

Folklife Today

September 2019: Chicago Ethnic Arts Project

Announcer: From the Library of Congress in Washington DC

John Fenn: Welcome to the *Folklife Today* podcast. I'm John Fenn, and I'm here with my colleague Stephen Winick.

Steve Winick: Hello!

John Fenn: We're both folklorists at the American Folklife Center here at the Library of Congress. I'm the head of Research and Programs, and Steve is the Center's writer and editor, as well as the creator of the *Folklife Today* blog.

Steve Winick: And today, we're joined by several guests from the AFC to talk about an online collection of ours, the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project collection. This was the first of AFC's historic field projects, and the collection was digitized and then made available on the Library of Congress's website just about two years ago. And a lot has been going on with it since, so, we've asked some of our colleagues to help us talk about it. Our first guest is our coordinator of Processing, Ann Hoog. Hi Ann!

Ann Hoog: Hello!

John Fenn: Ann, you know the collection quite well since you were involved in getting it ready for public online access. Where do we start?

Ann Hoog: Well, let me first say that I do know it fairly well, but it is such an immense resource that I am still learning new things about it! But a good place to start is with the type of collection that it is – meaning, how it came to be. As you can tell by its name, the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project collection, represents materials from a cultural research and documentation project, or survey, that was undertaken in 1977. As Steve said, it was the first of AFC's field survey projects after the center was formed in 1976. It was led by 14 folklorists who were directed by AFC, who fanned out across the city in a wide range of neighborhoods and suburban areas over the course of several months. They amassed more than 300 sound recordings, more than 14,000 photographs, 269 folders of manuscript materials, and 2 video recordings, as well as publications, ephemera,

administrative files, and, of course, field notes and reports ... totaling more than 20 linear feet.

John Fenn: That's a lot of documentation! What was the main purpose of the project?

Ann Hoog: Well, this project, along with many other survey projects the AFC undertook for the next 20 years, focused on documenting cultural communities and their traditions in a set geographic location. After Chicago, and similar projects focused on states like Rhode Island or regions like the Pinelands in New Jersey. It's a kind of spread-out exploration of who's out there and what they are doing, culturally speaking. Fieldworkers interview certain community members about their traditions, record performances and rehearsals and, of course, take loads of photographs and sometimes videos. The traditions include spiritual, musical, and dance traditions, spoken word performances like stories, and craftmaking and culinary traditions. The traditions are documented in places and spaces in which they develop and change, and the places where they are shared within communities and to wider publics.

Steve Winick: So we've mentioned before the 1977 Chicago Ethnic Arts Project was the first of a series of AFC-sponsored cultural surveys that were undertaken well into the 1990s, in a number of places in the U.S. So there's the South-Central Georgia Folklife Project collection, also from 1977; there's the Rhode Island Folklife Project and the Montana Folklife Survey collections, both from 1979; and there's the Lowell Folklife Project collection from 1987 through 1988, among others. And a good number of these survey collections have also been digitized and made available on the Library's website, loc.gov.

Ann Hoog: Right. All of these collections have something in common, which is that they were formed as a result of cultural survey work. But they also have different reasons for being initiated – that is, an array of goals of particular stakeholders who set the project in motion.

John Fenn: So, what sparked the Chicago project in 1977?

Ann Hoog: That's an interesting and important story. The Chicago Ethnic Arts survey was organized by the AFC, but it was co-sponsored *with* the Illinois Arts Council, which is now known as the Illinois Arts Council Agency. It's the funding body for supporting a wide range of arts organizations and activities across the state. In 1976, the Illinois Arts Council was interested in developing an ethnic arts

program – that is, a program dedicated to folk and traditional arts with set funds that could be used to support the communities, groups, and individuals who practice and express them. So they had some discussions with folklorist Bess Lomax Hawes, who was then Director of the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts. And they all decided that a crucial first step would be an ethnographic survey to – and I quote from the project’s final report – “determine the resources and needs of the greater Chicago area ethnic community.” In this way, the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project helped to create what has become the Illinois Arts Council Agency Ethnic and Folk Arts Program. It's a program that continues today through such funding opportunities as its Master/Apprentice Program, which is a common funding scheme of state folklife programs across the country.

John Fenn: Interesting, and it really speaks to the important uses of ethnographic survey projects in that they help to surface the rich diversity of cultural communities and their cultural practices and expressions in any given area to, in this case, state government structures of Illinois.

Steve Winick: Yes, the Chicago project was an opportunity to not only document the cultures of urban environments, a relatively new approach at the time, but also to show the benefits of grassroots ethnographic work and in that way demonstrate what professional folklorists can do. It really showed that these kinds of projects can help to increase the access cultural communities have to resources such as funding. And that's a basic need for supporting and sustaining cultural traditions. Figuring out what and whom to fund is a cornerstone of the nationwide infrastructure of state and regional folklife programs. And that infrastructure is still going strong today in many respects today, but it was just being built in the 1970s. I got my start in that network, as one of the State-supported folklorists in New Jersey, and all the directors of AFC were involved in that network of State and regional programs. And so was Michelle Stefano, who will be with us in this episode. So by demonstrating how successful such projects could be in establishing ongoing programs, the Chicago project really fed the professional development of folklife as a field.

John Fenn: Yeah, that's a great point Steve. Ann, what stands out to you about this collection?

Ann Hoog: Good question, John! One of the main strengths of the Chicago collection is its broad ethnographic scope in terms of the neighborhoods, and of course cultural communities and their cultural practices and traditions that are

represented in it. I mean, the fieldworkers really did spread themselves out, casting a wide net, so to speak. They really captured at least a few slices of Chicago's folklife at the time, including some of its many musical clubs, community heritage centers, religious spaces, storefronts, and other locations where traditional culture was found throughout the city.

John Fenn: And it's important to note that they didn't capture *everything*...

Ann Hoog: No, the collection is by no means comprehensive. But, as a *whole*, it provides significant insights into the multi-layered histories and cultures of Chicagoland in the late 1970s. It includes cultural, spiritual, and arts practices of roughly 25 cultural communities: Polish American parades, Greek American embroidery traditions, street murals and musical performances of Puerto Rican and Mexican American communities, to name only a few. Again, the collection's greatest strength is its wide-angle view into the region's cultural diversity at a time of great political, economic, and social change.

Steve Winick: Thanks, Ann! That really captures the collection in general, but I wonder if you'd share with us an item from the collection that sticks out for you?

Ann Hoog: Oh, that's a much more difficult question! I guess I'd have to say that Chicago's African American communities are the most represented communities in the collection, in terms of the numbers of photographs and interviews covering musical and other traditions, such as quilting, for instance. And I love the items relating to the city's jazz traditions...the numerous photos of street scenes and murals in the city's "Jazz Alley" at 50th Street and Langley Ave., on the South Side. The team documented great jazz clubs, such as the Checkerboard Lounge, where Muddy Waters played – whose son, Muddy Waters, Jr., I might add, was photographed and is also in the collection. Of course, I have to say that I love all the field notes that the fieldworkers wrote up; they provide such rich context for the photographs, recordings, and other materials in the collection.

John Fenn: True. But come on, Ann, you have to pick one!

Ann Hoog: Alright...I enjoy this interview with James Mack, a jazz musician, composer and educator, who was from Tuscaloosa, Alabama and moved to Chicago as young boy. He became Chicago's foremost arranger for RnB commercial hit records. In fact, as the folklorist Ralph Metcalf, Jr. pointed out in his field report: "a listing of the artists with whom [Mack] worked reads like a Who's Who of soul music." Here he is talking with Metcalf Jr about many topics

relating to his life as a Chicago artist and educator, but what I appreciate most is this excerpt, where he points out the importance of archival collections as resources for the city's musical traditions so that people can learn and know that history.

Ralph Metcalf, Jr.: Are there any other comments or perspectives you'd like to add about this Black music in Chicago, Jim?

James Mack: I think that the serious thing, that the most important thing that needs to be done, first, is really a definition of what that is. Some historical study, compilation of archives, interviews with figures who have taken part in the development. Even laymen who can give their reactions. I think the before any...I think the crying need is for any kind of archival collections. Studies, so that those who can subsequently...after all, before we talk in terms of developing something, we have to know what it is, where it is, where it's been going, what history indicates that its development might be leading to. I think there's a tremendous amount of ignorance, and even those of us who have been very very busy in the industry frequently don't really know that much about the guy who's in another aspect of it across the street. So I think the basic thing we need are archives and we need collections, of written material, of records. We need a place where scholars can get to these, 'cause there's a great deal of interest, and this interest grows. Remember, what was 25 years ago music of the streets and music of the corner is now high art, and WFMT regularly addresses itself to it, the kinds of things that I could only hear on my back porch as a kid.

Steve Winick: That was great, and really speaks to the work we are trying to do with the Chicago collection, as we'll hear in a little bit. So, Ann, we'll come back to you later to hear more about your work in preparing the collection for its digitization and online presentation, but let's bring in Carl Fleischhauer to learn more about what's in the collection. Carl is now retired but still here, at the American Folklife Center, as a volunteer. Welcome, Carl.

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, thanks, howdy, great to be here.

John Fenn: It's great to have you join us, Carl, especially since you were there, contributing to this project 42 years ago! Sorry to count up the years there, but from looking through the collection items online, I see that you were really *everywhere* in 1977! You photographed many churches and houses of worship of Southern Pentecostal communities in Chicago, as well as those of Greek, Russian, and Ukrainian Americans. You were in the homes of Norwegian American fiddlers

and needlework masters; you were in the German American cultural center documenting the “Transylvania Saxons” dance group, and at the Norwegian cultural center documenting the Danish singing group, “Harmonien.” You were in restaurants, bakeries, and the popular music stores of the Polish and also Balkan communities. I mean, I can’t even name it all!

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, you know the project was really broad. It may not have been as deep as we would sometimes wish. But it really did have a series of short visits with a huge array of people and communities. And I would say that the project's successful organization is a real testimony to the director, my then-Folklife Center colleague Elena Bradunas, a Lithuanian American and Chicagoan with a real feel for ethnic community life. Jonas Dovydenas and I were two participants who focused on media documentation -- sound recording and still photography -- in support of the professional folklorists who were central to field visits.

Steve Winick: So, what would be an example that sticks out for you?

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, one that makes a good "for instance" is a session I had with John Katsikas, a Greek American Santouri player. Here I was supporting the folklorist Peter Bartis. Peter was in Chicago in April 1977 but couldn't manage to visit some of the people he learned about. So in June, I followed up on Peter's arrangements and went out to the Katsikas home in suburban Oak Park. The santouri is a stringed instrument in the hammer dulcimer family, and Mr. Katsikas had played it since he was 7 years old as part of an orchestral group in the Greek Town neighborhood on the west side of Chicago, where he was born and raised. I set up the recording equipment in the living room and you can see in the photographs that Mr Katsikas donned a tuxedo for the performance. He had also written out a very long list that represented his repertory, and I photographed that during my visit as well.

Steve Winick: Yes, so let's just pause to say that the Chicago project was how Peter Bartis came to work at AFC, and he worked here literally for the rest of his life, and we all miss him! In Peter’s field notes, he writes that at the time Mr. Katsikas knew 2,000 traditional Greek songs and had been playing for 45 years. Let’s listen to an excerpt from your interview with him.

Carl Fleischhauer: Sure. Here's a segment from the very beginning of the recording, when I was asking him how he learned Greek traditional music, and particularly the santouri:

John Katsikas: Well, I learned it from my father when I was 7 years old, in 1931.

Carl Fleischhauer: And was this in Greece?

John Katsikas: No, right here in Chicago. Matter of fact, my father was an accomplished musician. He's still alive now, living in Greece on his retirement pension. And I was the eldest born, so he decided to make me a santouri player since he couldn't find a decent santouri player in the city of Chicago! And he was determined to make me learn it correctly, the way he thought it should be taught.

Carl Fleischhauer: I there a lot of variety of styles and stuff?

John Katsikas: There's a great variety because our Greek music has got about 50 different varieties and in Chicago we were obligated...being Yanks first of all, we were looked down upon as non-Greeks by many Greeks from Greece. So secondly, in the cabaret circuit where you can make a decent living...not even a decent living, but just about scratch out a living...you had to be able to play every type of different area music of the Greek people. In other words, the Peloponnesian peninsula for instance has a certain style of its own other than the northern peninsula, called rumedí. Now the islanders, on the other hand, have a different beat altogether, and the Turkish mainlanders have a different beat, while the people on the Adriatic near Italy have a different type of music. Now in order for us to make a living, we worked in cabarets, and coffee houses at night. And in order to get a buck out of somebody who's listening to the music, we had to play what HE wanted to hear. So we were obligated in the States here to learn more about Greek music than the average Greek knows in Greece himself. And most of the young ones coming today, who come to this country, are not as well versed in the variety of Greek music as I am. Of course, through my father's auspices and playing with the orchestra for many year, since I've been playing since 1931, I've picked up every style of music, every kind.

Carl Fleischhauer: And here is John Katsikas playing a piece known as a "Bacchanal Song," which he first describes:

John Katsikas: On the other hand, you've got a real relaxed type of music, that you get mostly in the old tavernas, which dates back to the time of Bacchus, the god Bacchus, the god of wine. And they even call it a bacchaniotiko [phonetic]. And that's strictly for a guy sitting in a...who's got a lot of wine in him, and he just wants to chant, wants to hear himself chant away. And we just play a style where all he does is go into a long chant on what he's singing.

[Music on santouri]

Steve Winick: Again, that was John Katsikas playing a Bacchanal song, and I can relate since my name means wine-person, and actually in Grad School my nickname was Bacchus!

John Fenn: Yeah, we're suddenly in the mood for wine here in the studio. But, Carl, one thing I've been curious about is that the project was facilitated by a team – over a dozen fieldworkers. But how did that work – how was it organized and run on the ground?

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, even a little more background. After the Illinois Arts Council and the Folklife Center agreed to proceed, project director Elena Bradunas pored over the 1970 Chicago census. Now this is a bit tricky – it's as much an art as a science – but Elena wanted to come to the best possible sense of the city's ethnic and cultural groups. The resulting working list of groups was then matched up with folklorists whose expertise made them a good fit for this fieldwork. For example, Jens Lund is an expert in Scandinavian American cultures, and we were lucky to engage him to discover and document the expressive culture of Chicago's Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, and even Icelandic American communities.

Steve Winick: Let's take a moment to listen to Jens interviewing Mr. Paul Svejnbjorn Johnson, who served as the consul of Iceland, about food traditions of the Icelandic American community. He was interviewed along with his wife at their home in Evanston, just up from the city on Lake Michigan:

Jens Lund: what about some of the home customs, with regards to, oh, food, with regards to decorating the interiors of one's house, sewing, any of those kinds of things. To what extent have they survived in the Chicago area among Icelanders or Icelandic Americans?

Paul Svejnbjorn Johnson: I would say to a marked...to a noticeable degree.

Jens Lund: I see. What are some of the things that are typically Icelandic, that can be found in Chicago?

Mrs. Johnson: What do you mean, in regards to...

Jens Lund: well, let's take food.

Mrs. Johnson: I think Icelandic women here in Chicago cook very much Icelandic food, along with American steak and barbecue. I think we use a lot of boiled potatoes and try to have fish at least once a week. Scandinavian type food.

Jens Lund: I see. Is there a favorite kind of fish that's particularly Icelandic?

Mrs. Johnson: The haddock. Haddock and cod, that you can buy here frozen.

Jens Lund: what are they called in Icelandic?

Mrs. Johnson: Haddock is called *ýsa*, and cod is called *þorskur*

Jens Lund: I see!

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, you know Jens covered a lot of ground in his 14 days of fieldwork in the city.

John Fenn: Yes, there is an impressive list of sites attached to his name throughout the project. There's never enough time, is there...

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, as I said a moment ago, the survey was "broad but not deep." Depending on their availability, the folklorists were contracted for something like 1- to 3-week periods. What they accomplished within that constraint is nothing short of remarkable. But it's also worth noting that the folklorist Greta Swenson served as field director in Chicago, working closely with Elena Bradunas who (like me) went back and forth from Washington. In addition, the media specialist, Jonas Dovydenas, lived in Chicago, and he and Greta were a terrific source of continuity during that whole spring and summer of 1977. It's also the case that several of folklorists had their own networks of contacts that they could rely upon, and really hit the ground running.

John Fenn: I've also seen some photographs that you took of "post fieldwork workshops," such as within the Italian American and Irish American communities, for example. What were those about?

Carl Fleischhauer: In the fall of 1977, after the fieldwork was all done, the project went a step further in convening a series of meetings with representatives of 8 of the 25 or so ethnic groups documented. These meetings served to assess from their perspectives how the fieldwork went, and also to foster discussions on potential, future activities centered on their cultures and traditions. These meetings were hosted by our partner the Illinois Arts Council and certainly aligned with the Council's interests in learning if a dedicated Ethnic and Folk Arts program ought

to be established. In general, the participants were enthusiastic about the project, and it was our hope that they would continue to document their own traditions.

Steve Winick: So Carl, I know that since the collection was put online in 2016, you have been busy with updating some of the information about addresses where photos were taken and where recordings took place, and other details that fall into one of our favorite categories, which is “metadata.” Could you share with us what you’ve been up to in that regard?

Carl Fleischhauer: Yeah, I'll be happy to! This concerns what we call the "about" information for collection items and -- here's a general truth about archiving -- enhanced information often emerges incrementally over time and in multiple places. This podcast is an example of an enhancement "today" and contributes to increased knowledge about the materials. But the example of the santouri player we heard earlier, John Katsikas, gives us a dandy instance of information enhancement "yesterday." During the fall and winter of 1977, the Folklife Center engaged the ethnomusicologist, Nathan Pearson (the author of a book on Kansas City jazz . . . and we call him "Bill"), to give a careful listen to all of the Chicago project music recordings. Bill typed up notes that the Center scanned as part of the collection. So when you are on the web page for the Katsikas recording, and you look at the "related object" links, one of them takes you to Bill Pearson's detailed notes. Regarding my own enhancements of the "about" information in the online collections during 2018, this entailed sorting out what had been typed or handwritten on paper in 1977 -- doing a bit of verification using today's search engines and online maps -- and keyboarding my findings into those about texts that are presented to researchers on the web. And I'm pleased to see that my efforts have indeed made the online offering more searchable and navigable for end-users

John Fenn: I can see how that could be both super important and never-ending! So, thank you for all the work you're doing on the collection for joining us, Carl, and thanks for helping us understand this a little bit more.

Carl Fleischhauer: Thanks for having me!

John Fenn: Let's turn back to Ann now to hear about the behind the scenes of digitizing and presenting a collection online like this once the project is over and the items processed and organized. Remember, just in terms of photographs alone, there are over 14,000...

Steve Winick: Yeah, so how does it all eventually get ready to be accessed online? Take us a little bit through that digitization and online presentation process, Ann.

Ann Hoog: So the first step was identifying which materials would get digitized. We decided to focus on the materials created by the fieldworkers themselves ... audio recordings, photographs, field notes, logs, and reports. The next phase was to retrieve the materials from the stacks and write instructions to the vendor for digitization specs, digital id numbers, and rehousing. There were a lot of moving parts with three different vendors and hundreds of thousands of unique collection items going in and out the door for a couple years. Getting the items digitized is only one piece of the puzzle though... for online presentation you also need to describe the materials. For this, we hired a different vendor to take the original typed log sheets and enter that data into a spreadsheet. Then our catalogers took that spreadsheet and massaged the data to make it more digestible for researchers. It takes a ton of time and resources, but the end result is so incredibly satisfying knowing that you're able to share this documentation with the rest of the world ... and often with the individuals and families of those represented in the collection!

Steve Winick: So, now that the collection is accessible from across the world, what more can we do?

Ann Hoog: Well, breathing life into archival collections, especially those reflecting living cultural traditions, is certainly boosted through their digitization and online availability. When they can be looked at and listened to from anywhere in the world, opportunities exist for connections to be made and knowledge to be produced that, perhaps, would not if such collections were only cared for in Washington, DC. With that said, though, we have been grappling with some questions concerning the limits of online accessibility – that is, what can we do to make these materials more discoverable and more connected to the communities from which the original documentation sprang? What does that city block look like now as compared to 1977? Are any of those restaurants and grocery stores still around? What about all those social and arts organizations that were documented ... how have they been preserved or transformed into something new?

John Fenn: Those are all key questions that underline a guiding principle for us here, at the American Folklife Center, in all the work that we do, and that's trying to make these connections back to communities. And I know we've been looking at the online Chicago collection as a tool – or rather, a pilot project – for exploring ways in which we can enhance engagement, and help people actually use our

online survey collections, especially within source communities. After all, the Chicago project, and the others that Steve mentioned earlier, are not *that* old – so, there’s bound to be real, direct connections between people living in Chicago today and the materials in the collection. On that note, let’s bring in our friend and colleague Michelle Stefano, another American Folklife Center folklorist who has been busy fostering such connections in Chicagoland. Welcome, Michelle!

Ann Hoog: Wait a minute – not so fast, John! Before I go, I want to hear what one of your favorite collection items is!

Steve Winick: I second that!

John Fenn: Ah, fair enough. Well, in general, I really like the street murals photographed during the project – mainly from African American and Mexican American communities, such as in the Little Village neighborhood, which was predominantly Mexican American at the time. Some were artistic expressions of cultural identity and unity in raising awareness of broader economic, political, and social issues facing communities in the city at the time. But, like I was saying, I get pretty excited about making connections between the collections and people, cultural organizations, and arts activities in Chicago today. So, the collection has an interview with the Chicago-based, Puerto Rican artist and muralist, Gamaliel “Bobby” Ramírez, who sadly passed away recently. In the mid-1970s, he founded an organization called El Taller, or “The Workshop” in Spanish, which was an artistic collective for young Latinx community members. El Taller provided folks with a creative outlet for expressing themselves through a range of arts practices, like mural painting, poetry, and theater. Here’s an excerpt from an interview Bobby Ramirez did with fieldworker Phillip George, where he describes the reasons for founding El Taller:

Gamaliel “Bobby” Ramírez: We have a collective. We have a board, we have a collective, and we have a membership. Right now in the collective there's five of us: Enrique Ruiz, Oscar Martinez, Alia Hernandez, me, and Ana Castillo. And the whole thing started—I'm answering your questions in order! The whole thing started when we felt there was a need for Latinos to get into the arts and into the culture. And we felt that there was Latinos in the community and in the neighborhoods and the city, that were into the arts and into doing things creative—there was a lot of creative activity going on, but it was like...it wasn't like...there was no way to channel it. So, there was a group of us working in this neighborhood, and we thought we should start an organization that would develop

that! Not only that, but from workshops that we were holding in the streets, and in vacant apartments, and all kinds of different places, we started realizing that the kids in the street, and developing them...we got into finding talented kids and developing them. We started to realize that a lot of them were like gang members and stuff like that. So we felt that in order to push the arts in the community we had to get more into the community...in other words, we had to relate to all aspects of the community. I worked with the Latin Eagles, and David worked with the Latin Kings, and we developed some workshops. This was about...David Hernandez, he's a poet...and he had some poetry workshops with the Kings, and I had some mural workshops with the Eagles, this was about three or four years ago, five years ago....

John Fenn: And so, thanks to some of the work Michelle has been doing in Chicago, we have learned about what Bobby Ramirez did later in his life. I'll let Michelle continue with that – welcome, Michelle.

Michelle Stefano: Hi, everyone! Yeah, so I have been fortunate to visit Chicago for over a year now. As John noted, I've been working to raise awareness of our online Chicago collection at the source community level and foster relationships with community-based organizations, as well as larger cultural institutions. And on one trip, I was able to meet with the Director of the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, located in the city's Hermosa neighborhood. The center focuses mainly on safeguarding and promoting Puerto Rican arts and culture, and the Director – Omar Torres – told me that Bobby Ramirez had been working with the center up until his death. Omar was so happy to find our interview with Ramirez and, of course, he shared just how accomplished and loved Ramirez was in Chicago and in Puerto Rico as an artist. And for me, it was important to see that these connections – however small – can be made with the collection, and that there must be great potential to make many more. It was also eye-opening to realize that the rich resources in the collection are really not that well known.

Steve Winick: So, let's back up a bit, Michelle. Tell us a bit about The American Folklife Center's overall aims in fostering these relationships in Chicago and what you've been up to.

Michelle Stefano: Sure. Well, we're guided by the idea that the collection is a rich resource for anyone now that it's accessible online. And more importantly, that it can be particularly important and meaningful for, again, source communities and their cultural organizations, as well as larger ones catering to wider publics in

Chicago. So, a good place to start is with a big meeting we convened in September 2018 at the Chicago Public Library.

John Fenn: Yes, the Chicago Ethnic Arts Collection Gathering.

Michelle Stefano: Right. Thanks to the *crucial* help of Chicago-based folklorists Sue Eleuterio and Lisa Rathje, we were able to convene representatives from a dozen, key stakeholder organizations – such as of course the Chicago Public Library, as well as the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Illinois Humanities, the Chicago Collections Consortium, the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, the longstanding Old Town School of Folk Music, and the Chicago Cultural Alliance, among others.

Steve Winick: That does sound like a big meeting...

Michelle Stefano: Yeah, it was. And while there were a range of goals, AFC wanted to do two things. First, we wanted to let these key representatives know about the collection, help them to engage with it, navigate through it to foster their own discoveries of materials and items that may be meaningful and useful to them and their organizational missions. Second, we wanted to learn about their needs in terms of cultural initiatives, projects, and public programming to see if our collection (and the AFC in general) can help to address them, or spark new programming that we can work on together. After all, these photographs and audio recordings and all sorts of other materials are digitized and downloadable and free to use by communities in exhibitions, at events, online in social media, etc. We want to encourage more dynamic and meaningful engagement with online archival collections of the Library and the AFC, and what better place to start than with the Chicago collection.

John Fenn: Yeah, Chicago is a remarkable city and there are so many cultural and arts organizations there doing such important work, especially at that community-based level.

Michelle Stefano: Absolutely. I am continually amazed by the number of community-run museums and cultural centers – older and newer – throughout the city, such as the Swedish American Museum in Andersonville, the National Hellenic Museum in Greektown, and the Haitian American Museum in Uptown, to name just three.

Steve Winick: And I know that one thing that you've learned are that a lot of these smaller cultural museums and centers are off the "beaten tourist track" – that is, in neighborhoods outside the core touristy area of Chicago's Loop.

Michelle Stefano: Yes, so few visitors to Chicago and – dare I say – maybe even some of the city's own residents know about these many cultural heritage organizations, where cultural communities are telling their own stories in their own words – and often for decades. So, one very important organization that we've been lucky to work with is the Chicago Cultural Alliance, which serves as a consortium of 40 Chicago-area cultural heritage museums, centers and historical societies. And I have been lucky to present about our collection at a couple of Alliance gatherings so that I can meet face to face with the directors, managers, curators, and other specialists at a good number of these smaller cultural organizations, such as the chance I had to meet with Omar Torres of the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center.

John Fenn: And so you've been developing these relationships to see how the AFC and particularly the Chicago collection can help them with their institutional and programming needs.

Michelle Stefano: Exactly, and this is something that is very much continuing at the moment. Since it's exploratory, it takes time. I know several organizations have already been featuring collection items on their social media, which is a key tool for them to publicly promote their organizations, of course. But I have also been meeting with staff at the truly inspiring Chicago History Museum. The Museum has rich resources in its own collections on Chicago's cultural history, as well as a tradition of partnering with smaller Chicago-based organizations on exhibitions and other programs. Many of the smaller organizations are within the Chicago Cultural Alliance. And, of course, the Chicago Public Library is an important collaborator in this exploration – at the end of this year, I will be presenting at one of their gatherings for librarians from their many branches. This is important for us as the Chicago collection is all about that neighborhood-level view into the city, which strongly resonates with the work that library branches throughout the city do at their local community level.

John Fenn: That's an important avenue for collaboration. And at the American Folklife Center, we've also been working on ways to make the Chicago collection more easily discoverable, as Carl spoke of earlier. Another way is that we will

soon be publishing a StoryMap based on the collection, and this is really thanks to the hard work of our recent Bartis Summer Intern, Edward Wang.

Steve Winick: Yes, we should say that the Bartis summer internships were founded with help from our dear friend, the late Peter Bartis, who was one of the fieldworkers in Chicago. And the first and second round of interns have worked on this podcast, so we thank Peter in our hearts every day. So John, explain Ed's work on the StoryMap a little.

John Fenn: Well, StoryMaps are these map-based, multi-media ways to tell a story online that really work well with the kinds of collections the Library has. For example, the Chicago StoryMap that we're working on tells a story about several of the community-based cultural organizations, museums, and centers that are represented in the collection – such as the American Indian Center and the Swedish American Museum. As you scroll through the online StoryMap, you will be able to see on a literal map where these were all located in 1977 at the time they were documented. And in some cases, these centers are still at the same address! Then as you continue to scroll, you get to learn about each of them through text and photos and even through listening to interview and other recording excerpts. It's a great way to bring together these digitized collection items into a larger story.

Michelle Stefano: And they help to provide entryways into the online collection, as there are innumerable stories that can be told about the collection, such as Musical Traditions in 1977 Chicago, or a more narrow story that focuses just on 1 festivals and parades, as represented in the collection.

Steve Winick: So, Michelle – it sounds like you've gotten to know the collection well. What's a favorite item of yours?

Michelle Stefano: OK. I prepared myself for this question, and I'm going to cheat! I have to say that one of my favorite *aspects* of the collection is that so many of these community and neighborhood-based cultural heritage centers and museums were documented in 1977 and are, therefore, greatly reflected in the collection.

John Fenn: Okay, that's a sneaky approach to the question!

Steve Winick: Yeah, "aspect?"

Michelle Stefano: Well, hold on; hear me out! A good number of these centers and museums were founded around the time of the 1977 survey project, or were established within a decade or so before it. So, they were at the time relatively new

and, significantly, many of their founders and other key staff members and community leaders were therefore interviewed by the AFC fieldworkers, such as we heard with Bobby Ramirez and the El Taller artistic collective. In addition, we have an interview with Kurt Mathiasson, founder and director of the Swedish American Museum; there's another interview with the Director – Alford Waters – of the American Indian Center, which is the first urban American Indian Center in the U.S., established in 1953, among many others.

John Fenn: Well, pick one for us to hear a little of...

Michelle Stefano: OK. How about we hear from the late artist and art historian Dr. Margaret Burroughs, the founder of the Du Sable Museum of African American History? The Museum was founded by Burroughs, with her husband, in 1961. Since the early 1970s, it is located right next to the University of Chicago in the Hyde Park neighborhood on the city's Southside. I'll let Dr. Burroughs tell us more about her museum; here she is talking with Beverly Robinson about its beginnings:

Beverly Robinson: Well, then the way that...how long has the museum been here...not here but

Dr. Margaret Burroughs: We opened in 1961; we incorporated in 1961. We are the oldest of all the Black museums. Now there are a lot of them that are coming up and making a lot more noise. We are the indigenous Black museum; the community started this! We were not backed by the Smithsonian...and I'm talking about Anacostia...you know, we're not an outpost. We're not an outpost. The Studio Museum in Harlem, I call that sort of an outpost. You put something in the Black community for them, and the expenses are paid by the city or by the Smithsonian. We pay our...we raised our money ourselves! In that case, we are unique. And it's part of the influence of this little institution, we started in 1961. In my living room, as you will read in the literature.

Beverly Robinson: And I saw your house yesterday!

Dr. Margaret Burroughs: in 1961, the libraries had very little and were not interested in anything about Black history. And we had one library, the George Cleveland Hall Library, where a librarian who was very much interested in Black history, had through the years amassed together a special collection which would fit into a room about from here to there. And many of us who were younger people coming up, trying to discover something about our history and all, we would go to Hall branch library. And if you were very very good, and very very nice, and very

polite, Ms. Harsh would let you in that private room where all of those books were. And you she'd let you sit there, and you could just read Langston Hughes and everybody! And so this is as teenagers, this is what I...we strived to do! You know, Gwendolyn Brooks went there! No doubt she read some of her first black poetry right in there. I did, and I always felt very very good when Ms. Harsh, who was a very dignified lady, a maiden lady...

Michelle Stefano: It really goes to show you that the collection comprises such a wide scope of topics relating to such important moments in the city's history, some more known than others, and how a folklife survey such as this captured so many of them, you know?

John Fenn: Indeed. I'm really excited to see where this project is going, Michelle, and to see how collection items can be made more meaningful and beneficial and resonant to people in Chicago and beyond. So, thanks for joining us. Now, before we end, I have to ask Steve what his favorite item from the collection is!

Steve Winick: I thought you'd never ask! So, one of the ways I got into being a folklorist was through traditional Irish music, in my original home town of New York. And in my 20s I moved to Philadelphia for graduate school, and my first job in folklore, really, was as a teaching assistant for Dr. Mick Moloney. And by that time the Chicago project was over, but Mick had been the main Irish community fieldworker on the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project, so he was telling me all about the project back in 1990 or so. And at the same time I was a journalist, writing about Irish music for various publications, and I came to know people like Mick, and like the great fiddler Liz Carroll, whom Mick recorded for the project. Liz has since then been a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship, as indeed was Mick a few years back. And Liz Carroll was also the performer at the very first Homegrown concert of our 2005 season, which means it was the first one I worked on at the American Folklife Center. So Liz is very special to me, and she was a contender for my favorite recording in the collection. In the end, I put Liz's recordings and Mick Moloney's Botkin lecture up at the blog, at blogs.loc.gov/folklife. And I decided to select for this podcast a recording that's a little more unusual. This comes from yet another Irish American National Heritage Fellowship recipient in the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project collection.

John Fenn: wow, this is suspenseful! Who could it be?

Steve Winick: Well, one of the major phenomena to arise from the Irish music and Dance scene nationwide was Riverdance in 1994. The original lead dancer of

Riverdance, Michael Flatley, then left to choreograph and perform in Lord of the Dance, Feet of Flames, and Celtic Tiger. Michael's parents were immigrants from Ireland, but he himself was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. And like a lot of Irish dancers Michael's also a musician, and in 1977 he was at the top of his game as a flute player. Mick Moloney recorded Michael Flatley for the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project, playing in an Irish music competition. So to put this in perspective, since these recordings were made Michael Flatley's shows have played to more than 60 million people in 60 countries, which is an astonishing level of success for a South Side ethnic artist grounded in folk arts. He's almost certainly the most successful artist in material terms that AFC documented in the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project collection. So let's hear some of his flute playing!

[Flute music: jig].

Steve Winick: Once again, that was Michael Flatley on flute, here on the Folklife Today podcast. Now, there are so many great recordings in the collection that John and I are going pick another one. So John, do you have another one?

John Fenn: Yes I do. I'm going to go with Ms. Edith Wilson. She was a celebrated blues and jazz singer, born in Kentucky but moved to Chicago when she was young. She performed in New York and elsewhere, too. Ms. Wilson was also an actress and portrayed Kingfish's mother in the popular "Amos & Andy" radio show. Thanks to fieldworker Beverly Robinson's interviews with her, we learn that when she was 13 years old, she used to sneak out at night to sing. These were her first times singing in public, which got her into big trouble with her mother.

Steve Winick: I remember that! It's a funny story. Here's an excerpt of Ms. Wilson performing "Woke Up This Morning With Blues All Around My Bed" at the "Jazz at Noon" concert series held in the Marina Towers, right on the Chicago River in the Loop, on May 20th, 1977:

Edith Wilson:

Woke up this morning with the blues all 'round my bed
Woke up this morning with the blues all 'round my bed
Didn't have nobody to hold my achin' head

Baby baby baby, where'd you go last night?
Tell me Daddy, where did you go last night?
You come in this morning, your clothes weren't fittin' you right!

If you see me coming, hoist your window high
If you see me coming, hoist your window high
If you see me leaving, hang your poor head and cry

John Fenn: once again, that was Ms. Edith Wilson recorded in 1977.

Steve Winick: And that leaves us with room for one more, as they say in the old spooky legend. But first, thank yous are in order. To our guests, Ann Hoog, Carl Fleischhauer, and especially Michelle Stefano, who drafted this episode. To all the fieldworkers on the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project collection, and all the people they documented...they are too numerous to mention by name.

John Fenn: And we should also thank Jon Gold, our engineer, and Mike Turpin and Jay Kinloch of the Music Division for help with the studio. And colleagues throughout the Library with helping us deploy this podcast once it's made. And of course, thank you Steve, and also congratulations because this is the last episode of the first season of our podcast!

Steve Winick: Well Thanks! And it has been quite a journey to figure out how to do this with you and Jon Gold and the whole team here at the Library of Congress. So it's been a lot of fun, and we're going to continue next season as well! Right now, I should say thanks to all our listeners, and to take us out, I say we head back down to the South Side and visit Josephine's Lounge on the night of May 21st, 1977, where Magic Slim and the Teardrops are playing "Laundromat Blues:"

John Fenn: Sounds perfect. Let's go!

Magic Slim:

You been meetin' your man, baby down at the local laundromat
You been meetin' your man, baby down at the local laundromat
I've done got wise, and daddy don't go for that

Early every mornin', I watch you grab your old blouse or two
Yeah, early every mornin' you grab your old blouse or two
Oh, you know you go down to the laundry where a dirty ol' man is waitin' on you

[Guitar Solo]

Early every mornin' oh you grab your old blouse or two
Yeah, early every mornin' you grab your old blouse or two
Oh, you go down to the laundry where your man is waitin' on you

You don't know it, baby, but things look bad for you
You don't know it, baby, but things look bad for you
Next time you go to the laundry...God damn it, I'll be there too!

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