

# FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

SUMMER 1992 • VOLUME XIV, NUMBER 3



**American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress**



The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by the U.S. Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1928, and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

#### Administration

Alan Jabbour, *Director*  
 Ray Dockstader, *Deputy Director*  
 Timothy Lloyd, *Assistant to the Director*  
 Doris Craig, *Administrative Assistant*  
 Hillary Glatt, *Program Assistant*  
 Camila Bryce-Laporte,  
*Program Coordinator*  
 Jennifer A. Cutting,  
*Program Coordinator*

#### Acquisitions

Joseph C. Hickerson, *Head*

#### Processing

Stephanie A. Hall, *Archivist*  
 Elaine Bradtke,  
*American Memory Project*  
 Catherine Hiebert Kerst,  
*American Memory Project*

#### Programs

Peter T. Bartis, *Folklife Specialist*  
 Mary Hufford, *Folklife Specialist*  
 David A. Taylor, *Folklife Specialist*

#### Publications

James Hardin, *Editor*

#### Public Events

Thea Caemmerer, *Coordinator*

#### Reference

Gerald E. Parsons, *Reference Librarian*  
 Judith A. Gray, *Folklife Specialist*

#### Administrative Office

Tel: 202 707-6590

#### Reference Service

Tel: 202 707-5510

#### Federal Cylinder Project

Tel: 202 707-1740

#### Board of Trustees

William L. Kinney, Jr., *Chair*,  
*South Carolina*  
 John Penn Fix III, *Vice Chair*,  
*Washington*  
 Nina Archabal, *Minnesota*  
 Lindy Boggs, *Louisiana*;  
*Washington, D.C.*  
 Carolyn Hecker, *Maine*  
 Robert Malir, Jr., *Kansas*  
 Judith McCulloh, *Illinois*  
 Juris Ubans, *Maine*

#### Ex Officio Members

James H. Billington,  
*Librarian of Congress*  
 Robert McCormick Adams,  
*Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*  
 Anne-Imelda Radice, *Acting Chairman*,  
*National Endowment for the Arts*  
 Lynne V. Cheney, *Chairman, National*  
*Endowment for the Humanities*  
 Alan Jabbour, *Director*,  
*American Folklife Center*

#### FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

James Hardin, *Editor*  
 Timothy Lloyd, *Editorial Advisor*  
 David A. Taylor, *Editorial Advisor*  
 John Biggs, *Library of Congress*  
*Graphics Unit, Designer*

*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, Washington, D.C. 20540-8100. *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.

Cover: Men carry statue of Santa Rosalia through the streets of Monterey, California, during the annual Santa Rosalia Festival, September 10, 1989. (IAW-KL-B118-28/28A) Photograph by Ken Light

#### EDITOR'S NOTES

##### MLA Lists FCN

The Modern Language Association has notified us that *Folklife Center News* will be listed in the *MLA Directory of*

*Periodicals* and indexed for inclusion in the *MLA International Bibliography*. Volume 5 of the annual bibliography is devoted to folklore.

#### Service to the Profession

The American Folklife Center has begun a project to evaluate and improve the services it provides to the field of folklore. The Center's current services include its publications (bibliographies, finding aids, Folklife Center News, and special publications); its Folk Archive reference service; its documentary equipment loan program; the Folklife job and professional opportunity telephone information recording; and collaborations with academic and public programs and with individual folklorists on fieldwork and other activities. Based on the rankings of possible new activities requested in a survey sent to academic and public programs in the field, the Center may add other services to the list. The results of this survey will be distributed before the end of the year to all to whom the survey was sent, and will appear in a future issue of *Folklife Center News*. For more information, contact Assistant to the Director Timothy Lloyd, who is coordinating the project.

#### "In Country" Performers on PBS

On July 13, 1989, folksingers Bull Durham, Dolf Droge, Chuck Rosenberg, Bill Ellis, and Bill Dower gathered at the Library of Congress for a concert and symposium called "In Country," based on the Vietnam-era soldier songs recorded by Gen. Edward G. Lansdale and donated to the Archive of Folk Culture in 1975 and 1977 (*Folklife Center News*, vol. XI, no. 3, summer 1989). A number of these performers will be featured on PBS's "Austin City Limits," a Veteran's Day special, November 11, with Kris Kristofferson as host, at 10:30 P.M. eastern and 9:30 P.M. central time.

#### Internet

The Folklife Center has recently put several of its free publications on the Library's Sequent computer linked to the Internet online network. Anyone in the world with network access may read or download (retrieve) these documents using File Transfer Protocol (FTP) at no charge. Currently the

*continued on page 18*

# Folklife Exhibition Celebrates Italian-American Ties and Attachments



The Nick family reunion, Price, Utah, 1982. From left, Kerry Nick Fister, Paulmina Nick New, Sister Jean Juliano, Josephine Nick Copfer, Angelina Nick Bonvicin, and Mary Nick Juliano. Photo courtesy of Kerry Nick Fister

By James Hardin

The truck from the Library of Congress pulled into the driveway of Kerry Nick Fister's home in Price, Utah, on July 12, just as members of the Nick family began to arrive for their 1992 reunion. The truck was there to pick up items Mrs. Fister had agreed to lend for an exhibition sponsored by the American Folklife Center called *Old Ties, New Attachments: Italian-American Folklife in the West*.

The Nick family will be represented in a section of the exhibition on the transformation of Italians in the American West into Italian-Americans.

The very surname Nick (changed from Nicolavo) encapsulates one part of that story. Many Italians felt obliged to change or anglicize their names, either to disguise the fact that they were Italians (and thus avoid discrimination) or simply to make the name easier to pronounce.

The Folklife Center's exhibition was the talk of the Nick reunion, as might be expected. The usual subjects of exhibitions are Egyptian pharaohs, treasure houses of Britain, French impressionist paintings, and other such products of "elite" culture. Why have one on the everyday lives of Italians in the western United States? What, for example, is so special about

the hog-sticking knife Kerry Fister's father made using an old file from the Carbon County coal mine where he worked?

The Nicks and many other contributors were puzzled at first that the Folklife Center wanted to display their garden tools, linens, photo albums, and other items. But when fieldworkers explained the way ordinary objects often come to symbolize the experiences of a lifetime, most warmed to the idea. Fieldworkers discovered a deep sense of family pride in the western communities they investigated, and most Italian-American families agreed that their stories deserved to be told.



Folklorist Paula Manini (left) records an interview with Eve Taravella, Louise Williams, and Dorothy Zanini at Taravella's home in Pueblo, Colorado, as they look through their photograph albums. (IAW-KL-B195-35) Photo by Ken Light

Folklife Center director Alan Jabbour proposed the Italian-Americans in the West Project as one element of a Library of Congress program to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the voyage of Christopher Columbus, the Genoese explorer whose 1492 landing in the "New World" eventually led to British and European colonization. The Folklife Center conducted a field study in five western states during 1989 and 1990 to investigate the present-day lives of one ethnic immigrant group for whom Columbus has become especially important.

Inspiration for the project can be traced back to an earlier field survey

the Folklife Center conducted in Paradise Valley, Nevada, in 1978, when fieldworkers documenting cowboy culture in the region discovered that many ranchers were Italian-Americans. In 1988, when Congress asked the Center to consider a project to commemorate the Quincentenary, Jabbour thought that a more extensive look at Italians in the West would be an appropriate Columbian Quincentenary undertaking. He explained that "most Americans associate Italian-American life, history, and culture with the urban East, but an important and much less understood aspect of Italian-American history is to be found in the American

West. In the mid-nineteenth century, large numbers of Italian immigrants settled in California and other Western states. They brought with them a number of cultural skills and arts—agricultural techniques, wine culture, stone masonry, and many others. More than most people realize, these Italian-Americans helped shape the cultural landscape of the modern West."

Jabbour asked historian John Alexander Williams to write an overview of Italians in the West in order to provide a framework for the field study. Williams's detailed account described when and why Italians came to this country, where they settled, and how they fared in the new land. Williams focused on two cultural developments, pan-Italianism and the transformation of Columbus Day celebrations (see Williams's articles for *Folklife Center News*, vol. XI, nos. 2, 3, and 4, 1989). Italy did not achieve political unity until Victor Emmanuel II became its first king in 1861 (for centuries it was a territory of city-states and small duchies and kingdoms). Italian-American culture was essentially something new, resulting from the common interests in America of people from different regions in Italy. As with many immigrant groups, Italians formed organizations to help one another survive and prosper, and these were prominent building blocks of Italian-American ethnic identity.

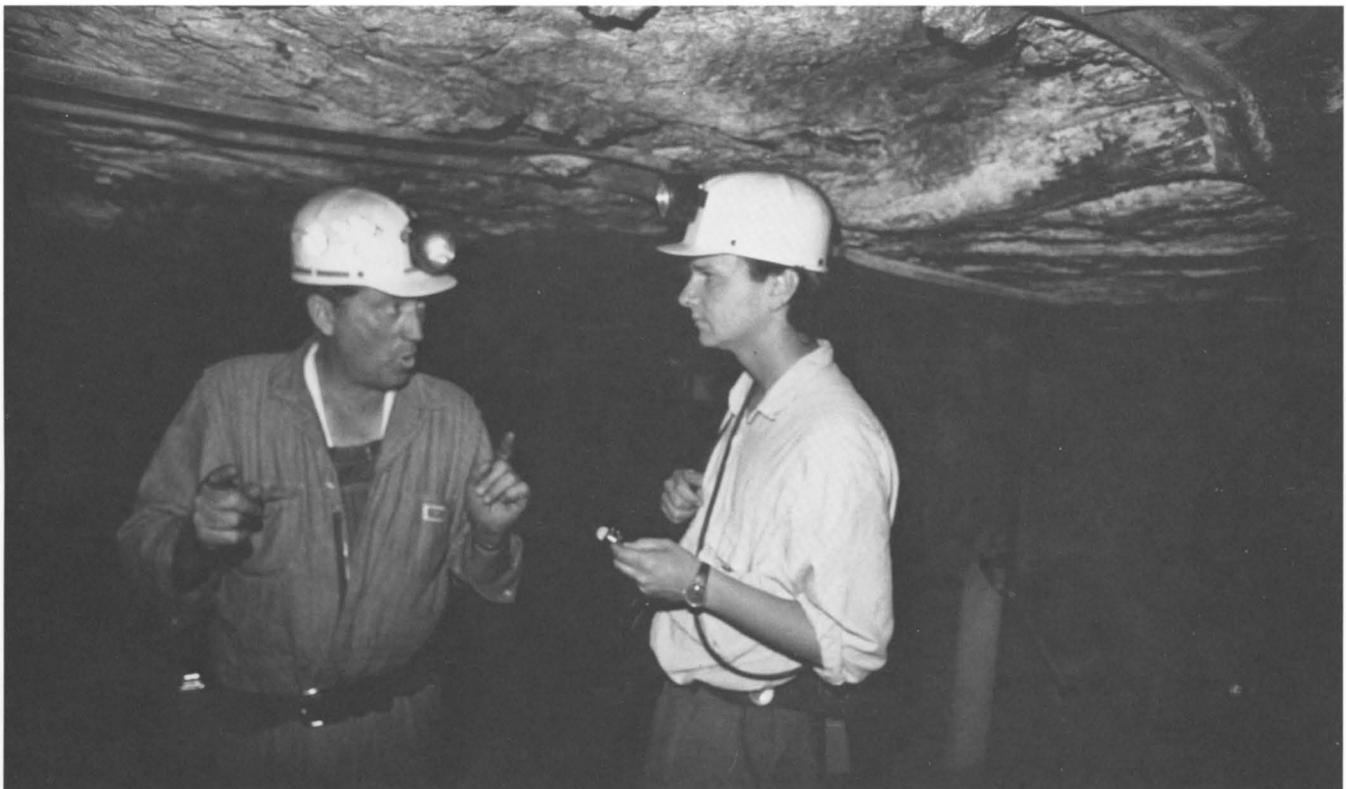
Italian community leaders found in Christopher Columbus (first celebrated in Yankee New England in 1792) an established American hero perfectly suited to their needs for ethnic pride and unity, and they set about reinventing him as an Italian hero. During the late 1800s, Italians in the West were influential in promoting Columbus's Italian origins. By 1885, Columbus Day in San Francisco had changed from a Yankee holiday of solemn assemblies to a festival of parades declaring Italian identity. In 1907, Colorado was the first state to adopt Columbus Day as an official holiday. Joseph Cervetto of San Rafael, California, began portraying Columbus at San Francisco's elaborate Columbus Day pageant in 1957: "I do it because I believe in the greatness of the man," he said to fieldworker Russell Frank. "Columbus represents for Italians the most important person." In recent years, Cervetto's son, Joseph, Jr., has taken over the role

At the Folklife Center, David A. Taylor was assigned the task of directing field research for the Italian-Americans in the West Project, and, in 1989, Taylor and four other researchers began work in the maritime community of San Pedro, California. Other sites visited by fieldworkers during the two-year field study were: the agricultural community of Gilroy, in California's Santa Clara Valley; several mining and ranching communities in central and eastern Nevada; the agricultural valley surrounding Walla Walla, Washington; the coal mining district of Carbon County, Utah, and the city of Pueblo, Colorado, where Italian-Americans have long worked in steel production and truck gardening.

In addition to Williams and Taylor, nineteen fieldworkers were engaged to work on the project (when possible, they were from the particular study areas and had already done pertinent research): Susan Anderson, Bee Bergold, Douglas L. Banks, Thomas Carter, Douglas DeNatale, Russell Frank, Andrea Graham, Ken Light, Jens Lund, Paula Manini, Maria Notarianni, Philip Notarianni, Blanton Owen,



Italian-American Joseph Cervetto, Jr., plays Columbus at the Columbus Landing Ceremony held at Aquatic Park in San Francisco, September 30, 1989. For many years the part was taken by Cervetto's father, Joseph, Sr. (IAW-KL-B175-14) Photo by Ken Light



Folklorist Russell Frank (right) goes "underground" to interview coal mine manager Joe Carpine at the Twin Pines #2 mine, near Rockvale, Colorado. (IAW-KL-B288-4) Photo by Ken Light

Valerie Parks, Bea Roeder, Steve E. Simmons, Steve Siporin, Paola Tavarelli, and Myron Wood.

"Fieldworkers devoted attention to Italian-American involvement in the distinctive occupations of the several regions," Taylor explained. "The investigation of stonework by Italian-Americans led to a better understanding of the diffusion of immigrant artisans and their integration into areas of Western life not usually perceived as being ethnic. Research in coal and precious metal mining communities shed light on the role Italian immigrant labor played in building extractive industries, and revealed family and cultural connections between Italian-American settlements in the West, their counterparts in the mining areas of the East, and the home communities in Italy.

"We also documented many other aspects of contemporary Italian-American culture, such as food traditions that play an important role in Italian-American identity, community-based sacred and secular festivals that disclose continuity and change of old-world traditions, and new forms of expression (including Columbus Day) drawn from the popular cultures of

the United States and Italy.

"We wanted to know if the informants contacted in the study communities were Italians or Westerners or both. Had they shaped the contemporary culture of their Western sub-region, or had it shaped them? These were the central questions the Center's researchers asked."

And responses to these and many other questions have resulted in an immense collection of material for the Folklife Center's Archive of Folk Culture: three hundred hours of video and sound recordings, twenty-five thousand photographs, and a thousand pages of field notes, logs, and other manuscript materials. A computer program enabled fieldworkers to speed the process of recording and indexing data, and now facilitates research using the collection (see Stephanie A. Hall, "Building a Better Shoe Box," *Folklife Center News*, vol. XIII, no. 1, winter 1991).

Washington area folklorist Marjorie Hunt sifted through the material to do a preliminary outline for an exhibition. (Hunt won an Academy Award for *The Stone Carvers*, her documentary film on the Italian stone carvers at the Washington Cathedral.) And later,

folklorist I. Sheldon Posen was asked to serve as curator. Posen has done a study of the *giglio* tradition in Brooklyn and its connection with Simon Rodia's Watts Towers in Los Angeles (the *giglio* is a tower carried through the streets in celebration of the Feast of St. Paulinus, the patron saint of a small village near Nola, Italy, to which many Brooklyn residents trace their roots). Center deputy director Ray Dockstader took on the job of coordinating exhibition activities at the Library and at other sites around the country, and the Leone Design Group of Larchmont, New York, was hired to design the exhibition.

In the summer of 1990, as fieldworkers were completing their research in Pueblo, Colorado, a major effort in fund-raising began. Although the Folklife Center received an allocation from the Library's Columbus Quincentenary special appropriation, which it used to conduct fieldwork, it was necessary to raise money for the exhibition from private sources. Renée Kortum, a professional fund-raiser from the Bancroft Group, Washington, D.C., was hired for the job, and

Women arrange dishes of food on a Saint Joseph's Day table at Saint Therese's Parish church, Pueblo, Colorado. (IAW-MW-B006-7) Photo by Myron Wood





San Pedro, California, fish company worker dumps mackerel into a box on a dock. The fish have just been taken off a fishing vessel operated by a local Italian-American crew. (IAW-KL-B033-28A) Photo by Ken Light

her early efforts were highlighted by a \$100,000 donation from Henry Salvatori of Los Angeles

The fund-raiser begins by asking the question "Who cares?" And the answer to that question, Kortum discovered, was the Italian-American community itself. Most of the private contributions came from Italian-American individuals and small companies, and raising it in that way was a good deal more complicated than by identifying and pursuing a single source.

Kortum enlisted the aid of Murphy Sabatino, a community leader in northern California, and Countess Angela Dandini, of Reno, Nevada, who formed fund-raising committees with her help. Both organized gatherings, endorsed the project, and urged their friends and associates to contribute. While the project never came to the attention of Frank Sinatra, one fund-raising event featured Sonny Bono, who was running for the U.S. Senate at the time and welcomed the opportunity to address the California voters.

Old Ties, New Attachments is an exhibition in three parts. The first part depicts a typical Italian-American home in the West, showing how living rooms, kitchens, and gardens display and help to sustain family history and values. "You have to understand the nature of Italian people," Jerome Lucido told fieldworker Russell Frank. "We are family-oriented people." The theme was sounded many times during field research: family business, family loyalty, family ties. A video terminal offers a digitized display of a family photograph album, with a voice-over narration by informants to explain the significance of particular images.

Included in the home section is a representation of a St. Joseph's Day Table, a spectacular presentation of flowers, candles, baked goods, fruits, vegetables, fish, omelettes, all prepared according to traditional specifications. The St. Joseph's Day Table originated in Sicily centuries ago when peasants prayed to St. Joseph, the island's patron saint, to end a period

of famine and suffering. When their prayers were answered, they offered up in thanksgiving their most prized possession—food. Today, in this country, practitioners ask for help most often to cure a family member's illness, promising to create a table in the home to show their gratitude. The community is invited to share in the feast, with certain persons invited to represent the Holy Family and other saints. Thus the tradition depicts the intersection of family, community, and personal faith.

The second part of the exhibition presents occupational history, highlighting the experiences of western Italian-American families involved in enterprises from ranches to restaurants, fruit stands to fishing vessels, steel mills to retail stores. The entrance to this section recreates Gus' Place, a Pueblo, Colorado, tavern located in what used to be one of the city's principal Italian neighborhoods. Video terminals placed here and in the third part will serve as "story stations," with interactive touch screens,

to tell immigrant stories of "the great journey" many family ancestors made to America, and of the discrimination many suffered in the work place.

The third part examines the transformation of Italians in the American West to Italian-Americans. Charlie Cuchiara of Pueblo, Colorado, reported that his father "wanted to become a citizen so bad he used to go to night school to study. I think the day he got his citizenship was one of the happiest days of his life." Within one generation of arriving here, Italian families were mingling new American ways with those they had known in the past. They blended worlds not only of food and occupational skills, but also of songs and stories. For example, the children of Giovanni and Maria Nicolavo—the Nicks of Price, Utah—grew up during the 1920s in a home that echoed with classical opera and Italian popular tunes, as well as American cowboy and romantic songs. "We were just absolutely cowboy crazy. That is, cowboy music," said Kerry Nick Fister.

Part three also looks at how Italian-Americans have helped shape the West and explores some of the many ways Italian heritage is expressed in the region today. That heritage provides a repertoire of cultural choices in day-to-day life—what to eat, how to dress, what language to speak, how to behave. For some, Italian heritage is ever-present; for others, it belongs to the past or is reserved for holidays, family gatherings, and special events like religious festivals. Some Italian-Americans imported local saints from their home places in Italy, and one display in the exhibition represents the festivals for Madonna del Lume and Santa Rosalia, two saints now honored in California.

About two hundred years ago, one story goes, several fishermen from Porticello, Italy, were caught in a storm. They followed a light that led to a cave, and there they found a bronze statue of the Madonna. They brought the statue to Porticello, but the next day it was found to have been mysteriously restored to the cave. The fishermen vowed to build a church in the Madonna's honor, and, eventually, a festival honoring Madonna del Lume grew from the story to become a central ingredient in the identity of the town. The festival was instituted in San Francisco in 1936 by Rosa Tarantino, with a procession from Saints Peter and Paul Church to



Helen D'Ambrosio (left) and Kerry Nick Fister, known as "Tex and Ted, the Singing Cowgirls," in 1931. "We were absolutely cowboy crazy," Kerry Fister told fieldworkers. Photo courtesy of Kerry Nick Fister

Fisherman's Wharf. Her daughter-in-law, Frances, has organized the festival since 1975 and continues the work "for the love of the Madonna," she says.

Santa Rosalia is the patron saint of Isola delle Femine, a small island off the coast of Sicily. She was a real person, living in the seventeenth century, who was canonized for her good works. A festival in her honor was begun in Monterey, California, in 1935, by four women who came

there with their husbands in the early days of the sardine fishing industry. Celebrations have waxed and waned with the growth and decline of fishing, but in 1973 Jerome Lucido organized the Italian Heritage Society for the purpose of ensuring that the festival would survive. Thus, three Italian traditions (for honoring St. Joseph, Madonna del Lume, and Santa Rosalia) have become ways of reinforcing family ties and sustaining Italian-American heritage.

Camila Bryce-Laporte, a program specialist at the Folklife Center, coordinated the effort to assemble artifacts for the exhibition. Nearly two hundred items borrowed from many of the three hundred or so informants from the project were selected: family portraits, linens, hard hats, soft hats, buttons, tools, the glass-encased model of a blast furnace, cowboy gear, union paraphernalia, and many others.

Al Gagliano, a retired deputy sheriff from Gilroy, California, carried a portable phone and rummaged through his things the day Bryce-Laporte called, and many of the items he touched, touched him. He is donating a pair of ravioli cutters, hand-made of wood by his carpenter father. "How do you feel when you use them," she asked. "I

feel like my father felt," he said, expressing the way familiar objects reinforce ties between generations.

Others grew more emotional at the thought of parting with treasured items (the exhibition will travel for two years). Frances Tarantino of San Francisco donated her mother's picture and her dowry linen, which has remained starched, folded, and packed away for years. "It's never been used," she said with a tremor in her voice.

But more than displaying the objects themselves, the folklife exhibition seeks to convey the meanings that surround and infuse them as a result of the people, places, and experiences with which they are connected. "Folklife is defined by context," says curator Sheldon Posen. "To an outsider, for example, the sing-

ing of a lullaby may have neither meaning nor appeal, but to the baby who hears it and the mother who sings it, the song can strike a chord that echoes through their lives. . . . The curator's job is to make the viewer understand and appreciate the artifact in the same way as the owner and the community." The St. Joseph's Day Table is an impressive sight to behold, but it also embodies all the complex meanings of family ties, faith, and heritage. The section of the exhibition on the steel industry is not about how steel is made, but about the steel workers' sense of community.

Posen's favorite artifact from the exhibition is the creased and faded snapshot Archie Royal (Achille Reali) sent to his girlfriend and future wife, Albina, a few years before they were married in 1920. She was helping her parents run a boardinghouse in Mount Harris, Colorado, and he met her when he worked in the coal mines there. The photo shows Archie dressed as a cowboy with hat and chaps, looking quite pleased with himself. To Posen it embodies all the pride and self-confidence with which Italians settled the West, and shows the good-humor with which Archie "bought into the whole western American cowboy scene." To Albina, of course, it embodies complex meanings, and is a family "treasure."

All the things on display are "treasures," but they are treasures within a particular community, Posen explained. The purpose of the exhibition is to knit together all the assembled artifacts of different kinds, from lariats to breads, in such a way that they tell a story, and that story is one of ties and attachments still felt by Italian-Americans living in the American West. If the effort is successful, the viewer will come to understand the power of folklife in the lives of Italian-Americans in the West—and in their own.

Old Ties, New Attachments: Italian-American Folklife in the West opens at the de Saisset Museum in Santa Clara, California, October 12, 1992, and travels to four other sites: The Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada (December 16, 1992, thru January 27, 1993); the Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles, California (April 6 thru June 13, 1993); The Museums at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, New York (June 19 thru September 18, 1994); and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (October 12 thru December 1994).



Colorado miner Archie Royal (Achille Reali) dressed as a cowboy in a photograph he had taken to send to his future wife, Albina, August 4, 1917. Photo courtesy of Albina and John Royal

# Maria Daltoso: "Walla Walla Sweet" Onion Farmer and Balladeer

by Jens Lund

In the Walla Walla Valley, on the Washington-Oregon state line, lives a small Italian-American community, whose origins date to the 1870s. They have nurtured a local horticulture industry, in recent years centered on the "Walla Walla sweet onion," a variety developed in the valley from Corsican stock brought there around 1900. The community is about evenly divided between northern Milanese, most with ties to the village of Lonate Pozzolo (now a Milan suburb), and those called "Calabrese," whose families came from Calabria and other places in the south of Italy.

The onions are raised today as a specialty crop. They are open-pollinated, with each farmer producing his own seed, and they are still harvested largely by hand, because their high moisture content renders them too fragile for machine harvesters. "Walla Walla sweets" are a gourmet slicing onion popular all over the West, and they are shipped as far as Alaska, the East Coast, and Japan.

The settlers' descendants still speak of the life their ancestors left behind in the old country. Most of the immigrants were neither peasants nor landowners there, but hired laborers. They lived in large families in Italy, some of the Northerners raising silkworms in their homes and working in the local silk industry. Ermanno Olmi's 1978 film *L'Alberi dei zoccoli* ("The Tree of Wooden Clogs") depicts a way of life in the late nineteenth-century Po Valley similar to that which some of today's old-timers heard about from their parents. Group singing during work had played a prominent part in the northern Italian laborer's life.

Retired Walla Walla immigrant farm wife Maria Daltoso remembers singing while working in the fields with her children as late as the 1950s. Signora Daltoso came to the United States in 1928 as the wife of Mario Daltoso, who had gone back to Italy from Walla Walla to find a bride. Both



Maria Daltoso listens to a recording of herself singing that researcher Jens Lund has just made. (IAW-JL-BWW029-28A) Photo by Jens Lund

were from Casale di Scodosia in Veneto, but his family had moved near to Milan during World War I. Signora Daltoso was the last of the original immigrants. She says that her children did not mind working with her in the onion fields, if she would sing her Italian songs with them:

*Especially when we topped onions. It's hard! And nobody wanted to come. It's early in the morning to late, about*

*three, four o'clock in the afternoon, in the onions. That's what we used to do. And the kids in the summer, they were home. You'd have to help and they'd come, yeah, "But you have to tell me a story. You have to sing." And they'd sing with me, and we'd go and they'd come behind me. They'd stay.*

Signora Daltoso remembers much of her repertoire of ballads, humorous



Below: A crate of Walla Walla, Washington's, famous sweet onions at Virgil Criscola's farm. Since their development in the 1920's, these onions have played an important role in the lives of Walla Walla's Italian-Americans. They are now considered a symbol of the Italian-American community. (IAW-JL-B-WW028-17) Photo by Jens Lund

and religious songs, and narrative poems, and performs for family and friends. Some of it, especially the poems, she learned as a child in school in Veneto. Some of it, she learned from her family. She still keeps a number of song sheets written down in longhand by her father, brought over from Italy. Her repertoire is a rich mixture of tragedy, piety, courtship, and some humor. One of her ballads, "Una bella e graziosa fanciulla" ("A Beautiful and Gracious Girl"), is a tragic tale of murder, family violence, and insanity.

Signora Daltoso sings the ballad quietly, very slowly, a cappella. One of her neighbors, a woman of the second generation, often stops by to visit and asks her to sing the song. "I don't know why, but that is the one she most wants to hear," she says. Other songs and poems in her repertoire include:

1. The poem "Fior' di spina" ("Flowers with thorns") tells of a little orphan girl, adopted by a rich woman and dressed in fine clothes, who still misses her mother.

2. "Mortante da guerra" ("Killed in the war"), tells of a poor girl who gathers firewood for her mother to sell, because her father was killed in World War I.

3. The ballad "La spazza camino" ("The chimney sweep") is about the wandering chimney sweeps, poor boys who travel around earning money for their families. When one of them returns with money for his mother, she has just died and been buried. The boys never have enough money, because they have to buy straw to sleep on.

4. The humorous song "Io son matematico," about a mountebank:

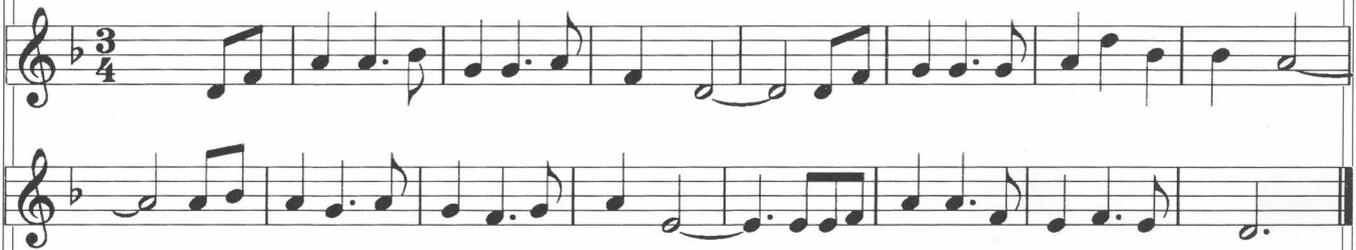
Io son matematico, son metafisico,  
son pure geologo, son pure astrologo,  
faccio il bobbano, ed anche il chimico,  
l'archeologo, ed il frenologo. . . .

I am a mathematician and a metaphysician  
Also a geologist and also an astrologer  
a botanist, and also a chemist,  
an archaeologist,  
also a phrenologist. . . .

5. A humorous poem "Il pollaio" ("The Chicken Coop"). A proud peacock declares himself king of the coop because of his beauty. The other poultry take him to task for not having good meat like the ducks and geese, and not crowing "ciricici" at dawn on a pretty day, saying, "When you can lay eggs every day, we will call you king!" The peacock then runs away in shame.

6. The song "La bella campagnola" ("The beautiful farmworker"), a young woman fieldhand goes to work each day and endures proposals sung to her by the boys who work alongside her. She no longer wishes to go, because she is afraid that if she marries one of them, she will be a farmworker all of her life. She wants to live in a proper house, sewing and caring for her family, not condemned to a lifetime of manual drudgery.

7. "Bimbo bello" tells of the love that grows between a little girl and her baby brother. (At first she asks why they have bought such an "old" baby, with no hair or teeth.)



Una bella e graziosa fanciulla,  
che di nascosto faceva l'amore  
sentirete quel vile genitore  
poverina che fine la fá.

La sua madre aveva fatto il pane  
da poco tempo lo aveva infornato  
disse ella, io vado al mercato  
quando e cotto lo devi levar.

Cosí rispose la giovanella:  
"Va pure e non dubitare,"  
e si mise cosí a lavorare  
intanto il suo damo arrivó.

Da molto tempo non si erano parlati  
si misero assieme a sedere  
dissero: "Che gioia, che piacere,"  
intanto il pane le venne a bruciar.

Quanto torna il padre dal lavoro  
sorprende la figlia in quell'ora,  
che non voleva facesse l'amore  
quel giovinotto via subito ando.

Allora il padre domanda alla figlia  
se dal forno il pane ha levato  
disse ella: "Non ci ho piú pensato  
forse troppo cotto sará."

Allora il padre andó ad aprire il forno  
vide il pane che sembrava carbone  
e li quel vile prese un forcone  
e la figlia volle infilar.

"Del caro padre perdona, perdona  
se ho sbagliato sará mal di poco,"  
ma li quel vile prese piú fuoco  
con un colpo la figlia infiló.

Quando torna la madre dal mercato  
di colei, della figlia dimanda  
ma nel vedere la scena tremenda  
impazzita la madre restó.

E quel vile fu subito arrestato  
parea che avesse il demonio  
nessuni per un matrimonio  
non avreberro mai fatto cosí.

A beautiful and gracious girl  
That hid her love for someone,  
Listen what a villain of a father  
Did to that poor girl.

Her mother made some bread  
And had put it in the oven.  
She said, "Now, I am going to the market  
When it is ready, you must take it out."

So said the girl, as she worked,  
"Go ahead and do not worry."  
And so in the meantime, her suitor  
Came to her, as was intended.

It had been a long time,  
Since they talked to each other,  
So they sat saying, "How joyous and pleasant,"  
As the bread was burning.

When the father came back home from work,  
He suddenly discovered  
That his daughter was in love.  
And the suitor ran away.

Then the father asked of his daughter  
If she had taken the bread out of the oven.  
She said, "I forgot all about it  
And perhaps it is overcooked."

The father then went to the oven  
And he found that the bread looked like charcoal,  
Then that villain took a pitchfork  
With which to stab his daughter.

"My dear father, pardon, please pardon  
I made only a little mistake."  
Then that villain became even more angry  
And with one blow, he then stabbed his daughter.

When her mother returned from the market,  
She asked about her daughter,  
Then she saw the terrible tragedy and  
It made her lose her mind.

The father was immediately arrested,  
Appearing possessed by a demon.  
How could anyone, just because they wanted to marry,  
Ever do such a thing to them?

8. "For Christmas, I want my mother" is about an orphan girl who cannot be comforted because she has lost her loving mother.

9. "Il pastorello" tells of a poor shepherd boy adopted by a king, who is miserable amidst the luxury of the court. He almost dies of heart-break, before his mother comes and fetches him back to a life poor in material goods but rich in love.

recitations is not suitable for large gatherings.

In the midst of the festivity, there is still discomfort among some older Italian-Americans, who suffered prejudice and stigmatization. During Prohibition, home wine makers were ostentatiously harassed by local authorities who looked the other way when non-Italians violated the law.

The rigid patriarchal structure brought over from Italy was ex-

agriculture, the daily interactions in which old-world folklore could be performed faded. But the traditions of Maria Daltoso are still very much alive in her circle of family, neighbors, and friends.

#### References

Locati, Joe J. *The Horticultural Heritage of Walla Walla County, 1818-1977: A Comprehensive Review of Fruit and Vegetable Growing, Shipping and Processing, Focused on Walla Walla County—With a Section on the Italian Heritage.* Walla Walla, Washington: privately printed, 1978.

Milani, Ernesto. "The Lonatese Experience in the Americas." In *Lonate Pozzolo—history, art, society*, translated by Ernesto Milani and Lorenza Garzoli Uchino, 19-34. Milan: Nicolini Editore, 1986. (English translation of "L'Esperienza lonatese nelle Americhe." In *Lonate Pozzolo—storia, arte, società*. Franco Bertolli, Elisa Bottini, and Rino Garatti, eds., 361-70. Milan: Nicolini Editore, 1985.)

Nicandri, David L. *Italians in Washington State: Emigration, 1853-1924.* Tacoma, Washington: Washington State American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission, 1978.



Dedication of the Christopher Columbus statue at Walla Walla, Washington, October 12, 1911. (copy photo IAW-JL-BWW010-19) Photo courtesy Doug Breen Saturno

Since the early 1980s, the Walla Walla Italian-American community has established an active program of ethnic celebrations led by the local Italian Heritage Association, founded in 1983. An annual parade on Columbus Day weekend proceeds to the statue of Columbus on the county court house lawn. (The statue, reputedly the oldest Columbus statue on the West Coast, was raised in 1911, paid for by subscription by the Italian immigrant farmers.)

A weekend-long celebration features dance, music, food, and performances by local groups and performers from Vancouver, British Columbia's large Italian community. Maria Daltoso does not perform at public events: her quiet and modest style of presenting songs and

travels is not suitable for large gatherings. Old-world Italian traditions were best conserved when hand-labor was a family affair, and Walla Walla's pioneer gardeners had many children. As family labor was replaced by mechanization and Mexicans, and subsequent generations sought jobs outside of

travels is not suitable for large gatherings. Old-world Italian traditions were best conserved when hand-labor was a family affair, and Walla Walla's pioneer gardeners had many children. As family labor was replaced by mechanization and Mexicans, and subsequent generations sought jobs outside of

*Jens Lund is a teacher in the Liberal Studies Program of the University of Washington. He was a fieldworker for the Folklife Center's Italian-Americans in the West Project. Thanks to Daniela Gbiselli Moats for Italian translations and to Julian Adamaitis for musical transcription.*

## New Publications for Fall 1992



Folklorist Nancy Nusz uses a 35-mm camera to photograph Apalachicola, Florida, oysterman Cletus Anderson culling his catch. (FMP86-BDT025-6) Photo by David A. Taylor

### **Documenting Maritime Folklife: An Introductory Guide**

By David A. Taylor

Soft cover, 79 pp., 40 illus. Includes bibliography.

S/N 030-000-00236-9 \$7.50, including postage and handling.

Available from New Orders, the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15250-7954. Make checks payable to the Superintendent of Documents.

*Documenting Maritime Folklife* provides an introduction to the

methods for identifying and documenting common maritime traditions. The guide is intended for nonprofessional researchers and community groups who wish to explore their own maritime heritage. But it will also be useful both to professionals in fields such as marine biology, fisheries extension, community planning, and education who are trying to understand cultural aspects of maritime activities, and to students and lay persons working on projects under the direction of professional folklorists, anthropologists, historians, preser-

vationists, cultural geographers, and other specialists in cultural studies.

In addition to examples of common maritime traditions and the methods that can be used to document them, *Documenting Maritime Folklife* includes suggestions for projects to disseminate collected information and appendixes containing examples of fieldnotes, a step-by-step description of the documentation of a small boat's hull shape, and sample forms for collecting and organizing information and obtaining informants' consent.



Crew members of a Seattle fishing boat arrange a seine net on the stern deck, as it comes off a power block. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer from *Documenting Maritime Folklife*

**Yiddish American Popular Songs  
1895-1950: A Catalog Based on  
the Lawrence Marwick Roster of  
Copyright Entries**

Compiled by Irene Heskes  
Hard cover, 527 pp., 13 illus. Includes  
bibliography.  
S/N 030-000-00242-3 \$44, including  
postage and handling.  
Available from New Orders, the Su-  
perintendent of Documents, P.O. Box  
371954, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
15250-7954. Make checks payable to  
the Superintendent of Documents.

When Peretz Jacob Koppel Sandler arrived from Eastern Europe to begin work as company musician at the Windsor Theater in the Bowery at the end of the nineteenth century, one of the songs he composed, with Yiddish lyrics, was "Eili, Eili," a creation that brought him neither wealth nor fame because he neglected to register it for copyright. The song's popularity and wide publication are evident in the sheet music editions listed and described in this volume. Many of the more than thirty-four hundred sheets listed are available today in the collections of the Library of Congress, because they were submitted for copyright registration. Many entries have extensive annotations, and this handsome and easy-to-use catalog includes an index to composers, arrangers, and lyricists, and an index to song titles.

**Old Ties, New Attachments: Ital-  
ian-American Folklife in the West**

Edited by David A. Taylor and John  
Alexander Williams  
Hard cover, 224 pp., 197 illus. \$29.95  
plus \$2.00 (book rate) or \$4.50 (first  
class) per book for postage and han-  
dling.  
Available from the American Folklife  
Center, Library of Congress, Wash-  
ington, D.C. 20540-8100. Make checks  
payable to the American Folklife  
Center.

Both region and ethnic heritage  
are elements of cultural diversity in  
America, and the Folklife Center's  
1989-90 field project Italian-Ameri-  
cans in the West enlivens the current  
discussion on the subject by examin-  
ing one ethnic group and one region  
that are not ordinarily conjoined in  
our thinking. (The Italian-Americans  
in the West Project is part of the  
Library of Congress program com-



The "parlor pianist" cover like this one appeared frequently in a variety of different colors for different songs issued by the Hebrew Publishing Company. The song "Wieber, macht mir far president" ("Women, make me President"), published here with an added comic duet, was an encore favorite of performer Bessie Thomashefsky. Entry 581 (2) in *Yiddish American Popular Songs*.

memorating the Columbus quin-  
centenary.)

American Folklife Center re-  
searchers conducted a two-year field  
study in five western states: Califor-  
nia, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and  
Washington. To what extent do eth-  
nic groups retain their own charac-  
teristic ways, the researchers wanted  
to know, and to what extent do they  
become "American"? To what extent  
do they shape the region in which  
they live, and to what extent are they  
shaped by it?

The book's twelve articles, writ-  
ten by the project's folklorists and  
historians, provide useful insights

and answers, as they recount immi-  
gration stories and describe traditions  
still practiced by many second- and  
third-generation Italian-Americans.  
Occupational traditions, such as agri-  
culture, wine-making, and mining;  
religious practices; and foodways  
are covered in the volume, which  
concludes with an article on how  
Columbus Day celebrations came to  
serve Italian-American ethnic pride.  
*Old Ties, New Attachments* is sure to  
be a treasured addition to the book-  
shelves of Italian-Americans and  
many others throughout the  
country.



Italian-Americans in the West fieldworker Paola Tavarelli (left) discusses the grape harvest with Jean Conrotto Burr of the A. Conrotto Winery, Gilroy, California, September 1989. (IAW-DT-B021-13) Photo by David A. Taylor



Zora Neale Hurston, 1938. (LC-USZ62-79898) Photo by Carl Van Vechten. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

**Zora Neale Hurston: Recordings, Manuscripts, and Ephemera in the Archive of Folk Culture and Other Divisions of the Library of Congress**

Compiled by Laura K. Crawley and Joseph C. Hickerson  
Pamphlet. 12 pp. Free from the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540-8100.

African-American author and collector of folklore Zora Neale Hurston is the subject of the latest finding aid

published by the American Folklife Center. Numbered 11 in the "LC Folk Archive Finding Aid" (LCFAFA) series, which was initiated in 1983, this pamphlet was compiled by Laura K. Crawley and Joseph C. Hickerson. Crawley, a doctoral student in the Institute for Women's Studies at Emory University, worked on the finding aid as part of a summer internship at the Folklife Center.

Generally, the "LCFAFA's" describe relevant portions of the Folk Archive's unpublished, multi-format,

ethnographic collections. Recently published finding aids have described the Archive's recorded holdings for Brazil, Kentucky, Maryland, Mexico, South Asia, South Carolina, and Virginia, as well as for street cries, radio-related materials, and the Robert W. Gordon collections. (A complete list of the more than two-hundred available finding and reference aids is available upon request.) The Hurston finding aid is unique in that it not only covers the Archive's holdings, but also those of the Library's Manuscript, Prints and Photographs, and Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound divisions.

Featured in the listing are a 1935 recording expedition to Georgia and Florida that Hurston made for the Archive with Alan Lomax and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle; nineteen songs performed by Hurston with commentary in a 1939 interview conducted by Herbert Halpert for the W.P.A.; six songs performed at the 1938 National Folk Festival by members of a choir led by Hurston from Rollins College; various correspondence among the Franz Boas and Margaret Mead papers in the Manuscript Division; folklore collectanea in the W.P.A. Federal Writers Project collection in the Manuscript Division; ethnographic film footage which Hurston shot, ca. 1927-29; an interview on a 1943 Mary Margaret McBride radio broadcast; a video and various reviews of Ruby Dee's stage production, "Zora is My Name!"; and a group of photographs of Hurston, primarily in the John and Alan Lomax collection in the Prints and Photographs Division.

---

EDITOR'S NOTES (from page 2)

file includes the new Zora Neale Hurston finding aid, the Brazil, Kentucky, and South Carolina finding aids, a bibliography on the folk revival, and the *American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1990: A Selected List*. All the files are in basic ascii format.

Those wishing to use Folklife Center publications online should FTP the Library's computer at "seq1.loc.gov" and sign on as "anonymous." First select the "PUB" or public directory. There you will find a subdirectory called "Library.of.Congress" (please

note the case usage, as the computer is case sensitive). Within this subdirectory there is a subdirectory called "about.LC" where an "amer.folklife.ctr" subdirectory may be found. In this subdirectory are the Center's brochure, and lists describing Center publications. In the "Library.of.Congress" subdirectory there is also a subdirectory called "research.guides." In this subdirectory there is another "amer.folklife.ctr" subdirectory where research publications may be found. This subdirectory will be expanded as machine readable files are made available.

---

**FOLKLINE**

For timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, a taped announcement is available around the clock, except during the hours of 9 A.M. until noon (eastern time) each Monday, when it is updated. Folkline is a joint project of the American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society. Dial:

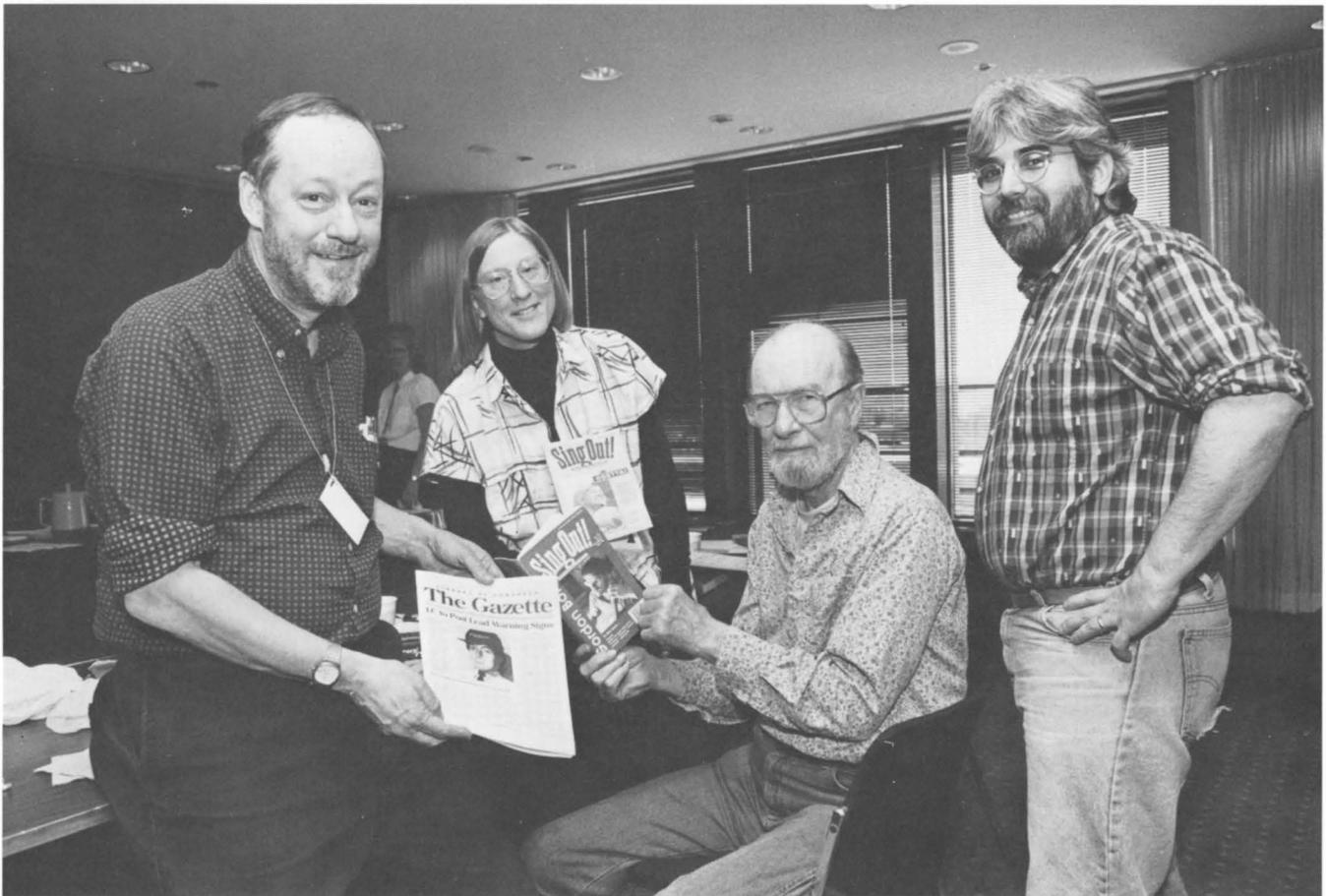
**202 707-2000**

## Sing Out Board Meets at the Library of Congress

On April 9-10, 1992, the American Folklife Center hosted a retreat for nine board and staff members of the Sing Out Corporation of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The group met to evaluate the past and future of *Sing Out!*, the pioneering folk music magazine established in New York City in 1950 by such folklorists, folksingers, and other contributors as: Howard Fast, Herbert Haufrecht, Lee Hayes, Waldemar Hille, Aaron Kramer, Ernie Lieberman, Alan Lomax, Walter Lowenfels, Paul Robeson, Earl

Robinson, Betty Sanders, Pete Seeger, and Irwin Silber.

Sing Out board member Pete Seeger, who is featured in the recent award-winning film about the Library, "Memory and Imagination," suggested the Library as a venue for this evaluative session, pointing out that he was inspired to pursue an interest in folk music while serving as a volunteer and assistant to Alan Lomax in the Library's Archive of American Folk Song in 1938.



Pictured at a brief recess during the Sing Out retreat are (left to right) Joseph C. Hickerson, head of acquisitions for the Folklife Center and member of the Sing Out advisory board; Diane Petro, the magazine's managing editor; Pete Seeger; and Mark Moss, the magazine's editor and head of the corporation. Photo by Reid Baker



Four generations of an Italian-American extended family in Pueblo, Colorado, with several persons holding cherished photographs of relatives. *Old Ties, New Attachments*, an exhibition based on the Folklife Center's Italian-Americans in the West Project, is described on page 3. (IAW-KL-B267-22) Photo by Ken Light

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540-8100

BULK RATE  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
PERMIT No. G-103

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300