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Advocating for Sunday Rock

(and all those other “Traditional Cultural Properties”)

BY VARICK A. CHITTENDEN

On a brisk, sunny late October day in 2011, a small group of local people gathered in the Adirondack hamlet of South Colton to celebrate the unveiling of a plaque, which reads:

Welcome to
SUNDAY ROCK

An Adirondack Landmark and Legend

This glacial boulder, twice preserved by local citizens, marks the gateway to the “Great South Woods.”

In the frontier days it was said there was no law or no Sunday beyond this point.

May all who pass this way continue to enjoy

the beauty of the mountains.

Placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places – 2010

That day, in the words of Sally Swift Thomas, the local octogenarian who pretty much singlehandedly undertook the nomination process, “...was one of the proudest days of my life!” (Beckstead 2011, p. A4).

On the day following the plaque dedication, the *Watertown Daily Times* reported:

“When I [Ms. Thomas] first called...they [the state historic preservation office]

said, ‘We don’t do rocks.’ But now they do. I looked up the word. It could be called a monument. Anything that marks the location of anything can be called a monument. It took about three years to do that. You had to have it pass through a lot of committees,” said Thomas.

[Ms. Thomas] received the good news in December 2010 when a representative she had been working with called to tell her the paperwork had passed muster with a final committee that determined it was significant enough to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

“She called about 2 o’clock in the afternoon. It was sort of funny. She said, ‘Sally. I have to tell you they didn’t like it.’ [Pause.] ‘I’ve got to tell you they loved it!’” (Beckstead 2011, p. A4)

The Rock, the Register, and “Traditional Cultural Property”

Sunday Rock, a large boulder on the roadside of New York State Highway 56, just west of the hamlet of South Colton in St. Lawrence County, is an important landmark for locals and travelers alike. At 11 feet high and 64,000 pounds, the oblong boulder, known to geologists as a glacial erratic, was originally deposited by a receding glacier. It was set on its end atop a largely flat and open area in the foothills of the northern Adirondacks and in the middle of what was to become a main transportation corridor in and out of the Adirondacks from the St. Lawrence



National Register of Historic Places plaque dedication for Sunday Rock, 2011. Photo by Varick Chittenden.

Valley. According to long lost oral tradition, this prominent natural feature was used as a traveler's landmark by Native Americans, prior to European settlement. Sometime during the settlement period, the boulder became known as "Sunday Rock," marking the transition from "the woods to the world" (Pospisil 1968). According to local sources, the name for the boulder and its associations were well established by the 1860s, and the surrounding communities embraced Sunday Rock with a source of pride, identifying with its historic lore.

As a landmark, it has been the stuff of local legend for at least 200 years and has been important to the people of South Colton and surroundings for just as long. Twice, in the 20th century, local citizens rallied to save it from demolition, and it is now safely located on its own small park by Route 56. Stories of the meaning of its name vary. Some accounts suggest it marked the point where the law and order of settled communities in the St. Lawrence River Valley to the north stopped and the adjacent Adirondack wilderness began; south of it, there was no Sunday, because lumber camp life and work were the same every day of the week. Others tell of a preacher, who sought to bring the gospel to the people in that part of the woods, but was told not to bother going past the boulder—because beyond it, there was no Sunday or religion. Somewhat later on, the rock began to stand for the freedom, sport, and leisure of the woods and mountains to the south of it (Pospisil 1968).

In 2007, Thomas—who died in September 2014—lived next door to Sunday Rock, and her family and her husband's family had lived in the community for generations, when she initiated contact with the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) office to find out how to nominate the boulder to the National Register. No cultural resource survey had ever been done in the town of Colton; the only site in the township to be placed on the National Register previously was the Zion Episcopal Church, a Victorian Gothic building made of Potsdam red sandstone. Thomas persisted, and Lin Garofalini, the SHPO program officer who served the



Sunday Rock in the State Route 56 roadside park today. Photo by Varick Chittenden.

northern region of the state at the time, made a site visit that year. Since the boulder sat in a small park owned by the Town of Colton, Thomas sought the town board's approval to go ahead with the nomination, and they agreed. In early 2009, Thomas filled out the required registration form for a National Register nomination and, with the help of others in her community, gathered information and letters of support.

It was at that point in the process that Sunday Rock might have been nominated to the Register as a "traditional cultural property" (TCP). Since 1966, when the Historic Preservation Act first established the National Register, the National Park Service (NPS) has maintained guidelines for eligibility for designation by the Register as "formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on national standards used by every state" (NPS n.d.). That act also required the establishment of SHPOs in each state, with responsibility for evaluating nominations of properties to the National Register in individual states before approving them for states' registers and sending them along to the NPS for national recognition. Since its beginnings, the Register has included buildings ("shelters for human activity"), structures ("for other than human

activity," like barns or bridges), objects, and sites ("locations of significant events, historic in nature") (NPS n.d.).

According to guidelines long used for eligibility and published by the NPS,

...a property must meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. This involves examining the property's age, integrity, and significance.

- Age and Integrity. Is the property old enough to be considered historic (generally at least 50 years old) and does it still look much the way it did in the past?
- Significance. Is the property associated with events, activities, or developments that were important in the past? With the lives of people who were important in the past? With significant architectural history, landscape history, or engineering achievements? Does it have the potential to yield information through archeological investigation about our past? (NPS n.d.)

Frankly put, would these guidelines allow for fair representation of some industrial or occupational sites; for sites important to ethnic, racial, or religious minority communities; or for sites in rural or underrepresented urban neighborhoods? Would events or activities at such sites, which have taken place during the last 50 years, matter in their evaluation? An important breakthrough came with the



TAUNY-sponsored summer institute of teachers visiting Sunday Rock, 2005. Photo by Varick Chittenden.

publication of *National Register Bulletin #38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (1990, revised 1992 and 1998), first written by Patricia L. Parker and Thomas F. King. In it they described:

A traditional cultural property, then, can be defined generally as one that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. (Parker and King 1990, p. 1)

If adopted as part of public policy and used regularly, that would open the Register to all kinds of properties not previously acknowledged. It could mean that the primary emphasis would not have to be on historical significance or architectural style. It could mean that how the property has been used and valued, and continues to be used and valued by its community, plays a big role in its significance, too. Vernacular architecture—commonplace structures like log cabins, fire towers, or potato barns—with local stories attached could qualify. In fact, non-architectural properties—like mountaintops, scenic vistas, even large roadside boulders—cherished for sacred or secular reasons—might be good candidates, too.

So, why not Sunday Rock as a TCP? Coincidentally, during that same period, repre-

senting Traditional Arts in Upstate New York (TAUNY)—the regional folklife organization—I worked with Sally Thomas and others to nominate and document Sunday Rock for TAUNY's Register of Very Special Places (RVSP) as a cultural landmark in the region. It was approved by TAUNY's board of directors in 2008, when it was added to our online gallery of RVSP—<http://northcountryfolklore.org/rvsp/index.php?id=129>—and documentation was added to the TAUNY Archives. That documentation included numerous published historical accounts—especially in local newspapers from the 1880s to the present—and several contemporary recordings of oral histories about the significance of Sunday Rock to the local community.

The apparent customary practice in the New York SHPO allows program officers to assist laypersons with little experience in historic preservation to research sites they consider good prospects, in order to make the best case with the State Review Board and the National Park Service. Sunday Rock was a very unusual nomination and, reportedly, quite controversial among the SHPO staff. Despite the considerable information provided in the nomination narrative concerning the oral traditions in the North Country about Sunday Rock and its symbolic and legendary nature to locals and travelers, the staff ultimately chose to emphasize its role “within the context of the early Conservation

Movement”—an important historical period in the United States—in the statement of significance on the registration form (Thomas 2010, Section 8, p. 7). They based that on “its association with local efforts to preserve important natural and historic landmarks from the threats of demolition” (Thomas 2010, Section 8, p. 1). The nomination was approved for the state register at the December 8, 2009, SHPO board meeting and listed on the National Register on December 7, 2010.

The Case for Significance

Because of its long value to local people as a landmark, Sunday Rock has been relocated twice in response to public highway projects on Route 56 that threatened its survival. It was first moved in 1925 to make way for a new paved highway to replace the original dirt road that wound around it. Original plans were to remove the boulder by blasting. However, strong public outcry intervened, and money was raised by scores of small contributions to pay for moving it to a safe place beside the highway. It was subsequently moved 12 feet north from the center to the side of the road. In 1965, Sunday Rock was again threatened with demolition to make way for a highway widening. Public opposition once again prevailed, and Sunday Rock was moved to the opposite side (south) of Route 56 on farmland donated to the town by Thomas's family. Sunday Rock now rests on a grassy island of sorts, alongside the road in a half-acre park with picnic tables and benches. It has a blacktop entrance, exit, and parking area. Two concrete monuments flank the mammoth boulder, each with metal plaques that commemorate the two moves and a narrative of the history of the rock.

Besides the narrative description summarized above, an important part of any nomination is the “statement of significance.” Based on her own knowledge and research, Thomas emphasized three main points in her description: (1) its evolution over time as a symbolic marker between civilization and wilderness; (2) its emergence as a symbol of efforts to preserve the natural world from the onslaught of human destructiveness; and (3) its continuing role as the subject of local

legends, rituals, and formal literature (Thomas 2010).

First, from the arrival of large logging operations in the mid-to-late 19th century until at least the 1930s, woods crews typically moved into camps deep in the Adirondack woods, miles from settled communities. They would live in the camps from fall to spring, working seven days a week cutting, skidding, and driving logs down rivers in highly dangerous, difficult work. They would go “to town” (towns like Colton) only occasionally, after paydays, and engage in some raucous behavior and lots of excitement. As for South Colton, in the words of Thomas: “Given its location between the farms and wilderness, the giant boulder came to represent a demarcation point where law and order stopped and there was ‘no Sunday’ according to local lore” (Thomas 2010, Section 8, p. 2). After World War I, people found it easier to travel for recreation; wilderness like the Adirondacks became a favorite destination for hunters, fishermen, hikers, and paddlers, as well as the site of seasonal homes, locally called “camps.” In a 1968 article in the *New York Times*, Allan Pospisil stated:

After a while, the rock came to stand for something else. When people from the St. Lawrence Valley passed it while on their way into the Adirondacks, they felt a sense of arrival, of having crossed a dividing line. On the other side of the rock, in the woods and mountains to the south, life was freer and easier. (Pospisil 1968)

Second, the Adirondack Park—the largest park in the contiguous United States, with six million acres of wilderness deemed “forever wild” by a state constitutional convention in 1894—was a major example of the Conservation Movement that swept the United States and the world, beginning in the mid-19th century. Ironically, late in that movement it was another rock, Plymouth Rock—rediscovered and rededicated in 1920, on the 300th anniversary of the Pilgrim’s landing—that got much national attention. The event was the celebration of an object of nature with obvious symbolic value. Living with nature in a sustainable way captured the imagination of

many. As for Sunday Rock, the great community response to the threat of demolishing the boulder to build a road into the Adirondacks in 1925 was a notable example of good conservation practices. Similarly, in 1965, when the local community devised a plan to move the rock, when road widening was imminent, it demonstrated continuing concern for the natural environment, as well as for a local landmark.

Finally, as demonstrated well by folklorist Robert Bethke’s (1981) definitive book on oral traditions in the northern Adirondacks and the Colton vicinity—*Adirondack Voices: Woodsmen and Woods Lore*—storytelling and folk traditions have been an important part of local life for a long time. As Allan Pospisil wrote:

Saluting the rock became a kind of joyful ritual to be observed. Elders might uncork a bottle on it and children could cut up without a fear or scolding. Hunters knew that, on the woods side of the rock, a man was entitled to all the game he could take. (Pospisil 1968)

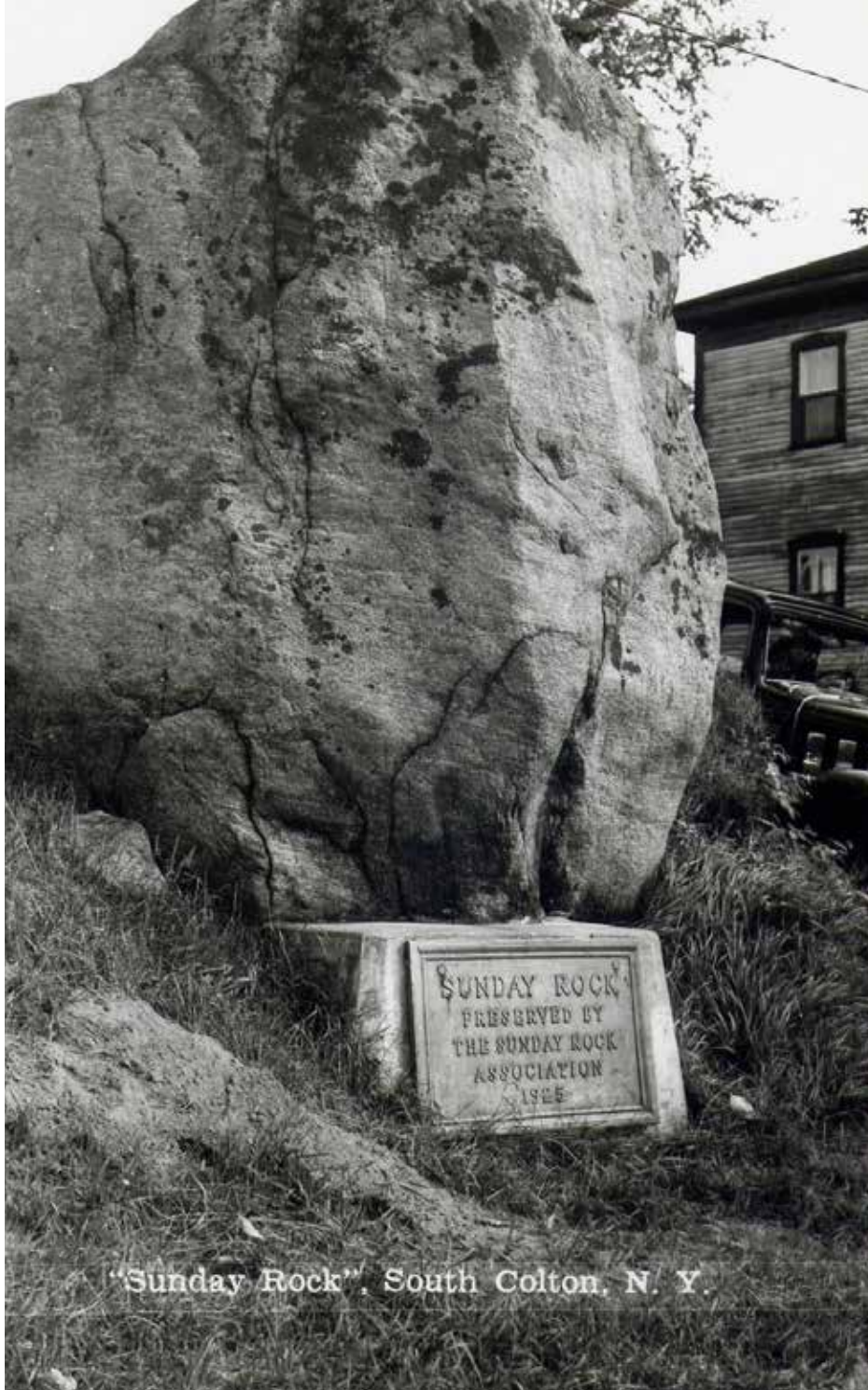
The stories of occupational and recreational life in the woods—indeed the local legend

and its variations about Sunday Rock itself—are rich. Besides fieldwork by Bethke and folklorists at TAUNY, articles about the boulder have appeared occasionally in local newspapers, magazines, and books. It received national attention when it was included in the popular syndicated newspaper feature “Ripley’s Believe it or Not” (1941). In 1992, Evelyn Riehl, a local musician and music teacher, produced a full-length play, *Sunday Rock: The Folk Musical*, that she had written, based on local woodsmen’s stories she had collected; it was revived in 2012 with great community response (Moe 2012). And in recent years, the rock has been the site of annual Easter Sunday sunrise church services for locals and weekly sing-alongs for seasonal residents from nearby Higley Flow and campers at Higley Flow State Park, as well as a destination for student groups from the Colton-Pierrepont Central School to learn about geology, local history, and folklore.

As noted above, when Sunday Rock was accepted for both the State and National Registers, according to Kathleen LaFrank, Coordinator of the National Register Unit of the New York SHPO, it was recognized as “a historic property” (K. LaFrank, personal email



Newspaper photo of crew moving Sunday Rock to its current location with heavy equipment, 1965. Unknown source, courtesy of Town of Colton Historian’s Collection.



"Sunday Rock", South Colton, N. Y.

Postcard photo of Sunday Rock where it was first moved along the roadside in 1925, ca. 1950s. Photo by Dwight Church. Personal collection of the author.

communication, October 9, 2012). No effort had been made by Thomas, Garofalini, or others in the New York SHPO to nominate it or consider it as a traditional cultural property. Obviously not qualifying as an architectural example, for their own review board and for the National Park Service, they chose to emphasize its significance based upon its 1920s-era rescue from demolition, as a commendable act of historic preservation within the context of the Conservation Movement

cited above. When I asked LaFrank recently whether someone could have made a case for it as a TCP, she replied, "No. A tourist object from the 1920s is not the same as a site associated with the spiritual or definitive cultural beliefs of a cultural group" (K. LaFrank, personal email communication, October 9, 2012). She added:

Most of us who looked at the documentation thought that the historical associations were unsupportable and

were, in fact, fictive, having been conceived in the 1920s to protect the rock (then threatened). The significance that was "developed" for the site in the 1920s and modeled after what was going on at Plymouth Rock, we were ok with—that was a good story, a relevant historical context. But there was no documentary or ethnographic evidence that the rock was a sacred object from the 19th century for any continuing cultural group. For example, I recall something (and I can't remember where I read it) saying the rock "must have been a landmark for natives." Not exactly solid documentation. (K. LaFrank, personal email communication, October 9, 2012)

Paul Lusignan, National Register Chief for the National Park Service, concurred with LaFrank with this opinion in 2009:

Historic sites associated with Euroamerican and other non-native cultural groups have historically been able to rely on more conventional methodologies for documentation and evaluation... In recent years a few different non-native American groups have sought to use the TCP concept to protect sites of interest. Among the difficulties faced by these efforts is reconciling the nature of the represented "traditional community" or cultural group, which remains an as yet undefined term. Where familiarity with the longstanding cultural communities formed by Native American traditionalists poses little debate, the nature of more modern or fluid communities raises intriguing questions. Work on developing better guidance on how non-Native American groups can also make use of the TCP concept appears to be a priority. (Lusignan 2009, p. 42)

Folklorists' Perspective

From the beginning of the National Register, SHPO, and National Park Service staffs charged with assessing nominations have been largely administered by architectural historians and historic preservation specialists. Seeking "to better position folklorists and folklore methodologies as central forces in historic preservation" (Sommers 2013), a small group of professionals were appointed by the American Folklore Society to a task force to study the issues and make

recommendations for future direction and collaborations. The results of their two-year study were published in June 2013, as “Integrating Folklore and Historic Preservation Policy: Toward a Richer Sense of Place” on the Society’s website <<http://www.afsnet.org/default.asp?page=FHPPolicyPaper>>. Since I was a member of that working group, the position paper included a brief reference to Sunday Rock and its would-be challenges for designation as a TCP. Among the recommendations in the report for the future included (1) identifying areas where folklorists’ expertise intersects with existing preservation policy and practice; (2) collaborating across disciplines on relevant matters of public policy; (3) positioning qualified folklorists in appropriate agency staff and review boards regarding historic preservation; and (4) joining policy discussions at broader levels (Sommers 2013).

On our local level, folklorists are involved in the selection and documentation of nominated sites for TAUNY’s Register of Very Special Places (RVSP). Since its public launch on the TAUNY website in 2005, we have remained committed to a more liberal, holistic definition of landmarks than the National Register, as we state online:

We all know about Mount Rushmore or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. These are truly distinctive landmarks with meaning for all Americans. How about Plymouth Rock, Ford’s Theater, or Graceland? What all of these sites have in common is their value to our nation’s heritage—places full of memories and traditions that have become part of the American story. Our own communities have such landmarks, too. The stories of these sites may not be recognized by or as important to outsiders, but they are very much part of each community’s landscape and heritage. While our local landmarks are likely to be vernacular architecture and not grand structures (or not even structures at all), they are full of meaning and value to our daily lives. As scholar Kent Ryden puts it: “The meaning of a place for the people who live there is expressed by the stories that they tell about it, about the elements that comprise it, and about the events that took place within its bounds.” (TAUNY 2012a)

After Sunday Rock was nominated for RVSP by Colton residents in 2007, I helped local town historians look for documents and photographs in the files of the Town of Colton Museum and Town Historian’s files. I recorded extensive interviews with Sally Thomas and Evelyn Riehl. Together, we searched through various written accounts and photographs, maps, and other documents. This is the kind of documentation—which comes from the community—that we seek for the RVSP: evidence of the social and cultural history, the contemporary uses of a site, and the values that local people place on the site.

We determined that the boulder met the following the RVSP criteria:

- Place for community gatherings
- Place that has served multiple generations over time
- Place where an important local historical event or movement occurred and is remembered
- Place is source of or repository of local beliefs, customs, or stories
- Place is physical marker on the local landscape
- Place that is a factor in community or regional identity
- Place that is an example of the vanishing regional or American landscape

At the July 2008 meeting of the TAUNY board of directors, Sunday Rock was added to the RVSP. Subsequently, a page with text, photos, a locator map, and specific criteria for selection to the RVSP was added to the Gallery of Places on the RVSP website (TAUNY 2012b). An RVSP plaque was presented to the Town of Colton in a public presentation and ceremony, in combination with other local activities, on July 31, 2010.

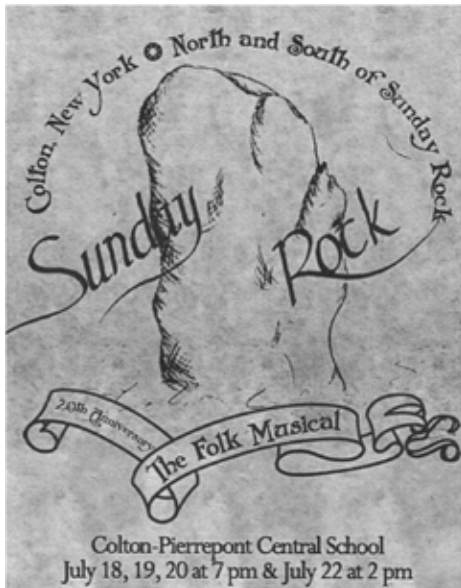
In the publicity provided about the RVSP, available to local communities in the North Country, TAUNY includes several benefits to getting a site on our register: a profile on the RVSP website, copies of all the documentation for appropriate repositories in the community and the TAUNY Archives, and an attractive RVSP slate marker for the site. We also state: “Your documentation could be

helpful in efforts to nominate your site to the National Register of Historic Places and in finding resources to help save the site for future generations” (TAUNY 2012a). Only very recently have we been asked to do that.

By the time we started working on Sunday Rock for the RVSP, discussions had already occurred between Thomas and SHPO. Frankly, I now believe that being more emphatic about the folkloric elements to the Sunday Rock story in the nomination from Thomas might have been something TAUNY could have helped with, especially if it was proposed as a TCP. The selection of Sunday Rock by TAUNY for the RVSP was not mentioned in the narrative of the nomination to the National Park Service. As indicated earlier, after Thomas’s initial information on the registration form, SHPO decided not to consider TCP as a designation in this case. LaFrank has said to me:

A TCP nomination sometimes needs substantial research and writing from staff. In addition, the fact that we have not had success with NPS (National Park Service) is discouraging. No one here has time to go through a three-year process involving two staff and three different consultants, only to be turned down in the end (a reference to a Russian monastery she considered an excellent candidate for a TCP). That makes it much more likely that we will seek another way to nominate the property. (K. LaFrank, personal email communication, October 9, 2012)

For a paper session at the annual American Folklore Society meetings in New Orleans in 2012, I gave a report on Sunday Rock—on which much of this article is based—and how it eventually made it to the Register. Like this article, I discussed what I’d learned about the current thinking at the New York SHPO about TCPs and the Register. When I finished, Kingston Heath, professor and director of the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Oregon and discussant of our session, made the following observation, consistent with most historic preservationists’ views: “At issue is the documentation of sustained ‘cultural traditions,’ a demonstrated ‘response to the natural environment,’ ‘land



Poster for revival of musical play *Sunday Rock—The Folk Musical*, 2012. Design by Valisha Arnold, original artwork by Evelyn Riehl. Courtesy Sunday Rock Legacy Project.

use’ or ‘ethnic identity’ tied to the resource.” Heath observed how “the meaning of Sunday Rock evolved and held different cultural values for a very different set of users. There was no fixed meaning or definitive set of ‘spiritual beliefs,’ fixed cultural or ethnic identity—all elements that are customarily tied to a traditional cultural property” (Sommers 2013). Ultimately, the New York SHPO felt that the rock lacked association with any continuing cultural group but approved the nomination anyway.

Some Takeaways

Although I personally have always had an interest in architecture and vernacular architecture and in historic preservation issues, and first led TAUNY’s efforts to create and maintain our RVSP program, the research for this case study has taught me several important things. For this study, I’m particularly grateful for the helpful conversations and correspondence with Sally Thomas, Kathleen LaFrank (the current coordinator of the National Register division of the New York SHPO), Bill Krattinger (the current SHPO National Register program officer for northern New York), Randy Crawford of Crawford & Stearns (a historic preservation architect and member of the New York SHPO National Register

review board), Michael Tomlan (a historic preservation planning professor at Cornell), and Christine Capella-Peters (a landscape architect with New York SHPO).

Here are some lessons that we’ve learned:

Non-architectural and vernacular architecture sites are commonly added to the New York State and National Register. Examples include carousels, a steam shovel, a bridge, entire farmsteads, tuberculosis cure cottages, fire towers, the site of an explosion, an Italian community bake oven, one-room rural schoolhouses, and many more.

Although Native American sites have dominated the TCP selection nationally, so far, LaFrank says that no sites have been nominated in New York State to date. She adds: “We do not have the same interest found in other states, nor the same vast areas... Archeology staff have pointed out that New York’s early settlement date and early confinement of native groups to small areas worked against retention of traditional sites” (K. LaFrank, personal email communication, October 9, 2012).

Given the apparent narrow interpretation of TCP at the National Park Service, LaFrank suggests that TCPs are not commonly pursued or selected. Reasons include a lack of clarity about TCPs and what that means for laypersons who wish to nominate, given the extra effort needed to establish significance relevant to TCP guidelines—something she notes may require more staff time than the NPS can justify, especially now with major budget cuts, a smaller staff, and larger territories to cover.

Asked how folklorists or ethnographers could help her staff (and the public) with challenging TCP nominations, LaFrank replied: “One of the major sticking points is defining a cultural group: a Native American tribe (nominating a sacred ritual site) is one, without question, and a group of Yankees’ fans (nominating Yankee Stadium) is not one, without question. The in-betweens can be tough.... The other thing to bear in mind is that the traditional cultural activity must be ongoing by the cultural group. If it has stopped and is a thing of the past, then it is not a TCP but could be a candidate for listing

as a regular site” (K. LaFrank, personal email communication, October 9, 2012).

And, given TAUNY’s commitment to the RVSP and the identification and recognition of cultural landmarks in our region, should communities want our assistance, we folklorists need to determine how we can help them better prepare nominations—especially, if there is a chance of presenting the nominations as traditional cultural properties.

We’re Not Finished Yet

Some might say that all this has been an argument over semantics. What does it matter if a site is on the Register as conventionally “historic” or as “a TCP”? For Sunday Rock, the people of Colton got what they wanted—honor and recognition from official sources and the outside world for their beloved local landmark. Persons in higher places—the SHPO officials who also wanted to get this fascinating nomination accepted—found a way to get it done. Many places, however, still deserve national recognition and protection for their long-standing—and continuing—value to their communities, as part of the living heritage of life there. Such recognition may contribute to a sense of place not only for visitors but for local residents as well. To recognize that a place can be more than an example of an architectural style or site of a political or economic event really matters.

Given the experience of Sunday Rock, I can easily see that many, if not most, of those sites already on TAUNY’s RVSP would be acceptable for the National Register for their place in North Country history. Beth Joseph Synagogue in Tupper Lake (the oldest synagogue in the Adirondacks), the Burrville Cider Mill near Watertown (the first mill building in Jefferson County), the Croghan Island water-powered lumber mill, Cooks Corners’ former one-room schoolhouse in Pierrepont—all come to mind as good examples of vernacular architecture with a long history in their communities. No problem there. Each of them is also still an active, vital part of life in their respective locales, with great stories already collected from community members, and a strong group of supporters from their communities maintaining them. TAUNY has

declared them to be “community landmarks.” Could cases be made for them as “traditional cultural properties,” as well?

Probably more challenging, but just as important, are a few other examples that we have come to know: The Woodward Boat Shop in Saranac Lake, a very ordinary looking series of sheds but home, since the 1930s, to generations of master boat builders of the legendary Adirondack guideboat; Veronica Terrillion’s three-acre sculpture garden with log house and pond in rural Lewis County; the rare antique Herschell-Armitage carousel in the Clinton County hamlet of Redford that only runs one day a year for the annual church fair; the Lazy River Playground, a homemade, family-run amusement park that has welcomed summer guests since the 1940s; and Birdsfoot Farm, an undistinguished collection of farm buildings that is home to one of the few remaining Upstate communes, founded in 1972 by a group of like-minded homesteaders known widely for their organic produce and experimental living. Some of these would likely not qualify for the Register because of their lack of age or integrity as historic architecture; the historical significance of some others might be questionable, as well. But all are important to people in their communities and, sometimes, well beyond.

Paul Lusignan says: “If anything, working with TCPs in the years since Bulletin 38 was published has revealed the need for continuing dialogue and guidance on the concepts and methodologies for the identification, documentation, and registration of these important sites” (Lusignan 2009, p. 42).

It’s important to recognize the significance that such sites play in the lives of people in rural communities and city neighborhoods. Our children and future generations will not even know why these places existed, unless we help to keep their uses and their stories alive. Community members and folklorists and historic preservationists can—and should—work together to make it happen. ▼

Note:

Sally Thomas is identified as the preparer of the Registration Form for Sunday Rock

for the National Register of Historic Places and is so credited in the text and list of references for this article. She was assisted in the research and writing by Mary Jane Watson, Evelyn Riehl, and other community members. When staff members of the New York SHPO made additions or revisions, they were not identified.

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