

Volume 29
No. 4

Folklife Center News




Francis
O'Neill
Cylinders


Bob
Edwards
Show


The
Piper's
Despair



American Folklife Center
The Library of Congress





FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER



FROM HIDE AND GO SEEK TO PADDY'S RESOURCE:



3 AFC's new collection contains 32 Irish folk tunes, recorded by the early twentieth century's greatest collector, Francis O'Neill. Lost for nearly a century, they were recently rediscovered in Milwaukee.

TALKING FOLKLORE WITH A RADIO ICON



13 AFC staff join radio host Bob Edwards once a month, playing and discussing *Treasures from the American Folklife Center Archive*.

SHE'S NOT SHY, BUT SHE IS RETIRING



15 Doris Craig served as the administrative assistant at AFC for over thirty years, from its inception until early 2008. Join us as we say farewell.

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AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER

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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, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., 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.

ONLINE INFORMATION RESOURCES: The American Folklife Center's Website provides full texts of many AFC publications, information about AFC projects, multimedia presentations of selected collections, links to Web resources on ethnography, and announcements of upcoming events. The address for the home page is <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>. An index of the site's contents is available at <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/az-index.html>.

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

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

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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Stephen D. Winick, *Editor*
David A. Taylor, *Editorial Advisor*
Michaela McNichol, *Art Director*

Cover: We have inserted Francis O'Neill's picture in place of Thomas Edison's on this photo of a cylinder box from the Ward Irish Music Archives in Milwaukee. The box contained one of the cylinders discussed in the article on page 3. The picture of O'Neill is a standard publicity shot; the cylinder photograph and Photoshop editing are by editor Stephen Winick.

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American Folklife Center:

Tel: 202 707-5510
Fax: 202 707-2076
E-mail: folklife@loc.gov
www.loc.gov/folklife

From “Hide and Go Seek” to “Paddy’s Resource”:

The Dunn Family Collection of Captain Francis O’Neill Cylinder Recordings.

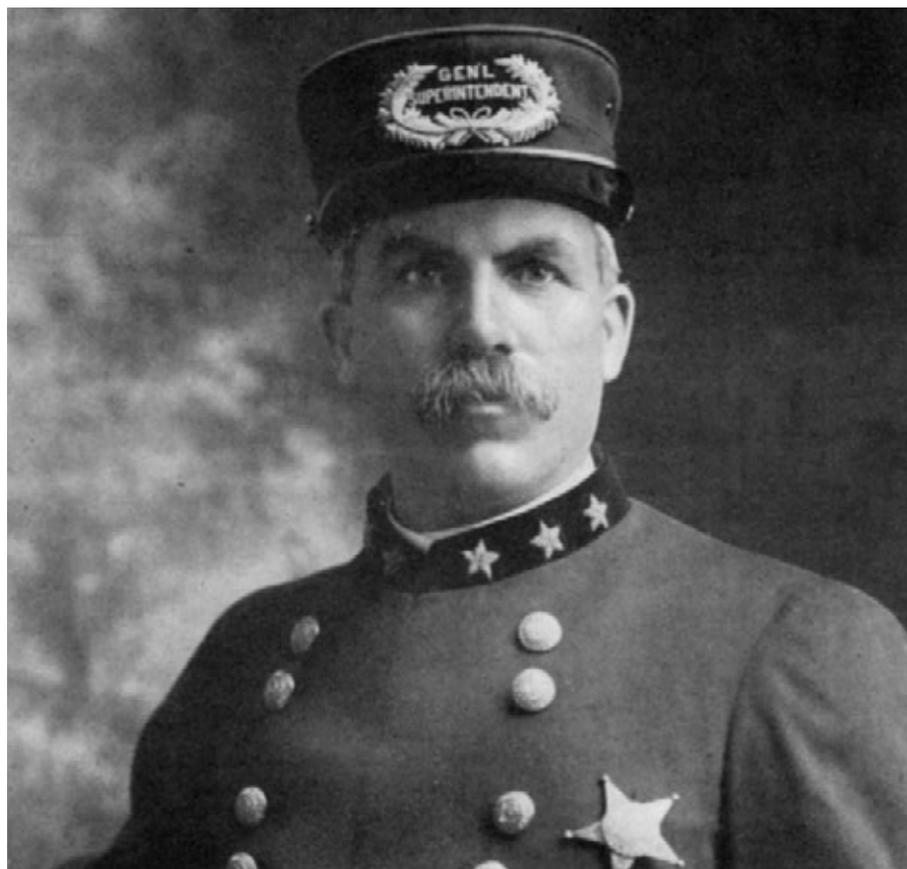


By Ilana Harlow and Stephen Winick

“Hide and Go Seek”: A Hidden Collection Found

In 2003, David Dunn of Milwaukee was looking through his departed grandfather’s attic for memorabilia. He came upon an old, dusty, brown-orange suitcase, and, upon opening it, discovered a fantastic portal to Irish music at the turn of the twentieth century. Inside were thirty-six wax cylinders, thirty-two of which were home recordings of master musicians made in the early 1900s by a renowned collector, Francis O’Neill.

The recordings were like buried treasure in the Irish music world; scholars knew that they had been made, but believed that they had been lost or destroyed long ago. Although we know that O’Neill and Dunn’s grandfather were friends, it is unclear exactly how the cylinders ended up in the Dunn home. It is very clear, however, that David Dunn’s search for his Grandpa’s firefighting coat and captain’s hat ended in a tremendous discovery for scholars and players of Irish music around the world. When Dunn, a medical doctor, found out exactly what he had in his possession, he was thrilled. “I was as high as I could be,” he said. “That was just a wonderful find. Not so much for myself but for the



Publicity photograph of Francis O’Neill as General Superintendent of Police, Chicago, ca. 1901.

people who are so involved in music. For them it was a treat.”

Dunn brought the cylinders to the Ward Irish Music Archives of Milwaukee. They, in turn, contacted the American Folklife Center for help in digitizing these

important recordings. In return for their assistance, AFC obtained digital copies, which will soon be available for researchers to hear in our reading room, and may form part of an online presentation in the future.

Ἀς ἰμῶδαο σο οἱ ἀν σεῖς.

OFF TO THE HUNT.

J.O'Neill.



“Off to the Hunt”: Francis O’Neill’s Lifelong Search for Tunes

Francis O’Neill is one of the seminal figures in the history of Irish music. A colorful character by any measure, O’Neill was born in Ireland in 1848, toward the end of the catastrophic Irish potato famine. He grew up in a home where traditional Irish music was among the only forms of entertainment available. Like many in his community, O’Neill learned to sing and to play airs and dance tunes; his instruments of choice were the flute, tin whistle, and several types of bagpipes, including the complex uilleann pipes. O’Neill’s family was from the Union of Skibbereen in County Cork, one of the areas worst affected by the famine, and like many of the post-famine generation, he left Ireland seeking a better life. In 1865, he shipped as a cabin boy on a sailing vessel, and soon sailed all around Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. After many adventures, O’Neill found himself shipwrecked with several crewmates on a coral island in the Pacific. During their rescue, the value of O’Neill’s musical skills became very clear. His fellow sailors were subjected to starvation rations by the crew that rescued them, but O’Neill escaped their fate through music. “One of the Kanakas had a fine flute,” O’Neill later wrote, “on which he played a simple one-strain hymn with conscious pride almost every evening. Of course, this chance to show what could be done on the instrument was not to be overlooked. The result was most gratifying. [...] My dusky brother musician cheerfully shared his ‘poi’ and canned salmon with me thereafter” (1910, 16).

Soon after this, O’Neill entered the United States. He remained a sailor for a few years, then took on other jobs, including shepherding in the Sierra Nevada and teaching school in Missouri. The big city soon beckoned, however, and he found his way to Chicago by 1871. He remained there until his death in 1936. In Chicago, O’Neill served on the police force from 1873, when he began as a patrolman, to 1905, when he retired as General Superintendent, or more colloquially, “Chief of Police.” He was famous for integrity and competence on the job, and for general erudition, which made him one of the most beloved public figures of his era. On his appointment as Chief in 1901, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* commented, “Captain O’Neill is not only the best educated man on the force, but also has a good reputation as a policeman.” Part of O’Neill’s reputation for learning was certainly based on his knowledge of Irish culture; he had one of the most extensive private libraries of Hiberniana in the United States. Moreover, his expertise in the specific subject of traditional music was also well-known; a few months after his appointment the *Tribune* called him “custodian of the richest treasury of Irish music in the world.”

There is, in fact, a good indication that O’Neill may have

been made General Superintendent in large part due to his musical connections. A newspaper article from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of April 14, 1911 claims that O’Neill “piped his way to power” through his acquaintance with an unprepossessing woman named Kate Doyle, who happened to be the beloved childhood governess of Chicago Mayor Carter Harrison. The paper recounts the story of Doyle’s visit to Harrison in 1901:

Edging her chair toward the table, the mayor’s visitor glanced around the room. Satisfied that they were alone, she said:

“Carter, I’m going to ask a great favor of you, but gra ma-chree, I know you’ll do it for Kate. I see by the papers that a new chief of police is going to be appointed. Now, what brought me here was to ask you if you would appoint my old friend, Frank O’Neill, chief. That’s all.”

The mayor, to use his own expression, was “taken off his feet.” But Mrs. Doyle went away with the promise that her request would be granted.

The article goes on to explain how O’Neill and Doyle came to be friends:

Years ago her house in Dearborn Street was a meeting place on Sunday for all the Irish pipers, fluters and fiddlers in Chicago. Among those who met there to play the tunes of Ireland were Barney Delaney, James Early, John Ennis, James Kerwin, James Cahill, and her choice for chief of police, Francis O’Neill, who played the pipes and flute. It was these Sunday afternoon concerts that made Kate Doyle acquainted with the man for whom she appeared before Mr. Harrison.

O’Neill’s biographer, Nicholas Carolan (1997, 68), has declared the Kate Doyle story “just someone’s joke.” Although Carolan has not apparently seen this newspaper account, and gives no reason for his belief, he may be right; this article is not credited to a specific reporter, nor does it cite any individual as a source for the story. But by claiming to give Carter Harrison’s “own expression” of his reaction, it suggests that the source was Harrison, former mayor of Chicago and, at the time the article was written, mayor-elect as well. The fact that neither O’Neill nor Harrison seems to have made any complaint about the article’s suggestion of blatant favoritism also suggests it may not have been far from the truth.

Whether his “fascinating hobby” helped him get the top job or not, certainly throughout his career on the force, O’Neill spent his spare time playing, collecting, and writing about Irish traditional music. From his earliest days on the force, when he served in the predominantly Irish Deering Street station, O’Neill sought out local musicians to hear them play and learn their repertoires. He listened for Irish tunes in businesses, in saloons, and on streetcars. Sometimes impromptu music sessions took



place in the station itself. O'Neill was a fine musician, had a wonderful ear for music, and could easily commit new tunes to memory. As he rose through the ranks in the police force, becoming a desk sergeant, then a patrol sergeant, then a lieutenant, then secretary to the Chief of Police, and subsequently serving a long tenure as captain before being appointed General Superintendent, he also grew in stature among local musicians. In 1901, the year he became Chief of Police, he was also elected President of the Irish Music Club of Chicago.

Around the time of O'Neill's promotion to lieutenant in 1890, it occurred to him that it would be helpful to create a written record of the tunes he was learning.

However, despite his many accomplishments as a musician, O'Neill

was not good at writing down music from the playing of musicians. He therefore enlisted the aid of a fiddler he knew from the police force, Sergeant James O'Neill (no relation). In some cases, Francis O'Neill learned tunes from other musicians, and played them on the flute to James O'Neill, who wrote them down. In others, Sergeant O'Neill took down music directly from other players. After transcribing a tune in pencil, Sergeant O'Neill would use his fiddle to play it back to the contributor, who would either accept or correct the written record. According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the chief and the sergeant also convened an informal "committee of inquest" made up of Irish musicians including (among others) James Early, Bernard Delaney, Edward Cronin, Patsy Touhey, and John McFadden. This committee, or its individual members, would be called in whenever there was a gap in a tune or a discrepancy between the chief's memory and the sergeant's.

O'Neill continued collecting throughout his time as lieutenant and as captain, and even after obtaining the lofty rank of Police Chief. This sometimes led to awkward moments, when musicians were discovered loitering outside his office, needing a moment with the chief to cement a tune in their memories. They would have to be escorted in, through several anterooms filled with puzzled police officers, and granted a private audience. O'Neill's enthusiasm for tunes also led to a certain leveling of the usual hierarchy, in which lowly officers and sergeants could make direct phone calls to the chief, as long as it was for musical reasons.

Sometimes, O'Neill forgot that a man in his position was always closely watched by the press, with amusing results. In 1923, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* recalled one such incident:

One day, while a sensational murder case held the attention of the Police Department, Chief O'Neill received a telephone call from a sergeant "back of the yards." The sergeant, Dennis Dillon, had found a woman 93 years old who "had a tune."

Reporters who saw the chief leaving his office hurriedly figured that he was going out on a hot tip concerning the murder case. All the evening papers gave the story a "scream" head. Upon his return to the office he was besieged by the reporters.

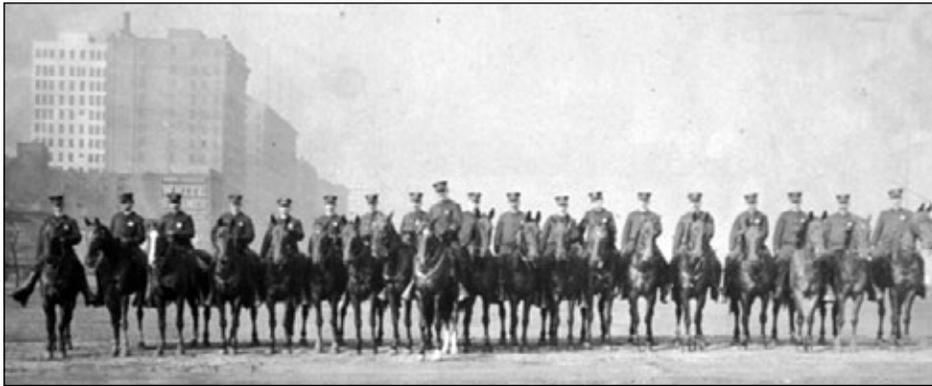
Calling the boys into his office he told them of his trip. He brought

back with him the notes of a tune he had never heard. And he called it "The Little Red Hen."

On another occasion, Chief O'Neill left the office early, intending to go home. On the way home, he changed his mind and decided instead to go to James O'Neill's house to play music. As a result, only Chief O'Neill, Sergeant O'Neill, and the chief's driver knew where he was. A practical joker took advantage of this situation and, in an anonymous phone call, informed the police that O'Neill had been assassinated. Word quickly spread among the force, and at the evening shift's roll call every officer was told to keep his ear to the ground. The result was that practically the whole force was looking for O'Neill, while the chief himself was off playing the flute. The joke was not funny to O'Neill's family, who had suffered with him through various injuries and one near-fatal gunshot wound at the beginning of his career. As soon as he heard of the rumor, therefore, O'Neill rushed home to reassure his wife. Later, however, he would remember with good humor the moment when Sergeant Hartnett and another officer arrived at James O'Neill's house with the news:

"In through the kitchen rushed a policeman with bulging eyes to announce that 'the chief was assassinated.' [...] With a look of terror he precipitately backed out on seeing me, convinced that it was my ghost which appeared to him" (O'Neill 1910, 216-217).

When reports of this nature appeared in Chicago newspapers, the writers generally employed a tone of amused affect-



Squad of Chicago mounted police, ca. 1907. Many of these men served under O'Neill, who retired only two years before this photo was submitted for copyright; the exact date of the photo is unknown. LC Prints and Photographs Division; Reproduction number LC-USZ62-117653.



tion, an indication that his deep involvement with Irish music was appreciated by the public as an interesting and unusual facet in the life of a prominent public servant.

“The Job of Journey Work”: O’Neill’s Printed Collections

Initially, O’Neill’s preservation of Irish tunes on paper was a personal project intended for private use. However, he soon realized that a published collection would be a great boon to musicians and scholars. Having grown up surrounded by jigs, reels and hornpipes, O’Neill regarded them as neglected treasures that deserved to be restored to prominence. According to his own account (1910, 61), “scarcely any attention had been paid by collectors and publishers of Irish music to dance tunes...” To fill this need, he compiled a large book, the now famous *O’Neill’s Music of Ireland*, published in 1903. Consisting of 1,850 separate pieces, over 1,100 of them dance tunes, it was at the time the largest collection of traditional Irish instrumental music ever made. Over half the melodies in this self-financed tome came from the memories of Chicago musicians; the rest came from older printed sources that Chief O’Neill had in his vast library. O’Neill was a conscientious collector, and noted down his source’s name next to many of the tunes.

O’Neill (1910, 62) writes that this first book contained “many times more [tunes] than were supposed to be in existence.” In compiling it, he encountered many wonderful melodies—often with several versions or “settings” of the same tune. Sometimes, he felt that one was clearly superior to the others; in writing about Cronin’s version of Banish Misfortune, he comments that it has three “strains” or parts, which makes it “much superior” to the two-strain setting in George Petrie’s volume *Complete Collection of Irish Music* (1910, 88). However, he did print more than one setting of a given tune if he felt each had its merits. These decisions made compiling the book a laborious exercise in comparison.

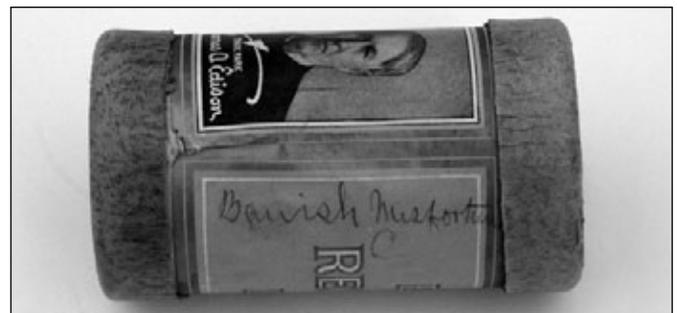
O’Neill’s efforts were rewarded on the publication of the volume. Both the press and private citizens commended O’Neill; the *Dublin Weekly Freeman* commented, “no one has ever done anything like this for Irish music,” while his friend Richard Henebry, a professor in Ireland, wrote that it was “incomparably the best collection we ever had” (O’Neill 1907, back cover). According to O’Neill (1910, 61), many of the letters suggested “the issuance of a smaller and less expensive volume devoted to dance music exclusively.” This prompted the 1907 publication of *O’Neill’s Dance Music of Ireland -- 1001 Gems*. This second volume contains many of the same tunes as the first, but adds over 100 new items.

Both books are still used by musicians today. The second, which was less expensive and had a greater circulation than the first, is the sacred reference text for many players of Irish

music in both America and Ireland; it is sometimes referred to as simply “the book.” If Francis O’Neill and James O’Neill had not gathered and transcribed the tunes when they did, many of them would have been lost forever to musicians on both sides of the Atlantic. Through his books, Francis O’Neill probably had greater influence on the course of Irish traditional music than anyone else in the twentieth century.

“Where Did You Find Her?”: O’Neill’s Cylinders

As Francis O’Neill was rising through the ranks of the Chicago police, Thomas Alva Edison was establishing a laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, that would eventually come to be known as “the invention factory.” One of his very first inventions at this facility, in 1877, was a machine that could record sound in grooves engraved on the outside surface of a cylinder. Edison initially used cylinders coated with tinfoil. Soon, spurred on by healthy competition from Alexander Graham Bell, Edison



Cylinder containing the tune “Banish Misfortune,” played by Edward Cronin. This is one of the few cases where O’Neill recorded the same person’s playing of the same tune documented in one of his books.

refined his machine to record on hollow cylinders made of wax. Each wax cylinder was approximately four inches long and two inches in diameter, and could record about two minutes of sound.

Wax recording cylinders were being mass-marketed by the 1880s, and by 1890 were being used to make ethnographic field recordings (the first were made by Jesse Walter Fewkes of Passamaquoddy Indians in Calais, Maine; they are in the holdings of the American Folklife Center). The cylinder recorder would thus have been available to O’Neill by the 1890s. It must certainly have been exciting for O’Neill to preserve music in this

Thomas Edison poses with a cylinder-recording machine in the 1870s. Brady-Handy Photograph Collection, LC Prints and Photographs Division; call number LC-BH826- 31346 B





This detail from the photo on the next page shows O'Neill (upper right) as a musician. In the upper left is O'Neill's son, Rogers O'Neill, who died in 1904, shortly after this photo was taken. The man in the lower right is piper John Ennis.

new way. Curiously, however, he does not mention his use of the new technology in his published writings, which makes it difficult to know exactly when he started recording.

AFC's recordings are not the only extant O'Neill cylinders. Thirty more are in the archive of the Music Department at University College Cork (UCC) in Ireland; O'Neill apparently sent these as a gift to his friend Richard Henebry, who was a professor of Irish Language at UCC. There are also dubs of two Chicago-made cylinder recordings in the archives at University College Dublin (UCD) that seem to feature O'Neill playing whistle in trio with Edward Cronin on fiddle and Thomas Kiley on banjo-mandolin; the original cylinders were loaned to UCD by a relative of Henebry. Thus, we know that O'Neill sent some cylinders to Henebry, but how many remained in the United States is still a mystery.

The end of O'Neill's career as a recordist is as mysterious as its beginning. We do know that eventually O'Neill gave away his cylinders, partly because of his family's tragic history. Over the years, O'Neill and his wife suffered the loss of six of their ten children to various illnesses, and when their last son, Rogers O'Neill, died in 1904, it was the end of music in their household. Although O'Neill continued his musical pursuits outside of the home, out of respect to his wife and her mourning, no music was played in the house either live or on phonograph. O'Neill stored his phonograph at the house of his colleague and fellow musician Sergeant James Early, and his cylinder recordings, too, were given to Sergeant Early or other friends for safekeeping. Some of them ultimately made their way to the home of Michael Dunn.

Michael Dunn was a friend of Francis O'Neill's. He was a decorated captain in the Milwaukee Fire Department, a fiddler, and a piper. He was also renowned for building and repairing uilleann pipes; O'Neill (1913, 231) wrote that Dunn was "an expert and ingenious mechanic in all that pertains to the

fittings of the most modern Irish chanter." Dunn emigrated from County Laois, Ireland, in the 1880s, and in 1900 moved into the Milwaukee house where the cylinders were discovered. When O'Neill had occasion to come to Milwaukee, he visited and played music with Dunn. Apparently, O'Neill, or possibly Early, gave or loaned some cylinders to Dunn, and they were forgotten for almost a hundred years.

When David Dunn found the cylinders, he had an inkling of what they might be. Along with the cylinders was a piece of paper penned in lovely Victorian handwriting that listed the titles of thirty-six selections, most of them Irish dance tunes. Dunn knew that his grandfather had been an Irish musician and a friend of Chief O'Neill's. It had been suspected for some time that O'Neill had given some of his cylinders to Dunn, but they had never turned up; indeed, ten years ago Nicholas Carolan (1997, 50) speculated, "O'Neill gave part of his collection [to Dunn], including cylinders. These were destroyed after Dunn's death." Knowing some of this, David Dunn began inquiries among Irish music enthusiasts, and was soon put in touch with Barry Stapleton, Director of Milwaukee's Ward Irish Music Archives.

Stapleton knew of O'Neill's wayward cylinders, but had heard only that someone in Milwaukee had destroyed them. When he was told that a local doctor was coming to see him with some Irish music cylinders, it didn't occur to him at first that they might be the legendary lost cache. That would change, however, when Dunn arrived in his office. "When Dr. David Dunn came in and put the old case on the table, it started to overwhelm me," Stapleton said. "After Dr. Dunn explained his grandfather's relationship with Chief O'Neill, it was clear to me that these were the supposedly 'destroyed' cylinders."

Even without the family connection to O'Neill, the enclosed list pointed to the Chief. Each title was followed by a letter: "E," "C," "D," "T," or "McF." These are the initial letters of the last names of five of O'Neill's best-known musical sources, members of the group the *Chicago Tribune* called his musical "committee of inquest": James Early, Edward Cronin, Barney Delaney, Patsy Touhey and John McFadden. It seemed that the list was indicating who was playing on each recording, a theory that was confirmed when the cylinders were finally heard; a voice announces the tune and its player at the beginning of most of the cylinders. The identities of the players point strongly to O'Neill as the collector, and it is quite possibly O'Neill's voice announcing the tunes as well. Furthermore, it was not surprising that more of O'Neill's recordings should be found, as Nicholas Carolan recently pointed out to us. "He put great store in preserving his collections," Carolan said. "It makes sense that he would have given [his cylinders] to friends for safekeeping."

As a music archivist, Stapleton knew that wax cylinders are fragile, and can be played only a few times without significant damage. "It was clear that they needed to be transferred by



This photo of the Irish Music Club, Chicago, was taken sometime between 1901, when the club was formally established, and 1904, when Rogers O'Neill died. Front row, l-r: Garrett Stack, James Kerwin. Second row, l-r: John Connors, Barney Delaney, John Beatty, Tom Ennis, James Early, James Cahill, Adam Tobin. Third row, l-r: John McElligott, M. G. Enright, John Duffy, John Ennis, Charles O'Gallagher, William McCormack, Michael Dunlap, Thomas Dunphy, Fr. J. K. Fielding. Back row, l-r: Fr. W. K. Dollard, Ed Cronin, Rogers O'Neill, Francis O'Neill, Timothy Dillon, John McFadden, Michael Kissane, James Kennedy. (O'Neill, 1913: 479)

someone professionally," he said. Stapleton contacted the American Folklife Center for assistance. The Center had digital copies made of all the cylinders, returned the cylinders and one set of digital copies to the Ward archive, and retained a set of digital copies for the AFC archive. The Ward archive's plans include a CD release of the cylinders; AFC will make them available to researchers, initially in the reading room, and eventually, perhaps, online.

"Paddy's Resource": The Collection's Value

One of the primary reasons this collection is valuable concerns the particulars of Irish music. There are aspects of Irish musical performance that are difficult to capture on paper, and this makes the cylinder recording a much better document of how a tune was played than a transcription. O'Neill himself was aware of the imperfections of written notation for taking down Irish music. "[Patsy] Touhey's and [Barney] Delaney's graces, trills and deviations were endless in variety," he wrote. "While their style and skill entranced the listener, both were the despair of the music writer" (O'Neill 1910, 96). He was equally impressed with Edward Cronin: "Long sweeping bowing with its attendant slurs gave marked individuality to his style which was

both airy and graceful," he remarked. "In fact he presented a distinct school in this respect, for among traditional Irish musicians nothing is so noticeable as the absence of uniformity of style or system." Similarly, O'Neill (1910, 36) wrote of John McFadden: "everything connected with his playing was original and defiant of all rules of modern musical ethics; yet the crispness of tone and rhythmic swing of his music were so thrilling that all other sentiments were stifled by admiration."

In discussing his greatest sources' "rhythmic swing," their "graces, trills and deviations," and their "absence of uniformity," O'Neill was getting to the heart of the problem for anyone who wishes to transcribe Irish tunes. In Irish tradition, each melody exists as a pattern to be reproduced, an abstraction that is only actualized by the playing of individual musicians. Each tune is a mere outline, to be filled out by the improvisation of the player. Players add their own touches to the tune by slightly altering the rhythm, lengthening some notes and shortening others, to create the "swing" that O'Neill noted in McFadden's fiddling. They also add the "graces, trills and deviations," today conventionally called "ornaments": patterns of tones surrounding the main notes of the musical outline. These ornaments are a well known aspect of the music employed by all Irish mu-

The Piper's Despair: A Few Words on the Uilleann Pipes

Of all the instruments used for Irish traditional music in Francis O'Neill's day, the uilleann (pronounced "ILL-in") pipes were held in the highest esteem. To this day, they are considered by many to be Ireland's national bagpipes, and the most distinctly Irish of instruments. Of the thirty-two items in the Dunn Family Collection of Captain Francis O'Neill Cylinder Recordings, twenty-eight are played on uilleann pipes.

A full set of uilleann pipes consists of the following components:

- a bag, held under the piper's right arm, which is squeezed to supply air to the chanter
- a bellows, strapped to the piper's left elbow, which is pumped to keep the bag filled
- a two-octave chanter, or double-reed pipe, with eight finger-holes, which plays the melody
- three drones, which sound continuously behind the chanter
- three regulators, or capped drones, which make no sound unless the player strikes a row of brass keys with a hand or wrist; in that case, each sounds a note determined by which key is struck

In addition to pumping the bellows with one elbow, squeezing the bag with the opposite arm, playing the melody on the chanter with both hands, and hitting the regulator keys with the right hand or wrist to create both chordal harmonies and percussive effects, the piper

also seals and opens the end of the chanter by pressing it against a leather pad resting on one of his knees, to produce a staccato effect as needed. As if this were not enough, some pipers even sing while playing the pipes as accompaniment!

The uilleann pipes developed from a bagpipe very similar to the familiar Scottish highland bagpipe. The bellows was added in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, creating an instrument known as the pastoral pipe, which was popular over a wide area, including all of Scotland, the north of England, and much of Ireland. By the end of the eighteenth century, a bagpipe had emerged that had two more regulators, and was generally called the "union pipes;" this was later adapted to "uil-

leann pipes." It is unclear in which country the last two regulators were added, so it is quite possible that the uilleann pipes are not originally Irish at all.

The name "uilleann pipes" has a contested history. Many people claim that it is an old name for the pipes derived from the Irish word for "elbow," and refers to the pumping of the bellows with the elbow. In all likelihood, however, the name was introduced to replace the earlier term "union pipes." The name "union pipes" was used for the Irish bagpipes by the latter half of the eighteenth century. Francis O'Neill still called them "union pipes" a hundred years later. The term probably referred to the fact that the three drones and three regulators are set

in a common stock, rather than being allowed to hang or stand independently, as in most mouth-blown bagpipes; this "union" of the drones and regulators made the pipes easier to manage. However, in 1800, a law called the "Act of Union" gave the word "union" a new, political meaning for many Irish people. The act annexed Ireland to Britain, creating The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. It was despised by many Irish nationalists, and it is probably through an aversion to the political-sounding name "union pipes" that Irish speakers invented the alternative term "uilleann pipes." This is the term that is generally used for the instrument today. ○

— By Stephen Winick



A piper from near O'Neill's birthplace, ca. 1904. The girl in the lower right plays a "half set," without regulators, and the girl in the upper right plays a whistle. They are probably the piper's students, at different stages of learning. LC Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction number LC-USZ62-67034.



sicians; different ornaments even bear specialized names like “cran,” “roll,” and “triple,” so that musicians can explain to each other how they ornament a tune. Because ornamentation is personal and improvisational, each melody is different every time it is played. Indeed, even the same musician, playing the same tune twice through, usually subtly varies the ornamentation in order to make each repetition slightly different.

Ornaments are also notoriously difficult to transcribe, and James O'Neill certainly had some trouble accurately rendering them on the page. While Chief O'Neill (1910, 29) wrote that Sergeant O'Neill's “...versatility in reducing to musical notation the playing, whistling, singing, and humming of others was truly phenomenal,” later scholars of Irish music have not been quite as complimentary. For example, in the introduction to his 1976 edition of *O'Neill's Dance Music of Ireland* (which he confusingly titled *O'Neill's Music of Ireland*), Miles Krassen (1976, 11-12) wrote of “surprising errors that mar the original edition of Francis O'Neill's books,” including “incorrect key signatures and unnecessary accidentals,” which “render some very good tunes all but unrecognizable if played as written.” In particular, Krassen was critical of the sergeant's handling of ornaments, pointing out that “many of the embellishments as they are written in James O'Neill's transcriptions do not even remotely resemble the ornamentation regularly employed by traditional musicians alive today or on record.”

Whether we choose to blame the shortcomings of O'Neill's books on Sergeant O'Neill, or on the inherent imperfection of written notation as a method of capturing living music, one thing becomes clear: Francis O'Neill's use of wax cylinders, the only recording technology available at the time, was both thoughtful and prescient. The important musical qualities of variation and ornamentation are conveyed on the cylinders in a way they never could be in a book.

A detailed comparison of Francis O'Neill's music books to his cylinder recordings would be a major undertaking, even for an accomplished scholar of Irish music. Based on the thirty-two cylinders in AFC's collection, only some preliminary observations are possible, along with suggestions for future research. For example, two of Michael Dunn's cylinders contain recordings of the same musician playing the same tune as O'Neill's books: “Banish Misfortune” played by Edward Cronin, and “The Croppies' March” by Patsy Touhey (the latter appears in O'Neill's 1922 book *Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melody*). Now that we have access to the sound recordings, it is possible to compare the printed versions with the audio versions. Hear-

ing the tunes as played by the same musicians may clear up some of the questions raised by James O'Neill's transcriptions. Most importantly, it will give us a sense of what the sergeant was hearing when he wrote out the tunes so long ago. In a further seventeen cases, the cylinders contain pieces published by O'Neill from another person's playing. In these cases, the cylinders will serve as valuable comparative documents, estab-



Sergeant James O'Neill. (O'Neill, 1910: 28)

lishing the variety of ways a particular tune was played. In four cases, O'Neill's published versions have no source's name attached; this makes it impossible to say if the player on the cylinder is the same as the one in the book. In these cases, analysis of the cylinder may shed light on the identity of the player documented in the book. Finally, in ten cases, the tune on the cylinder is not in O'Neill's collections at all. If nothing else, their absence from the books suggests that they might not have been known to O'Neill when the books were published; they may thus help scholars establish the date of the cylinder recordings, which is still in doubt.

In a more general way, because tunes are only fully realized in the playing,

each recording of any given tune is a precious document; recordings as old as O'Neill's are all the more precious for representing a long-gone era in the history of Irish music. As Nicholas Carolan pointed out to us, “it's the only true evidence of their musical style of that time. How fast did they play? With what rhythm? All the dimensions of music not captured on paper.” This will be a great boon to researchers and musicians alike.

Another factor that adds to the value of these cylinders is that players such as McFadden, one of the greatest fiddlers of his generation, and Cronin, another well-known talent, were never recorded commercially. O'Neill's recordings are perhaps the only ones ever made of these musical masters. On the other hand, Patsy Touhey, the accomplished piper, recorded tunes for a fee, on both commercial records and made-to-order cylinders; the total number of known Touhey recordings prior to this find was about sixty (Mitchell and Small 1986, 9-10). The O'Neill cylinders add about ten more tunes to his known repertoire, giving scholars of Touhey's legacy a better understanding of both his repertoire and his playing.

The enthusiastic response the music can ignite today is evident in the reactions of four scholars and musicians for whom the recordings have been played: Mick Moloney, Don Meade, Nancy Groce, and Scott Spencer. They all commented on the thrill of hearing performances by musicians they had previously only read about, as well as on the qualitative difference



Michael Dunn, fire captain of Milwaukee, and an avid fiddler. It was in Dunn's former home that the cylinders were discovered, by his grandson David. (O'Neill, 1913: 360)

between reading a transcript and hearing a musician. "It's the same tune, but each time they play it, it's different. And that's the magic of it," said Spencer, who heads an Irish music study center at NYU. "What you see on the printed page is an ironed-out version of what they're playing on those recordings. And if they were to play what's written on the page there three times in a row, it would be really boring. But what you're hearing in the recording is the magic between the notes, which really makes this tradition interesting and fun and vital." He continued, "I've read the names and I've read the transcriptions that are on the printed page. And to hear the difference between that and what's played in the recording is...I think that's what's knocking us all over."

"It's exciting to actually hear people play who mostly I only ever read about," said Meade, a respected independent scholar, journalist, and musician. "Like that recording of Edward Cronin. I've never heard Edward Cronin play. There are no recordings available. This may be the only one." Moloney, who is an award-winning musician, an NEA National Heritage Fellow, and a folklorist on the faculty of NYU, commented on the quality of all the musicians: "It's very, very good. I would say it's the finest of what was around at the time; because those people are very calm, their rhythm is perfect. When you read O'Neill writing about these great players and you don't actually hear their music it's one thing. When you actually hear them it's another matter." Groce, a folklorist and musician who recently joined the AFC's staff after eight years at the Smithsonian Institution, pointed out, "because of the mechanics of the cylinders' playback, it's hard to tell just how fast they're playing. But their execution, at whatever speed, is very impressive."

As an example of how the cylinders can give careful listeners insight into playing styles, the experts noted that the fiddlers

were playing the tunes the way pipers would play them. Meade explained, "McFadden's letting the bow hit the D string when it resolves in an A like that, gives it a real pipey kind of sound." This pipe-like style is a valuable confirmation of other available evidence about how fiddlers steeped in the pipe tradition play. "As the principal instrument for dance music in Ireland, the pipes preceded the fiddle and dominated," Meade explained. "So [musicians would] pick up some of the elements of how it sounds on the pipes and try and transfer it over to the fiddle."

The old-fashioned quality of the sound also impressed the experts. Spencer pointed out that players are "bending" the notes a little, "flattening things or sharpening things just a little bit," while "modern-day players tend to play precisely in tune." Meade commented on McFadden's performance, "Some of the things that he puts on the tune you just don't hear anymore... the slides are a really old sound. Fiddle players nowadays are looking everywhere to find older versions of things," he added. "People will go nuts!"

"There have been rumors about these cylinders for years," marveled Groce. "It's remarkable not only that they were found, but that they made their way to two excellent archives, where researchers will be able to study them." Stapleton agrees, and looks forward to continuing the Ward Archive's research. "When the cylinders were transferred and we could hear each tune announced by someone, that was a magical moment," he said. "Who was announcing? Who was recording? Who else was in the room at the time? Here I thought that getting the cylinders transferred would be the ending of a great mystery. It's clear to me now that it's only the beginning."

Rare finds such as the O'Neill cylinders add a great deal to the treasure trove of musical and cultural heritage in the American Folklife Center's archive. Scholars and musicians for generations to come are sure to benefit from the preservation and presentation of the thirty-two lost cylinders—now, finally, found. ○

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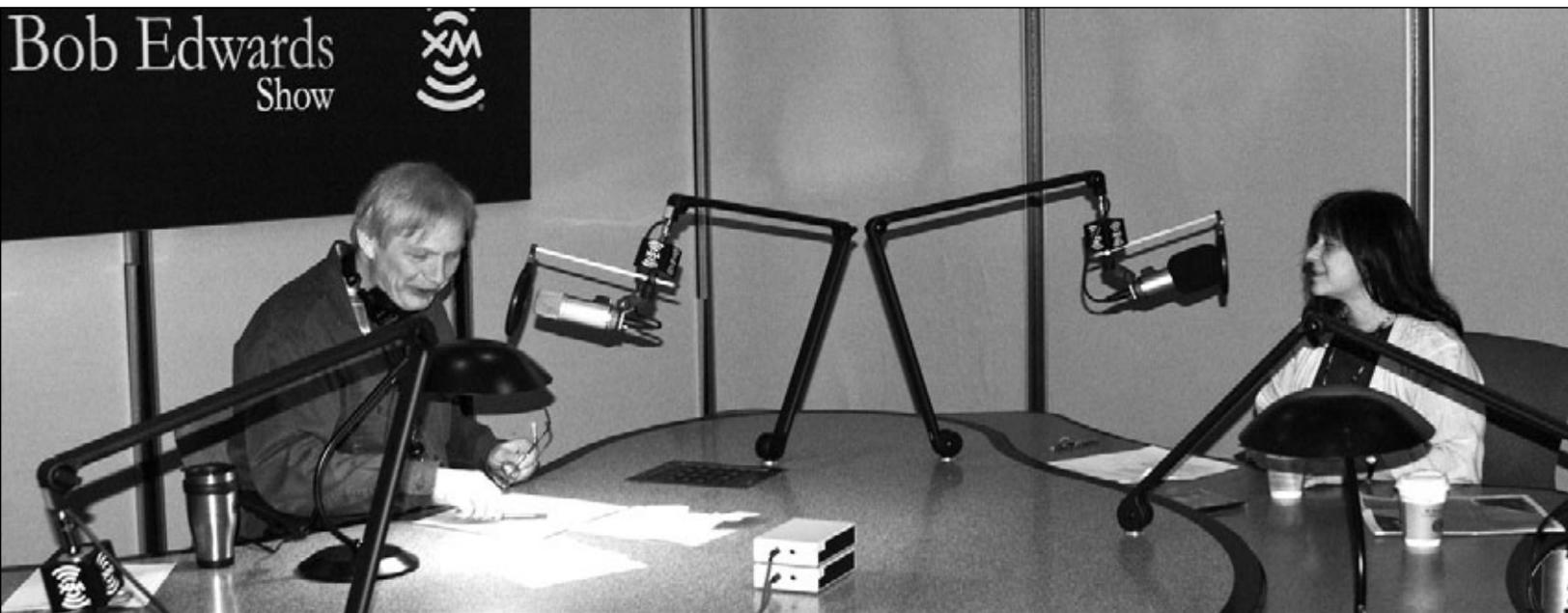
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Talking Folklore With a Radio Icon: AFC on the Bob Edwards Show.

By Stephen Winick



Bob Edwards interviews AFC folklife specialist Nancy Groce in XM's Washington studios (Stephen Winick, AFC)

What do the following things have in common: a Vaudeville song about peeking into people's windows from an elevated train, an oral history in which a former slave recounts a savage beating, one of the first recordings of the legendary blues musician Muddy Waters, and a story about U.S. Senator Frank R. Lautenberg's childhood? If you guessed that they're all archival treasures at the American Folklife Center, you're only partly right. They've also all been played by world-renowned radio host Bob Edwards on XM Satellite Radio's *The Bob Edwards Show*.

A new partnership between Edwards and AFC has resulted in a regular feature called "Treasures from the American Folklife Center Archive." The feature airs monthly as part of *The Bob Edwards Show*, and occasionally as part of *Bob Edwards Weekend*, which is nationally

distributed through Public Radio International. Each segment highlights audio materials from the AFC archive, along with interviews between Edwards and one or more members of AFC's staff of experts. Together, Edwards's two shows reach well over one million people each week, bringing the Archive's most interesting recordings to a vast new audience. Edwards summed up the partnership succinctly during remarks he made to the AFC Board of Trustees in November. "We're radio, we like sound," he explained. "You have treasures here that no one has...it's a natural fit."

How it Happened

The stage for "Treasures from the American Folklife Center Archive" was set in 2004, when Edwards left NPR's *Morning Edition* for XM satellite radio, with the intention of doing a long-form

interview program. "I thought, 'well, gee, who should I have on? I'd better make a list,'" Edwards remembered. "I purposefully went after people with long, fascinating lives, who were still around to talk about them." This approach, which Librarian of Congress James H. Billington humorously referred to as "no nonagenarian left behind," led to interviews with many prominent older Americans. Eventually, one of his producers, Andy Danyo, located the famous Florida folklorist, writer, and social activist, Stetson Kennedy.

Stetson Kennedy's greatest claim to fame was infiltrating the KKK and publishing a 1954 exposé entitled *I Rode With the Ku Klux Klan* (later reissued as *The Klan Unmasked*). He also wrote several other books on civil rights issues in the southern United States, including *Southern Exposure*, *Jim Crow Guide*, and *After Appomattox: How*

the South Won the War. In addition to these accomplishments, Kennedy was a pioneering folklore collector. During the 1930s, while in charge of folklore, oral history and ethnic studies for the WPA's Florida Writers' Project, he collected vast amounts of Florida folklore. He also supervised other collectors, including Zora Neale Hurston. The collections his team assembled came to the Library of Congress's Archive of Folk Song, which is now the American Folklife Center's archive. (Some of their recordings can be heard online in AFC's online presentation *Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942*, at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/flwpahtml/flwpa.html>)

Kennedy's connection to the AFC archive was one of the things that intrigued Bob Edwards. More important, though, was the friendship between Kennedy and AFC director Peggy Bulger. Bulger, who wrote her dissertation about Kennedy's work for the WPA, was asked to take part in a program honoring Kennedy on January 30, 2006. Suddenly, as she put it, "who should come in but Bob Edwards and his producer?" Edwards, who was the emcee for the Stetson Kennedy tribute, was already well known to Bulger from his work at NPR: five years as co-host of *All Things*

Considered, followed by nearly twenty-five years as founding host of *Morning Edition*. Like thirteen million others, Bulger had tuned in regularly to hear Edwards's mix of news, interviews and commentary. Although she said she was initially "slightly star-struck," Bulger found Edwards easy to talk to. "We started talking about what the American Folklife Center does, and what the Library of Congress does," she recalled. "We realized that we could have a partnership that we could work on together." Edwards, impressed by what the Center and its unparalleled archive had to offer, decided he could help AFC with publicizing its many treasures. "People should know this is here!" he said.

Building a Segment

A lot of work goes into the radio segment each month. First, the topic is selected by AFC staff, working with Edwards and Danyo. Danyo provides guidance on various aspects of *The Bob Edwards Show* that affect the selection of material: their listeners' preferences, other material they have recently featured, etc. Once a topic is chosen, AFC staff members select approximately ten audio examples. According to AFC's strict ethical policies, airing any field

recording constitutes a publication, and we must seek permission to publish from the families of the informants. In practice, this can limit what we are able to air, but with decades of permission-cleared materials that have been released on LPs, CDs, and online presentations, AFC actually has thousands of items from which to choose. After audio selections are chosen, the AFC staff member who will be appearing on the air makes notes about each field recording, which are shared with Edwards. Using the notes and recordings as a guide, Edwards conducts the interviews at XM's studios in Washington, DC. Finally, XM's production staff edits the interviews and audio examples into a finished segment.

Programs have included an introduction to folklife, with Peggy Bulger, AFC's director; a selection of African American recordings, with Michael Taft, the head of the AFC archive and a leading blues scholar; a presentation on traditions of work, with David Taylor, the head of AFC's research and programs section; a discussion of the Center's Burl Ives recordings with Stephen Winick, AFC's writer and editor; and a set of songs about bad weather with both Winick and Nancy Groce, an AFC folklife specialist. Individual items that Edwards has aired are as varied as a description of lemon picking by a migrant laborer in 1940, an urban legend from the 1980s involving lovers who become stuck together, a fiddle tune from the 1930s that we suspect is a direct precursor to the bluegrass classic "Orange Blossom Special," and "The Christian Automobile," a gospel song sung by a group of menhaden fishermen.

The results so far have met Edwards's notoriously high standards. "It's been very good for us, and I'm just very excited about it," he told the AFC board. "I look forward to those interviews each month."

"Treasures from the American Folklife Center Archive" is available to XM Radio's approximately eight and a half million subscribers nationwide. In addition, *The Bob Edwards* show can be purchased as a download, from www.audible.com. ○



Bob Edwards

Not Shy, But Retiring: AFC's Doris Craig Retires

By Stephen Winick

In January, 2008, Doris Craig retired from the Library of Congress after thirty-two years of service. For more than thirty of those years, she worked as the administrative assistant in the American Folklife Center. At the time of her retirement, Doris had worked at AFC for longer than anyone else in the Center's history. She played a role in a great many of the Center's accomplishments, including its permanent authorization by the Congress.

During her time at AFC, Doris had many responsibilities. In particular, she helped organize the meetings of the AFC Board of Trustees, and kept the Trustees apprised of AFC activities throughout the year. She kept AFC current with supplies and equipment, and was in charge of vital office functions internal to the Library, including time and attendance and emergency preparedness. Doris was a passionate advocate for the Combined Federal Campaign, an annual philanthropy drive, and coordinated AFC's participation for many years.

Carl Fleischhauer, a member of AFC's original staff in 1976, congratulated Doris and thanked her for her "genuine participation in the work of the Center." He explained, "when we were working in Nevada from 1978 to 1982, Doris willingly transcribed my lengthy field-notes from trips to Paradise Valley cattle ranches, for which I was very grateful." Fleischhauer continued, "She was always nurturing and helpful to the staff (some of whom she called her 'children') and to the members of the Center's Board of Trustees."

Many staff members agreed with Fleischhauer's sentiments. On January 16, at a retirement party for Doris in room LJ



Doris Craig at AFC in the early 1980s

119 of the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building, David Taylor read a letter to Doris from AFC director Peggy Bulger, who was on medical leave. Bulger wrote, in part: "I especially want to thank you for your warm and friendly personality, and a caring attitude that embraced us all." Paula Johnson, another member of the Center's original staff in 1976, said her special recollection was of Doris's laugh: "it was really welcoming and a signature of the Center's work environment." Johnson has worked elsewhere, and said that she has "not found that spirit and warmth anywhere else." Current colleagues at AFC agreed as well, calling Doris "loving, self-reliant, friendly, industrious, humorous, generous, efficient and wise."

Peter Bartis, who, like Doris, has served on the AFC staff for over thirty years, had more kind words for his old friend. "I spent more than half of my life with Doris," he remembered. "We were

like brother and sister, confiding and complaining to each other, growing and finishing our educations and buying our houses, all while she raised her three boys."

It isn't only at AFC that people know and love Doris; she spent years building friendships throughout the Library of Congress. For Doris's Folklife Center colleagues, just walking with her from the Jefferson Building to the James Madison Building was always a learning experience. Doris introduced them to colleagues in every conceivable office, and in the underground tunnel that connects the two buildings. It became accepted wisdom at AFC that Doris knew everyone in the Library. Not surprisingly, then, Doris's retirement party brought a large number of friends from all over the Library to the Jefferson Building. The room was decorated in tropical style for the theme "Cruise Along with Doris." Doris herself gamely donned a grass skirt, paper lei, and coconut-shell bikini top, as well-wishers made speeches and presented gifts.

In the weeks leading up to her retirement, praise for Doris came from all levels of the Library, including the Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington. "During my time as Librarian of Congress, one thing that has become clear to me is the dedication and long years of service that are typical of Library staff members," Dr. Billington said, addressing the AFC Board of Trustees. "In this regard, I would like to thank a long-serving member of the American Folklife Center staff. Doris Craig has faithfully served the American Folklife Center since 1977.... Congratulations and many thanks to Doris Craig." ○



Gulha Shemar, AFC

Doris Craig bid a fond farewell to the American Folklife Center at a retirement party in January 2008. Doris plans to travel, and especially likes cruises, so the theme of the party was "Cruise Along with Doris." In keeping with that idea, she donned colorful paper leis and this retirement hat, which were gifts from the AFC staff. Doris has worked at AFC for over thirty years, and is to date the longest-serving employee in the Center's history.



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