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## From the Director



When the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) first formed their Folk and Traditional Arts Program, New York Folklore (NYF) became

NYSCA's technical assistance provider. This allowed NYF to develop a strong program of technical assistance and professional development to support the growing infrastructure of folk and traditional arts in New York State. During the 1990s, at the time when NYSCA's grant-making was the most robust, NYSCA oversaw a portfolio of folk arts programs that covered almost the entire state. New York Folklore managed NYSCA's statewide technical assistance portfolio from its offices, first in Ithaca, and after 1999, in Schenectady. Therefore, since 1990, NYF has been closely connected to arts and arts funding. That commitment continues today, with support from NYSCA provided to NYF through a NYSCA Re-grants and Services grant, and through program support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

In addition to providing technical assistance and professional development to folk artists and folk cultural specialists, NYF supports a robust schedule of exhibitions, arts workshops, and concerts. Our "Ancient Arts in New Contexts" program focused on documenting and presenting the traditional arts of India and Guyana (see *Voices* Vol. 49:3-4). This project brought performances and workshops into each of Schenectady's public schools and supported several community-based concerts. With support from the NEA, NYF works with community cultural specialists to arrange performances and presentations in several locations in the state, including Buffalo, Utica, Binghamton, and Jamestown. Closer to our home base, NYF is an active member of Schenectady's downtown arts environment, supporting community-wide festivals and

arts events, and participating in Schenectady's monthly "Art Nights."

Folklore is equally at home in the humanities. "Collecting" and "documentation" lie at the heart of folklore's research methodology. New York Folklore's bend toward the arts has been a result of the generous support that we have received from NYSCA and NEA over the past 30 years. The humanities provide another lens for our work. Currently, our Collaborative Folk Archives project has received support from the National Historic and Records Preservation Commission to develop a statewide plan for folklife archives and collections in New York State. Working with archivists and with those who are maintaining and creating folk arts and folklore collections in humanities and arts organizations, the collaborative project will develop a shared lexicon and a shared finding aide for folklore collections around the state, many of which were first instituted in the early days of support from NYSCA. This project, begun in 2024, will continue throughout 2025.

Another ongoing project that draws on both the arts and the humanities is an Indigenous place-names project that NYF began in 2023. Initiated by Bill Crouse, a Seneca Nation Faithkeeper and artist, the project is documenting and marking places of significance to Indigenous communities across New York State. The project's results include a series of weather-resistant markers to mark places of significance to the Haudenosaunee peoples, with a website and school-based curricula to provide additional information regarding the markers and places. This project has received support from the Our Town Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Department of Environmental Conservation, Humanities NY, and the Pomeroy Foundation. Please look for details of this project in future issues of *Voices*.

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## From the Editor



The year 2023 marked the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Champlain Canal, the "little sister" of the Erie Canal that opened two years later in 1825.

At the Folklife Center, we were able to join the celebration by producing a video mini-series called *Champlain Canal Stories*, funded in part by a grant from the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership.

This project allowed us to do a deep dive into Champlain Canal-specific content, for a region running from Whitehall to Waterford, that is, from Lake Champlain south to the Capital District. Stories of boats and mules and locks. Of life and work, reaching back to childhood memories, newspaper columns, and written memoirs. Songs and stories, poetry and art, local characters, specific places along the route. And unfortunately, one never has enough time or money to include all the wealth of possibilities.

We made the entire 30-part series available free-of-charge via touch-screen iPad Kiosks hosted by 12 partners along the Canal corridor, and our YouTube channel — [www.youtube.com/@thefolklifecenteratcranford8195](http://www.youtube.com/@thefolklifecenteratcranford8195).

One story, provided below, illustrates our work. Finding a lost song in a local 19th century newspaper, tracking down its composer and context, and then recording a contemporary performance (by our friend Dan Hubbs)—a bit of our shared local heritage, all added to a 5-minute video for all to enjoy.

In these turbulent times of senseless and mean-spirited federal budget cuts, we continue to be grateful for the opportunities still available to do the good work that we all do in the arts and culture sector, always for the benefit of our communities.

Here's the script from the video, and be sure to check out the video online:

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**"Body, boots, and britches... means 'the whole thing.' A hundred volumes would not tell the whole thing about Upstate New York, but in this book I have at least tried, without smirk or caper, to let the folk say their own piece."**

—Harold W. Thompson, *Body, Boots & Britches: Tales and Ballads of Up Country America* (1939), p. 19.

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