

*Festival of
American
Folklife 1980*

*Smithsonian Institution
National Park Service*



Cover Note

On the covers are examples of Hmong textile work called *pa ndao* or "flower cloth." The Hmong began emigrating from China to the highland areas of Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand about 150 years ago. References have been found in Chinese texts dating back almost 2,000 years to the distinctive Hmong costume and its ornamentation. Batik, appliqué, reverse appliqué, and embroidery are used by Hmong to decorate their costumes, bed coverings, cloth infant carriers, and squares used in the burial ritual. The center of the piece on the back cover, made by Chang Xiong, is part of a baby carrier. The red, white and blue of the piece on the front, made by May Da Xiong, reflects an adaptation to the Hmong's new home in America. Both pieces courtesy of the Southeast Asia Co-Operative, Inc., Providence, R.I. Hmong textiles will be on sale with other Southeast Asian crafts at the Festival of American Folklife.

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October 8-13

A Dedication

In the course of preparing for the 1980 Festival, a close colleague, friend, and member of the staff who had worked with the Festival since 1971, was fatally injured in an automobile accident. With sorrow at her loss, we have dedicated this program book and the closing concert on the festival grounds, October 13th, to Abby Watkins Bernon, whose contributions, like her friendship, were rich, creative, and highly valued.

This year is the first in our nation's history in which the number of foreign tourists visiting the U.S. exceeds the number of Americans traveling abroad. This fact gives pause for thought to those of us concerned with conserving our nation's cultural heritage. Americans traveling abroad have sought out natural wonders, historic sights, and the traditional foods, music, dance, and crafts of exotic cultures. Foreign tourists in the U.S. may start with skyscrapers and move on to the Grand Canyon, Disneyland, and Basin Street. But on more than one occasion, I have taken interested groups of visitors from abroad to an Appalachian or a Louisiana French Cajun community. These visits evoked expressions of astonishment from our foreign guests at the two hundred year continuity of Anglo-Scots-Irish speech patterns and the French language tradition; and visitors' delight was expressed at the continued existence of old ballads, fiddle tunes, craft traditions, and foodways in the midst of modern America. The healthy persistence of traditions fascinates and gratifies travelers everywhere.


But we should not take the continued survival of these folk traditions for granted. In a publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Alan Lomax pointed out: "Our western mass production and communication systems are inadvertently destroying the languages, traditions, cuisines, and creative styles that once gave every people and every locality a distinctive character. . . . Soon there will be nowhere to go and nothing worth staying at home for." * When families and community groups gather to celebrate or to mourn, they depend on traditional flavors, sounds, dances, and prayers to reinforce their sense of belonging, their group strength and cultural identity. At the annual Folklife Festival, we acknowledge the power of these traditions. They remind us of the value that Americans continue to place on being members of groups—familial, occupational, ethnic, regional and religious. We consider this recognition a step in the process of cultural conservation, in the belief that cultural variety, on a national and on a global scale, makes travel and life itself more rewarding.

For the Fifteenth Annual Festival of American Folklife, we shall return to the summertime. The Festival will be held over the Fourth of July weekend in the summer of 1981 and for the foreseeable future.

Ralph Rinzler
Director
Smithsonian Office of Folklife Programs

Lomax, Alan **Folk Song Style and Culture,"
Washington, D.C.: American Association for
the Advancement of Science, 1968, p. 4.

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Pride of Origin

by S. Dillon Ripley

Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

Our Festival, which is 14 years old this year, demonstrates again something that has become self-evident over the years. This is the great interest that almost everyone has in seeing many of the tools and objects stored in museum cases brought to life and *used*. The fact that people everywhere, but especially in the country, know how to make things with their hands and use simple, old-fashioned tools fascinates the young people of this technological age.

But there is more than that. We rediscover the extraordinary diversity of national strains that make up our society. Thus there will be a Caribbean Carnival with steel band and calypso competitions; Finnish-Americans from northern Minnesota demonstrating a traditional "whipsled" for children and such crafts as making Christmas tree ornaments from wood shavings; Southern carpenters building a traditional "dog trot" house; Southeast Asians demonstrating weaving, embroidery, stone carving, calligraphy; and so on.

Inevitably, all of this reminds us of our roots. For the discovery, however tenuous sometimes, of rootedness (we all came from somewhere originally) is a matter of need, one of the oldest. It is a tangible part of the fascination with history, our own or our country's or that of some distant place.

This is a part of life that everyone should value, and so the Festival not only celebrates customs and ways of doing things, but evokes the pride of being someone from somewhere.



A Cherished American Heritage *by Russell E. Dickenson*

*Director,
National Park Service*

The Festival of American Folklife on the Washington Monument Grounds celebrates the joy of being an American. We of the National Park Service are proud and delighted to join again with the Smithsonian Institution in bringing you this annual event, which has become a tradition in the Nation's Capital.

In a broad sense, the Festival celebrates our achievements as a country of working people—a citizenry that can trace its histories and traditions to many lands. This mixture has melded together to create a cherished American heritage.

The Festival has been described as America's family reunion, for it is here that so many people join together to participate in an event in which we all have common ties. The 1980 Festival is a cross-section of the customs, the traditions, and the arts brought to this land. They have lived on through the years, and the Festival provides an opportunity to bring these many traditions under one umbrella.

As the Federal agency charged with protecting our country's greatest natural, historical, and cultural resources, the National Park Service brings to the people it serves a unique chance for enjoyment, education, and inspiration—all in a setting where much of our country's history has been made as well as remembered in the monuments and memorials to America's leaders.

Whether this is your first festival or your 14th, we hope your time here will be enjoyable and memorable and that you will also take a moment to visit the parks of our Nation's Capital.



The New Immigration and New Urban Cultures in the Making

By R. S. Bryce-Laporte

The United States is a nation of nations. Historically, its peopling has been due, in large part, to waves and waves of immigrants. Even its oldest inhabitants, Native Americans, are believed to have migrated from Asia to this then uninhabited continent. It is more likely that they, rather than Columbus, discovered this "New" World. Since then, Africans, Europeans, and other Asians have been settling in the United States of (North) America and its overseas territories. For its size and age, this country has experienced, and continues to experience, the greatest variety and volume of immigration in the world.

A Personal Commentary

I happen to be one of these immigrants. Born in the Republic of Panama of a varied Caribbean ancestry, I lived, studied, and worked in the administered Canal Zone for much of my younger life. I belong to a group of West Indian immigrants who were recruited as the mainstay of the labor force for construction, cultivation, canal, and colonial company towns that were being established by the United States in Panama and along the Central and South American coastlands.

I came to the United States as an advanced foreign student, intending to complete my first degree, then either return home or send for my family. However, the lack of funds and other extenuating circumstances requiring expedient decisions resulted in my continued stay in the United States. And while I have enjoyed relative success in the achievement of my goals, I have also suffered a feeling of being "braindrained" and some degree of frustration, alienation, powerlessness, despair, and nostalgia for my "old" country, as have other immigrants.

Panama is host to an abundance of ethnicities, a variety of cultures, and intense interactions among the people and communities that comprise it. Its pluralism is observable, especially in the larger cities, at times of celebration and other public events. Just a few months ago, there was an unprecedented display of cultural and ethnic diversity when Panama hosted the Second Congress of Black Culture in the Americas, and featured the full panorama of its Black folk culture. This latter included traditions of rural and urban colonial Blacks, West Indian canal workers and their descendants, and new developments resulting from recent African and North American influences. And while in New York City, older Panamanian and Costa Rican *emigrés* dance the quadrille and other West Indian folkdances, in Washington, D.C., their descendants dance Tamborito and other Panamanian folk dances.

As to the larger Caribbean, it is a region in transition made up of immigrants, tourists, and others in transit, and is characterized by modernizing states and people in nationalist ferment. Its culture is not simply plural but creole, consisting of segments of various old and new world traditions that are in continuous evolution and multiple stages of blending. This culture attempts to reconcile old world traditions, new world influences, and the exigencies of modernization.

The Caribbean is also a region of emigrants. Externally induced labor displacement, low wages, unemployment, high population growth rate, heavy emigration, and an emigrant ethos have characterized its history since the mid 19th century. Not only the United States and Latin America, but Canada, Europe, Africa, and even the Pacific have been recruiters or recipients of Caribbean emigrants. Today many people of West Indian ancestry are resettled

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Photo by Akmal for Festivals Magazine.

in the United States. While our roots are drawn from more cultural backgrounds than perhaps most other immigrant groups, our routes have provided us with unusually extensive transnational kin-networks, linkages, identities, cosmopolitan views, and cultures. Much of our presence involves adopting, confronting, negotiating, sharing, and shaping the ways of life, and contributing to the local cultures of the communities and work-places in which we operate as minorities, a reversal in status for many Caribbean immigrants.

1 Crowds seized by the Carnival spirit in *Mas* in Brooklyn, New York, 1979.

The New Immigrants and the Cities

In 1965, the United States Congress passed its most comprehensive reform in immigration laws. Compared to its predecessors, the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act was categorically less exclusive, restrictive, or racist. Together with the policies and preference guidelines that were simultaneously implemented with it, the 1965 Act represented a parallel effort to equalize opportunity—this time for immigrants to the United States and its territories from (almost) all the independent countries of the world without favoring the traditional Western-Northern European or Western Hemispheric source countries.

This New Immigration, as we call it, is characterized in part by its non-European provenience. The new immigrants tend to be largely urban located and oriented. Because of their visibility and the discrimination against visible minorities, they suffer multiple levels of disregard by the larger population. The life styles, cultures, and languages of the new immigrants are little known, appreciated, or regarded by the general American public. American cities are the frontiers of the new immigrants; the arenas where the wills, interests, and cultures of each group come into contest with those of other ethnic groups; and the settings where competition or coalescence take place among them. It is in the cities that we see the scenes of confrontation between traditions and of adjustments from both sides—natives and immigrants. The cities are also the sites of the celebrations and the contributions of most new immigrants.



2 Celebrating the Latin American Festival with Colombian Coastal dancers, Washington, D.C. 1979.

3 Urban folk and foreign tourists at a downtown street theatre, Curacao, The Netherlands Antilles.

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Caribbean and Southeast Asian Festivals—New Urban Celebrations

Every year another great city of Canada and the United States witnesses efforts by its growing Latin American and Caribbean populations to restore the tradition of Carnival. Depending on scale and style, these vary from radio programs, private parties, club dances, and school projects to magnificent parades with mounted steelband platforms and prancing masqueraders. In New York City two specific cases are the Caribbean Carnival (*Mas* in Brooklyn) and the Columbus Day (*Día de la Raza*). In Washington, D.C. there are the weekends of the Caribbean, Latin American, and African Liberation Day Festivals. Already the Caribbean Carnivals of the United States and Canada are more Caribbean than the prestigious Trinidad and Tobago prototype in the sense that they draw participants and spectators from a wider range of West Indian cultures—Haiti, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, etc.; those of West Indian ancestry from the off-shore islands and Latin American rimland such as Costa Rica, Panama, Columbia, and Venezuela; and others from mainland countries with intense Carnival traditions such as Brazil and Peru.

The United States is currently undergoing another wave of immigration, this one from Southeast Asia. The people of Southeast Asia have a very ancient tradition compared to the United States, the Caribbean, or other societies. As refugees, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians, as well as the various ethnic groups such as the Hmong, came to this country under conditions tainted by desperation and disillusion both for them and for their American hosts.

Southeast Asian people of all nationalities, classes, ethnicities, and statuses report special problems of adjustment and dislocation—language, home, generation, identity, education, and job status. But they have been acquiring their immigrant epics and their success stories as well. Despite their recent arrival and the revolutionary shifts they have experienced in life styles, the Southeast Asian immigrants have been able to make noticeable contributions to American culture and to its tradition of festivals and celebrations. Once graced annually by the celebration of Chinese New Year in Chinatown, this year the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area enjoyed a Vietnamese New Year celebration as well.

In summary, even when forced to migrate, people do not do so totally denuded; that is, they do not migrate without their culture. Sometimes they manage to migrate with great resources of materials; other times only with a limited repertoire of memories. Whether publicly or privately, immigrants do perpetuate their old culture. Done publicly, on a grand scale and with high visibility, others cannot help but observe and even participate in these festivals and carnivals. Thus, it is not surprising that the United States has such a rich and cosmopolitan culture. Even though it has been undergoing constant change, it also demonstrates continuity and cross-fertilization.

Costuming: Latin-American and Caribbean Urban Carnivals

By Katherine Williams

Carnival costumes are designed to strike the spectator with their richness, dignity, exotic quality, or erotic appeal. For the wearer it is an escape into make believe—a chance to become royalty of any period, poet, peasant, or slave. The costume establishes the character that is being portrayed. The costume designer, through historical research, may strive for accuracy or may wander into the realm of fantasy. These costumes are made of silk, satin, cotton, brocade, leaves, or straw, and are decorated with fringe, beads, sequins, rhinestones, and glitter dust. Long ago, costumes that included breast plates and helmets were made of tin and copper. Today, because of increased costs, these same items are sometimes made of aluminum and copper foil.

The costumes reflect the rich and diverse cultures of the region from which Caribbean-Americans came. These cultures have developed by the retention and reinterpretation of African, Indian, and European traditions, using these as the raw materials to form new, local practices.

Carnival is competitive; people are selected from the community to act as judges. The collective festivities of a Carnival are known as *Mas*; an individual is also called a *Mas* or a *Mas player*. The act of wearing a costume and parading either individually or in groups called “Bands” is known as *Playing Mas*. The costumes are awarded points on the basis of authenticity or originality, color, design, workmanship, and visual impact. Putting on a costume is not enough, however. The wearer must embody the “spirit of Carnival,” which includes not only dancing in the costume but the joyous abandonment of cares, concerns, and politics.



Photo by Akmal

1 *Ole Mas*—here simple and less elaborate costumes are worn. In North American cities these revellers generally parade at the head of the procession dressed as devils and clowns.

2 Each band has its cast of principal characters—the King and Queen. The band is divided into several sections, each with a leader. The section portrays a segment or portion of the major theme of the band. The leader's costume is an elaborate version of the rest of that particular section. The King's and Queen's costumes are the most elaborate of all.

Katherine Williams is a native of Trinidad and Tobago, a country known for its annual celebration of one of the most colorful and popular Carnivals in the Western Hemisphere. She has served as judge in several Carnival contests both in Trinidad and in Canada. A free-lance writer, lecturer, and consultant, she is currently editor/publisher of Festivals Magazine, and coordinator of the Caribbean segment of the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife.



Photo by Akmal

Photo by Akmal



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Photo by Akmal



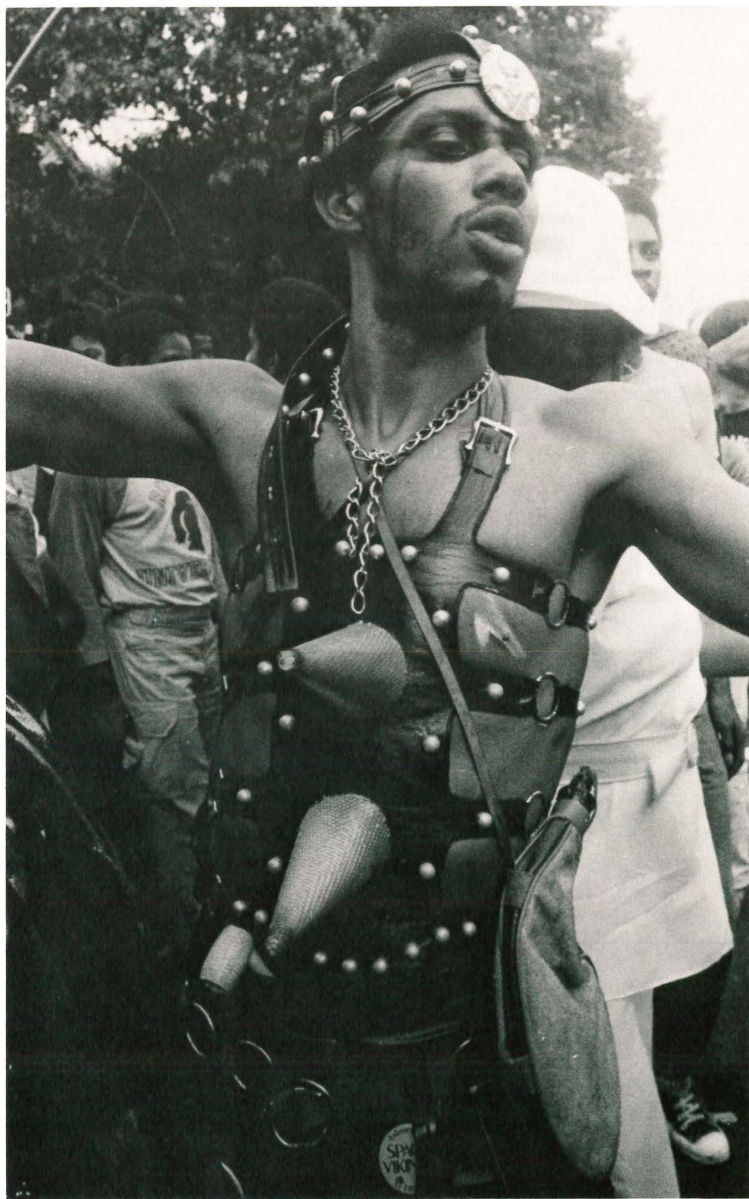
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Photo by Garvin J. Williams



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Photo by Akmal



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3 People of all nationalities participate in the Carnival. Here, a Chilean immigrant of Chinese descent plays *Mas*.

4 Masqueraders depict any nationality. This is a band's interpretation of a Chinese mandarin.

5 Sometimes national dress is worn as a costume during the festival. This Chilean couple represented by a *huaso* (male) and *la china* (female) does a dance in the *vaquero* (cowboy) tradition.

6 A space-age reveller: costumes are not all based on the past or present. Band leaders are permitted to fantasize about dress or costumes of the future.

7 Children—whatever their origins or ages, they enjoy Carnival in or out of costume.

8 Some costumes are too large and heavy to be carried by the masqueraders; these are fitted with wheels for easy mobility. If the masquerader is not part of the basic costume—if the costume is seen as an appendage—it is called a float.

9 The spectacle of costumed bands (*Mas*), with thousands of other spectators accompanied by the throbbing sounds of drums, steelbands, reggae, or even soul music, makes a Carnival parade an unforgettable experience. In the Caribbean, whole communities are swept up in the celebration. Here in North America, large segments of the Caribbean population celebrate in cities, including New York, Boston, Montreal, Toronto and Washington, D.C.



8

Caribbean Contributions to the U.S.A. Community

By D. Elliott Parris

The Caribbean presence in North America predates the American Revolution. Not only were slaves who had been born "seasoned" in the Caribbean sold to American plantations, but free Blacks also migrated to the North American continent. Immigrant Prince Hall, a free Black from Barbados, became the father of African secret societies in the United States by starting Masonic African Lodge No. 1 in Boston on July 3, 1776. In 1827 a Jamaican, John B. Russwurm, later one of the founders of Liberia, was the first Black to graduate from an American college. Throughout the 1800s, West Indians continued to distinguish themselves in the United States. In the early 1900s many more Caribbean immigrants came to the United States via Panama, where they were used as labor force in the building of the Canal.

Until 1965, discriminatory immigration laws kept the influx of Caribbean peoples into the United States strictly controlled. The New Immigration Act of 1965 resulted in a dramatic increase in Caribbean immigrants, but the percentage of Caribbean peoples to the total U.S. population remains relatively small. One million legal immigrants entered the U.S. 1820-1970 from the English-speaking Caribbean, yet West Indians comprise only one percent of the total black population. Nevertheless, West Indians have made their presence felt in the United States far more than what their size would indicate, especially in terms of their achievements in many areas, their leadership roles in a wide spectrum of group activities, and their visibility in civil rights movements and protest politics.

Many analysts attribute the success of the Caribbean immigrant group to a highly developed Protestant ethic. It is thought that the social structure of the Caribbean inculcated this work ethic into the poor Black man, because while Whites and light-complexioned Browns in that culture could depend upon racial and color characteristics to ensure their success, the only hope for the poor Black man in the Caribbean was to make it through hard work. This attitude toward work, plus the natural motivation common to people who have migrated in order to improve themselves, has made the Caribbean immigrants particularly upwardly mobile in America. For the most part, however, Caribbean immigrants kept aloof from their host society, acting as sojourners rather than permanent settlers, keeping in their hearts the dream of future return to the Caribbean. This may have been a defense mechanism, a reaction to the discrimination they faced as Blacks and the resentment they felt as foreigners.

Recently these attitudes have been changing. The changed legal status of Blacks in the United States society due to the successes of the Civil Rights struggle, the growing bonds of Pan-Africanism shared with Afro-Americans, the pride in the political independence of several Caribbean nations, and the growing acceptance of "cultural pluralism" rather than "Anglo-conformity" as a model for the United States, are all factors that have imbued the contemporary Caribbean immigrant community with the confidence to proclaim and practice openly their Caribbean heritage.

An obvious example of this is the proliferation in many North American cities of the Caribbean festival of *Carnival*. In Boston, Hartford, New York, Montreal, Toronto, and Los Angeles, this festival has emerged as a full-scale annual community celebration, while in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Miami, and other cities, some aspects of Carnival can be seen on a smaller scale. The degree of acceptance of such festivals by the American public is a measure of

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the integration of the Caribbean community into the American plural structure. One function of these carnivals is the impetus they give to the internal unification of the Caribbean communities themselves. Considerations of class and island origin have tended to divide members of the American Caribbean community from each other. But the carnivals have emerged as Caribbean, and their acceptance by the community as such holds the potential for even greater unification in the future.

In addition to Carnival, the Caribbean immigrant community is contributing to the American scene in sports, religion, music, dance, literature, and the arts. Cricket, once considered an elite British game, is the sport that every child is introduced to in the Caribbean, whether it be the game as traditionally played, or the West Indian variations of "marble cricket," "bat 'n' ball," "beach cricket," or "kneeling-down cricket." West Indians have been credited with bringing to a game that was once considered stylish but stuffy a spirit of fun and *fête* that makes it a joy to watch. It can now be enjoyed any Saturday or Sunday afternoon in West Indian communities in such cities as Hartford, Boston, and New York.

In Miami, New York, and Washington, the distinctly Caribbean religions of *Santeria*, the worship of *Vodun* (Voodoo), and Rastafarianism, can be found. *Santeria*, practiced by many Cubans, is a unification of Roman Catholicism with the Yoruba religion of West Africa. *Vodun*, a Haitian religion, is a similar blend of Christianity and the religious worship of ancient Dahomey. Rastafarianism, however, is a modern religion that originated in Jamaica in the 1930s based on the belief in the divinity of the former Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, and the perception of Ethiopia as the original homeland to which Blacks in the Western Hemisphere should be repatriated.

Caribbean music is now very much a part of the sound of many an American city—whether it be the Yoruba drumming of *Santeria*, the reggae rhythms that originated with the Rastafarians, or the rhumba, the samba, and the calypso. There is even evidence of union between these Caribbean rhythms and the rhythm-and-blues beat of the United States in such new dance beats as the "salsa" and "soca" (soul-calypso). Meanwhile, Caribbean folk poets can be seen peddling their latest poems or reciting them at folk festivals, and the steelband soloist has joined the ranks of street musicians in Greenwich Village.

Caribbean contributions to American community life include, therefore, an impressive record of achievement and an infusion of cultural forms that add to the vitality and diversity of American life—a vitality and diversity that has historically been strengthened by the contributions of immigrant communities.

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Bringing a Winter Festival to Washington

By Thomas Vennum Jr.

By including a Finnish-American component in this year's Festival, the Smithsonian Institution Folklife Program reaffirms its commitment to plans specially developed for the 1976 Bicentennial Festival. The program, called "Old Ways in the New World," was intended to dispel much of the "melting pot" notion of American culture by showing that many traditions brought from the Old World have tenaciously survived and developed in their new setting.

When immigrant groups arrived here, the "Old Ways" of cooking, singing, dancing, building, and playing they brought with them were often their only means of maintaining cultural identity. Eventually the descendants of many of these ethnic groups, by retaining these practices, have developed a pride in their heritage. Often they choose a particular day, such as a patron saint's feast day, to celebrate their ethnicity. Such an annual occasion becomes a real "homecoming," when distant family or community members return to their roots, eating traditional foods with foreign names and joining in Old World dances to the accompaniment of music and instruments from outside the mainstream of American popular culture.

While ethnic festivals in the United States are numerous, scholarly focus has centered mostly on urban celebrations sponsored by the larger immigrant groups, such as Italians or Irish. By contrast, *Laskiainen* is a rural winter festival quietly sustained by one of the smallest immigrant groups, the Finns. It was first celebrated as a Shrove Tuesday festival in the early 1500s during the advent of the Reformation in Finland. As with Mardi Gras and other well known Shrovetide celebrations, *Laskiainen* was a day of feasting and other festivities in anticipation of the 40-day Lenten fast. In fact, *Laskiainen* is a derivative of the verb *laskia* meaning "to settle down," and is connotatively translated: "to settle into Lent."

Having been transplanted from Finland to northern Minnesota, the event has continued for more than 50 years, making it one of this country's oldest ethnic festivals. Additionally, the community's own documentation of the event over the years has provided a valuable time-span for studying the historical evolution of *Laskiainen* in this country and comparing it with the practice in Finland today.

Having decided to present a segment of *Laskiainen* at the 1980 Festival of American Folklife, problems in recreating a winter festival during Washington's early October weather arose. Because it was impossible to transport the entire event with all its participants, we selected a fairly representative cross section of foods, crafts, and entertainment, stressing wherever possible the wintertime aspects of the event—*lastu* (Christmas tree ornaments), the colorful Finnish woolen wear, the birchbark winter slippers as used in the lumber camps, and the sauna from which one emerges to plunge into the snow.

A crucial decision was to transport the whipsled (*vipu-kelkka*) from Palo, and to have it operational. Though a fairly modest hand-powered device, it is such a popular "folk ride" in Minnesota and so uniquely Finnish that it might be said to symbolize the celebration. For that reason, it will be the focal point of our presentation. Another challenge was to devise some means to make the ride work, since in its natural context it is set up on a frozen lake and the track is, therefore, ice. After exploring the possibilities of synthetic ice or a teflon-coated runway, we decided to mount the sled in a specially built cradle with roller skate wheels running on a plywood track. While the ride is considerably smoother than on Loon Lake in Minnesota and lacks the familiar

Thomas Vennum, Jr., Ph.D. in musicology, is staff ethnomusicologist for the Smithsonian Institution Folklife Programs. He has published widely on the subject of American Indian music, and he is General Editor of the Smithsonian Folklife Studies Film / Monograph Series.

crunching sound of the runners going over ice, we feel we have simulated the effect and, to complete the experience, we have provided photographs of the sled in use in Minnesota.

Another essential aspect of *Laskiainen* that we have tried to retain is its family character. Among this year's participants you will find two brothers and a sister playing Finnish music, several husband-and-wife teams, and a young man weaving fishnets while his grandmother knits caps and socks nearby. The one element missing is the presence of many local children, as they are essential participants in the event. However, by restricting the whipsled ride for *your* children to enjoy, they will be able to experience the joy of the Finnish-American children for whom *Laskiainen* is planned on the Iron Range each February.

Photo by Paul Williams



Riding the whipsled in Palo, Minnesota, for the 1979 *Laskiainen* Festival. Rumor has it that a small child is sometimes asked to say "Vipu-Kelkka," Finnish for whipsled, for an extra good ride.

Ethnicity and Community: Laskiainen in Palo, Minnesota By Carol Babiracki

In early February each year, in the small rural community of Palo in northern Minnesota's Iron Range region, hundreds of people gather for traditional *Laskiainen* festivities. The word *Laskiainen* literally means "sliding downhill." For the Finns in northern Minnesota, it is more than simply a winter sliding festival; it is a time to share traditions and memories and take pride in their Finnish heritage.

Laskiainen was brought to the Iron Range by Finnish immigrants in the late 1800s. It was originally a pre-Lenten or Shrovetide celebration. In Finland and in northern Minnesota, Finns have also considered it a celebration of the lengthening of the short dark winter days. Until the mid-1930s, *Laskiainen* was observed in northern Minnesota by small family or neighborhood groups with sledding and sliding, Finnish foods, music, and dancing. In the mid-1930s, community-wide *Laskiainen* festivals were organized in the rural schools to stimulate interest in the community's folk traditions. Through the years, the festival at the Palo School overlooking Loon Lake has become the region's only *Laskiainen* and has grown in both size and popularity.

The two-day festival is usually held during the first weekend in February, when the weather is right for the festival's outdoor activities. The cold, snowy white setting outside contrasts with the warmth and color inside. For those hardy enough to brave the often bitter cold there are log-sawing contests, skating races, hockey and broomball games, skiing, sledding, and sliding down the steep hill that begins at the school and ends down at the lake. Indoors there is plenty of traditional Finnish food, music, and fellowship.

Carol Babiracki is the granddaughter of Finnish immigrants to Minnesota's Iron Range. She has done field research on Finnish folk traditions on the Range and coordinated the Iron Range Folklife Project of the Minnesota Folklife Center and the Iron Range Historical Society during the summer of 1978. She is currently working on a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Photo courtesy of Iron Range Historical Society, Gilbert, Minnesota

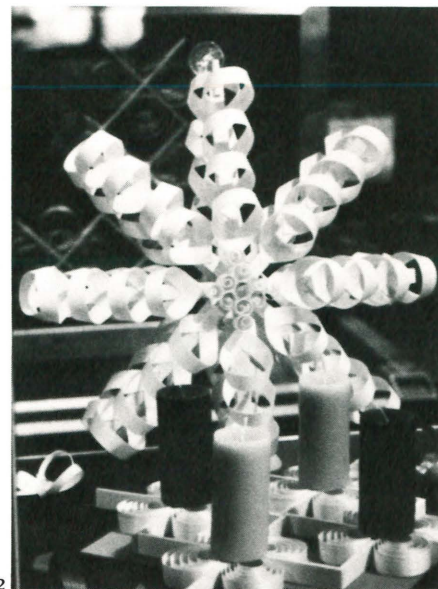
Though many aspects of *Laskiainen* have changed, there are some necessary Finnish ingredients that can be expected every year. For the area's Finns these aspects reinforce a sense of the continuity and endurance of their heritage and their community. They look forward to the *Laskiainen voi-leipä-pöytä* (buffet, literally "bread and butter table") with traditional foods such as *rieska* (flatbread or "skinny bread"), *nisua* (sweet cardamom loaf), *korppuaa* (hard cinnamon toast), and *berne keittö* (pea soup). The festival's program has always featured humorous recitations in Finnish and folksongs sung and played on the button-box accordion or fiddle by local musicians. In their songs they express the Finns' sentiments about the Old Country, the land and nature, love, heroes, bad luck, and, on the Iron Range, about mining and lumbering. Today, the musical items also include performances by Finnish-American folkdance groups. At the traditional evening *Laskiainen* dance, the local band mixes Finnish polkas, waltzes, and schottisches with fox-trots, two-steps, jitterbugs, and butterflies.

Outdoor sporting activities have always been part of *Laskiainens* as well. The slide-builder, with 24 years' experience behind him, spends about a week building up the smooth sides and four-inch base of ice on the toboggan and "bump-the-bump" slides, using special forms that are saved from year to year. The log-sawing contests reflect the important part logging and lumbering have played in the history of Finns on the Iron Range.

While these Finnish elements of the festival have been continued through the years, other Finnish aspects have disappeared. Girls no longer race to be the first one down the sliding hill to win a spray of flax. People no longer talk about *Laskiainen* legends or "superstitions." And many Finnish foods have disappeared from the menu.

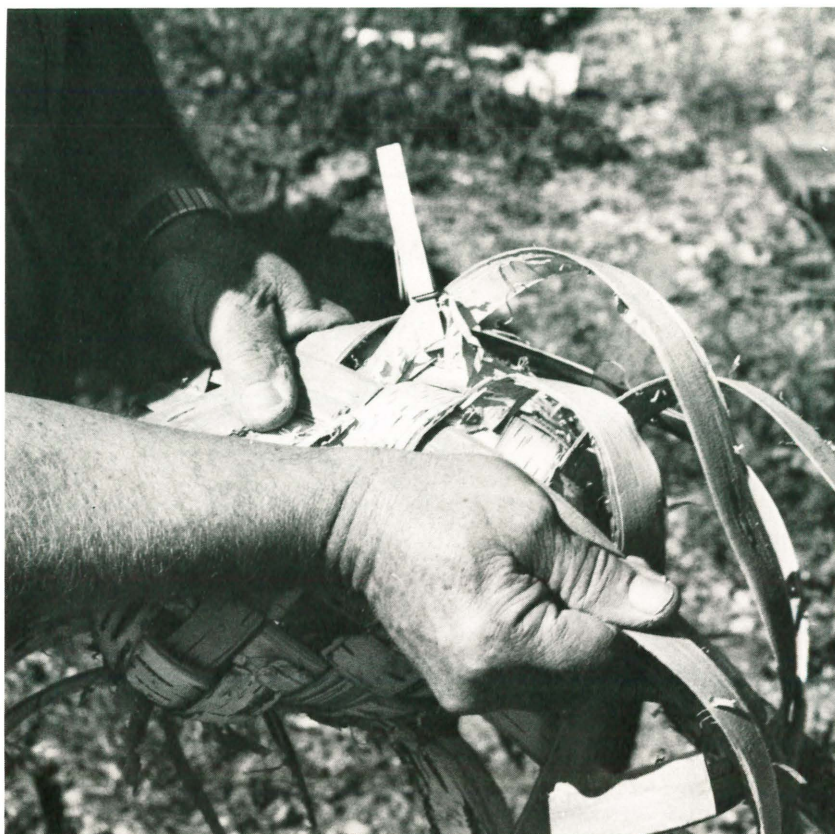
Yet in recent years, other Finnish elements have been reintroduced into the festival. Visitors can sample *leipä juustoa* (or "squeaky cheese," a white cheese made from rich milk and rennet) and *kropsua* (rich, oven-baked pancake) at the buffet. Outdoors, on the lake, they can once again enjoy a ride on the *vipu-kelkka* (whipsled), a sled on iron runners attached to a 26-foot spruce pole that rotates on a post frozen into the lake. When the pole is pushed around the post, the sled is sent flying around the icy circular track.

Displays and demonstrations of traditional Finnish crafts, common in the early *Laskiainens*, have also reappeared in the festival recently. There are examples of fine handwork such as crocheting, tatting, weaving, and *lastu* craft (bending thin strips of unfinished wood into decorative designs). Many of the display items, however, were once made for household use, out of necessity, from materials found in the Minnesota surroundings: birch-bark baskets, packsacks (*konttis*), and shoes (*tuobri wirsu*), warm felt boot liners (*tossus*), farm tools, carved wooden kitchen utensils, skis and ski poles, snowshoes, and sleds. Discarded clothing was transformed into woven rag rugs and quilts. Wool and flax were carded, spun, and knit into socks and sweaters. Many of these old crafts are not widely practiced anymore, but on display at the *Laskiainen* these artifacts take on new significance. They give older visitors a renewed sense of pride in their traditions and their ability to survive by their wits. The displays are also a gathering place for those who want to reminisce about the old days and ways. Both the displays and the live demonstrations of carding, spinning, and quilting at the festival have encouraged younger generations to learn and continue these traditional crafts.



1 Three Finnish women immigrants posed for this picture outside of their "homestead" around 1912. The house in the background was built using Finnish carpentry techniques and still stands in Brimson, Minnesota. So exact are logs hewn that no chinking is needed for weatherization against the harsh Minnesota winter evident by the snow and icicles.

2 Examples of *lastu*, the traditional Finnish craft of making ornaments from wood shavings.



3 Birchbark weaving is a craft still practiced among Finnish-American immigrants and their descendants similar to the way it was among their ancestors. Marvin Salo of Embarrass, Minnesota, is shown weaving a birchbark basket.

4 A completed backpack.

Suggested Reading

Edgar, Marjorie. "Old Finnish Folk Songs in Minnesota." *Music Teachers National Association, Volume of Proceedings*. Series 40 (1946): 137-141.

Hoglund, A. William. *Finnish Immigrants in America 1880-1920*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960.

Johnson, Aili Kolehmainen. "Lore of the Finnish-American Sauna." *Midwest Folklore* 1 No. 1 (Apr 1951): 33-40.

Karni, Michael G. "Otto Walta—Finnish Folk Hero of the Iron Range." *Minnesota History* 40 (1967): 391-402.

Kaups, Matti. "A Finnish Savusauna in Minnesota." *Minnesota History* 45/1 Spring 1976.

Smith, Robert J. "Festivals and Celebrations." *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*. Richard M. Dorson, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Suggested Recording

Finnish Heritage: Music by the Third Generation. Available from The Third Generation, P.O. Box 659, Virginia, Minnesota 55792.

The reintroduction of Finnish traditions in the *Laskiainen* festival reflects the community's interest in its own ethnicity. Once the Palo area was nearly 100 percent Finnish. Though most are still of Finnish ancestry, the area is becoming a mixture of many different ethnic groups. There is a concern among the older generations that they will lose some of their Finnish traditions, that their children may not know what a *vipu-kelkka* is or how to do a polka or a schottische. Through their *Laskiainen* festival they can pass on their traditions to younger generations and share them with each other.

Laskiainen has always been an Iron Range festival, also, by offering popular activities that Finns share with other area ethnic groups. Thus, basketball, hockey, and broomball games have become traditional features of the festival. Since its beginning, the festival has included the coronation of a *Laskiainen* queen, and, since the 1950s, she has walked to her throne under an arch of hockey sticks held by honor guards clad in hockey team uniforms.

Though visitors to the festival come from all over Minnesota and neighboring states, the festival is organized by volunteers from the Palo community. Local church groups, fire departments, boy scouts, and other community groups all participate. Shopkeepers donate food, and local women bring baked goods from home or prepare foods at the festival. In addition, proceeds from the festival are helping to keep the building on Loon Lake, closed as a school many years ago, open year-round as a community center.

The *Laskiainen* festival is a dynamic, growing tradition in Palo. Traditional old Finnish elements in the festival provide continuity with the past. New elements are being added and traditions reintroduced to meet the needs of a contemporary community. It is a family festival, with events for all ages. It is a community festival, with fun and friendship to offer the area's non-Finns. But *Laskiainen* has a special meaning for the Finns. Conversations at the festival often come around to the subject of "being Finn." Non-Finns are dubbed "honorary Finns." People wear Finnish buttons and hats, speak Finnish with each other, tell Finnish jokes. As one *Laskiainen* celebration came to a close, a Palo Finn expressed her deep satisfaction in this way: "This is one day when you can be proud to say you're a Finn. It's a different way of life, being a Finn. But this is one day when even the jokes don't bother you. It's a great day for Finns."

The Southeast Asia Program

by Susan Kalčík

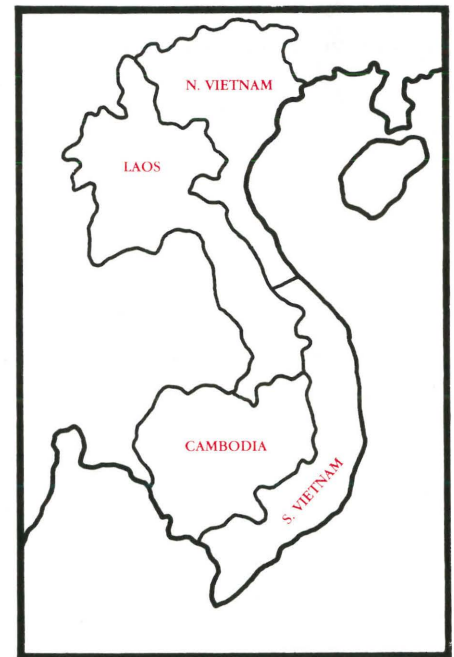
The Southeast Asia Program of the 1980 Festival of American Folklife will present the traditional culture of immigrants from three mainland Southeast Asian countries: the Khmer from Cambodia, the Lao and Hmong from Laos, and the Vietnamese.

India and China were two sources of immigration and culture for Southeast Asia, although the term "Indochina" places disproportionate stress on their influence. Archeological findings reveal signs of sophisticated civilization in Southeast Asia paralleling or possibly predating the development of civilization in the Middle East and China. Later, great civilizations such as Funan and Khmer in present-day Cambodia (the latter built Angkor), Lan Xang in Laos, and Champa in southern Vietnam, arose and died. Indian culture was felt most in Laos and Cambodia, and Chinese culture in Vietnam, which was ruled by China for 1000 years until AD 939. Hinduism left a deep impression on the literature, song, and dance of Cambodia and Laos, which reflect, for example, the stories of the Hindu epic, The Ramayana. But in all three countries, the contributions of India and China were combined with the indigenous cultures to form a unique whole. Southeast Asian women, for example, have traditionally had more freedom and equality with men than women in India and China.

Europeans first came to Southeast Asia with the arrival of the Portuguese in the early 16th century. In the 19th century, France consolidated its hold over Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (hence the term "French Indochina") and except for the Japanese invasion during World War II, controlled the area until 1954. Under the French, north, central, and southern Vietnam were called Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, respectively. The European rule exploited the resources of Southeast Asia but brought political ideas that resulted in the independence movement and cultural contributions, including Christianity.

Southeast Asia possesses a great mix of ethnic groups and a great variety of languages and religions, among them Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Cao Daim, Confucianism, Taoism, animism, and family worship. Lowland areas in all three countries are characterized by wet-rice agriculture and heavy concentrations of people, and highland or mountainous areas are characterized by dry rice and swidden agriculture and small, highly diverse concentrations of people. Of the groups participating in the Festival, the Hmong are highland people and the others mainly lowland. Although there are urban centers in these countries, the greater percentage of people are from villages.

In recent years, wars and economic and political upheaval have made refugees of many peoples from these countries. Some have become part of the most recent wave of immigration to the United States, bringing with them rich traditional folk and classical cultures.



Folk Arts of Southeast Asia: Persistence and Change

By Maxine Miska

Photo by Nicholas Bocher for the Smithsonian



1 This lifelike spray of daisies made by Pearl Le is an example of the Vietnamese craft of silk flower making.

Arts and crafts are the expression of the community that creates them, but they also belong to the land that produces the materials used in their manufacture and according to whose seasons the calendrical festivals are set. The folk arts of a people embellish the festivals and ceremonies of their lives and are produced in accord with the cycles of the community—the availability of raw materials and time of the craftspeople. While ceremonies and costumes are to some extent portable, one of the tasks of the new immigrants from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia is to seek ways of preserving and adapting their crafts to the United States, which has its own holidays, work pace, and raw materials.

The nations of the Southeast Asian mainland have been built on many cultures. Just as the countries of Western Europe incorporated the civilizations of Rome and Byzantium into their cultures, so were the Southeast Asian countries influenced by China and India. Their distinctive cultures were formed by selective adaptation and innovation. Hindu and Buddhist ideas were incorporated with the original belief systems of spirit worship, and animism. Styles of sculpture, architecture, dance, and drama were adapted and given a distinctive stamp. But this process of accumulation in one's own land is quite different from transplanting one's arts to a new land with its own landscape, festivals, and raw materials. In various ways the new immigrants have made these folk arts part of their lives in the United States and a link with their former lives in Asia.

The Vietnamese maintained their own cultural identity under 1000 years of Chinese domination. They fought the Mongols and resisted the French. Now in the United States they are engaged in a different struggle—to preserve their Vietnamese tradition through art and poetry. Vietnamese homes are decorated with rice paper and ink paintings, delicate silk paintings, lacquer paintings, glass-encased scenes of plum blossoms, birds, and trees made of cut pieces of wood, or pastel paintings of young women crossing the fields, their long silk dresses (*ao dai*), blowing in the wind. The images evoke life in Vietnam—wide, slow rivers, tall bamboo forests, houses with boats moored beside them.

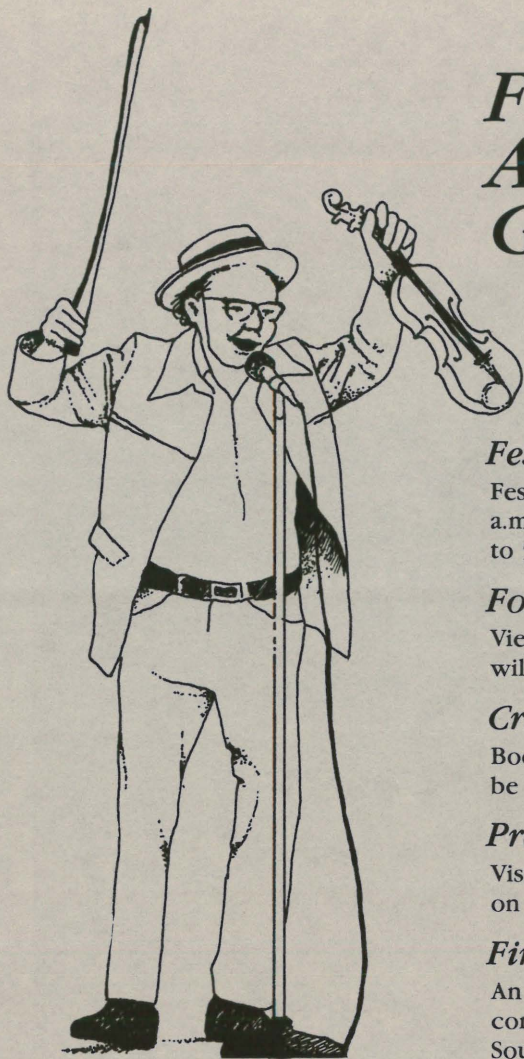
The function of some of these arts has changed. For example, in Vietnam silk flowers mimicked nature, fooling the eye with their skill, but now these same flowers preserve images that can otherwise be held only in memory.

Vietnam has a very ancient poetry tradition. Poetry and song are closely related, and many people can recite from memory parts of the old poems. The poets still get together as they did in Vietnam, but with the added mission now of bringing their fellows the images, sounds, and smells of Vietnam, which they might not otherwise remember. The following verse from the 1000-year-old tradition of oral poetry (*ca dao*), exemplifies this:

*Sad, idle, I think of my dead mother,
her mouth chewing white rice, tongue removing fish bones
The Red Cloth drapes the mirror frame:
men of one country must show love for each other.*

Another Southeast Asian group, the Hmong, have continued and adapted their textile arts to life in the United States. In Philadelphia and other cities with a Hmong population, there are women dressed in skirts of many-colored pieces stitched together like a quilt, with long embroidered sashes, silver necklaces, and turbans or caps. These are the Hmong people from the

Maxine Miska is a doctoral candidate in Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania. She did folklore fieldwork in Taiwan from 1974 to 1976 and is currently co-director of the Folklife Center of International House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Festival of American Folklife General Information

Festival Hours

Festival opening ceremonies will be held in the large Carnival tent at 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, October 8. Thereafter, Festival hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily.

Food Sales

Vietnamese food will be sold in the Southeast Asian area, and Southern food will be sold in the Community Activities area.

Craft Sales

Books, records, T-shirts, and program books relating to Festival programs will be available in the sales tent from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily.

Press

Visiting members of the press are invited to register at the Festival press tent on 15th Street near Madison Drive.

First Aid

An American Red Cross mobile unit will be set up in a tent on the southwest corner of the Festival site, during regular Festival hours. The Health Unit at the South Bus Ramp of the Museum of History and Technology is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Rest Rooms

There are public and handicapped facilities located on the northwest corner of the Festival site. Rest rooms are also located throughout the various Smithsonian museums and on the Washington Monument grounds.

Telephones

Public telephones are available on the Washington Monument grounds and in any of the Smithsonian museums.

Lost and Found | Lost Children and Parents

Lost items may be turned in or retrieved from the administration tent located on Madison Drive near the trailer. Lost family members may be found at the administration tent on Madison Drive. We advise putting a name tag on youngsters who are prone to wander. Announcements of youngsters will be made at the various music stages.

Bicycle Racks

Racks for bicycles are located on the Washington Monument grounds and at the entrances to each of the Smithsonian museums.

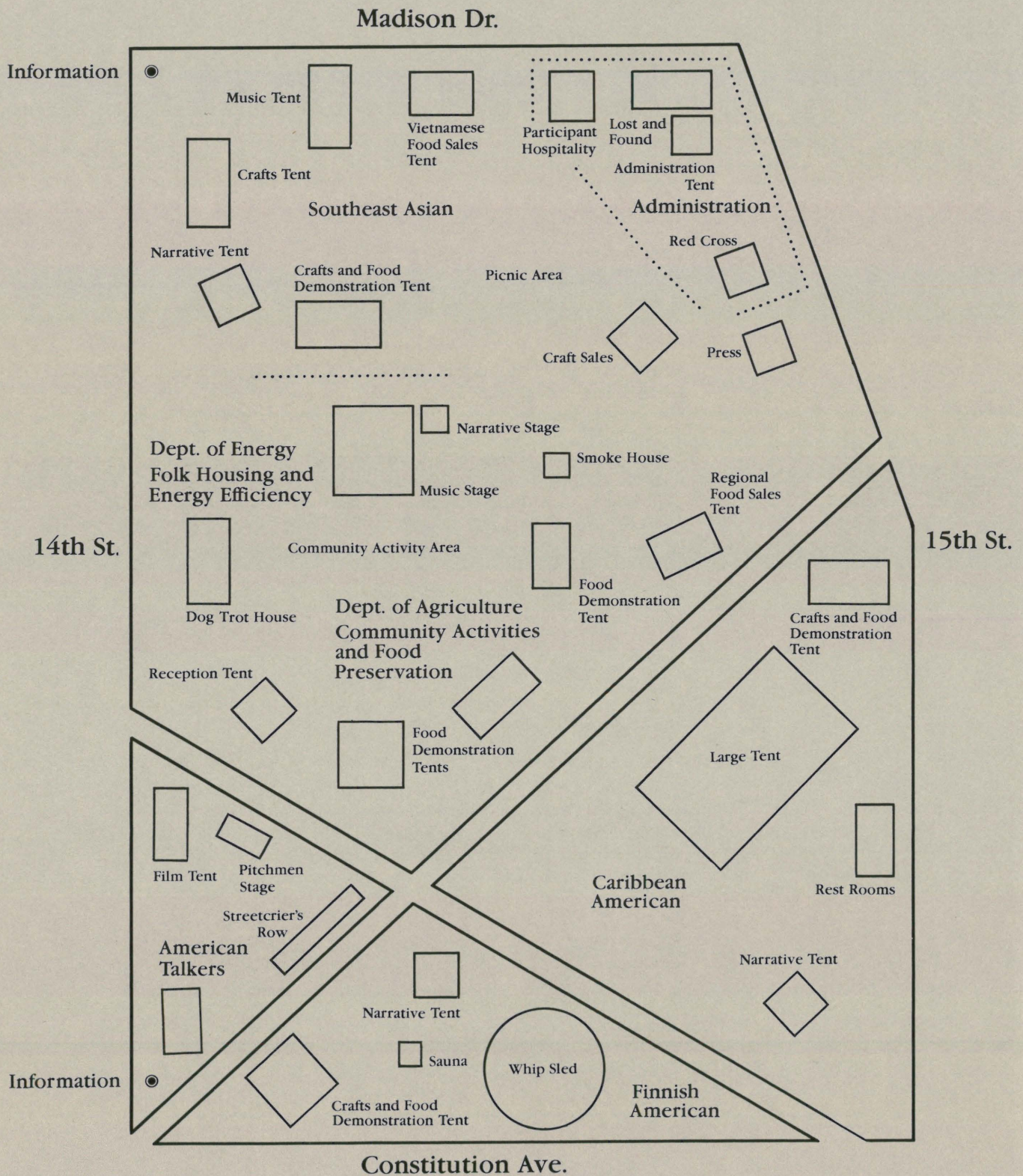
Metro Stations

Metro trains will be running every day of the Festival. The Festival is served by either the Federal Triangle station or the Smithsonian station.

Interpreters for the Deaf

Intrepreters for the deaf will be available each day of the Festival in a specified program area. Please see the schedule for particulars.

Festival Site Map



Wednesday October 8

Schedules are subject to change.
An interpreter for the deaf will be present
in the Caribbean American Area all day.

Folk Housing & Energy Efficiency*

Community Activities & Food Preservation**

Southeast Asian Americans

Caribbean Americans

American Talkers

Finnish Americans

	Large Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Auction Tent Area	Pitchmen Tent	Street Crier Row	Film Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Food Preservation Area	Dog Trot Construction Site	Music Stage	Narrative Stage	Craft & Cooking Tent
10															
11	Opening Concert														
	Opening Ceremony														
12															
1	Steelband Concert	Children's Games	Botanica & Craft & Cooking Demonstrations All Day	Household Auction	Demonstration & Discussion of Pitches	Demonstrations All Day: Baltimore Arabbers, Eyeglass Defogger Pitchmen, New York City Bootjacker, Balloon Man, Baseball Stadium Hotdog Vendor, & Medicine Man	Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Finnish Foods & Traditions	Demonstrations All Day: Baking Oven Pancakes & Breads 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Dog Trot House Builders	Peanut Shelling 12:30-1:30 & Demonstrations All Day: Wine Making, Meat Smoking, Butter Making, Canning, Cane Syrup Making, & "Found Food" Preparation	Participants will be building a traditional southern dog trot house from 12-5 p.m.	Lao Music	Workshop Presentations on Southeast Asian Crafts, Games, Costume, Holidays, Celebrations, Dance, Puppets, & Immigrant Experiences	Craft & Cooking Demonstrations All Day
		Film (10 min.)					Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets								
2	Fire-Eater	Oral Historian	Household Auction	Side Show, Mouse, Jam, Grab Joint, & Candy Pitches	Tobacco Auction	How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Kantele Music & Lore	Lastu Making 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Fishnet Making 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Sauna Construction 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Wool Carding, Spinning, & Knitting 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Dairy Product Makers	Vietnamese Music	
		Steelpan Tuner					Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets								
3	Stick Fighters	Samba Workshop	Lesson in Auctioneering	Tobacco Auction	Medicine, Geek & Side Show Pitches	Jazz Club & New Orleans Pitches	Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Concert	Log Hewing 2-3 p.m.	& Skipole Making 3-5 p.m.	Dog Trot House Builders		Workshop		
	Afro-Caribbean Folk Dancing	Brazilian Music Discussion					How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck								
4	Calypsonian	Religion Discussion (Umbanda)	Household Auction	Side Show, Pen, Foot Medicine, Chinese Water Lily, & Candy Pitches	Lesson in Auctioneering	Jazz Club & New Orleans Pitches	Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Folk Dancing Demonstration			Traditional Georgia Music				
	Fire-Eater						Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets								
5															

*Sponsored by the
Department of Energy
**Sponsored by the
Department of Agriculture

Schedules are subject to change.
An interpreter for the deaf will be
available in the Folk Housing and
Community Activities Area all day.

American Talkers

*Community Activities & Food Preservation***

Southeast Asian Americans

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Department of Agriculture

Friday October 10

Schedules are subject to change.
An interpreter for the deaf will be present in the American Talkers Area all day.

	Caribbean Americans			American Talkers				Finnish Americans		Folk Housing & Energy Efficiency* Community Activities & Food Preservation**			Southeast Asian Americans			
	Large Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Auction Tent Area	Pitchmen Tent	Street Crier Row	Film Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Food Preservation Area	Dog Trot Construction Site	Music Stage	Narrative Stage	Craft & Cooking Tent	
10	Afro-Caribbean Folk Dancing	History of Carnival & Stick Fighter	Botanica & Craft & Cooking Demonstrations			Demonstrations All Day: Baltimore Arabbers, Eye-glass Defogger Pitchman, New York City Bootjacker, Balloon Man,			Demonstrations All Day: Making Squeaky Cheese 10 a.m.-1 p.m.		Dairy Product Makers	Watermelon Cutting (12:30-1:30 p.m.) & Demonstrations All Day: Wine Making, Meat Smoking, Butter Making, Canning, Cane Syrup Making, & "Found Food" Preparation	Workshop	Workshop Presentations on Southeast Asian Crafts, Games, Costume, Holidays, Celebrations, Dance, Puppets, & Immigrant Experiences	Craft & Cooking Demonstrations All Day:	10
11		Oral Historian														11
12	Stick Fighters	Caribbean Latin Dance Workshop		Demonstration & Discussion of Auction Chants	Pen, Foot Medicine, Chinese Water Lily, & Side Show Pitches			Music	Baking Oven Pancakes & Breads 10 a.m.-5 p.m.		Traditional Georgia Music		Lao Music			12
1	Calypsonian	Film: Gods in Exile														1
2	Steelband Concert			Lesson in Auctioneering	Demonstrations & Discussion of Pitches	Baseball Stadium Hotdog Vendor, & Medicine Man	Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Finnish Foods, & Traditions	Wool Carding, Spinning, & Knitting 10 a.m.-5 p.m.		Dog Trot House Builders		Workshop			2
3				Household Auction			Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets		Sauna Construction, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.							3
4	Fire-Eater & Limbo	Steelpan Tuner	Cooking Demonstrations	Tobacco Auction			How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Kantele Music & Lore	Whipsled Ride 10 a.m.-5 p.m.		"Found Food" Specialists		Vietnamese Music			4
5									Birchbark Weaving 11 a.m.-1 p.m.							5
6	Stick Fighters	Children's Games		Household Auction	Side Show, Mouse, Jam, Grab Joint, & Candy Pitches		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets		Log Hewing 1-2 p.m.		Dog Trot House Builders		Workshop			6
7							Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets		Fishnet Making 2-4 p.m. & Lastu Making 10 a.m.-5 p.m.							7
8	Caribbean Folk Singing	Santeria Discussion		Household Auction	Jazz Club & New Orleans Pitches		How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck				Food Canners		Hmong Music			8
9					Medicine, Geek & Side Show Pitches											9
10	Calypsonian				Demonstration & Discussion of Street Cries		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets				Traditional Georgia Music					10
11	Fire-Eater															11

*Sponsored by the Department of Energy
**Sponsored by the Department of Agriculture

Saturday October 11

Schedules are subject to change.
An interpreter for the deaf will be present in the Southeast Asian American Area all day.

	Caribbean Americans			American Talkers				Finnish Americans		Community Activities & Food Preservation**			Southeast Asian Americans			
	Large Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Auction Tent Area	Pitchmen Tent	Street Crier Row	Film Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Food Preservation Area	Dog Trot Construction Site	Music Stage	Narrative Stage	Craft & Cooking Tent	
10																10
11	Caribbean Folk Singing	Calypso Workshop	Botanica & Craft & Cooking Demonstrations			Demonstrations All Day: Baltimore Arabbers, Eye-glass Defogger Pitchman, New York City Bootjacker, Balloon Man, Baseball Stadium Hotdog Vendor, & Medicine Man			Demonstrations All Day: Making Squeaky Cheese 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Food Canners	Barbecue (12:30-2 p.m.) & Demonstrations All Day: Wine Making, Meat Smoking, Butter Making, Canning, Cane Syrup Making, & "Found Food" Preparation	Participants will be building a traditional southern dog trot house from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.	Workshop	Workshop Presentations on Southeast Asian Crafts, Games, Costume, Holidays, Celebrations, Dance, Puppets, & Immigrant Experiences	Craft & Cooking Demonstrations All Day	11
	Stick Fighters	Steelpan Tuner		Demonstration & Discussion of Auction Chants	Medicine, Geek & Side Show Pitches			Music	Baking Oven Pancakes & Breads 10 a.m.-5 p.m.							
12	Rastafari Discussion with Nyabingi Drummers		Cooking Demonstrations	Household Auction	Demonstrations & Discussion of Pitches		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets		Making Linen Thread from Raw Flax 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Dog Trot House Builders			Workshop			12
1				Tobacco Auction			How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Sauna Construction 10 a.m.-5 p.m.								
2	Reggae Band	Kite Workshop		Household Auction	Pen, Foot Medicine, Chinese Water Lily, Candy, & Side Show Pitches		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Kantele Music & Lore	Log Hewing 12-1 p.m.	Cane Syrup Makers			Vietnamese Music			2
	Kiddies Carnival	Children's Games	Tobacco Auction			Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Wilderness Traditions: Fishing, Hunting, & Trapping	Fishnet Making 1-3 p.m.								
3	Preview of Kings, Queens, & Individuals of the Bands			Lesson in Auctioneering	Side Show, Mouse, Jam, Grab Joint, & Candy Pitches		How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck		& Lastu Making 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	Dog Trot House Builders			Workshop			3
4	Steelband Concert & Competition			Household Auction			How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Concert		Traditional Georgia Music			Hmong Music			4
					Demonstration & Discussion of Street Cries		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets									
5	Awards & Prizes for Kiddies Carnival						Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Folk Dancing Demonstration					Khmer Music			5

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Sunday October 12

Schedules are subject to change.
An interpreter for the deaf will be present in the American Talkers Area all day.

Caribbean Americans

American Talkers

Finnish Americans

Folk Housing & Energy Efficiency* Community Activities & Food Preservation**

Southeast Asian Americans

	Large Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Auction Tent Area	Pitchmen Tent	Street Crier Row	Film Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Food Preservation Area	Dog Trot Construction Site	Music Stage	Narrative Stage	Craft & Cooking Tent		
10																10	
11	Square Dancing: Panamanians & Costa Ricans	Steelpan Tuner Discussion of Voodoo	Botanica & Craft & Cooking Demonstrations			Demonstrations All Day: Baltimore Arabbers, Eye-glass Defogger Pitchman New York City Bootjacker, Balloon Man, Baseball Stadium Hotdog Vendor, & Medicine Man			Demonstrations All Day: Making Squeaky Cheese 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Baking Oven Pancakes & Breads 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wool Carding Spinning, Knitting, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sauna Construction 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Whipsled Ride 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Birchbark Weaving 12-2 p.m. Log Hewing 2-3 p.m. Fishnet Making 3-5 p.m. Lastu Making 10 a.m.-5 p.m.		Dog Trot House Builders "Found Food" Specialist Traditional Georgia Music Meat Smokers Traditional Georgia Music	Quilting Bee (1-3 p.m.) & Demonstrations All Day: Wine Making, Meat Smoking, Butter Making, Canning, Cane Syrup Making, & "Found Food" Preparation	Participants will be building a traditional southern dog trot house from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.	Workshop	Workshop Presentations on Southeast Asian Crafts, Games, Costume, Holidays, Celebrations, Dance, Puppets, & Immigrant Experiences	Craft & Cooking Demonstrations All Day	11
12		Cricket Workshop Children's Dance Workshop		Demonstration & Discussion of Pitches	Pen, Foot Medicine, Chinese Water Lily, Candy, & Side Show Pitches			Music						Lao Music			12
1		Mardi Gras Discussion		Household Auction	Demonstration & Discussion of Pitches		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Finnish Foods & Traditions						Workshop			1
2	Parade of the Bands			Tobacco Auction Lesson in Auctioneering	Side Show, Mouse, Jam, Grab Joint, & Candy Pitches		How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Kantele Music & Lore					Vietnamese Music			2	
3				Household Auction Tobacco Auction		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets							Workshop			3	
4 Calypso Competition with Fire-Eater & Stick Fighter: Mardi Gras Krewe Awards & Prizes			Household Auction	Jazz Club & New Orleans Pitches Medicine, Geek & Side Show Pitches		How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Concert Folk Dancing Demonstration Folk Dancing					Hmong Music			4	
5					Demonstration & Discussion of Street Cries		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets						Khmer Music			5	

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Monday October 13

Schedules are subject to change.
An interpreter for the deaf will
be present in the Finnish American
Area all day.

The spruce *sauna* will be sold at an auction in the
Finnish American Area at 4 p.m.

Caribbean Americans

American Talkers

Finnish Americans

Folk Housing & Energy Efficiency* Community Activities & Food Preservation**

Southeast Asian Americans

	Large Tent	Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Auction Tent Area	Pitchmen Tent	Street Crier Row	Film Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Craft & Cooking Tent	Music & Narrative Tent	Food Preservation Area	Dog Trot Construction Site	Music Stage	Narrative Stage	Craft & Cooking Tent		
10																10	
11	Caribbean Folk Singing	Film (10 min.) Costume Workshop	Botanica & Craft & Cooking Demonstrations			Demonstrations All Day: Baltimore Arabbers, Eye-glass Defogger Pitchman, New York City Bootjacker, Balloon Man,			Demonstrations All Day: Making Squeaky Cheese 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Baking Oven Pancakes & Breads 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Making Linen Thread from Raw Flax 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sauna Construction 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Whip Sled Ride 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Log Hewing 12-1 p.m. Fishnet Making 1-3 p.m. Lastu Making 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Ski Presentation Ceremony 3-4 p.m. Auction of Sauna at 4 p.m.	Dairy Product Makers Dog Trot House Builders Traditional Georgia Music Food Canners Dog Trot House Builders	Demonstrations All Day: Wine Making, Meat Smoking, Butter Making, Canning, Cane Syrup Making, & "Found Food" Preparation	Participants will be building a traditional southern dog trot house from 10 a.m to 5 p.m daily.	Workshop	Workshop Presentations on Southeast Asian Crafts, Games, Costume, Holidays, Celebrations, Dance, Puppets, & Immigrant Experiences	Craft & Cooking Demonstrations All Day	11	
12	Square Dancing: Panamanians	Oral Historian Steelpan Tuner		Demonstration & Discussion of Auction Chants	Pen, Foot Medicine, Chinese Water Lily, Candy & Side Show Pitches			Music						Lao Music			12
1	Stick Fighters			Lesson in Auctioneering	Demonstration & Discussion of Pitches		Baseball Stadium Hotdog Vendor, & Medicine Man	Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets						Workshop			1
2	Reggae Band		Cooking Demonstrations	Household Auction				Kantele Music & Lore						Vietnamese Music			2
3	Calypsonians			Tobacco Auction	Medicine, Geek & Side Show Pitches		How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck										3
4	Fire-Eater & Limbo			Household Auction	Jazz Club & New Orleans Pitches		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Wilderness Traditions: Survival Techniques						Workshop			4
5	Stick Fighters			Household Auction	Side Show, Jam, Mouse, Grab Joint, & Candy Pitches		How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck	Concert					House Warming Party at Dog Trot House	Hmong Music			5
6	Steelband & Reggae Concert				Demonstration & Discussion of Street Cries		Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets Mermaids, Frog Legs, & Filets	Folk Dancing Demonstration						Khmer Music			6

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Participants in the 1980 Festival of American Folklife

Caribbean Americans

Miguel Alpizar: Santero—Silver Spring, MD
George Andre: Brazilian music discussant—Washington, DC
Ruthven John Blake: publicist & M.C.—Silver Hill, MD
Elliott P. Boisdore: Mardi Gras discussant—New Orleans, LA
Brightwood Elementary School: Hispanic-American games—Washington, DC
Marie & Claude Brooks: dancer and drummer—New York, NY
William Brown: Umbanda discussant, leader, Brazilian costumed band—Washington, DC
Selwyn Callendar: stick fighter—Washington, DC
Isolina Campbell: Botanica—Washington, DC
Caribbean-American Carnival Day Association (Edward Harry, leader): costume band—Boston, MA
Carifolk Singers (Augustus Howell, leader): Caribbean folk singers—Washington, DC
Lucy Carvajal: craftsperson—Washington, DC
Mildred Catuy: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Byron Chambers: Cricket discussant—Teaneck, NJ
Hector Corporan: presenter—Washington, DC
Ruben O. Davis: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Joan Dupigny: Ole Mas & Kiddies costume band—Washington, DC
Camboy Estevez: Dominican costume band—Washington, DC
Sylvia Fisher: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Winston Fleary: leader, Afro-Caribbean Dancers, Big Drum Nation—Brooklyn, NY

Iona Forbes: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Randolph Forbes: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Henry Frank: Vodun discussant—New York, NY
Paul Greenhall: kite flyer—Washington, DC
Marjorie Hall: Rastafari discussant—Washington, DC
Errol Hosein: Cricket discussant—Bloomfield, CT
Oscar A. Hunte: fire-eater—Montreal, Quebec
Image (John Rosemen, leader): Calypso Band, Rockville, MD
Lucille Jacob: costume band—Hartford, CT
Edgar King: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Allen Labertis: costumed individual (Moko Jumbie)—Baltimore, MD
Urban Lane: costume band—Washington, DC
Steve LaRoche: costumed individual (bat)—Washington, DC
Hollis Lashley: Master of Ceremonies—Washington, DC
Sylvie S. Lee Kin: kite flyer—Silver Spring, MD
Vernon Lee Kin: kite flyer—Silver Spring, MD
Eli Mannette: steelpan tuner—Long Island, NY
Godfrey Marchand: costume designer—Miami, FL
Diann Marshall: dancer—Washington, DC
Von Martin: publicist & M.C.—Seabrook, MD
Maryland Pacesetters (Pasley Graham, agent): steelband—Baltimore, MD
Sandra Mendoza: Cuban costume band dancer—Washington, DC
Stephenson Michael, leader, Duro Ladipo Theatre Ensemble: costume band—Silver Spring, MD

Will Morris: stick fighter: Washington, DC
Loline F. Payne: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Winston Peters ("Gypsy"): extemporaneous calypsonian—Brooklyn, NY
James Porter: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Premier International (Nadine Howell, leader): Reggae band—Silver Spring, MD
Rosalie Roman: Puerto Rican costume band—Washington, DC
Ralph Roper: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Samba Batucada Group (William Brown, leader): Samba workshop—Washington, DC
Silver Stars Steel Orchestra (Kelvin Griffith, captain): steelband—Boston, MA
Sons of His Majesty (Satta Blue, leader): Nyabingi drummers, Rastafari discussants—Washington, DC
Triangle Systems (Linda Phifer, leader): kiddies and costume band—Washington, DC
The Trinidad and Tobago Baltimore Steel Orchestra (Paul Gervais, leader): steelband—Baltimore, MD
The Trinidad and Tobago Steelband of Washington, D.C. (Franklin Harding, leader): steelband—Washington, DC
Brian Walker: dancer, costume band—Washington, DC
Levi Warren: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
Reginald Warren: Cornelia Cotillion Square Dance Club—New York, NY
The West Indian American Labor Day Association (Carlos Lezama, leader): carnival organizer—New York, NY

Peter Whiteman: costume designer,
costume band leader—
Washington, DC
The Wild Tchoupitoulas (Jason Berry,
agent): Mardi Gras krewe—New
Orleans, LA
Connie Williams: cook—Brooklyn,
NY

Community Activities & Food Preservation

Maria Agner: wine making—
Fitzgerald, GA
Etta Mae Anderson: found foods—
Ocilla, GA
Martha Barrs: canning—Ocilla, GA
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Bentley: meat
smoking—Pelham, GA
Minnie Pearl Brown: canning—
Tifton, GA
W. Guy Bruce: musician—Trion, GA
Mr. & Mrs. Grady Bryan: cane syrup
making—Lenox, GA
Annie Mae Calloway: canning—
Tifton, GA
Mrs. Calvin Davis: dairy products—
Ocilla, GA
Forrest B. Joiner: canning—Meigs,
GA
Joe Miller: musician—Campton, GA
Peggy Miller: canning—Sylvester, GA
Neal Pattaman: musician—
Winterville, GA
Ivery Sneed: canning—Ocilla, GA
Gordon Tanner: musician—Dacula,
GA
Phil Tanner: musician—Dacula, GA

Folk Housing & Energy Efficiency

William F. Brogdon: dog trot builder
—Omega, GA
Florida Coffee: dog trot builder—
Rhine, GA
Dabney Crosby: dog trot builder—
Pelham, GA
Lois Davis: dog trot builder—
Camilla, GA
Jesse Freeman: dog trot builder—
Richland, GA

Eugene Lane: dog trot builder—
Ocilla, GA
Henry Lynch, Sr.: dog trot builder—
Lumpkin, GA
Henry Lynch, Jr.: dog trot builder—
Lumpkin, GA
Jack McGalliard: dog trot builder—
Pelham, GA
Harvey Powell: dog trot builder—
Omega, GA
Allen Shellhorse: dog trot builder—
Tifton, GA
Alan Sligh: dog trot builder—
Hamilton, GA

American Talkers

Fred Bloodgood: pitchman—
Madison, WI
John Bradshaw: pitchman—New
Canton, VA
Dick Burnett: pitchman—
Winterhaven, FL
Bob Cage: auctioneer—South
Boston, VA
Bud Corey: pitchman—New Orleans,
LA
Bernie Doeppkins: tobacco warehouse
manager—Waysons Corner, MD
Sonny Diggs: arabber—Baltimore, MD
Buford Evans: auctioneer—
Lawrenceburg, TN
Marcus Johnson: balloon man—
Washington, DC
Randall Johnson: eye-glass defogger
vendor—Greenville, SC
Walter Kelly: arabber—Baltimore,
MD
Alton Machen: medicine man—
Elizabethton, TN
Bus Mars: auctioneer—Pawlet, VT
Edward Morrow: auctioneer,
Martinsburg, WV
Vincent Ploche: bootjacker, New
York, NY
Bobby Reynolds: pitchman, Fillmore,
CA
Victor Rhoades: auctioneer,
Pottstown, PA
Tom Walton: hot dog vendor, St.
Petersburg, FL

Finnish Americans

George E. Ahlgren: log hewer—
Duluth, MN
Joyce E. Davis: *kantele* player—
Minneapolis, MN
Jeanne A. Doty: musician—Eveleth,
MN
Alex Hietala: musician—Embarass,
MN
Geraldine Kangas: cook—Aurora, MN
John Kangas: whip sled builder/
operator—Aurora, MN
Karen H. Kiviluoma: cook—Makinen,
MN
Pentti Korpi: log hewer—Duluth,
MN
Laimi Koskiniemi: knitter and cook—
Gilbert, MN
Wilbert W. Koskiniemi: fishnet maker
—Makinen, MN
Eva Lammi: *lastu* maker—Virginia,
MN
Martin Mattson: head log hewer—
Esko, MN
Robert J. Mattson: whip sled builder/
operator—Aurora, MN
Marvin Salo: woodsman—Embarass,
MN
Gregg W. Santa: musician—Hibbing,
MN
Wesley A. Santa: musician—Hibbing,
MN
Larry H. Saukko: musician—Tower,
MN
Lilya White: spinner and cook—
Aurora, MN

Southeast Asian Americans

Hmong
Song Vu Chang: musician, storyteller
—Providence, RI
Yeu Chang: crafts—Philadelphia, PA
Tolanda Hang: singer, dancer, crafts—
Philadelphia, PA
Chia Chu Kue: musician—
Providence, RI
Pia Lee: cook—Falls Church, VA
Yang See: presenter—Falls Church, VA

Pang Xiong: musician, singer, dancer,
crafts—Philadelphia, PA
Long Yang: musician—Arlington, VA
Vang Yang: musician, crafts—
Providence, RI

Khmer

Phok Dul: crafts—Arlington, VA
Phoung Phan: musician, dancer—
Arlington, VA
Moly Sam: dancer—Ocean City, NJ
Sam-Ang Sam: dancer, musician,
puppeteer—Ocean City, NJ
Sain Seng: cook—Arlington, VA
Ven Wath: crafts—Providence, RI

Lao

Da Inthirath: musician—Herndon, VA
Nouaane Inthirath: musician, crafts—
Herndon, VA
So Khamvongsa: musician—
Alexandria, VA
Phouratsamy Naughton: presenter,
cook—Springfield, VA
Kham Souk Phanthavong: musician—
Arlington, VA
Sing Soulamani: crafts—Alexandria,
VA

Vietnamese

Nguyen Ngoc Bich: presenter—
Springfield, VA
Anh Duy Dao, M.D.: musician, singer
—Butler, IN
Hoang Oanh: singer—Middlesex, NJ
Tam Vi Thuy: musician—Fairfax, VA
My Van: cook—Arlington, VA

Festival Staff

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Strickland

Assistants: Anne Mercer, Mary
Wilson

Assistant Designer: Abby Bernon

Associate Designer: Jenifer Weiss

Administrative Assistant: Pamela Ow

Clerk typist: Leslie Stein

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Scipio

Caribbean Americans Program

Coordinator: Katherine Williams

Special Consultant: Roy
Bryce-LaPorte

Technical Director: Paul Squire

Crew Chief: Fred Price

Grounds Crew: Brian Cooper,
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Debra Levick, Steven Martinetti,
Terrance Meniefield, Katherine
Porterfield, Elaine Reinhold,
William Tibble

Volunteer Coordinator: Magdalena
Gilinsky

Supply Coordinator: Alvin Shealey

Sound Crew Chief: Mike Rivers

Sound Technicians: Mathieu
Chabert, Peter Derbyshire,
Nick Hawes, Steven Green,
Harriet Moss, Bill Pearson, Keith
Secola, Cal Southworth

Recording Engineer:

Gregg G. Lamping

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Hadley, Richard Hofmeister, Akmal
Holden

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Lindeman, Linda St. Thomas

Hometown News: Abby Wasserman

Grants and Risk Management Office

Liaisons: Chip Albertson, Alice
Bryan

Site Design: Gary Floyd

Fieldworkers/Presenters

Steve Addiss
John W. Berquist
Charley Camp
Amy Catlin
Dennis Coehlo
Hector Corporan
Amanda Dargan
Richard Flint
Marjorie Hunt
Geraldine Johnson
Fred Lieberman
Howard Marshall
Von Martin
Maxine Miska
Bill Moore
Elliott Parris
Leslie Prosterman
Arthur Rosenbaum
Jack Santino
Marta Schley
Katherine Williams
Margaret Yocom
Steven Zeitlin

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Supply Services
OPLANTS
Grants & Risk Management
Division of Performing Arts
Photographic Services
Communications & Transportation
Travel Services
Exhibits Central
Audio-Visual Unit
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Security & Protection
Membership & Development
Horticulture
Congressional & Public Information
Elementary & Secondary Education
Grants & Fellowships
Contracts
Motion Picture Unit
Anthropological Film Center

Special Thanks

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The Daily Chronicle, Santa Paula, CA
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Nashville Auction School, Nashville,
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Gerry Parsons
Triangle Tobacco Warehouse, Inc.,
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2

highlands of Laos, who have brought with them the ancient traditions of embroidery, appliqué, batik, and silversmithing.

The Hmong are mentioned in Chinese texts dating back almost 2000 years. They are famous for their organization, independence, and initiative, and for their folk art. The Hmong lived in mountainous areas, usually at elevations of over 3000 feet. The various subgroups of the Hmong, such as the green, the white, and the black are differentiated by costume. The women make kilt-like skirts of many small pleats. The material itself is an intricate combination of bright colors—reds, greens, black, and white—with an underlying level of subtle batik. The batik is made by growing cotton or hemp and weaving it into cloth. Wax, gathered from wild bee hives, is applied in an intricate pattern. The cloth is then dipped into a vat of natural indigo dye. (Indigo is a plant that grows in Asia and Africa whose stems are fermented in a crock and made into the deep blue dye.) Where wax has been applied to the fabric, the dye does not take, and a subtle pattern emerges when the wax is removed.

The Hmong are also famous for their appliqué and reverse appliqué work. Small pieces of fabric are sewn on top of each other, and some are cut and folded back to reveal layers of another color underneath. For example, the cloth is cut in a spiral shape and folded back to produce a narrow even spiral shape in a contrasting color. Hmong women make cloth carriers for their infants consisting of rows of appliqué with batik underneath and red cloth cross-hatching over the batik. They also do skillful embroidery with silk thread, which because of the closeness and precision of the stitching, often looks like beaded work. The beauty of the Hmong costume was also important during the New Year's festivities when boys and girls tossed a cloth ball back and forth. The person missing the ball would have to give the person who threw it an embroidered belt or silver necklace. Later they would meet to return the items; this was part of their courtship. The Hmong may not wear their costumes everyday, but they continue to produce appliqué and embroideries using American fabrics and sometimes American color schemes and stitches. While many of the older women know how to make batiks, it quite difficult to get natural indigo in the United States.

It is not only the lack of materials, however, that challenges the persistence of traditional crafts, but also the available time. A large and complex Hmong textile may take two years to complete. The new immigrants do not have two years to devote to these tasks. It is similar with the arts of Cambodia. In



2 Sing Soulamani works on a loom constructed by her husband. In Laos she wove silk but here she has substituted cotton thread.

3 Like many other Cambodian stone carvers, Doul Phuoc's designs are derived from carvings at Angkor Wat and adapted to practical objects.

4 Hmong women wear their distinctive traditional costume at a gathering in Philadelphia.

Cambodia weaving was done on a large rectangular loom; a scarf thus woven might take one month. The traditional garment for men and women, the *sampot* might take two months. Vegetable dyes, available only in certain months are mixed for each garment, making each one unique. The most complicated design, using pre-dyed multicolored thread takes three months. Along both of these dimensions—availability of materials and time-frame—the folk arts of Southeast Asia will be changed by the pressures of living in the United States.

For the new arrivals to the United States who left their homes so abruptly, the appliquéd baby carrier, the sarong woven of silk and silver threads, and the reed organ are all treasured mementos of the past and models for production and innovation of folk artistic forms. The new forms will be adapted to the American environment—some things will have to change. A Hmong man looks at his sturdy twelve-inch bamboo flute and laughingly remarks that the bamboo in the United States is very skinny, and he continues to play on his old flute.





9



11



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5 A close-up of the cross stitch that decorates the tightly pleated skirt of the Hmong costume.

6 Hmong textile work includes batik, embroidery, appliqué and reverse appliqué. (See the covers for examples of the latter two.) This type of fine batik work would have been done with bees wax and natural indigo dye in the home village.

7 Detail of the belt that shows the tiny, even stitches characteristic of Hmong needlework.

8 A young Hmong watches as an older woman works on the small appliqué and embroidery squares that form the long belt of the costume.

9 This *pa ndao* uses chain stitch to form the popular "snail" motif and satin stitch on the flowers.

10 Detail of chain stitch on *pa ndao*

11 Another part of the Hmong costume is an elaborate silver necklace like the one pictured here. In this country Hmong craftsmen have turned to aluminum as a less expensive material.

Suggested reading:

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May Mayko Ebihara. *Svay, a Khmer Village in Cambodia*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Columbia Univ. Ph.D., 1968.

Fleeson, Katherine Fleeson. *Laos Folk-Lore of Farther India*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899.

Graham, David Crockett. *Songs and Stories of the Ch'uan Miao*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1954.

Steinberg, David J. *Cambodia, its People, its Society, its Culture*. New Haven: HRAF Press, 1959.

Huynh Sanh Thong. *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Talking Reeds and Singing Voices:

Music from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam

By Amy Catlin

Photo by Amy Catlin for the Smithsonian



Photo by Amy Catlin for the Smithsonian



- 1 The Hmong use the *njang* or jaw's harp as a courtship instrument. In his left hand this young man holds the wooden carrying case for the instrument.
- 2 This free reed flute is one of many wind instruments Sam Ang Sam learned to play in Cambodia.

Amy Catlin received her doctorate in ethnomusicology from Brown University, June, 1980. She has done fieldwork in India and Indonesia and with Southeast Asians in Providence, Rhode Island. She was a fieldworker and presenter for the Indian program and tour of the 1976

Music from Southeast Asia can be heard throughout the United States today. Most regions in the United States have Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Hmong cultural associations that organize festivals such as New Year celebrations, where music is performed. Here the many traditional activities are mixed with modern elements, and visitors are welcome to observe and participate.

At the Festival of American Folklife, however, we are concentrating on the music that represents the older strands of tradition; those strands that stem primarily from village and home life. One of the basic instrument types found throughout the region is the *free reed*, whose simplest form is a leaf held in the hands or lips and blown to produce noise, or, in the case of the talented, music. The Hmong and Cambodians are known for their skill at playing tunes on such a leaf, which is a popular worldwide folk instrument.

Another free reed instrument is the *jaw harp*, made of a thin strip of cane or metal that is attached at one end to a frame and plucked at the other. Of course, this must be held at the mouth (jaw) while inhaling or exhaling at each rhythmic stroke to produce music. By changing the shape of the mouth cavity, the various notes of the melody are amplified to an audible level. The jaw harp is found throughout the world; it is also called a Jew's harp or guimbard. Southeast Asian jaw harps are different in their basic design, however, because the vibrating "tongue" of the instrument is usually cut only a hair's breadth from the frame surrounding it. Also, this tongue is often shaped like an extremely elongated triangle, sometimes with two additional points flanking the apex.

The Hmong use the jaw harp to convey messages in courtship. A young man serenades the one he has chosen by composing his thoughts into words and then expressing them through the jaw harp. The young woman replies with her own instrument. Hmong is a tonal language with eight tones, so it is possible to produce the rising, falling, or straight tones at the appropriate high, middle, or low pitch levels on any melodic instrument. Thus, the "talking drums" of Africa have a counterpart in the "talking reeds" of the Hmong.

A free reed may also be inserted into the side of a horn or pipe. A delicate sound is produced by covering the reed with the mouth and alternately blowing and sucking with firm, gentle pressure. These free reed pipes measure from a few inches to several feet in length and produce a low, haunting tone. Elaborate ornamented melodies can be played by the addition of finger holes. Again, the Hmong melodies are based upon the rising and falling contours of speech. Courtship may be the subject of a player's thoughts, or other personal poetry may be transmitted through these talking reeds.

The singing of the Hmong need not always be translated into instrumental form. Many people are experts at performing spontaneous sung poetry, which may express longing, nostalgia, and love of nature or one's village. Courtship is often conducted by singing alternately for hours in order for the couple to understand each other's feelings and thoughts. For shyer couples, however, the voice is masked by the talking reed. Interestingly, Hmong children do not sing because singing's function is to court and to express deep thoughts; although parents do sing lullabies to their children.

Cambodians also use various types of free reed horns and pipes. The *pey pork* is played by inserting the entire end of the pipe containing the reed into the mouth and cheek. It produces gentle, ethereal melodies that accompany melancholy dance. Two basic ensemble types are used for festivals and dance:

the *mohori* and the *pinpeat*. The *mohori* ensemble contains mostly string instruments, such as the bowed spiked fiddle (*tro*) and the plucked *chapei*. The *pinpeat* contains xylophones, metallophones, gong-chimes or horizontal sets of small tuned gongs, drums, finger cymbals, and the penetrating oboe (*seralai*). This ensemble accompanies masked dance, classical dance, and the shadow play. The folk version of shadow theater, (*ayang*), uses small translucent leather puppets to tell humorous stories, with improvised dialogue and contemporary satire predominating.

When several free reed pipes are joined together, the reed organ is formed, which is found from Bangladesh to Borneo. The Hmong *gaeng* is played at celebrations and funerals by older men who often dance and perform acrobatic feats, such as somersaults, while continuously inhaling and exhaling into the mouthpiece. Sometimes several *gaeng* players compete, and some Hmong people dance in groups along with the players. Their dances have titles such as *Welcome* and *Friends*.

The Lao counterpart (*kaen*), unlike the curving Hmong instrument, has straight pipes. It is played for courtship, shadow puppetry, and to accompany expert singers (*mawlum*). Often two singers will improvise a dialogue on a romantic or philosophical topic and dance to the *kaen* music between each response. Percussion instruments may join in some forms. The *kaen* also participates in the *lanat* ensemble, which contains xylophones, fiddles, fipple flute, gong-chimes, drums, voices, and finger cymbals. This ensemble plays for group dances at festivals and celebrations.

Many of these instruments produce music that is audible only in intimate groups, but their delicacy of sound is treasured. The Vietnamese monochord *dan bau* is such an instrument. Its single string is stretched by one hand to change its pitch after being released (not struck) by a stick held in the other hand. All the tones produced are harmonics, as in the jaw harp. Thus, it must be played in quiet places and in close company. The *bat truong quan* is another monochord, but it can be heard outdoors where it accompanies groups of boys who call out their challenging riddle-songs to a nearby group of girls who must reply. The single string is actually a rope about eight feet long strung tautly over a pit three feet wide and braced up in the center. The two sides of the rope are struck with sticks in a rhythmic drone. The pit is lined with seashells to increase its capacity for reflecting the sound.

Of course, these instruments and ensembles represent only a tiny fraction of the traditions that originated in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and that are continually being brought to America. They contribute immensely to the richness of our kaleidoscopic cultural quilt, and we welcome the opportunity to learn from them.

Photo by Nicholas Bocher for the Smithsonian



Photo by Nicholas Bocher for the Smithsonian



3 Da Inthirath demonstrates the Lao *kaen*, a type of mouth organ.

4 The *dan tranh*, here played by Kim Oanh, is a traditional Vietnamese instrument.

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Community Events and Rural America

By Dennis Coelbo

Both professional people, they had worked until the last minute, and then left their jobs in Atlanta for the long, hot drive that September Saturday afternoon. Mrs. Betty Highsmith remembered the disquiet at being unable to personally prepare any food. The family, the neighborhood, and the community would all be gathered at Old Empire Primitive Baptist Church in southeastern Berrien County, Georgia, for the yearly Homecoming. There would be singing, dinner-on-the-grounds, preaching, and the chance to visit the graves of friends and relatives just across the new road from the church. Decades of parked wagons had finally worn a path that separated the church from the cemetery. Recent county improvements had brought paving to the path and put a bridge over the little stream, thereby eliminating the bothersome shoes-off trek through the creek.

As they drove south through the heat of the day, Mrs. Highsmith recalled Homecoming meetings at Old Empire that she had attended as a little girl. She remembered her father standing outside the church on Sunday morning, inviting each returning pilgrim to dinner at the farm. Once, over 60 people accepted his cordial hospitality. The family had all worked for days to prepare the household, and a half-century later, the memory of hospitality gladly given and received still shines without tarnish. Food, family, and fellowship all mixed nostalgically in her mind as they approached Tifton. Mrs. Highsmith was uneasy: it would not be right to come to Homecoming without some kind of food.



Dennis Coelbo is Folklorist for the South Georgia Folklife Project, a program of the Arts Experiment Station at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia. He is a Ph.D. candidate at the Folklore Institute at Indiana University and is currently completing his dissertation on The Search for a Useable Past: Historical Festivals and Their Audiences.

American Folklife Center / Library of Congress Photo by Carl Fleischauer



Photo by Howard W. Marshall
American Folklife Center / Library of Congress

2



- 1 Plate of traditional foods served at a dinner at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Damascus, Georgia
- 2 Dinner on the grounds, Royal family singing convention, Mystic, Georgia
- 3 Array of homemade desserts prepared for annual homecoming at Bethel Baptist Church, Worth County, Georgia

3

Pulling into Tifton, they drove quickly across town to the courthouse square. Thank the Lord, the bakery was still open. They dashed in and, with her husband's encouragement, she bought every cake and pie in the store—nearly \$75.00 worth. After carefully loading the food in the car, they set off on the final 30 miles to the church. They felt ready to do their part.

Throughout rural America, community events such as Homecomings act as centripetal forces pulling members back into the center of values, of behaviors, of world view all tied together in activities that reinforce the past and tailor the future. While Homecomings in the southeast tend to be most strongly developed in a sacred or religious context, secular forms exist as well, blossoming forth to cover all the symbolic territory in ways that accomplish some manifest goals and, at the same time, present community style, i.e., the appropriate behavior in the appropriate fashion.

Human society is built on the expectation of predictable behavior. Community events in America reinforce and restate the expected style of behavior in attempting to reintegrate distant members to the community's values. No event, no matter how tedious, is all work—nor is any festivity all frolic. Perhaps there is something in humanity that best transmits and receives cultural statements as a mixture of frivolity and determination.



4 Sacred Harp Sing at Georgia Agrirama

5 Jam Session at the home of Preston Newell, Tift County, Georgia.

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The Homecoming at Old Empire is an example. Each year, in preparation for the event, the church cemetery receives its annual cleaning and arranging. The yearly pilgrim strolls through the ordered grounds, rarely sensing that each August, nature, Sysiphus-like, nearly recaptures the grounds before being driven back by volunteers from the congregation. Cleaning the graveyard is hot, dirty, and often melancholy work that nonetheless needs to be done.

While few events are ever total gaiety, even fewer are unrelieved work. In South Georgia, land clearing meant neighborhood gatherings for a "log-rolling" (putting cut timber into piles to be burned), while the women gathered on the porch or in the dog trot house to piece and quilt for the coming winter. Such hard-work days usually ended with a frolic. More recently, peanut shelling for seed, corn husking, and even the tobacco harvest were followed by a covered dish supper, singing, and old-style dancing. Luther Creech of Mitchell County, Ga., recalls how he would somehow lose the bone-weary fatigue of day-long work in the cotton fields when one neighbor or another would dispatch a car or wagon to fetch him to lead, teach, and call a dance. "Seems there was always some reason for a frolic, back then," he said.

In Solsberry, in Greene County, Ind., the community began an annual fish fry to raise money for the volunteer fire department. But the event was so successful that it became part of the town's sudden self-consciousness and developing internal cohesiveness after years of gradual decline. After awhile, it was almost as if the money raised was irrelevant. More importantly, the community pulled together to establish and continue the event. Local musicians who revived old skills to provide entertainment suddenly found their activities spilling over into church functions and other community activities. The goal was to buy new equipment for the firemen, but along the way, Solsberry gained a new coherence.

Motives for public events are of course subject to the winds of economic, political, and social change. From the 1890s through the 1950s, rural America centered secular celebration at the local school. John R. Griffin of Lenox, Ga., now 83, fondly remembers playing his fiddle for school closings each spring as the students filed out of the buildings. The neighborhood school in fact provided a center for the yearly cycle of opening ceremonies in the fall, recitations and drama in the winter, and frolics and closing events in the spring. Some of these activities were lost while others were transferred to local churches when economics forced the increasing consolidation of rural school systems after World War II.

The community and its institutions are tied to the common needs of its members for food, shelter, solace, and fellowship. Whether cooking for Homecoming or feeding the firemen, public participation in community events validates our membership in the cultural system, and provides a common sense of purpose, of contribution, of what needs to be done and how to do it.

Dog Trot Comfort:

A Note on Traditional Houses

and Energy Efficiency

By Howard W. Marshall

A hallmark of folk architecture is that it “fits in” with the surrounding physical and cultural environment. Like ballads and baskets, folk houses vary according to regional and ethnic configurations, and express a personally meaningful style.

Many students of architecture are drawn by the functional and inventive ways that people have traditionally coped with the details of survival. People in different regions have developed ways of taking advantage of natural energy sources and the landscape's innate character to find comfort. Climate and locally available building materials affect house design and construction. The same style of house may be made of heavy, hewn, oak logs tightly chinked and sealed in horizontal weatherboarding in the cold climes of Missouri or Indiana, but it might be built of light pine poles and left unchinked and cool in Georgia or Mississippi. A two-room house in Massachusetts may hug the ground and have a huge central fireplace to add radiant warmth, while in tidewater North Carolina the same dwelling sits high off the ground, its chimney outside the gable end to keep *out* as much heat as possible. The environment, then, plays a vital part in determining building traditions and appropriate forms of shelter.

The dog trot house has long been the symbol of traditional homes of the southern United States. Known to specialists as the central hall house, it features a distinctive hallway (“dog trot,” “turkey run,” or other suggestive name) through the middle of the one-room wide, one-story dwelling. Two rooms of roughly equal size flank this passage. Chimneys frame the gable ends, and wide, shady porches and wings added to the rear of the house are standard. Often thought to be strictly log, these houses are made of frame and other materials as well. Like most other buildings of folk architecture, the dogtrot is an extension of the basic one-room house that originated in medieval Europe.



1 Shellhorse dog trot house, Tift County, Georgia.
All photographs by Howard W. Marshall, American Folklife
Center/Library of Congress
All drawings by Howard W. Marshall

Howard W. (Rusty) Marshall is a Folklife Specialist at the American Folklife Center whose responsibilities include the areas of material culture, museums, preservation, and the design and supervision of field research projects. He is a native Missourian and holds a B.A. degree in English from the University of Missouri, and received both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the Folklore Institute at Indiana University. He is a former editor of *Pioneer America*, publishes widely on folklife subjects, and teaches a periodic graduate seminar at George Washington University.

2 Widdon frame dog trot house with hall enclosed, Georgia.

3 Floor plan of Widdon house.

4 Shellhorse log dog trot house.

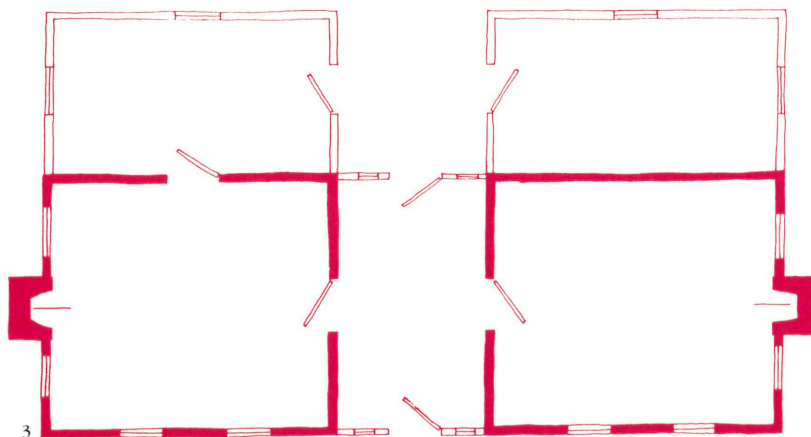
5 Detail of saddle-knotched logs at corner of shellhorse log dog trot house.

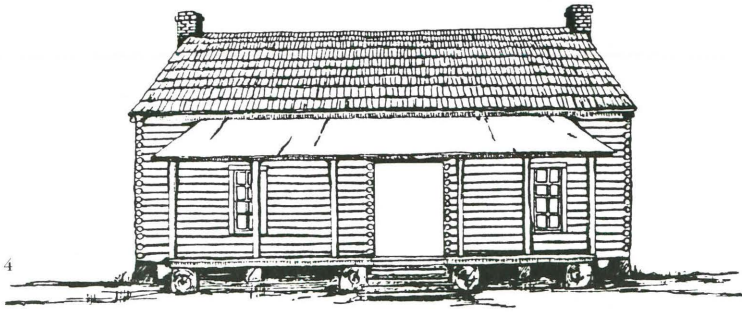
6 Bledsoe house, Hartsburg, in Missouri's Little Dixie Region, showing how the central breezeway was enclosed in response to Missouri's cooler temperatures.

7 Floor plan of Bledsoe house.

8 Another example of a Missouri frame dog trot house with enclosed breezeway. It was built in the early 19th century in the Mississippi River bottoms, Boone County.

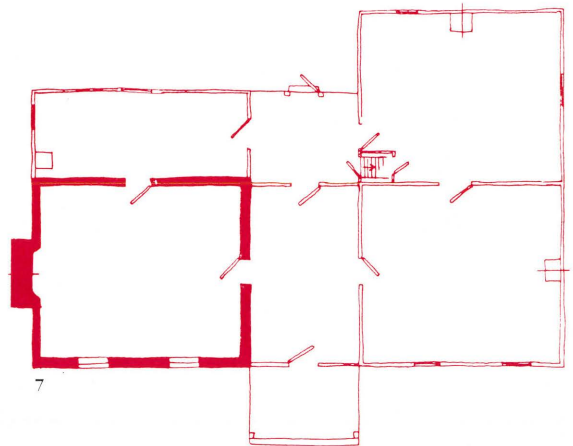
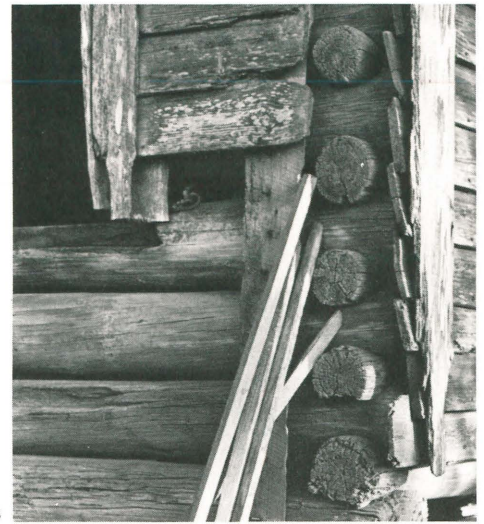
At its core, the dog trot house has a perfect air-conditioning system. By channelling breezes through the central hallway, the architecture relies on nature—not mechanical contrivances—to cool the interior. In the 17th and 18th centuries the breezeway provided a refreshing area for meals, family activities, and sleeping, especially in the South. Doors and windows could be set so as to pull air throughout the house. Nineteenth-century settlers from the Southeast took the dog trot design to the Midwest and enclosed the distinctive breezeway to protect themselves from the cold, snowy winters. Later in the 1800s the introduction of rural electrification made the open hallway obsolete. Today, the old dog trot houses found on midwestern farms are virtually undetectable without a visit inside, since the painted wood siding hides the old hallway from view.





In 1926 Mr. and Mrs. Allen Shellhorse bought Wesley Phelps' log dog trot house near Tifton, in the Wiregrass region of southern Georgia and lived in it for four years. Phelps had closed in the original breezeway, added frame wings and horizontal siding and had replaced the south log wall with a frame one without the chimney. Mr. Shellhorse noted how much cooler the dogtrot house was to live in than his modern dwelling with its many electric fans.

Folk houses like the humble dog trot seem noble indeed when their qualities of energy efficiency are combined with their importance as artifacts that embody deep meanings and long traditions for people in everyday life.



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From Drying Shed to Drying Chevy: Food Preservation Remains a Lively Tradition

By Gerri Johnson

In recent years it has become increasingly evident that we must broaden our conservation efforts to include resources such as food. Rising prices are forcing people to find alternatives to the grocery store. One way to combat the crunch is to store food. Not only does food storage save money, but it also allows seasonal fruits and vegetables to be available throughout the year. In many areas of the rural South, gardening, canning, drying, and smoking are traditional forms of retaining food that have remained vital for years.

Peer into the basement or root cellar of many rural homes and you will find summer's bounty stored for the winter. Potatoes covered with lime fill a bin in one corner of the room. Colorful jars filled with fruit, vegetables, and meat line the walls, while crocks full of still fermenting pickle beans sit in another corner. Dried apples, beans, peaches, and corn are stored in brown paper bags, and home-cured hams hang from beams overhead.

Even though they own freezers, many rural women prefer to can, dry, and pickle produce from their gardens because it is more economical and the food suits their regional palates. Blue Ridge women, for example, raise large gardens and may can from 200-600 quarts of food each year—"enough to last a lifetime," one woman says. People can raise food, Carrie Severt continues, "cheaper than they can buy it." In addition, her home-canned tomatoes, applesauce, and sausage taste better. "I'd rather have mine than buy it out of the store," she concludes.

Geraldine Johnson studied folklore at the University of California at Los Angeles and received her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1980. Her dissertation, entitled Rag Rugs and Rug Makers: A Study of Craft and Community is a regional approach to a woman's craft. She is an Associate Professor at Strayer College in Washington, D.C. For the past 3 years she has participated in research projects for the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and for the Smithsonian Institution Office of Folklife Programs.



American Folklife Center / Library of Congress Photo by Terry Eiler



Food that is not canned is often pickled. Dilly beans, chow-chow, pickled corn, tomatoes, and beets—as well as several varieties of watermelon and cucumber pickles—fill the cellars of traditional cooks. Many women still make sauerkraut and pickle beans in a large crock covered with towels and a heavy plate or stone. The kraut ferments, as one woman puts it, “until it gets through stinking.” It is then ready to put into jars or simply scoop out for an evening meal. Some older traditional cooks still follow the planting signs in their local almanacs for pickling and occasionally for canning; when the daily signs are above the waist, preferably in the head or heart, pickles, kraut, and pickle beans are less likely to spoil.

The women may can meat products, but in many rural households, it is the men who cure the meat they slaughter—especially pork. City dwellers who are weary of tasteless, watery commercial hams can appreciate Levy Cruise's efforts as he packs hams in salt for about ten days. He then washes and hangs them in his newly built shed, smoking them with a hickory fire for three or four days. Finally he puts the dozen hams in a special solution before storing them for a year. The Cruises, who live alone, have two freezers full of their own farm products—one for meat and the other for garden produce.



- 1 Beans drying, Alleghany County, North Carolina.
- 2 W. H. Cleary and Mozelle Cleary hanging green beans to dry.
- 3 Wood-fired drying shed at the Easter farm, Surry County, North Carolina.
- 4 *The daily signs from Blum's Farmer's and Planter's Almanac for the Year 1967. Blum's Almanac Syndicate, Winston-Salem, N.C. p. 2. Courtesy American Folklife Center. Library of Congress.*



4

4 Josh and Verona Easter and their daughter, Carole Lowe, prepare apples for drying in Surry County, North Carolina.



5

5 Mrs. Mae Willey of Grayson County, Virginia prepares corn for canning.

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Food drying also remains popular in many parts of the country because some foods are easier to dry, or they simply have a different flavor when cooked. "Nothing tastes quite like leather britches," Mae Willey says of her dried string beans, and "dried apples make the best fried pies you'll ever eat." The Amish women dry corn, a particularly difficult food to can, by heating it in a dual-layered, galvanized pan with a little water between the metal layers. Dried peaches, also popular in some areas, are eaten as a "confection" during the winter.

At one time drying sheds dotted the Upland South and were used to dry beans, peaches, apples, and pumpkin. Apples, for example, were sliced into rings and strung onto long poles that were placed lengthwise in the shed; a fire built below would dry the apples in a few days. Now, many rural families build special racks to cover their furnaces so they can dry food indoors; they use metal tables for drying in their backyards, or recycle old window screens to use as outdoor drying frames. The old leather britches, however, are often still threaded on a heavy string with a darning needle and draped just about anywhere inside or outside the house, where they may take weeks to dry.

The automobile is the most innovative drying device found in areas where dried foods are popular. Thinly sliced apple wedges, for example, are arranged on the dashboard and rear shelf of a car parked at the house, shopping center, or factory. The sun's energy is soon put to effective use, and the automobile becomes a modern, mobile drying shed.

While food preservation techniques may have adapted to changing times, home canning, pickling, curing, and drying remain vital traditions. They are economical in many ways, and the final product is easily adjusted to community preferences. Like homemade biscuits, cookies, and pies, home-processed hams, dilly beans, sauerkraut, and leather britches simply taste better to people who are accustomed to them.

Although food storage may seem complicated for beginners, the Department of Agriculture has information available to the public with clear instructions on canning, drying, and other processes of home food storage. For further information please call or visit your local office of the County Extension Service. District residents should contact the Cooperative Extension Service at 1331 H St., NW, or call 727-2979.

The American Talkers

Program: Street Criers, Pitchmen, and Auctioneers

By Steven Zeitlin

This year the American Talkers program brings you the excitement of a carnival midway, a market, and an auction house. Members of three occupations that employ stylized language and vocal artistry will be on hand to sell their products in a pleasing cacophony of musical sounds. Street criers will holler, auctioneers will chant, and carnival pitchmen will ballyhoo. We will show a film about callers on the Maine Avenue fish wharf, *Mermaids, Frog Legs and Fillets*, and one on a livestock auctioneering contest, *How Much Wood Could A Woodchuck Chuck*. A tobacco auction will be demonstrated, and audiences will not only listen to some of the finest antique auctioneers demonstrate their skill, but will experience the joy of participating in a real country auction.

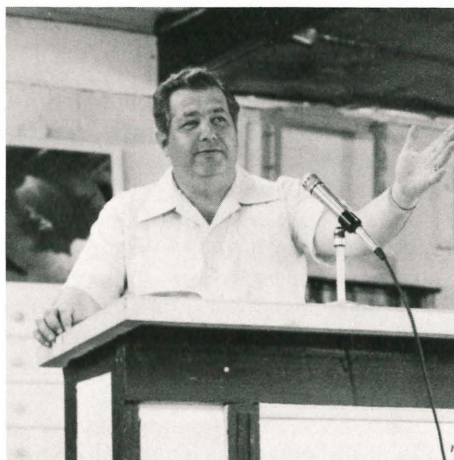
Street vendors too will be selling their wares. The commercial enterprise is, after all, the *raison d'être* for their folk poetry. For the better part of their lifetimes, these persons have hammered their salesmanship into an art. In this way they manage to make their living—and we are all the richer for it.

Photo by Steven Zeitlin



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Photo by Margaret Yocom



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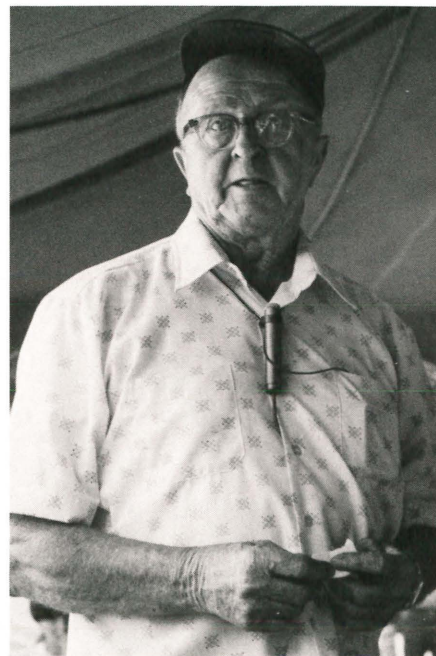


Photo by Jack Santino

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1 Bus Mars' auctions are often day-long community events. Because his audience is made up largely of non-professional buyers, the auction chant is more leisurely. Still, by his gestures, his chant, and his talk, he creates the mood for spirited spending.

2 Like many rural auctioneers, Ned Morrow is a local celebrity, and stories have grown up around him. "He didn't go to school to learn to auction," one gentleman mentioned. "He learned down on Shepherd Grade where he was out milking and . . . each time he'd milk the cow he'd squeeze the old teat. It would be 'one two, one two, one two, one two.'"

3 Auctioneers say that you can sell things at an auction that you could not give away on the street. Archie Moody tells a story about finding a pile of brooms and metal scraps just lying around the auction grounds. The owner considered it junk, but Moody convinced her to tag it, and it sold for \$100.

Steven Zeitlin received his Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania and is on the staff of the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Program. He has produced a number of films on folk culture and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses at the George Washington University.

American Talkers: The Pitchman By Steven Zeitlin

Bobby Reynolds describes the wonders within his tent.

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A Documentary Record of the James E. Strates' Carnival, Library of Congress. AFS #4699-4705, 1941.



Photo by Greg Schneider, The Daily Chronicle, Santa Paula, California

Much of what is appealing about a carnival, a side show or a circus comes not from what is seen but what is heard. The midgets, the sword swallowers, the dancers are only half the show. The pitchman sets the scene for all of them. His skillful use of language can transform the most paltry attractions into unforgettable images, and lend his curiosities some of the bizarre beauty of a Grimm's folktale.

Carnival pitchmen are among the last oral poets to hold the attention of modern American audiences. Their spiels, handed down from one generation of showmen to another, combine rhythm, alliteration, repetition and hyperbole—that is, outrageous exaggeration. The pitch builds to a fevered point where the talker “turns the tip,” and tries to transform the magic of his talk to ticket sales. The following pitch, from a 1941 recording at the Archive of Folk Song in the Library of Congress, is for a carnival Motordrome, a cylindrical building where motorcycles rode on the walls:

*High powered motorcycles on a straight up and down perpendicular wall!
Motor maniacs, upside down riders,
Crazy riders, crazy drivers on the walls of death.
Say hell riders, hell drivers,
Say come on in!*

With the demise of many small travelling shows, the pitchman is vanishing from the American scene, his artistry gone unrecorded. In the late twenties and early thirties, throughout the Depression, Fred Foster Bloodgood operated one of the last “geek shows” which travelled with a small carnival. His show consisted of little more than an ordinary carnival employee, a man with a mop on his head, who wrung off the head of a chicken in a fashion not all that different from a country cook. But his graphic images transformed this makeshift attraction into a monstrous illusion which transfixed his carnival audiences. In the hope of recording the oral poetry of a pitchman and his perspective on the art, we asked Fred Bloodgood to pen an essay for *American Talkers*.

Here, then, in his own words, are some of the reminiscences and spiels of one of the greatest carnival pitchmen of all time.

The Geek Showman's Pitch

By Fred Foster Bloodgood

"Hold it, doctor. Don't feed her just yet!"

The scene is a carnival lot of a midwestern city in the early 1930s. A young man on the bally platform of a side show describes the strange woman inside the tent:

*She was found by a Dr. Carter,
Crouched as you're going to see her tonight
Upon a huge flat rock.
From a point of vantage he watched her.
She was entirely surrounded by venomous reptiles,
Some larger than a man's upper arm.
And occasionally she would
Tease, tantalize, and torment them
Until, in their wildest fury,
They would strike,
Biting her all over her miserable body—
Upon the arms, the limbs, the cheeks, even upon the tongue,
Until the blood would course from those wounds
Just as you'd pour water from a glass.*

Fifty years ago I was that young man on the front of the bally platform and that woman was, in the language of the carnival world, a "geek," the strangest of all strange creatures. Her eating habits were not nearly as dramatic as the gruesome descriptions, handed down by word of mouth from showman to showman:

*Often to avenge herself she picks up one of the larger reptiles,
Bites off the head with her long and tusky teeth,
And proceeds to peel down the skin and devour it head, hide, tail, and all,
Just as you or I would eat a banana.*

During my 11 years of exhibiting geeks, I used many of the techniques favored by showmen throughout the ages. As with any sales endeavor, the pitch and a few tricks were woven together to whet the appetite of the audience. A cardinal rule was to exaggerate some of the more colorful aspects of the side show attraction and to never rely on *one* word when *four* would do. This gave a certain balance or rhythm to the pitch. For example, when explaining the moral quality of the show, it would be unthinkable to simply state, "It's a clean show." Rather this: "There will be nothing seen, heard, said, or done that would mar the impunity or injure the propriety, in any way, shape, form, or manner, of the most fastidious lady in the community."

Euphonious names and alliteration were extremely important to a pitch. I once described an attraction called the "Giant Deep Sea Devilfish" as a "death-dealing demon, a denizen of the deep." A series of phrases or words was always very effective. A thin man or "human skeleton" was

Slowly becoming atrophied, slowly becoming ossified, slowly becoming petrified . . . and slowly turning to stone.

I discovered that a female was a better lure than a male, hence the names "Neva" and "Neola." Any name with a long "e" had a much better carrying quality, especially before the days of sound equipment.

It was imperative that a competent "inside lecturer" be on hand at all times and I had one of the best in Robert Barnard. His duty was not only to answer



Fred Bloodgood wearing his doctor's uniform to lend an aura of authenticity to his geek-show attraction.



Fred Foster Bloodgood's geek show, 1929

the many questions regarding the background and origin of some of the “most marvelous creatures you ever saw,” but also to help the patron make the transition between fantasy and fact, between the emotional exaggeration on the outside and the cold, hard facts visible on the inside. He was extremely useful when one sold his goods sight unseen—and collected his money in advance.

Imagine now that the front of the tent is open and already a crowd of interested spectators can be seen peering into the “pit.” Suddenly the geek begins the “roust.” She becomes completely unmanageable. In clear view of the potential customers outside she picks up a snake, screams, and leaps across that steel-bound arena, seeming to throw the reptile at one of the spectators. (Actually a piece of inner tube is substituted, but the illusion is most convincing, and women scream and often faint.)

At this point the inside lecturer rushes to the front man in utter panic to inform him that he can no longer control her. “We must FEED HER NOW!” The front man races to the pit and fires several rounds of blank cartridges from a .38 caliber revolver. In desperation they seize a tent pole to wield as a weapon, causing the entire tent to collapse on the spectators’ heads. Screams are heard across the midway until order is finally restored, the tent is re-erected, and the feeding proceeds—but only after a few hundred tickets are sold.

Incredible? Indeed it was. But even more incredible was the fact that anyone would resist investing a dime or quarter to see just what was transpiring inside.

Without question the geek show was, in the words of my own pitch, “one of the most disgusting, one of the most repulsive, yet I’ll say one of the most interesting attractions” ever conceived by the mind of mortal man. It brings back a host of memories. . . .

Last year I walked down a carnival midway at the Dane County Fair near my home in Madison, Wis. Suddenly a youngster leaned over the counter of his roll-down game joint, beckoned to me, and said, “Hey, how about you, Dad?”

Yes, he called me “Dad!” And at that moment I experienced a deep sense of shock. I wondered how all the years had gone so quickly between this eager, callow lad and my young self on the bally platform exclaiming:

“It’s feeding time . . . and we are going to feed her!”

American Talkers:

The Auctioneer

By Steven Zeitlin

Moving down rows of piled tobacco with an entourage of bidders and clerks, auctioneer Bob Cage refers to his sale as a train. "As I'm crying the bids, they've got to get on or they're going to miss the tobacco." Once he "gets clicking," the sale builds momentum, and the buyers must put in their bids before the final call. "I'm going to cry a bid a few times, and then I'm going to WHACK IT."

The livestock or antique auctioneer works up an audience with a barrage of fast talk, musical sound, and humorous quips. He pits members of his audience against one another. If a person bids 5, he'll say, "Do I hear 6?" If he doesn't hear 6, he keeps the chant moving as fast as the ear can discern, building a momentum with his rolls—"Will you go 6? Will you give 6? Will you buy 'em at 6? Will you bid 6? Will you say 6? Do I hear 6? Did you say 6?" he may throw in nonsense syllables like this one from a popular song: "whack-a-doo, whack-a-doo." Even at slow moments, bids appear to be flying past.

Unlike the pitchman, the auctioneer does not tantalize the audience with images of an unseen product. All that he sells is open for examination before and during the sale, and the bidders themselves determine the price.

But with his chant, his humor, and his familiarity with the audience, he can induce people to spend far more than they may intend. He coaxes. He cajoles. He makes folks feel that they have money to burn, that they know something the next fellow does not. He taunts reluctant bidders. He teases and tempts his audience. And he torments them with the lurking notion that at any moment the train might leave the station without them.

1 The tobacco auctioneer's rapid-fire chant may be unintelligible to an untrained ear, but it communicates much information to the buyers who follow up and down the rows. It is his skill in calling prices and setting the sale's rhythm that helps determine the price of the tobacco.

2 Some auction houses allow any one to contribute items for auction. People often bring possessions they no longer need, then sit in the audience and bid on other items. This constant buying and selling of household goods often becomes part of rural life.

Photo by Margaret Yocom



2



Photo by Gerry Parsons

1 39



Photo by Paul Wagner

3

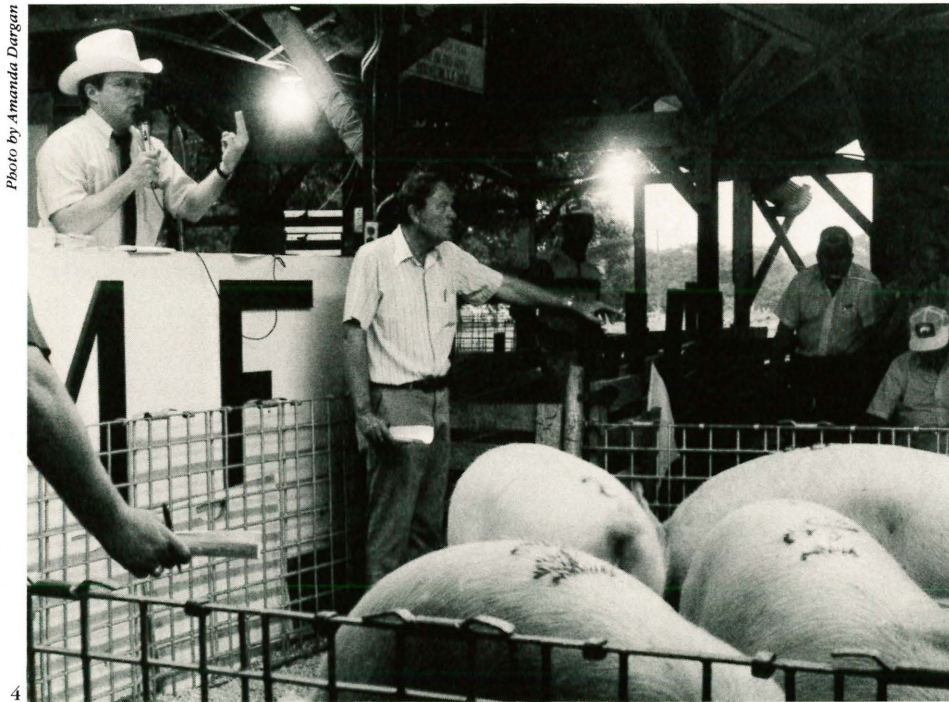


Photo by Amanda Dargan

4



Photo by Amanda Dargan

5

3 "You have to be part showman", said one auctioneer. The sale is entertainment, perhaps as much as it is a commercial exchange. Some of the audience are spectators with no intention of bidding. With bleachers looking down into an arena, the staging of a livestock auction has been compared by folklorist Margaret Yocom to theater-in-the round.

4 A livestock auction, like a tobacco auction, caters to trained buyers familiar with an auctioneer's chant. This enables him to deliver his pitch at breakneck speed and still be understood.

The auctioneer's charisma spreads "auction fever" through the crowd. "When I'm here I feel like I'm at the racetrack," one participant commented.

Much of the cacophony of these auctions comes from the animals themselves as they are constantly prodded or herded before and after sale.

5 The "ringman" at livestock auctions stands close to the audience to spot bids and encourage more bidding. "Just say \$500 once," he taunts a bidder, "and you'll never have to say it again." A ringman often plays the straightman for an auctioneer's jokes.

6 Pigs relaxing before going to auction.



Photo by Paul Wagner

6

Suggested Reading

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