

# FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

January 1980

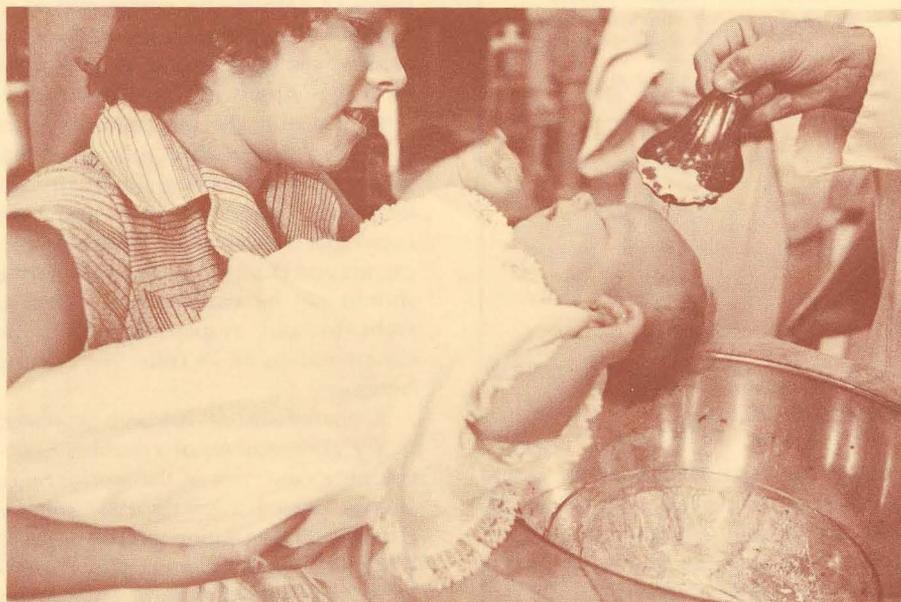
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## PROPOSED HISTORIC PRESERVATION LEGISLATION

The end of 1979 saw a stirring of legislative initiative in Washington, D.C., pertaining to the broad field of historic preservation, with two major bills—the “National Historic Preservation Amendments of 1979” (H.R. 5496) and the “National Heritage Policy Act of 1979” (S. 1842)—being introduced to amend existing preservation legislation.

In September Congressman John F. Seiberling of Ohio introduced H.R. 5496 in the House for himself and several dozen cosponsors. The bill contains a provision for examining “intangible elements of our cultural heritage,” specifically including “folklife and folkways.” It calls for a report to Congress, to be prepared in consultation with the American Folklife Center, outlining recommendations for legislative and administrative actions to encourage the continuation of “the diverse traditional historic, ethnic, and cultural activities that underlie our American heritage.”

Key features of the proposed legislation include the creation of a Historic Preservation Agency which would combine in one Federal entity the preservation activities of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Inte-



*St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church, Woonsocket, R.I. This photograph and those on pages 4 and 5 were made by Henry Horenstein and are part of the documentation of the Rhode Island Folklife Survey.*

rior Department's Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. The Historic Preservation Fund, which would be administered by the new agency would be reauthorized at \$150 million per year through 1989, with several new provisions made for distributing Fund monies at the state and local level, in accordance with a detailed distribution formula. A limit of \$50,000

would be set on development grants for any single property for any one year. Further, a Building Arts Foundation, housed in Washington's historic Pension Building, would be instituted to collect current and historic documents on the building arts, foster education and training activities in the trades and crafts related to historic preservation,

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### *Director's Column*

I have just returned from a meeting in Geneva of the Working Group on the Intellectual Property Aspects of Folklore Protection, jointly sponsored by UNESCO and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The auspices under which the meeting was held reveal a rise in the level of seriousness with which the nations of the world are beginning to regard the issue of protecting their folk cultural traditions. The Working Group consisted of folklorists, administrators of national cultural programs, representatives of artists' organizations, and specialists in copyright law. Our deliberations ranged from the broadest discussions of concepts of "folklore" and "preservation" to the most minute analysis of possible

legal provisions for recommendation to national legislatures.

We are not unfamiliar with these issues in the United States, where discussions of folklore protection generally fall into two categories. The first has to do with the relationship between collector and performer, giver and taker. A folklorist, let us say, records a song from a singer and publishes it for private gain. What ethical principles should guide his activities, and what are the corresponding rights of his informant?

But beyond the ethics of cultural professionals looms the second, and perhaps larger, category of debate: the rights of a traditional community to its traditional expression in the face of commercial exploitation. In this country Native Americans have been prominent in raising the fundamental issues of what might be called "folkright." Tribal representatives have repeatedly and insistently asked whether and how copyright law applied to Native American art and culture, and whether a tribe should not be entitled to a collective right to and responsibility for the dissemination of its collective cultural heritage.

The same concern has been expressed by the governments of a number of developing countries of the world. Since Bolivia passed a law in 1967 for the protection of its national folklore, there has been a growing international interest in "protecting folklore." The motives for such efforts among the nations of the world range from enriching national identity, to preventing or controlling economic exploitation of national traditions in the international commercial market, to insuring that outside researchers share the fruits of their field research with the nation, to preventing the physical removal of artifacts deemed a part of the irreplaceable national heritage.

I came away from the meeting feeling that whatever particular issue was being debated, an underlying idea was

emerging slowly from the discussions which will prove of more fundamental consequence: the extension by law of the concept of intellectual property rights from individuals to traditional groups and societies, and the corresponding extension of legal protection from individual creativity to collective creativity. Whether this idea will eventually translate itself into legislation in various countries, and whether such legislation can protect "folkright" without infringing upon the vital dynamics of folklore itself, are questions for which the future holds the answers.

Thus it is that matters of concern to folklorists for many years are becoming

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public issues for international deliberation. All professional folklorists, and all other citizens who care about the nourishment of folk cultural traditions, should pay careful heed to the growing debate.

## PUBLICATIONS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

*American Folklife Center*—a brochure with general information on the American Folklife Center. Available upon request.

*Arizona Folklife Survey*—53-page directory of folk cultural resources found in the collections of libraries, universities, museums, cultural organizations, and private individuals throughout the state of Arizona. Available upon request.

*Folklife Center News*—quarterly newsletter. Available upon request.

*Folklife and Fieldwork*—25-page introduction to fieldwork theory and field study techniques, designed for the layman. Available upon request.

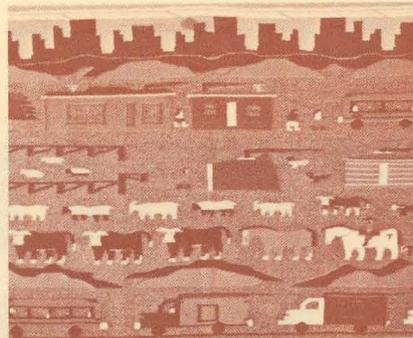
Coe, Linda, ed. *Folklife and the Federal Government: Activities, Resources, Funds and Services*. Publications of the American Folklife Center, No. 1, 147 pp; \$2.75. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Order by stock No. S/N030-000-00091-9. Remittance must accompany order.

*Inside Our Homes, Outside Our Windows: Photographs of Chicago Ethnic Communities*—24-page catalog of photographic exhibition bearing the same name, displayed at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, August-September 1979; reproduces 15 images included in exhibit. Available upon request.

Paper-cut greeting card—original paper-cut designs by Magdalena Gilinsky, a traditional Polish folk artist. Colors: red, purple, orange, and blue. Packages of 12 assorted cards and envelopes, three of each design—\$3.50.

Calf branding greeting card—roping calves for spring branding in Humboldt County, Nev.; Paradise Valley Folklife Project, 1978. Full color. Packet of six cards and envelopes—\$2.75.

Contemporary Reservation Scene greeting card—reproduction of pictorial Navajo weaving by Bessie Taylor, Rock Point, Ariz. Full color. Packet of six cards and envelopes—\$3.



Order cards from the Library of Congress, Information Office, Washington, D.C. 20540. Prices include postage. Orders must be prepaid.

## FOLKLORIST APPOINTED TO MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL

Michael Korn was appointed folklorist at the Montana Arts Council in December 1979, filling a position created by the state legislature last year. Korn is a native of California and holds an M.A. in Intercultural and Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University. He conducted fieldwork preparatory to the Smithsonian's 1975 Festival of American Folklife, and was program

assistant in the Regional American Program during the 1976 festival. For the last year and a half he has been Heritage Conservation Coordinator for the Barren River Area Development District in Kentucky, where he located and documented cultural resources, coordinated programs for historic and folklife preservation, and implemented environmental conservation procedures.

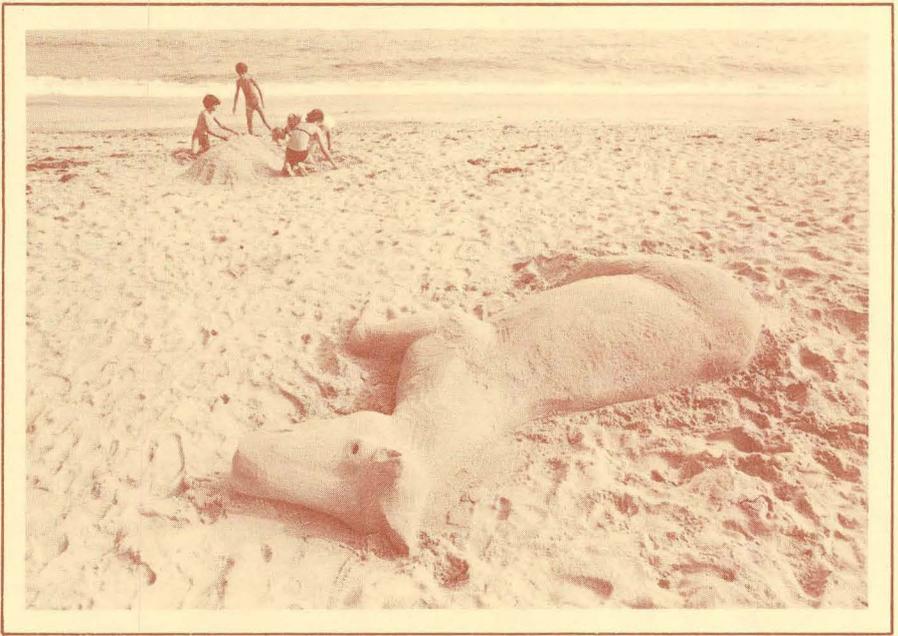
The Montana Folklife Survey, carried out during the summer of 1979 by the American Folklife Center and the Montana Arts Council, was designed to prepare a body of information to aid the Council's new staff member. Among the materials resulting from the survey are a report and recommendations, as well as an archive of field notes, lists of informants, sound recordings, and still photographs.

Korn's initial plans for the use of the materials include the organization of exhibitions in different areas of the state to bring the materials back to the communities from which they originated. Planning for a series of radio programs and possible phonograph records is also underway. He hopes eventually to help create a public archive on the state's folklife. A Montana folklife festival is projected, and the information already gathered will be used as the basis for more intensive research activities within the state.

## THE ARCHIVE OF FOLK SONG: A RESOURCE FOR FOLKLIFE FIELDWORK

Not surprisingly, most scholars approach the Archive of Folk Song with archival questions in mind. They ask us, for example, what songs have been recorded in the United States that relate to railroading, what recordings we have that mention Georgia politician Joe Brown and his coal mine, or what might be the earliest appearance in print or on record of "I'm Sittin' on Top of the World." Although we take

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*Sand sculpture by Del Bonis, Matunuck Beach.*



*Manville bar.*



*Joseph C. Lafond weaving mill, Manville.*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

The Center's fall Board of Trustees meeting was hosted by the University of California in Los Angeles from October 22 to October 24. All private members and several Federal representatives were in attendance. During their stay, Board members and Center staff had an opportunity to tour several folklife-oriented collections and organizations on campus, including the Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, the John Edwards Memorial Foundation, several ethnic studies centers, and Board member Wayland Hand's collection, the Dictionary of American Popular Beliefs and Superstitions.

This was the last meeting presided over by Raye Virginia Allen as chairman; the Board elected Edward B. Danson as its new chairman and Janet Anderson as vice chairman. Mr. Danson of Sedona, Ariz., has been director of the Museum of Northern Arizona and president of their Board of Trustees. From 1958 to 1964 he served as a member of the National Park Service Advisory Board and since 1964 has been a member of the National Park Service Advisory Council. Janet Anderson, formerly of Oregon and presently from Claremont, Calif., was legislative assistant to Senator Mark Hatfield between 1969 and 1974 and assistant to the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts from 1976 to 1977. In 1977 she received the National Jaycees Outstanding Young Person of America Award. She currently teaches art history at Pitzer College, Claremont, Calif.

In addition to general orders of business and meetings of the Board's standing committees, the session included several special presentations. Linda Degh of Indiana University gave a report on folklore and folklife programs of European institutions, based on first-hand observations made during a European trip extending from October

1977 to January 1978. She found that the current European approach to folklore is to connect it with today's social context, looking at all aspects of living traditions and modes of interaction. For example, studies are conducted on the total meaning of Christmas, both the traditions from the past and the ways in which people's lives change during the Christmas season today. European folklorists have also investigated such topics as tourism and how travel changes the life of those visited and of the visitor. Some have undertaken extensive studies of the widespread modern phenomenon of "folklorism," that is, the self-conscious adoption of or participation in traditions perceived as "folklore." Dr. Degh found that a number of folklorists pay special attention to social groups that meet regularly, dress in traditional costumes, and dance folk dances to regional tunes, or who recreate traditional forms of expression for festival presentations. Europeans often use a multi-discipline team approach for their studies, with work being coordinated among different professional fields.

Historic resources are also important on the European scene; archives and inventories of folklore materials exist in many of the countries, and scholars still stress that it is necessary to study the past in order to illuminate the present. Museums play a large role in helping to present folk traditions to the public and tend to be used as educational institutions more than as research or scholarship centers. Almost all European museums, archives, and academic study centers are state supported.

During her trip Dr. Degh found that scholars in Europe were looking forward to developing contacts with the folklife community in this country. Dr. Degh made two recommendations to the Board on means of fostering greater awareness of and cooperative activities with the European communities. She suggested that the Folklife Center help to arrange a meeting in this

country of a small group of European and American scholars, and that the director of the Center visit Europe on a study trip.

A second presentation was made by Richard Dorson of Indiana University on his proposal that a sequence of regional folklife studies covering the entire United States be organized, and that a series of books based on the work be published. Prior to this presentation for the Board of Trustees, Dr. Dorson put forward his proposal at a conference on October 13-14, 1979, in Bloomington, Ind., cosponsored by Indiana University, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Folklife Center.

Dr. Dorson felt that there are two reasons for such an undertaking: There is now relatively little resource material available which provides primary data on the broad theme of American folklife; and the available material often fails to reflect new techniques and concepts in the field. Folklorists no longer simply look at folklore items and genres, but address a more complex body of materials, ranging from historical traditions to complete ethnographic contexts.

In the development of the project, a major consideration is the means of choosing regions for fieldwork sites. Dr. Dorson suggested looking at a map of the United States overlaid by grids that incorporate different regional relationships. For instance, a historical grid might outline regions like the 13 original states, the states which comprised the Northwest Territory, and the states of the Confederacy. Another grid, based on geographic characteristics, would outline the regions of the Great Lakes, the Gulf Coast, and the Atlantic Seaboard. An economic-commercial-agricultural grid would define the plains states, oil and coal producing areas, as well as regions of heavy industry. City grids could highlight entertainment centers, port towns, and industrial areas. Fieldwork sites might

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## A VISIT WITH HELEN ROBERTS

In 1920 a young woman fresh from Columbia University made her first field trip to Jamaica. With notebooks and sharpened pencils in hand, she proceeded to write down melodies sung to her over and over again. One particular singer never sang a song twice in the same way; she said to him, "Wait until I get my recording machine, then we will have it down and I won't have to bother with this and get you to do it over and over." Weeks later the long-awaited Edison phonograph arrived, complete with cartons of wax cylinders. With obvious hesitancy, the old man sang into the machine. "Would you like to hear this?" asked the young researcher as she began to play the recording back. She still recalls the singer's thrilled response to the sound of his own voice coming from the machine, "Missy, you shore am God! You am the Lord Himself!" Thus began the fieldwork of Helen Heffron Roberts.

The Library of Congress possesses over 500 wax cylinders collected by Miss Roberts during the 1920s and 1930s, 400 of which she herself recorded in Jamaica, Hawaii, California, and New Mexico. At 91 she is one of the last surviving pioneers of ethnographic field documentation. On December 5, 1979, ethnomusicologists Maria La Vigna and David P. McAllester, both consultants to the Center's Federal Cylinder Project, visited Miss Roberts at her home in Hamden, Conn. These stories and remarks on her fieldwork experiences were recorded during that visit.

Miss Roberts' fieldwork incorporated what she termed the humanistic approach. "I did not approach my fieldwork from the standpoint of a scientist who was merely trying to get information. You make friends and there is a lovely feeling of friendship among you. If you can help them in any

way you can, you should. You don't treat anyone as though they are something pinned on the wall. I always tried to let that humanistic element go into my work."

Early collectors faced many of the same problems fieldworkers are confronted with today. "You don't know the odds against which we had to work in order to get a nickel to do anything, to get someplace or to acquire the necessary equipment. It was challeng-



*Helen Roberts photographed in California by ethnologist John P. Harrington in 1926. (Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution).*

ing and satisfying, of course, when it all came out. Vastly satisfying." The available modes of transportation added additional hardships to fieldwork carried out in the early part of the century when there were no freeways or airstrips. Traveling by boat was at times precarious. "There was one boat we used to cross the Columbia River. It was made out of a log, hollowed out inside enough so that you could get in. The river was quite rapid and I was always fearful that I wouldn't reach the other side." While in Hawaii in 1923, Miss Roberts hired a small water craft to transport her from island to island. On one memorable trip, "we ran into a typhoon and nearly lost everything; that boat didn't amount to a row of pins!"

One method of transporting her portable Edison phonograph and cartons of cylinders to remote regions was by horseback. "I would pack the cylinders in a basket tied to one side of the saddle. I hand carried the phonograph

in one hand and drove the horse with the other, and heaven help me if the horse ever shied at anything along those mountain paths! But usually," Miss Roberts added, "there was a derelict, ramshackle car around that would take me somewhere."

Few ethnologists or anthropologists possessed the musical skills Miss Roberts had acquired during her career as a musician. While studying to be a concert pianist, Miss Roberts became interested in anthropology and archaeology after spending several summers visiting the Pueblos in the Southwest. "I decided to study at Columbia University with Franz Boas. 'With all your musical training, if you have the anthropological training, you will have the field to yourself,' he said. I realized how lucky I was to have had a complete musical education and the two fitted together so beautifully for this particular kind of work."

Since little research had been done before Miss Roberts' time, her cylinder collections reflect a wide spectrum of musical genres from various parts of the world. "I was trying to collect as much as I could. I obtained as much information about the individual, about his background or his tribe that was possible, knowing that few people were paying much attention to this kind of music. I tried to make good recordings for I knew it would have its day someday."

—*Maria La Vigna*

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great pleasure in helping investigations of this sort, we would also like to emphasize the unparalleled resource offered by the Archive's collections for the preliminary research that is necessary to fieldwork and to the writing of proposals for field projects.

The folklore books, journals, and published recording collections of the Library of Congress are among the largest in the world, and their high points can be located in the Archive's reading room, which houses a reference

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and create temporary and permanent exhibits.

The second bill, S. 1842, introduced by Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, grew out of studies conducted by the Department of the Interior, and incorporates the Administration's position on preservation policy. This bill does not fundamentally alter the emphasis on artifactual and architectural preservation found in the original preservation legislation of 1966. It does, however, broaden the categories of resources that may be listed on the National Register of Historic Places to include "networks, cultural landscapes, and neighborhoods."

The Jackson bill would reauthorize the Historic Preservation Fund at \$150 million per year through 1983. Administration of the Fund and primary responsibility for implementing the provisions of the legislation would continue to rest with the Secretary of the Interior, with no specific provisions made for the distribution of the monies in the Fund. A National Register of Natural Areas would be instituted and maintained to list natural resources of national significance; participating

states would name a Natural Heritage Officer as well as a state Historic Preservation Officer. Further, the current Advisory Council on Historic Preservation would be renamed the Council on Heritage Conservation, and its membership would be altered and expanded.

Hearings on both pieces of proposed legislation are expected to be held during the spring.

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#### Board

be chosen on the basis of areas where several of these grids overlap.

The Board decided that the director of the Folklife Center should take part in the planning to explore further the possibilities for this "encyclopedia of American folklife."

The Center's winter Board meeting was held in Washington, D.C., on January 28-29, 1980.

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documentation and indexes, that the collection of the major works in the field. But research leading to fieldwork should not be confined to published sources. It is to the Archive's vast collections of unpublished recordings and manuscripts, and their complementary

serious researcher should direct his or her attention. Through these resources, one can discover what has been collected where, when, and by whom. Indexes are available to look up titles, informants, collectors, geographical locations, languages, and to some extent, genres. Field recordings are also available for listening on an appointment basis.

Those who have visited the Archive for these purposes have gained a sense of who has been working in their areas of interest, what sorts of materials have been gathered, what fieldwork projects have been carried out, and what remains to be done.

For optimum results, researchers should plan to visit the Archive in their preparations for fieldwork. A limited amount of assistance, however, can be given through correspondence. In addition, a number of finding and descriptive aids have been prepared and can be mailed on request. An inventory of these aids is also available. The Archive is open weekdays (except national holidays) from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Correspondence should be addressed to the Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Song, Washington, D.C. 20540.

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