

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

April 1980

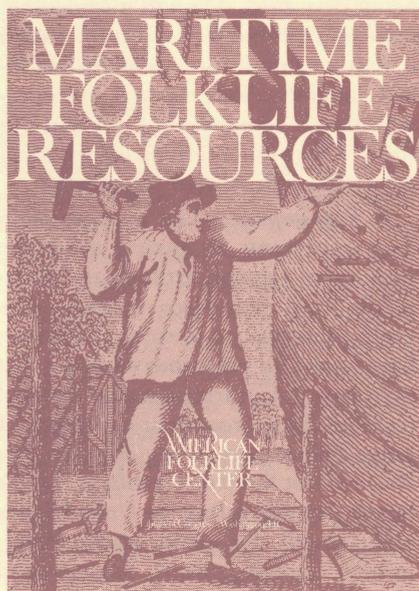
Volume III, Number 2

FOLKLIFE CENTER RESEARCH AND THE USE OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Since 1976 the American Folklife Center has experimented with mail survey questionnaires in collecting information relating to traditional culture in the United States. Thus far the Center's efforts—the Arizona Folklife Survey, the National Maritime Folklife Survey, and the Rhode Island Folklife Survey—have varied significantly in scope, region, and design. Final reports from two, the *Arizona Folklife Survey* and *Maritime Folklife Resources*, are currently available from the Center at no cost.

The Arizona Folklife Survey, assisted by Edward Bridge Danson of the Center's Board of Trustees, a longtime resident of Arizona, was addressed to 98 libraries, universities, museums, cultural organizations, and individuals within the state. It included an introductory statement on the nature of folklife studies and the activities of the Center, followed by questions about collection categories such as Artifacts, Print and Manuscript Materials, Sound Recordings, and Visual and Audiovisual Materials. Of the 50 respondents, 45 reported holdings in these categories.

The National Maritime Folklife Sur-



vey, mailed to approximately 400 organizations, gathered information on more specific subjects (scrimshaw, sea shanties, diaries) under related category headings (Artifacts, Verbal Arts, Other Materials Related to Life at Sea). It also requested practical information on the facilities and programs of each institution. Out of approximately 300 respondents, 172 reported holdings. The resulting directory of institutions and indexes to their holdings repre-

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ALAN LOMAX PREPARES PUBLICATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC

During the summers of 1978 and 1979 Alan Lomax, former head of the Library's Archive of Folk Song, returned to southern fieldwork for the first time in 19 years. His project was to shoot a TV special on Afro-American folk culture in northern Mississippi, and thus to throw light on the origins of the blues, which flowered early in this area. To his distress he discovered that the rich stock of Black folk music which he and his father, John A. Lomax, had documented during the 1930s and 1940s had all but disappeared. Only the elderly remembered the classic Black traditions which had given rise to a world music. Since neither the schools nor the media gave time to Black folk traditions, Black youngsters knew little of the magnificent songs their forebears had created, songs that had sustained and entertained generations of Americans, and have by now been heard virtually around the world.

In response to this experience, Lomax returned to the Library of Congress in November 1979 to begin a project aimed at reevaluating the body of field recordings of traditional Black

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FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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Library of Congress

Alan Jabbour, Director

Ray Dockstader, Deputy Director

Elena Bradunas
Carl Fleischhauer
Howard W. Marshall
Folklife Specialists

Peter T. Bartis, Folklife Researcher

Eleanor Sreb, Executive Assistant
Brett Topping, Administrative Secretary
Doris Craig, Clerk-Receptionist

Tel: 202 287-6590

Archive of Folk Song

Joseph C. Hickerson, Head
Gerald E. Parsons, Jr., Reference Librarian
Patricia M. Markland, Indexer-Secretary

Tel: 202 287-5510

Washington, D.C.

Managing editor: Brett Topping

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

In the last issue of *Folklife Center News* (III, 1, Jan. 1980) I shared some of my immediate reflections upon returning from a meeting in Geneva on the subject of the legal protection of folklore. Three months have now passed, and I have received enough inquiries about the subject to persuade me that others share both my interest and my perplexity. The impetus for protecting folklore, both nationally and internationally, is a deep-seated but inchoate concern or anxiety, which does not translate easily into clear-cut issues. Nevertheless, here is a taxonomy of the anxiety, thrown together for the nonce.

A. *Authentication*. Concern for authentication of folklife comes in various forms. Native Americans and West Africans unite, for instance, in decrying

the replication of their traditional crafts in overseas factories, which mass-produce the items with cheap labor and flood the international market, including local markets in Nigeria or the American Southwest. Such replication constitutes not only an economic but a cultural and psychological threat to the authentic practitioners of traditional arts and to the traditional groups whose value those arts express. To take another example, the issue of authentication hovers about the frequently expressed complaint that outside researchers study and publish descriptions of traditional cultures and their practices without consulting the people being described. Though it sometimes appears that one person's information is another's misinformation, the worldwide anxiety about cultural misrepresentation is genuine; thus it is that this form of the authentication issue is often associated with calls for consultation.

B. *Expropriation*. The expropriation issue represents an anxiety about the removal of valuable artifacts and documents from their place of origin. The great museums of western civilization have heard for years the complaint that they have taken irreplaceable national treasures away from their homelands. I judge this concern to be still on the rise. But it is not limited to artifacts. I have heard fretting, within the United States and around the world, about photographs, motion picture films, sound recordings, and other documentary materials being created, then taken away from the original community, region, or country which is the subject of documentation.

C. *Compensation*. Even when the national and international circulation of a folk cultural item is a source of local pride, or when it is conceded that such circulation is inevitable and proper, there is wide-spread resentment of the fact that the individuals and communities whence the item originated are not compensated for their contribution.

D. *Nurture*. Although all the issues

listed above seem to pertain to regulation of the circulation of folk cultural items outside their "native habitat," in fact the worldwide expression of concern about these issues is regularly accompanied by a parallel concern for maintaining the health and vitality of folk culture itself in the face of "modernization" and "internationalization" in the flow of commerce and culture. Protests about the external exploitation of folk cultural items, in short, almost always betoken a harder-to-express fear about the disruption of folk culture itself.

This classification is put forward hesitantly and may be improved upon. But I have found it helpful in sorting out my thinking, and it is clear to me that the impulse toward folklore protection must be sorted into its constituent strands of issues before there can be any hope for useful corrective actions.

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NEW CULTURAL DIRECTORY

On February 19 the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities announced the publication of *Cultural Directory II: Federal Funds and Services for the Arts and Humanities*. Research and writing for the book was directed by Linda Coe, author of the first cultural directory and of the Center's directory *Folklife and the Federal Government: Activities, Resources, Funds and Services*. Assisting Coe with this second cultural directory were Rebecca Denney, arts education coordinator and teacher, and Anne Rogers, a writer and Federal program consultant to colleges and universities. Anne Hartzell and Robert Peck coordinated the project for the Federal Council.

Cultural Directory II describes approximately 300 programs administered by 38 Federal agencies, providing detailed information on financial aid, employment opportunities, information services, technical assistance, training programs, research collections, and other forms of support available to individuals and groups working in the arts and humanities. Programs supporting forms of folk cultural activities are detailed in approximately 30 index entries grouped under the major headings "ethnic culture," "folk arts," "folklife," and "folklore." Listed under these headings are programs within agencies which are well-known for their assistance to and presentation of America's culture, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Library of Congress. Other programs highlighted in the directory fall within governmental departments and agencies more often associated with other missions. For example, the Cooperative Research Program of the Department of Agriculture grants funds to state agricultural experiment stations, land-grant universities, and other state institutions to

plan and undertake research projects. Research conducted usually relates to the agricultural sciences, but studies on sociological aspects of rural life and economy or the role of the arts in rural development have also been funded. Examples of two recent projects conducted through this program are the examination of the history and themes of fairs and festivals and their relationship to community development in Louisiana, sponsored by Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and a history of German emigrants from Russia who settled in Colorado, sponsored by Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

In discussing ways in which the second directory differs from the first, Rebecca Denney underscored the greater readability of the second due to the new format of entries which starts with a brief synopsis of what the program is and to whom it is directed, then continues with a full description. Another format change which has increased readability is the elimination of page numbers, so that the only numbering is by section. Linda Coe emphasized the addition of programs which support the humanities as being the major difference in this second directory. This addition resulted in much broader coverage of programs related to American folklife which, as she observed, incorporates or integrates both the arts and the humanities. The coverage of agencies with a broad range of cultural responsibilities, such as the Library of Congress and the Department of the Interior, was also expanded to include more references pertaining to folk and ethnic culture. Coe attributes her heightened awareness of Federal programs supporting folk cultural expression, reflected in the second directory's entries, to her work on *Folklife and the Federal Government*.

Funding for the directory was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Office of Edu-

cation. The Smithsonian Institution Press is the publisher and distributor. Copies, priced at \$7.75 plus 85¢ postage and handling, can be ordered from the Smithsonian Institution Press, P.O. Box 1579, Washington, D.C. 20013. Quantity discount rates are available. For further information, contact Anne Hartzell, Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, 202/456-6565.

NEW EDITIONS OF FOLKSONG RECORDS

The Library of Congress has issued new editions of some of the first recordings released from its Archive of Folk Song: *Anglo-American Ballads* (AFS L1); *Anglo-American Shanties, Lyric Songs, Dance Tunes, and Spirituals* (AFS L2); *Afro-American Spirituals, Work Songs, and Ballads* (AFS L3); *Afro-American Blues and Game Songs* (AFS L4); and *Ethnic Music of French Louisiana, the Spanish Southwest, and the Bahamas* (AFS L5). Produced in 1942 from selected field recordings made primarily in the southern United States by John and Alan Lomax, Herbert Halpert, and others, the series was originally issued as 25 shellac 78-rpm records in albums of 5 records each. Alan Lomax, then head of the Archive, edited the albums and wrote the accompanying brochures containing notes on the selections and transcriptions of the lyrics.

In 1956 the albums were re-issued as 5 LP recordings, direct transfers from the 78s issued 14 years earlier. The companion brochures, however, were not changed. Between 1964 and 1966 the 5 LP recordings were remastered from the original field recordings. The resulting LPs included an occasional "take" different from that on the original 78s, as well as complete versions of selections that had been excerpted earlier.

Although the selections on the new editions of AFS L1-L5 remain the same as when they were remastered, they

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VIDEO DOCUMENTATION AND FIELDWORK PROJECTS

The Folklife Center's field projects have stressed daily notes as the primary record of each fieldworker's activities, impressions, and discoveries. Sound recordings and still photographs are made whenever possible and, like fieldnotes, tend to reflect the work in its entirety; to study a project's picture file or its collected sound recordings is to form an accurate impression of the whole. The coverage from photographs and sound recordings can be comprehensive because these forms of media are relatively simple to make and not too expensive. The Center often adds a specialist still photographer to its field teams to assist with the most difficult aspects of photography—particularly candid coverage of human activities—but everyone takes at least some pictures.

Hambone performed by Johnny Park, Tifton, Georgia. This photo and the videotape of the game are part of the collections from the Center's 1977 South Central Georgia Folklife Project. (Photo by Beverly Robinson)



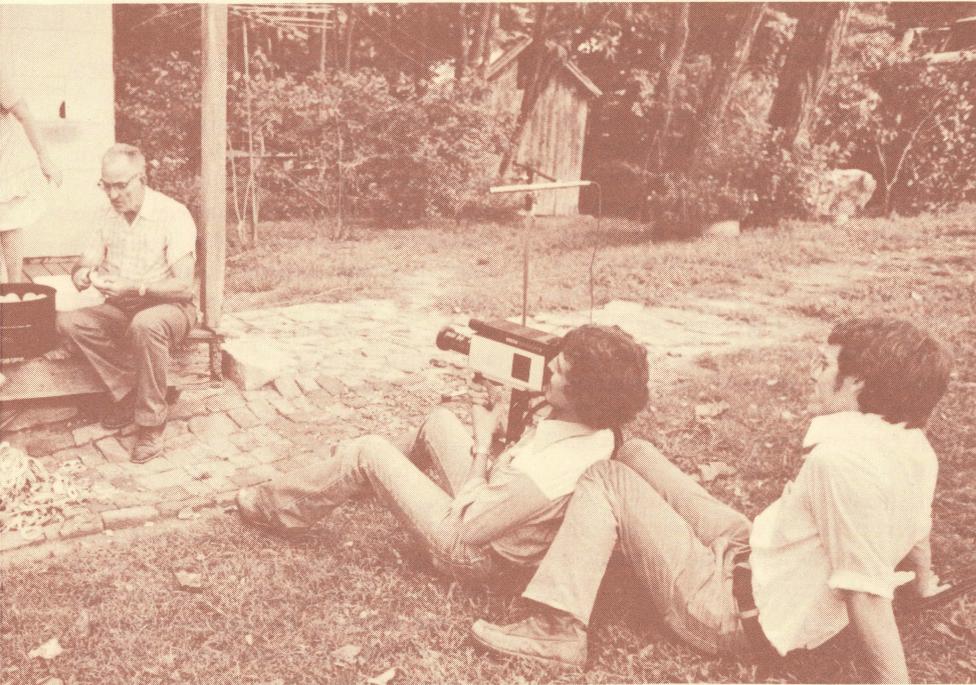
Videotape requires a different approach. Of course, certain phenomena lend themselves to motion documentation, but the creation of professional-quality video recordings requires time, effort, and skill. The most effective means to this end would be an additional person on the team to oversee the creation of videotapes. To date, other priorities have taken precedence.

The Center's projects in Georgia, the Blue Ridge, and Nevada, however, have experimented with video recording. Since the projects have not sought finished, edited programs as a goal, we simply gathered "footage" of certain phenomena. The tapes generally document demonstrations of dance, speech, children's games, and technological processes. They are special performances for the sake of the video recording—a sort of visual analog to the interview.



During the 1977 project in Georgia, folklorist Beverly Robinson surveyed Afro-American traditions in the region. She often watched children playing hand-clapping games, and we talked about how we might videotape them. Although we would have liked to make a recording "on the street" as the games occurred, that would have required two or three acclimating visits to a location, and our survey was too brief to permit such an investment of time. In addition, we wished to record particular games as "texts." In the end, Robinson, folklorist Tom Adler, and I decided to set up in as comfortable a place as we could find and solicit demonstrations.

The Center's modest color equipment tolerates neither contrasty nor dim light. Since the performers had dark skin, proper illumination was critical. We decided against trying to work outdoors in direct sun or "splotchy" shade and opted to erect four 1000-watt lights and transform a college dormitory lounge into an impromptu studio. Robinson located a dozen child-



Veoma and Josh Easter, with temporary assistance from Wally MacNow, peel apples for drying as Terry Eiler (with camera) and Bob Fulcher videotape the process. Eiler was a member of the field team in the Center's 1978 Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project; MacNow and Fulcher visited the project and joined in. (Photo by Lyntha Scott Eiler)

ren, from four to seventeen, who performed games ranging from solo performances of "hambone" to rhyming games which involved mutual hand-clapping by three players. The footage consists of about 30 minutes of games and discussion.

During the Blue Ridge project several members of the field team visited the Josh Easter family in Surry County, North Carolina. The family was peeling and slicing apples for drying in their wood-fired drying shed. Terry Eiler, with help from Tom Adler, Bob Fulcher, and others, used the occasion to make a video recording in a fashion suitable for editing. Rather than stick to the relatively static frame we had used for the games, Eiler made shots with a variety of frames and camera angles; varied and complete coverage of such a process is ideal for later assembly in an edited montage. The Easter's work was repetitive, and Eiler was able to predict

which kinds of shots would be needed and to judge when to make a close-up or to reverse the camera angle, as well as when to provoke an explanatory statement from one of the participants by means of a question. The final raw tapes look fine, but the Center has not yet had an opportunity to edit them.

Although small, the Center's collection of videotapes is satisfying, and we continue to look at them from time to time; field situations are then brought back with such immediacy that we wonder why we did not make more. The wish, however, is tempered by the memory of how hard it has been to find the time and energy to make these recordings during our rather hectic projects. And, as our communications with the public continue to take form as print publications, we have a deep appreciation for the value and impact of the still photographs we have made instead.

—Carl Fleischhauer

HOUSE HEARINGS ON PRESERVATION ISSUES

On March 17-18 the many issues and challenges surrounding the historic preservation movement were aired in hearings before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in the U. S. House of Representatives. The hearings devoted attention, among many other issues, to the question of "intangible elements of culture" (including folklife) as it pertains to historic preservation law. Folklife Center Director Alan Jabbour testified on the "intangible" issue, which is raised in three of the bills now before the House.

In the months before the hearings two bills had been introduced into the House which proposed major revision of existing historic preservation legislation—H.R. 5496, the "National Historic Preservation Amendments of 1979," introduced by Congressman John Seiberling of Ohio with many cosponsors, and H.R. 6504, the "National Heritage Policy Act of 1979," the Administration bill, which originally appeared in the Senate, introduced by Congressman Phillip Burton of California with cosponsors (see *Folklife Center News* III, 1, January 1980). The week immediately before the hearings saw the introduction of two additional bills, both featuring modifications and compromises which emerged out of the intense discussions that preoccupied historic preservation circles in early 1980. H.R. 6805, the "National Heritage Act of 1980," was introduced by Burton and cosponsors with the support of an alliance of preservation and conservation organizations. H.R. 6804, the "National Historic Preservation Amendments of 1980," was also introduced by Burton and represents a modification of Seiberling's original bill.

The House hearings were opened by

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sents a step towards a national inventory of artifactal and archival data for maritime folklife.

The Center's most recent effort, currently underway in Rhode Island, was designed with the assistance of Kenneth Goldstein of the University of Pennsylvania, who was also the director of an extensive fieldwork project in that state during the summer and fall of 1979. Collected field data influenced the questionnaire format, as well as the selection of the 101 institutions and organizations to which it was addressed. Like the maritime survey, the Rhode Island survey requests detailed information on holdings grouped within key categories.

History of Use and Development

Questionnaires have been employed since the 17th century, when "queries" were used to gather information for regional studies of natural history and for the study of British antiquities. The first half of this century witnessed a significant increase in the use of folklife questionnaires in Europe, where four major institutions studying traditional culture are now recognized leaders in the development of questionnaires: the Nordiska Museum in Stockholm; the Landsmalsarkiv in Uppsala, which since 1927 has developed the largest continuing program, numbering over 200 separate questionnaires; and two institutions which adopted the Uppsala design, the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh and the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin.

In the United States the approach has not been as systematic and organized as that of our European colleagues. Both the larger area and diverse population have impeded development of a meaningful national questionnaire program. There have been some important regionally based projects, however. The Pennsylvania Folklife Society used its publication *The*

Pennsylvania Dutchman (later renamed *Pennsylvania Folklife*) to present a series of questionnaires to readers between 1949 and 1953. The series was reestablished in 1966, under the direction of Don Yoder, and each issue since has included a questionnaire on subjects ranging from foodways to hex signs to windmills. The Society for the North American Cultural Survey (SNACS) is exploring the use of questionnaires for such topics as foodways and family folklife on a national level and has conducted several regional experiments. Various projects of the WPA in the 1930s employed questionnaires in national surveys of the United States, although the questionnaires used were intended primarily as an interview outline or as sample questions for amateur collectors in the field.

Some Observations

The WPA questionnaires, and nearly all other questionnaires developed in this country, can be termed "fieldwork" questionnaires: they ask personal questions of individuals to solicit information about their habits, activities, and beliefs. They can be used to structure a personal interview, or they can take the place of a personal visit and thus become a means of conducting "vicarious fieldwork." The possibility of conducting fieldwork vicariously can be attractive under certain circumstances. Alexander Fenton, for example, has cited the "chronic shortage of manpower" for fieldwork studies to support his statement that "for the time being greater stress must be laid on vicarious fieldwork using questionnaires."

The Center has not yet attempted to utilize the questionnaire method as a form of vicarious fieldwork. Its orientation has been restricted to the location and assessment of collected artifacts, recorded verbal and musical expression, printed materials, and so forth. While such holdings reflect the habits and beliefs of individuals and groups, inquiry into such collections remains a

step removed from direct personal surveys.

Several factors may have contributed to the high rate of survey responses. A request that blank questionnaires be returned to indicate the lack of pertinent holdings was incorporated in each survey. Follow-up letters have been sent to encourage responses. Each questionnaire has been tailored to the subject matter or region. We have made every effort to promote the view that local supportive programs are vital for the successful development and delivery of the questionnaires. Dr. Danson assisted the Center's introduction at the local level in the case of the Arizona Folklife Survey and the Rhode Island questionnaire survey benefits from local contacts made during our field survey in that state. The Maritime Folklife Survey was aided by the distinctly specialized and limited subject matter and the recipients' recognition of the need for such a survey of maritime collections. Further, the Center's connection to the Library of Congress may have generated a response in the institutions and public organizations surveyed to the larger "national" implications of helping researchers and the public locate specific collections. Finally, respondents may also have appreciated the opportunity to provide increased exposure for their own unique holdings.

The effectiveness of any questionnaire survey depends upon both careful crafting by its designers and active effort by its respondents. After each experimental survey effort the Center has tried to evaluate its usefulness before further surveys have been undertaken. Many questions have presented themselves. Do the questionnaires in fact elicit the data sought after? Do the resulting published directories present the information effectively, and is the information useful to scholars and the general public? Do the directories stimulate use of public collections and intercommunication among their custodians? Does the pro-

cess of completing the questionnaires offer any educational benefits for respondents, and do the questionnaires and directories have the effect of reinterpreting collections in folk cultural terms for custodians and users? As the Center accrues data and experience to answer such questions as these, it will be able to determine whether the continued use of questionnaires is warranted. —Peter Bartis

Further Reading

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New Editions from page 3

now have new covers and are accompanied by revised brochures, prepared by Wayne D. Shirley of the Library's Music Division. The new brochures reproduce the notes written by Alan Lomax. The transcription of lyrics has been adjusted where necessary to provide the text of a complete cut, and an introduction by Shirley outlines the history of the series.



Alan Lomax and John Howell, Library of Congress Recording Laboratory, transfer the sound from a forty-year-old disc to magnetic tape, part of the task of mastering Lomax's new series of record albums.

Alan Lomax from page 1

music made by the Lomax family for the Library, and preparing them for publication as an LP record series. With the assistance of Peter B. Lowry, an experienced record producer and publisher, Lomax has been assembling the choicest selections from the original field recordings with a view to issuing ten or more LP recordings of the material. The project has been made possible by a grant from the Media Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The LPs will be edited to demonstrate the beauty, variety, and regional traits, as well as to indicate the African origins, of this great body of song. The initial albums will be regionally oriented to represent Black folk music of the southern states, Texas, and the Bahamas, while offering a broad range of genres and performance styles. Notes with stylistic analysis will accompany each record.

Lomax describes the body of materials he is working with as "a thing of very great beauty—a monument to the extraordinary creativity of the Black people of North America and to the concern of the Library about American culture." He anticipates that the mate-

rial will again be a rich source of inspiration for Americans of all races. Once the production of the LPs is completed, he plans to seek their distribution to regional schools and cultural centers, so that this cultural treasure can be returned to the people who so generously shared it with the Library and the world.

1980 OUTDOOR CONCERT SERIES

This year the Center will hold six outdoor concerts, scheduled on the second Thursday of each month between May and October. The series begins on May 8 with a performance of traditional Armenian music and dance offered by Leo Sarkisian and his group from the Washington area. Don Stover, banjo player, guitarist, singer, and raconteur, will perform bluegrass and oldtime music on June 12. He will be followed on July 10 by the Sam Brothers Five, heating up mid-summer with their zodic music from Louisiana. Concerts will be held on the Library's Neptune Plaza from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. Subsequent performers will be announced later.

**ARTICLE ON FOLKLIFE
ALONG BLUERIDGE
PARKWAY IN
CONSERVATION MAGAZINE**

Center Director Alan Jabbour recently completed an article entitled "Folklife Today on the Blue Ridge Parkway" for the National Parks and Conservation Association's monthly magazine. Based on observations made during the Center's fieldwork project carried out in cooperation with the National Park Service along a 75-mile stretch of parkway, the article appears in the April 1980 issue of *National Parks and Conservation Magazine*. Reprints are available upon request from the Folklife Center, and single issues of the magazine may be purchased for \$2 from the National Parks and Conservation Association, 1701 Eighteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Founded in 1919, the Association

addresses issues pertaining to the conservation and preservation of the nation's parks, its natural resources, and its living cultural heritage.

House Hearings from page 5

Phillip Burton, Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs, who then designated John Seiberling to chair the remainder of the proceedings. The subcommittee hearings drew a standing-room-only audience of interested citizens. Testimony was heard from an array of federal agency heads, preservation and conservation organizations, as well as state and municipal officials.

Both H.R. 6804 and H.R. 6805, the two most recently introduced bills, include the "intangible" provision, requiring the Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with the American Folklife Center, to prepare within two years a report to the President and the

Congress. The report will include "recommendations for legislative and administrative actions by the Federal Government in order to preserve, conserve, and encourage the continuation of the diverse historic, ethnic, and folk cultural traditions that underlie and are a living expression of our American Heritage" (H.R. 6805, in nearly identical form in H.R. 6804).

In both his prepared statement and oral testimony Alan Jabbour discussed the growing involvement with folklife in archaeological and historic preservation activities around the country and cited examples where historic preservation and the preservation of folklife converged. His was the only direct testimony regarding the "intangible" provision in the various bills, but the provision received support from some others who testified.

Hearings on these preservation and conservation issues opened in the Senate on April 17.

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