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need help with your letter or proposed visit. If you've been waiting for a crisis to get involved, this is it!

And please, if you can help us out with the costs of this advocacy effort, it will make a big difference. See the request on the back cover, and use the order form on page 11. Thank You!

John Suter

TO THE EDITOR

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discipline or viewpoint.

The exhibit will be at DCHA through October 30, 1994; a traveling schedule will be announced soon. Visit it and make your own decisions.

Sincerely,
Linda B. Norris
[Former] Director

FOLKLIFE FORUM

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environmentalists and for the Farm Bureau to publicize farmers' concerns and needs, spoke of the need to address issues of sustainability in a way that puts farming as a traditional occupation into the equation. Sustainability, a concept that refers to farming practices that have a low environmental impact, has become an increasingly alienating term. Instead, Fairburn has begun to use the phrase "farming with a future" to discuss how to pass a farm from one generation to the next, how farmers are succeeding and failing in their enterprises, and what keeps farms alive.

Marjorie and Clayton Warner, who have interests in both farming and farm history, spoke about the early days of their family farm as well as how times have changed. They noted that when the Warner family purchased their farm in Deposit in 1907, the main concern was getting the farm paid for; now farms never get paid off. When they were growing up, individual farms did not own a full selection of agricultural machinery; instead, people worked together and shared machinery for plowing, planting, and harvesting.

Betty Elliott, who comes from upstate New York and met her husband at Cornell, expanded on the Warners' experiences with her family's lore. Like them, she remembers a time when local families would take their milk cans to the local creamery. She also noted the changes in haying technology, which has gone from pitching hay into wagons and transporting it to the barn, to hay loaders, and then to square and now round bales.

Discussion next shifted to the dangers inherent in farming, and the farmers present related tales of accidents.

Carol O'Beirne, who attended the New York State Rural Women's Conference in Cooperstown in October, spoke of the tension between farming as a lifestyle or a business. Others present offered their perspectives.

The forum concluded with plans to continue the information exchange. Participants seemed pleased with the opportunity to speak with others from different backgrounds interested in farm life.

NYFS SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Working With Folk Materials In New York State: A Manual for Folklorists and Archivists

Edited by John Suter, with contributions by Bruce Buckley, David Carmicheal, James Corsaro, Ellen McHale, Susan O'Brien, Paul Rapp, Kathleen Roe, and Frederick J. Stielow

Produced in an attractive looseleaf binder, *Working With Folk Materials in New York State* includes the following chapters:

- Introduction
- Fundamentals Of Folklore
- Fundamentals Of Archives
- When Folklorists And Archivists Meet
- What To Do Now
- Forms And Guidelines
- Glossary of terms
- Resources
- Supplementary Readings

Prejudice and Pride: Lesbian and Gay Traditions in America, New York Folklore, Vol. 19, Nos. 1-2, 1993

New York Folklore has devoted an entire special issue to the study of lesbian and gay traditions and culture. Edited by Deborah Blincoe and John Forrest, this is the first journal issue in the field of folklore to focus exclusively on gay and lesbian matters.

"Prejudice and Pride" brings together pioneering humanistic scholarship and grass roots writing and imagery. Artists, musicians, activists, folklorists, anthropologists, historians, and literary critics explore such topics as gay spirituality, lesbian self-made myth, the social significance of drag, Amazon rage, and queer politics. The articles are risky, passionate, reflective, and readable.

Use the form at right to order either of these publications. For a complete list of NYFS publications, please contact our office.

The New York Folklore Society is dedicated to furthering cultural equity and crosscultural understanding through its programs serving the field of folklore and folklife in New York State. The Society seeks to nurture folklore and folklife by fostering and encouraging folk cultural expressions within communities where they originate and by sharing these expressions across cultural boundaries. ▼ The Society publishes the scholarly journal *New York Folklore* and the *New York Folklore Newsletter*. You will receive subscriptions to both as benefits of membership as well as discounts on various publications and events. ▼ We provide technical assistance to organizations engaged in folk arts programming and produce conferences and other programs with statewide scope that address issues concerning folklife. ▼ We welcome your involvement and support. ▼ Thank you!

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One of over 400 Sicilian marionettes made by the Manteo family and used in their stage performances of a Medieval tale. From *Out of the Ordinary*. See story, page 6. Photo by Nicole Keys.

Help Save Arts Funding

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) are threatened with severe cuts from the U.S. Congress and the New York State Legislature.

The very survival of arts—including folk arts—organizations and programs across the state and nation depends on a strong and immediate response from thousands of people who care. People like you.

Please, read the article beginning on page two. Then do whatever you can to help, and get your family and friends to help, too.

Advocacy work costs money. Can you help?

NYFS is contributing \$750 already to the national and state lobbying efforts, not counting our own costs of mailings, phone, and travel. This is already more than we can afford, and we would like to increase our contribution to \$1000. Won't you please help by making a special Advocacy Contribution of \$10, \$25, or \$50 now, using the form inside. The money will go straight to the advocacy effort to save the NEA and prevent drastic cuts to NYSCA. Thank you very much!

MOVING? Please let us know if you change your address or wish to be taken off our mailing list. That way you'll get the mailings on time, and you'll save us money—we pay for each returned piece of mail. Please use the form inside. Thank you very much!

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