



# COME TO THE OLD COUNTRY

A Handbook for Preserving and Sharing  
Schuylkill County's Cultural Heritage

by Michael and Carrie Nobel Kline

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**SCHUYLKILL RIVER**  
NATIONAL & STATE HERITAGE AREA



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*Cover photo: As Carrie Kline photographed Mary Osilka's pysanky her young grandson began to reach across the table to touch them. The metaphor unfolds: When a visitor shows interest in a cultural art form, family and community members begin to see greater worth in their own traditions.*

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

I was raised in a good Pennsylvania Dutch family on the eastern edge of Berks County. Through years of genealogical research I learned that my family had been in Maxatawny Township since before the dirt and that I was a 13th generation American. My grandparents' voices were thick with a Dutch accent and we ate things like pig stomach stuffed with sausage and fastnachts, potato doughnuts fried in lard. There was nothing special about any of this; everyone around us did those things. All of my relatives, and all of their friends spoke with that thick, guttural speech, and I understood it just perfectly. Occasionally my grandparents would start speaking in this foreign tongue, usually only around their friends. They mostly reserved this for things like telling dirty jokes, discussing Christmas presents, and other things they didn't want the children to understand. Either way, while foreign, this other language wasn't strange. This was part of my life and everyone I knew shared something similar.

I left for college on a sweltering August afternoon and arrived in Virginia to find that it really was hotter and more oppressive in the South. I was out of the truck no longer than five minutes when I realized that I had entered a very different world. It was a world filled with drawls, twangs, and surprisingly enough...tons of New Yorkers. Checking into the dorm, I was shocked to find that there was no one whose last name ended in -berger or -schitz and that I had a funny accent! I couldn't believe it! Here I was in the heart of Virginia, and people told me that I talked funny. To my mind there was nothing unique about where I had come from. How could the way that I spoke, the foods I ate, and the way I lived my life be strange? It was at that moment that I realized that the place and the people I had come from were not strange...they were entirely unique.

I spent four years in Virginia studying architectural history, culture, ethnicity, and geography with people who had worked all over the world. Somehow I fell in love with Pennsylvania and chose to write just about every research paper on something Pennsylvania Dutch-themed. When questioned about my apparent obsession with an esoteric topic like Pennsylvania Germans, I tried to explain where I was from and why I was studying this stuff in the first place. It usually ended in me referencing the Reading Railroad (as in the Monopoly game) or Allentown (like the Billy Joel song) or just generally being from "Pennsylvania Dutch Country." Those references were quickly followed up with a Pennsylvania geography lesson and an explanation that Pennsylvania Dutchmen existed outside of Lancaster County. If I had a nickel for every time someone asked me if I was Amish, I could be living a very handsome life right about now. I was fascinated with the stories of religious persecution, fraktur, blanket chests, the farm life that I read about my forebears. This wasn't an academic fascination, however. What made these things so compelling is that they were about me. Every one of the songs, recipes, building styles, and blanket chests was coursing through my veins.

It was exhilarating and comforting to know where I had come from. I had a friend whose father was a colonel in the Air Force and she and her family had moved no less than 14 times between her 5th and 18th birthdays. When I asked her where her people came from, she replied "I don't have any people." Her family came from all over the place and yet no place in particular. She couldn't identify a clear artistic or culinary tradition that she could call her own. I think secretly she envied the stash of family bibles, birth certificates, and photos I kept in the dresser drawer at my grandfather's house. She wasn't envious of them because they were precious antiques or artistic treasures. Rather, she was envious of them as symbols of a strong and unmistakable connection I had with my roots. They were from my people.

So what then do my college days in Virginia and some old photos have to do with an Ethnic Heritage Study of Schuylkill County? Having grown up not far from the county line and spending many summers camping outside of Tamaqua, I knew Schuylkill County only as the place that made the engine in my dad's truck groan as it climbed the hills with the camper in tow, that we went through Schuylkill County to get to that strange town where the grounds on fire, and that there were all sorts of funny churches with onions on top. Not much else really mattered or made sense to me as a kid. I didn't know where these things came from, who built them, why they mattered, and frankly, didn't much care.

We began work on the Schuylkill County Ethnic Heritage Study in August 2004. I was fresh on the job, having been employed at the Heritage Area for less than two months and having no real sense of what the task before me was or what shape the project might take. Michael and Carrie Kline came on board in early September and together we started down a road of multicultural exploration, taking turns driving, and never following the map exactly as it was printed. With the help of a remarkable, and ever growing team of local friends and advisors, Michael, Carrie, and I shifted roles and they became my tour guides.

Over the last year Michael and Carrie have had the privilege and enviable pleasure of driving back and forth across Schuylkill County eating, singing, laughing, and always learning about what an incredibly unique place it is. I say



that the task was enviable, because I am in fact envious of the places they've seen, the people they've met, and the things they've experienced. Each time we talked on the phone or we visited with each other I heard another story about a dancer, or a painter, or a baker. One time they toured a church with a particularly beautiful set of murals and emailed me the pictures to show me what I was missing. What I realized I had been missing was the real Schuylkill County.

I thought back to my time in the County as a child. It was coming back to me slowly, but surely with each new story. I remembered the Pioneer Tunnel and the Mother's Memorial. I could picture the Red Church outside of Orwigsburg, and taste the ice cream at Heisler's. I had the places in my mind, but I had not met the people. It was through Michael and Carrie that I began to meet the people. I didn't meet as many in person as I would have liked to, but I'd bet I know many of their stories by heart at this point.

What struck me and what ingrained these stories so deeply in my mind is that they were stories of people who were much like me and my family. People who spoke dying languages, ate interesting and unique foods, lived in the places where their grandparents lived. These were people with a story, and a real connection to their past. Even though we have never met, I identify with many of the people that Michael and Carrie have told me about.

As the project has progressed I also have begun to recognize another, more disturbing, though all too common, similarity between myself and what I have been hearing from the Advisory Committee and the interviews. The wealth of diversity, cultural tradition, and rapidly disappearing community heritage that lit up the Klines' Marylander eyes, seems to only mildly excite many of the people who call Schuylkill County home. To many this is just how things are done; inherited recipes, songs, jokes, and accents that don't quite carry the same meaning to us today as they did to our grandparents. With each new generation, it seems that a little less of the tradition is passed on. Maybe you substitute a prepackaged ingredient for something that was once homemade. Maybe you only speak your mother's native language in church. Maybe you can't quite remember the stories your grandfather told you as a child. Maybe you don't even notice.

I know the story well and believe that this project is a new chapter to that story. My grandparents know that theirs is the last generation to speak Pennsylvania Dutch fluently. When they die, a language that evolved over the course of 300 years will die with them. They will take with them the stories of their parents pressing apples to make apple butter for the scrapple, Fersommlings, the occasional community gatherings and conversation hours, and how they were tormented by the infamous Belsnickel each Christmas. They know that they are about to take a culture with them, and I know it too. The real question is: How many other people know and what can we do to keep it alive?

The answer, as Carrie Kline points out in Chapter One, is that there are dozens, if not hundreds of individuals and groups all around the County that care about their traditions and want to do more to preserve and share them. There is an unrivaled wealth of culture and tradition in Schuylkill County that each and every person who lives there is, and rightfully should be, extremely proud of. Houses of worship, Granges, historical societies, cultural organizations, and even local fire companies and Lions Clubs all play a role in keeping the intangible traditions of past and present Schuylkill Countians alive.

Protecting this treasure trove of cultural wealth is a responsibility that each of us must shoulder, both individually and as a community. In Chapter Two Michael Kline offers up some wonderful suggestions for how communities and organizations all across Schuylkill County can band together to share the human and financial responsibilities associated with cultural preservation, and build stronger communities while doing it. He also points out that there are some very important differences in what and how we share these traditions with others. There are certain traditions that you will want to share through festivals, fairs, books, tours, and exhibits. There are other things that are meant for more personal reflection and enjoyment, like traditional holiday meals with your family. In both instances, the important thing is that the tradition that you are experiencing is meaningful to you.

I don't know many of the people that Michael and Carrie interviewed personally and would not venture to tell their stories here among my reflections. Both of the authors do so throughout this study in a way that speaks to the reverence and appreciation for the people they met over the course of this project. But what I can say is that I am certain that the individuals and groups featured in this report are only the tip of the cultural iceberg. In each of our communities and probably even our own homes there are people who have something unique to share with the rest of us. This is true not only of those people who are descended from the many generations of miners, mill workers, and farmers who built Schuylkill County over the past three centuries, but of those recent immigrant groups who continue to shape our world in the present and future. Heritage in this case, is not reserved exclusively for those things that occurred in the past. Instead, this is a study that speaks to the ongoing evolution of ethnicity and culture in this incredibly unique and special place we call Schuylkill County.



There are many applications of the information contained in this report. One obvious one is the development of tourism opportunities around the inherent cultural assets of Schuylkill County. It is my hope that more people will visit the community fairs and festivals and that more organizations will offer church tours, reunions, and ethnic heritage events. But this is where the preservation of these traditions is imperative. If we do not value these traditions for their meaning to our own lives before we share them with others, we risk losing them to the market forces and expectations of our visitors.

It has been a great honor and an incredible personal and professional learning experience for me to work on this project. The people who welcomed Michael and Carrie into their homes, broke bread with them, and genuinely took care of them are truly remarkable. Without them this project would not have been possible. More over, the members of the Advisory Committee who helped make those connections, shape this report, and provide invaluable guidance, resources, and connections cannot be thanked enough. This is a project of and for Schuylkill Countians and I hope you find it meaningful.

Cory R. Kegerise  
Program Manager  
Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area  
November 2005



## AUTHORS' NOTE

In the early weeks of August 2005 we are holed up at the Acopian Center at the foot of Hawk Mountain to pull together the fruits of our six month Ethnic Heritage Study of Schuylkill County which we conducted under contract with the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area in Pottstown with able oversight from Cory Kegerise. In an effort to maintain our writing schedule we venture out only occasionally. We have a couple of longstanding invitations though, which we have been planning for months to keep: Attend Irish Weekend in Heckscherville and run a Talking Tent with community telling sessions at the Schuylkill County Fair in Summit Station. We manage to squeeze in a foray to experience Ukranian Semiary Day one week and Lithuanian Days the next. But we yearn to go forth and see and hear more. Every corner of the county is calling to us through the voices we recorded and friendships that grow so easily here.

We thank our capable intern Hanna Musser Thurman who was with us for much of our exploration of Schuylkill County, living, working and singing third-part harmony with us. We thank our creative Advisory Committee members, listed in the Appendix, who gave generously of their time and ideas. And we extend our gratitude to the people of Schuylkill County who shared stories and reflections on tape and on the street.

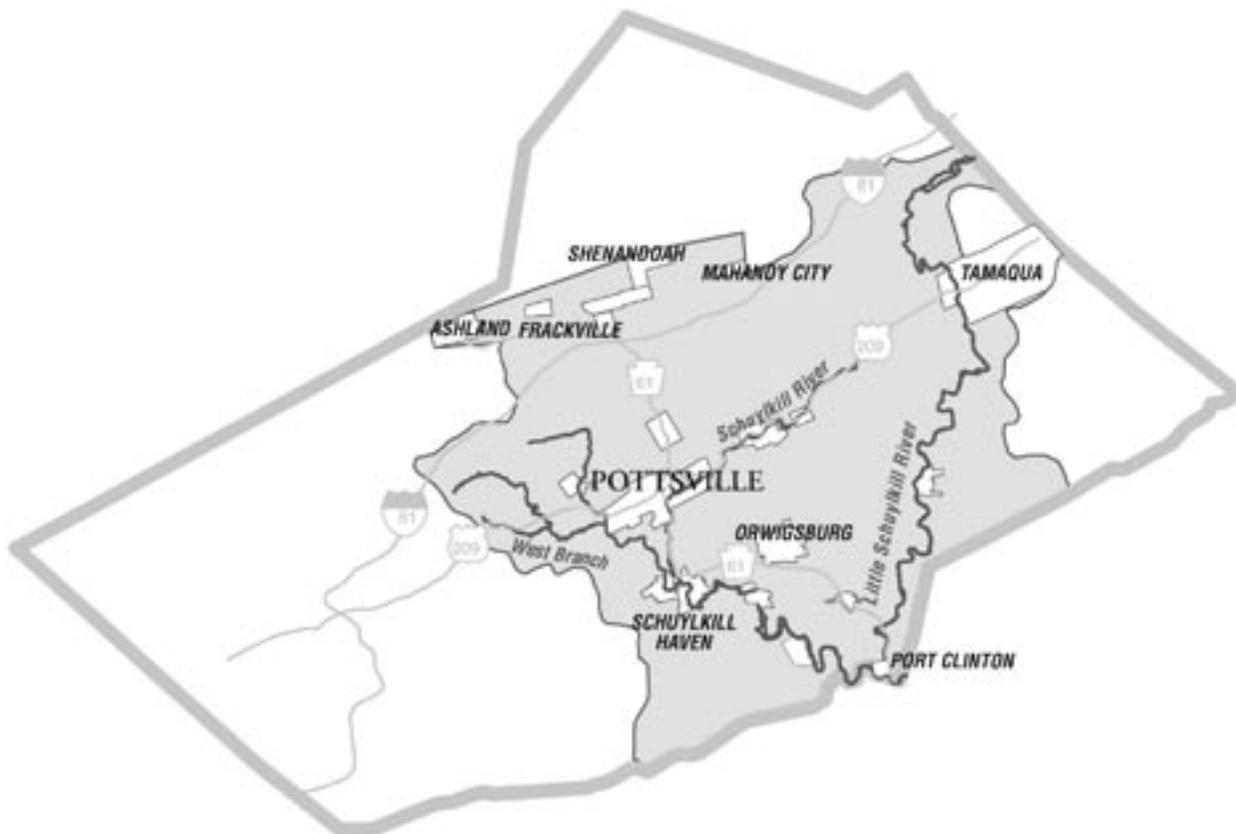
We know that we have not seen all of Schuylkill County yet. That will require an effort far greater than the scope of this project has permitted. If after reading this report you feel left out, please contact us and let's figure out together how to get your story told. For now let's think of working together to keep this county great.

We undertake this writing with all of you in mind and pray for inspiration.

Michael & Carrie Nobel Kline  
Talking Across the Lines, LLC  
September 6, 2005



The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area is located in Pennsylvania and includes the entire Schuylkill River watershed in Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties. The Heritage Area is home to over 3.2 million people and covers over 1,700 square miles of land area. The Schuylkill County Ethnic Heritage Study focused fieldwork and research on the portions of Schuylkill County within the boundaries of the Heritage Area as shown on the map below. While the geographic scope of this project was limited, the conclusions and recommendations are applicable to all parts of the county.





# Executive Summary

In our brief Ethnic Heritage Study we have documented a resiliency in Schuylkill County that clearly has the capacity to overcome the past and usher in a new era of collective self-realization. As local residents look to one another for solutions and a shared vision, we offer strategies and social exercises aimed at reaching across ethnic and political lines to find common ground for launching imaginative initiatives.

Schuylkill County has an astonishing wealth of cultural and ethnic diversity, varied landscapes and beautiful rivers—and a *story* that will keep visitors coming back for more. The county harbors cultural traditions long forgotten in their land of origin. What is lacking is the experience of working in a collaborative, entrepreneurial way across ethnic and community lines to achieve broadly based goals.

There are a number of avenues for dialogue in Schuylkill County, with the goal of working toward a shared understanding of the past to build economic prospects for the future. The aim of all of these activities is to engage youth and adults from diverse backgrounds. These pathways include:

1. oral history projects
2. multicultural discussion panels
3. history courses
4. newspaper and radio series
5. art exhibits
6. theater productions
7. festivals celebrating local arts of storytelling, music and/or artistic creations
8. folk arts apprenticeship programs

Learning to *hear* one another is crucial to the process of working productively together. A widespread lack of trust is in large part a by-product of having lived under the thumb of the coal industry, a way of life which worked against collective initiative and alternative economies. Over the last two centuries, the companies have thrived on divided communities and encouraged the kind of competition which may be better for realizing production goals than engendering human progress. Shenandoah's Parade of Nations and multicultural Heritage Day provides a shining model of ways the community has already set about the work of breaking down barriers of the past. We need to continue these kinds of efforts on a much larger scale that engages and embraces the entire county.

It is crucial to create environments in which people can air divergent views of local history. It takes time and dedication to speak our various truths on the past, views which hinge largely on ethnic, geographic and class lines. Only after this process can we determine which of our stories we want to share with tourists and through what lens. Anthropologist Erve Chambers, who studies the local effects of tourism, insists that "community members have to disagree and try to settle among themselves the terms by which they are represented."

An important first step in county-wide healing and redevelopment is setting the story straight about the history and ecology of our surrounding communities and landscapes. Cultural affirmation, preserving a sense of place, listening to those voices not usually heard in public debate, are all means of empowerment for people who see themselves as average—and powerless. In the words of Linda Yulanavage, Tamaqua Main Street Manager, "It's important for the communities to appreciate their heritage before developing the business of tourism. We need to make sure local people are involved, because they are the ones who are going to promote it on the street."

Most boroughs have a historical society, and these organizations work hard to preserve structures and material culture, bolstering local communities. Occasional jealousies and strong local pride among the towns and on both sides of Broad Mountain have indeed created a vitality of sorts, though not one that always works to the realization of county-wide success and unity. This sort of divisiveness is to be expected among communities which were long locked in the grip of a coal economy.

In study groups, committees and classrooms local people must tackle the heady issues of tourism science. This will build a degree of local autonomy that will minimize *leakage*, whereby outsiders prosper from home-grown efforts, and broaden the base of what appears to be an emerging tourist economy. We recommend a process which yields a more highly aware citizenry who, through sharing stories, arts and traditional recipes of newcomers and old timers, come to appreciate, espouse and embrace the complexity and diverse wonders of Schuylkill County as a whole—and the potential for involving young people in documentation and interpretation shaping the new cultural heritage tourism effort.



# Chapter One

## ETHNIC WEALTH: A FORAY INTO SCHUYLKILL COUNTY TRADITIONS

By Carrie Nobel Kline

Ethnic heritage is at the root of every aspect of Schuylkill County life and affects everything people here do.

We meet Schuylkill Countians at every turn who will talk about their ethnicity before offering their names. A

***The county's history makes the Old West's read like a Sunday School picnic.***

mention of ethnicity unlocks the past. The County's history makes the Old West's read like a Sunday school picnic. It is a compelling story in which the Molly Maguires is but one of many chapters, yet, a story which remains largely untold. Repression of labor in the coal industry of earlier years, anti-German sentiment through two world wars, the standardization of American education over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and fifty years of numbing, network TV have been discouraging to the growth of ethnic identity. High school texts don't reference it very often. The Catholic Church is de-emphasizing ethnicity in many of its local parishes. Yet ethnic heritage is at the root of who we are and at the source of our vitality. We are a wash of cultures, ideas and world views.

Wishing to generate imaginative initiatives in Schuylkill County in hopes of jump starting increased self-awareness and a new found appreciation of local community life, the Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area found the resources to conduct an Ethnic Heritage Study here. Our team of public folklorists and researchers worked on a six-month contract to carry out this social inquiry. We set up a house in the county and went right to work with our advisory committee to build a database of "leads" who could begin to bring the Study into focus. Each of these leads directed us to others and still others until we had woven an informational web of local residents with various connections to one or more ethnicities in the county. In the end we produced sixty broadcast-quality

***There's more of Old Europe in Schuylkill than in many parts of Europe itself.***

recordings of interviews with more than seventy residents from both sides of Broad Mountain, as well as choirs, church services and community celebrations. We also took hundreds of digital photographs and organized them into a power point production to share with local communities.

The findings are stunning. There's more of Old Europe in Schuylkill County than in many parts of Europe itself. New Americans of the past three decades have brought rich flavors and cultures from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Asian and African continents. The list goes on and on. The richness of its ethnic heritage rivals Schuylkill's considerable natural wealth, despite the paradox of a blighted economy and shrinking population. The Study daily reveals complexities and creativity that defy assumptions or stereotypes. It is clearly the most diverse situation we have ever had the pleasure to study.

What is not yet clear is: what do local residents want to do about these largely unrecognized qualities and untold stories? Do we want to reassess and reinvent the past in ways that will contribute to the quality of our present lives? Can study and celebration of ethnic diversity help us get better acquainted with those around us and make new connections with our children? Can we get them involved in community building?

The questions go on and on. How do you pay for these things? Doesn't county-wide redevelopment cost millions?

***If we could bottle it, we'd all be rich.***

Actually, coming together around social inquiry and community celebrations can be an inexpensive early step in profoundly important redevelopment, the discovery and rediscovery of neighborhoods, boroughs, and townships. The *Foxfire* educational movement of the 1970s and 1980s provided compelling models and examples of what happens when a classroom begins to study its surrounding community. The Ethnic Heritage Study lists a number of Schuylkill County connections to community studies and local artists and musicians whose work resonates with ethnicity and vitality. Beyond this report is a 400-record ethnic heritage database we have begun, representing some of the county's cultural wealth. We've also listed the kinds of local events (see Appendix) that attract returnees now living in distant places, who still long for what this county exudes. If we could bottle it, we'd all be rich.



## ETHNICITIES

### LACED IN ETHNICITY

People in the county warned us that this area is depressed. It may be. We see some empty storefronts. We see some despondent faces. We've seen statistics on unemployment, dwindling population and physical and mental health issues in the county. But we've also seen depressed areas in other parts of Appalachia, a region which includes Schuylkill County. We've lived in West Virginia, another coal state with a lot going for it and plenty of economic depression. What we really saw when we arrived in Schuylkill County was vitality, many more storefronts open than closed, and ethnic diversity shouting out from every corner, be it Dutch stonework, German candy shops, Russian churches or Lithuanian pubs. And we saw lace, with so many styles of lace curtains dressing up windows in the county. We've seen Dutch tatting, Irish lace and Eastern European quilts. Just go to the County Fair Needlework Building for a taste of Schuylkill.

We've lived and worked in West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Washington, D.C., New York City, Massachusetts, Arkansas and Minnesota. We've seen ethnic diversity. We've seen depressed places. We've seen coal towns. But never before have we seen the vitality and wealth of ethnicity that makes up Schuylkill County. Members of most, if not all of Schuylkill's immigrant groups went to West Virginia as well to work in the soft coal. But you have to look pretty hard to find pockets of ethnicity remaining there. Here people wear their ethnicity on their sleeves; they hang it on their windows, beautifying their communities with textures of the Old World. Immigrants and their children intermingled with others in the mines and the mills, but though they became Americans, they never gave away their cultural resource, their ethnic heritage. This leaves Schuylkill County with a rare wealth, something for local people to hold dear and share with others at their discretion for the betterment of the county. This cultural sharing is a crucial part of the work that, over time, can help build an economic infrastructure which would allow younger generations to find work here.

Maybe it's a hard coal thing. Family, religious and ethnic tradition helped people endure the suffering that came with anthracite mining. Ethnicity in Schuylkill County mingled but did not melt. Instead the county is like a rich, tossed salad today, held together in a bowl of gentle, old mountains. You can still savor distinct morsels and relish each flavor.

Even county residents who have lived here many generations are still likely to volunteer information on their ethnic lineage. This ethnic diversity creates *social capital*, wealth on which the county can draw for its sustenance and improvement. People retain distinct ethnic customs as well as ancestral memories of landing in a New World with its glitter and possibilities. Walter Baran, former Secretary of the Department of General Services for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Polish American "Schuylk," as county residents are wont to call themselves, speaking to the Polish American Club of New Salem, Pennsylvania in 1980, imparts wisdom that applies to all ethnic groups:

*What we share is custom and tradition that goes back for centuries. We share a zest for life and an overpowering desire to succeed that has been instilled in us in ways that we, even now, don't really understand... We are... still able to retain something from the past that is good... an ethnic identity that gives us character, a sense of history... a true meaning of the promise of America.*

### FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

"Come Home to Schuylkill," a slogan we're recommending, is already happening. It has been happening for years. At every ethnic heritage festival we meet returnees, those who left the county for work but return for a taste of home. Almost every ethnic group has a festival. Borough heritage days will likely have an ethnic component, though often just through offering regional Eastern European delicacies: blenies, pierogies, halushki and sometimes halupki and kielbasy. We met one group of Delaware-based Ukrainians at Irish Weekend in Heckscherville on a Friday evening. We were reunited with them Sunday at Ukrainian Seminary Day, which had been their main draw for returning home. They never miss it. On

*What we really saw when we arrived in Schuylkill County was vitality, many more storefronts open than closed, and ethnic diversity shouting out from every corner.*

*Immigrants...never gave away their cultural resource, their ethnic heritage. This leaves Schuylkill County with a rare wealth, something for local people to hold dear and share with others at their discretion for the betterment of the county.*

*Here people wear their ethnicity on their sleeves; they hang it on their windows, beautifying their communities with textures of the Old World.*

*... never before have we seen the vitality and wealth of ethnicity that makes up Schuylkill County.*



Saturday, in between the two festivals, they picked huckleberries, as in their childhood. Others spend the time in between events researching their genealogy.

Micah Gursky, aide to State Representative Dave Argall, cites a “huge market for people who trace roots to ‘the old country.’” Visitors and returnees have such a fervent interest in linking pieces of their past that they often call upon Shenandoah Chamber of Commerce president Valerie Macdonald in her antique shop to assist. Sometimes they call Eileen Barron or Linda Yulanavage at the Tamaqua Chamber of Commerce and Historical Society. People are coming back to Schuylkill County because it’s their home. They can also visit a staffed genealogical research booth at the annual Heckscherville Irish Festival.

In the words of Ted Block, Tamaqua Jewish Clothier,

*Every group has a different name for [potato pancakes]... Pierogies. People like that stuff. It’s all under the heading of “what grandma made.” And people get hunger pangs for it periodically... It reminds you of a better day and a happy day.*

## BLENDING

Despite these private yearnings, speaking as a first-generation child of immigrant parents, Baran reminds us that public pride in our ancestry and family practices is relatively new.

*Some of us resisted being different, and we were embarrassed by our differences. We didn’t want to speak the language. We didn’t care about the customs. We simply did not want to be different from other Americans. This was unfortunate because now we regret what was lost... It has not always been easy to express or even acknowledge one’s ethnic heritage in America. You either bowed to the pressure to conform to the American norm, or you paid the price by subjecting yourself to discrimination, ridicule and snobbery. This challenge was overwhelming and constantly discouraging... Today... we are able to appreciate the richness of our traditions, the beauty of our customs, and the fact that belonging to an ethnic group is something we can and should be proud of.*

**Tamaqua is a heavily German town, but if you tune your ear you can trace ethnic lineage from many lands through the last names.**

Even growing up in the 1970s in Tamaqua, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian Micah Gursky was not beyond being called the old standard term Western European Protestants used for their American neighbors from Eastern Europe, “Hunkie.” Football is a passion and a way of life for coalfield “Schuylks.” Athletes from other counties knew to beware of the coal region and still recall the bruises and injuries of sporting events with “Schuylks.” Gursky reminds us that Tamaqua is a heavily German town, but if you tune your ear you can trace ethnic lineage from many lands through the last names. At the football games you would hear a host of ethnic surnames called out. Leaving the area for college, Micah still remembers the first wedding he attended that didn’t have a polka band.

In some instances ethnic groups blended and enjoyed one another’s customs. As a church and secular singer, Emil Simodejka knows that “The polka repertoire used to include music of many nationalities.” Paul Lohin recalls growing up in Heckscherville, the son of Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants. Although his teacher, an Irish nun, teased him for his Old World ways, he recalls that, “The Irish neighbors were nice to us. My mother gave them halupkies, halushkies, and pierogies. One of the Irish neighbors made good ketchup.” The cross-cultural exchange was always at work in one way or another, at the root of a complex system of barter.

## THE SOUR CREAM SCANDAL

Here’s a recipe for how to confuse a folklorist. We attended Lithuanian Days at the Frackville Mall in August of 2005. Reading through the menu offered by the Knights of Lithuania Anthracite Chapter, I said aloud, “Oh, I want to try that spinach soup.” Before finding the Knights we found dancers, vendors and displays. I was engrossed in conversation with two elder gentlemen, Lithuanians from Minersville, when Michael, my comrade in multicultural discovery, handed me a Styrofoam cup of thick green soup. I thanked him and continued my conversation. Soon I tasted the soup and was intrigued by the mysterious blend of flavors. I asked the men for help. One said he thought this traditional Lithuanian soup was made of beef stock, barley, potatoes and spinach. “There’s something sour in it too. Lemon?” I wondered. He tried to explain that spinach could be sour. My mind flashed on my grandmother’s *schav*, a cold soup made of a tart green from the sorrel plant, blended with buttermilk, which she used to drink in a glass. But this was spinach. Nothing sour there. I smiled and nodded, and we returned to other subjects.



Later I spotted the Knights' serving quarters and found young Merideth Domalakes behind the spinach soup tureen. "This soup is good," I said. "What's in it?" I had suspected from reading names of dishes and partaking in *Kucios*, Lithuanian Holy Supper, that Lithuanian food would have a particularly pleasing lilt, its own tart, pickley brand of Eastern European cuisine. Polishing off my soup, my suspicion was proving true.

Meredith named all the ingredients that the Minersville man had included. "But," she said, "there was a big fight in the kitchen over whether to mix in the sour cream."

"Really?" I asked, laughing over the image of women so wedded to their family recipes that matters became overheated.

"Yup," she said. "They're still not speaking to each other." "Even I heard about it," confirmed Merideth's father Paul Domalakes. I began to notice that people were patronizing the *pierogies*, *halushki*, the potato *kugel* (casserole), and even the *borscht* (red beet and sour cream soup), but they seemed to be bypassing the spinach soup.

Michael was quite enamored with the sourness. I was tantalized. It was like nothing we had tasted. We would have thought it was Lithuanian, or at least Schuylkill County Lithuanian. And for part of the community, some of the cooks, it was. But it does call into question the veracity of some of what follows in this chapter.

Later that day we stopped at a yard sale in the southern part of the county. Jutting up between piles of books and household items was rusty, enticing farm machinery. Michael went to investigate, but the people sitting up on the hill by the house magnetized me. With their flat brimmed straw hats and location in the county, I took them for Pennsylvania Dutch. I slowly walked up toward them, admiring a large shade tree along the way. "Horse chestnut," a woman with a black hatband said. Soon we were in conversation. She was not Dutch but Lithuanian. "The neighbors said we were out of place," she said, "but we stayed here and farmed for thirty-five years." I told her we had just come from Lithuanian Days. She was sorry to have missed it and wanted a report. I told her what I could and recalled for her the menu. Soon the subject of the spinach soup came up. I told her there had been something of a controversy and a stir. "Oh, you're not supposed to put in sour cream!" she shouted, outraged.

I based my writing on pamphlets, books and clippings people in the community gave me, and of course on their oral testimonies. But as it turns out, one person's truth is another's fiction. Truth is not only singular but also a collective notion. We seek to interview as many people as we can within and across ethnic perspectives, hoping in the next phase of this project to sew together a patchwork quilt of truths, a collage of meaning, as with the tossed salad, creating something collectively palatable, giving voice and credence to a host of views. So for now, take all these recipes for ethnic living with at least one spoonful of... um, er— sour cream?

## SURVEYING SCHUYLKILL COUNTY ETHNICITY

We recorded sixty sessions with Schuylkill County residents, barely scratching the surface of local knowledge. The disparate numbers of those we interviewed from various groups reflects the circumstance of a short stay in the county as well as a bow to those whose ethnic practices are most distinct from the mainstream and who are eager to share them with visiting folklorists. Many "Schuylks" have ties to several ethnic groups. Some focus on one over another; others celebrate them all. Some wend their way into the mainstream and leave past traditions by the wayside.

In this preliminary survey we have tried to include ethnicities living here in the greatest numbers according to the 2000 census. The exception here is our inclusion of small ethnic groups who have gone out of their way to provide us with a glimpse into their customs. We do not accord greater importance to larger groups of people. We know there are Asians here from all across the continent, along with Filipinos, Scandinavians and others who make this county shine. Although there were few Latin Americans recorded in the year 2000, they have been arriving in significant numbers since then, so we will include them here. We recommend producing a book with greater depth featuring ethnic life in this county. Readers may find below one or two ethnicities described at greater length than others. View these segments as models of sample passages for such a publication.

## ETHNIC GROUPS

Schuylkill County has an outstanding array of ethnicities, people who have arrived here from far corners of the earth and still adhere to the practices carried over from the old country. Notice the number of churches, bars and fire companies in small communities. Each ethnic group stayed with their own. In the old days Protestant and Catholic immigrants and their descendants protected their own kind. Fire companies were benevolent societies



providing insurance to their ethnicity. Even today, fire companies across the county operate as social halls and offer public breakfasts and suppers throughout the year.

## AFRICAN AMERICANS

*As has been the case throughout the telling of American history, African American experience in Schuylkill County has not received the emphasis it deserves.*

African Americans have lived in this county and this country longer than members of many ethnic groups. As has been the case throughout the telling of American history, African-American experience in Schuylkill County has not received the emphasis it deserves. Our written source for this section stems from research conducted in Chester and Lancaster Counties, closer to the border of slave holding states. Nonetheless we suspect that many of the circumstances detailed would have been similar in Schuylkill, all forces working toward destabilizing African Americans economically and creating a black underclass.

The first African Americans in the county were indentured servants, slaves, runaways or free people, the latter having been manumitted or born free. In the late colonial and early national periods, as slaves became less a symbol of opulence and more of an expense, many slave holders cast off or manumitted their human chattel. Pennsylvania, being a free state bordering on slave states, became home to many freed or runaway slaves.

Though many African American males arriving in eastern Pennsylvania were skilled tradesmen, they were rarely permitted to enter the trades, which were already dominated by whites. While enslaved, many men had become skilled ironworkers, as well as cobblers, blacksmiths and craftsmen of the day. Yet upon gaining freedom they, along with their families, became transient, moving to new jobs as often as six or seven times a year.

New American immigrants are often considered lowest on the social and economic ladder, but people of color were typically below even these recent arrivals. The greatest increase in numbers of impoverished African Americans occurred when skilled and unskilled blacks found themselves unable to maintain economic and social positions due to competition from white immigrants. Newcomers drove blacks out of craft and building trades and even domestic work. In the 1830s and '40s Irish labor pushed blacks out of positions held for a lifetime, including waiters, laborers and canal boatmen. Compounded with the economic depression of 1837-38, black miners and laborers already on the brink fell overboard into grave poverty as situations worsened.

### AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

This background describes the circumstances out of which many of today's African Americans have risen. There were a sizeable number of blacks in the county when coal was king. Since then African Americans have remained an important if small minority serving the county in various capacities. We interviewed Professor Arthur Harris, Laverna Beard and Rosie and Jeffrey Snowell, siblings. Beard and the Snowells were raised in Pottsville. Jeffrey expresses his perceptions of their minority status:

*As African American in a small town you're outnumbered... We all went to integrated schools; so did blacks in their seventies, because there were so few blacks... Minersville Street was mostly black, so [our] playmates there were black, but there were mostly whites in school. You couldn't survive back then without lots of interaction with whites.*

The family had close relationships with Caucasians, but in certain cases the lines were drawn. Jeffrey describes this as "intimacy in the face of 'd'jour segregation." But at the same time, as a small town, he says, "Pottsville... nurtured me.... My first grade teacher still asks about me." Jeffrey and his sister Gail had teachers who "took us under their wing... Mrs. Catherine Sweible... made me Editor-in-Chief of the yearbook over white kids." Jeffrey remembers her encouragement in finding his way to Gettysburg College.

Jeffrey is now a Sociologist; he gives credit where it is due. "Einstein said he stands on the shoulders of giants. I do too, my older siblings." Jeffrey considers himself lucky and doesn't see the same fortune for today's youth here in the county. "We're failing miserably to educate black kids through college, except for our immediate family. I see so much wasted talent here." Today Rosie mentors younger African Americans at Penn State Schuylkill, where she is employed in Admissions.

### BEFORE THE REDEVELOPMENT

African Americans in the county do not share a common set of religious practices. In Schuylkill County believers ascribe to various denominations of Christianity, to Islam, to Afro-Caribbean beliefs and likely more. We are aware



of two African American-led congregations in the county at present, Bethel A.M.E., the African Methodist Episcopal Church on Laurel Blvd. in Pottsville, and the Church of Broken Pieces on Front St. in Minersville, both of which we have attended. Before what is commonly referred to as “the redevelopment,” part of the federal Urban Renewal program of the 1950s and ’60s which razed streets and structures in low-income neighborhoods throughout the country, Pottsville hosted another important gathering place for African Americans, Mt. Zion Baptist Church on Minersville Street.

***It becomes doubly important to tell the story of the people and the community, since the architectural footprints are gone.***

It becomes doubly important to tell the story of the people and the community, since the architectural footprints are gone. “There were five to six streets black people lived on, now torn down where they built the John O’Hara projects,” says Jeffrey Snowell. “The redevelopment” dismantled several important landmarks for African Americans, places also enjoyed by whites. These include the Lincoln House, home of indoor recreation for neighborhood youth, and the notorious Minersville Street. Some decline to speak of this locale, known as a booming red light district worked by African American and white prostitutes and enjoyed by visitors from near and far. Yet Minersville St. and the surrounding neighborhood was in many ways a flourishing enclave, as Professor Arthur Harris reminds us, in which reputable African American, North African, Lebanese (also locally called Syrians) and other white families resided and owned businesses.

***“Schuylks” of all colors regret that their children lack exposure to teachers of color, especially since so many young people will leave the county for work. Their elders would like to see them well prepared for whom they meet in the future.***

Laverna Beard’s early life took in many of these locations. She attended kindergarten at the Lincoln House and first grade at the Minersville Street School. Her kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Edith Foster, was also her first Sunday School teacher at Bethel A.M.E. The teacher was African American, “and she meant business.” Beard’s first- through fourth- grade teachers were white. Today there are no black teachers in the county. Laverna Beard, the Snowell siblings and people of color from various ethnicities bemoan the fact that their children have no role models in the classroom who look like them. “Schuylks” of all colors regret that their children lack exposure to teachers of color, especially since so many young people will leave the county for work. Their elders would like to see them well prepared for whom they meet in the future. Mrs. Beard cites Gail Snowell, a Pottsville native who “would be a good teacher here in town,” but, unable to find work in Schuylkill, teaches outside the county.

Mrs. Beard recounts growing up in the 1940s and ’50s in terms of de facto segregation. “It was like the South. [But] in South you knew where you stood. Here you had to find out the hard way.” She speaks of an inability to land jobs beyond domestic work, though she and her peers had excellent grades in school.

After Rosie and Jeffrey’s father died the Snowells were among the first African-American families to move into one of Pottsville’s first housing projects. For them it presented a wonderful opportunity to develop lifelong friendships with white contemporaries. “It was full of play. We all played outside,” Jeffrey recalls. Rosie concurs:

*We have great memories of growing up in the projects on Fairmont Avenue. Our kids have no idea how close we were [with those white kids]. We had similar tragedies. . . . We played at night together until late. . . . Kids always gathered around our house outside [so our mom could keep tabs on us]. She never minded the sounds of kids playing.*

Back then, Jeffrey Snowell recalls, “We had black role models. . . professionals. They didn’t rise up through Schuylkill County, but became skilled elsewhere,” but still they were there to be observed by children. The Snowells grew up as devoted fans of world champion boxer Mohammed Ali, who established a training camp near Schuylkill Haven. Close friendships with Ali over the years provided inspiration and direction for the growing children. Arthur Harris finds more black professionals in Pottsville today than in the past two decades and is encouraged by the increase in role models for local youth.

### A GROWING POPULACE WITH NO PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS

African Americans live in many of Schuylkill County’s boroughs today. According to Penn State Schuylkill Sociology Professor Steve Couch, the African American population went from 0.5% of the total population in 1990 to 1.5% in 2000. While the numbers are small, the increase is significant. Some African Americans have moved in recently as urban centers to the east have become increasingly crowded and expensive. Some longtime residents assert that local developers are seizing low-cost housing and turning it into Federal Section 8 units in many parts of the county, attracting low-income newcomers, whites and people of color.

***We found no fair or festival celebrating the contributions of African Americans in Schuylkill County***



Others call attention to the county's three prisons as a magnet for new residents who move here to be closer to incarcerated loved ones. We did not hear instances of old timers reaching out to newcomers with a welcoming hand, but instead heard fear and misunderstanding in the voices of longstanding residents.

We found no fair or festival celebrating the contributions of African Americans in Schuylkill County, be it a Juneteenth Celebration, a Jubilee, or other public event to instill pride and impart history. The African American Heritage Coalition, centered in Pottsville, is a vital organization meeting every Thursday night in the John O'Hara Project's Roundhouse with programs in the arts, inspiration and education for youth and adults of all ethnicities and sectors, and offering community wide potluck suppers.

## AMERICAN INDIANS

Although American Indians make up a tiny percentage of today's county residents we mention them here to pay homage to the region's first people. The original inhabitants of Schuylkill County were members of the Wolf Clan of the Lenni Lenape tribe, meaning "original people," belonging to the Delaware Indians. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Delawares occupied a region from the Delaware Bay to the Kittatiny Mountains of New Jersey and from the Atlantic Coast to the Delaware-Susquehanna watershed. This included much of what is now Delaware and Pennsylvania and all of New Jersey. By the time the Germans arrived and purchased land in Schuylkill County in 1732, the bill of sale came from the Iroquois Six Nations who had captured the Delaware and made them a captive people. These interactions are described in a brochure produced by the Pennsylvania German Studies Program at the Lebanon Campus of Harrisburg Area Community College.

Having been disenfranchised and evicted from their lands hundreds of years ago, Lenni Lenape remaining in Schuylkill County have mixed ancestry. We found no visible trace of anyone resembling full-blooded Iroquois, either. Nonetheless there may be people who can trace a portion of their lineage back to the first inhabitants of this land. In neighboring counties it is possible to find artisans who have relearned the ways of their ancestors. Schuylkill itself has residents who trace their lineage to American Indians of other regions, such as Cherokee educator and Unity Coalition member Annie Spece.

## CARPATHO-RUSYNS

National borders shift continuously, but "Schuyllks" of the Eastern Rite generally descend from Lemko or other ethnic minorities in the Carpathian Mountains of Poland, Slovakia, The Ukraine and Ruthenia. There are smaller numbers of Carpatho-Rusyns in Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Czech Republic from which "Schuyllks" can trace lineage. In no country do Carpatho-Rusyns have an administratively distinct territory. Listed on later pages are references to immigrant families from these nations who are not from the Carpathians and possess somewhat varying traditions. Lemko-Rusyns or Rusins and Transcarpathian-Rusyns are responsible for many if not all of the onion-domed churches in Schuylkill County.

*Carpatho-Rusyns are responsible for many of the county's ornate onion-domed churches resembling European cathedrals.*

Eastern Europeans came to Schuylkill County in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to add to the labor pool of the coal mining industry. "Schuyllks" often say that these newcomers were brought over to keep the wage scale low and deter union organizing by adding language barriers to the workforce. Laborers overcame these obstacles, as witnessed in such massive organizing efforts as the 1902 Coal Strike, earning Schuylkill County the title of "Birthplace of the American Labor Movement." Of course the Irish miners of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including John Siney and those who followed, also did much to earn this title for the county and give birth to organized labor in the fast industrializing United States.

Many Carpatho-Rusyns had been miners and farmers back home and continued both occupations in America. Paul Lohin's Carpatho-Rusyn parents came from Austria-Hungary and spoke several Slavonic languages. Paul describes an abandoned engine house in Heckscherville, known as the "Castle on the Hill," which housed new immigrants. Paul himself, the youngest of eleven, was raised in Heckscherville, where the family butchered hogs, gardened and smoked kielbasy while his father worked in the mines. He still owns the family homestead, complete with the outdoor oven in which his mother baked twenty loaves of bread every Saturday morning. His father made wine for the community and Paul carries on the art. He recalls weeklong wedding celebrations in the community up until the 1940s. Immigrants knew all the same songs, and according to Lohin, "constantly sang at work. [They also] sang here at all the gatherings."

Byzantine Church cantor Dr. Peter Yasenchak describes a legacy of agrarian stewardship which immigrants carried



to the new land. “You took care of the animals. Our parents planted fruit trees and made plum wine. They did the things that mattered.” According to the beliefs brought across the sea, “Animals always talk. Miners could understand animals; they were there with baby Jesus.” This reflects the Old World custom of bringing baked goods to the animals in the barn on Christmas Eve, when it was believed the animals would talk. Several of the Eastern European traditions share this ritual.

In some areas ethnic groups formed “patches,” small residential enclaves outside of town close to the mines and collieries. One Internet source maintains this term came from a prevalence of community gardens, at least among those who spoke the same language. Our oral histories have not mentioned communal gardening, but certainly growing food was a vital addition to the meager income of miners, and rural immigrants were adept at growing and preserving it. Mines were often closed for several days a week, well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ebbing and flowing with the economy. Meager wages were largely devoured by company-owned houses and stores. Injury and death were common aspects of mining life. Widows were evicted from company homes.

Carpatho-Rusyns are responsible for many of the county’s ornate onion-dome churches resembling European cathedrals. Immigrants to Pennsylvania imported European craftsmen to paint ceilings, walls, craft stained glass windows, carve elaborate stations of the cross, and paint movable screens behind the altars of Orthodox churches. Local miners lent their own skills as artisans between shifts while women supported the efforts by providing food, labor, childcare and church cleaning.

Carpatho-Rusyns belong to several denominations including Byzantine (sometimes called “Greek”) Catholic, Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox. In Byzantine and Russian Orthodox churches the cantor sings in Church Slavonic. Churches had lodges to maintain ethnic traditions. Pete Yasenchak reminds us that young parishioners used to attend Ukrainian or “Greek” School at night to learn the language, culture and religion. Pete learned to write Russian Cyrillic as a boy. The singing heard in Eastern Rite churches was handed down by cantors. The music was written down in the 1940s. Before that, Yasenchak explains, “its transmission was completely oral.” Pete Yasenchak and Paul Lohin sing in the county’s Original Byzantine Male Choir, directed by Emil Simodejka, whom we also interviewed. The ensemble sings strictly in the native tongue of their forebears.

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## BYZANTINE AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHRISTMAS

Carpatho-Rusyns and other ethnic groups lived near their churches. The bells of worship brought a dual sense of order and beauty to work-a-day lives. Carpatho-Rusyns celebrate St. Nicholas Day the Sunday before Christmas, in honor of St. Nicholas of Myrna, Wonderworker, and in anticipation of the Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord. For Schuylkill County Byzantine Church members this constitutes a morning service and breakfast joining the parishes of S.S. Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church of Minersville & St. Mary Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church of St. Clair.

The most sanctified meal of the Christmas season is held on December 24, a Holy Supper consisting of thirteen foods. These vary from home to home, but traditionally the meal is devoid of red meat and dairy. (After Supper you may see a cook making small preparations for the next day’s Christmas meal which generally includes kielbasy and ham, since Christ has been born by then and rich feasting can begin.)

Ethnic Heritage Survey Committee member Peg Grigalonis arranged for us to join the Osilka family of Mahanoy City for church and Holy Supper. Mary is a devout member of St. Mary’s Byzantine Catholic Church and an extraordinary practitioner of traditional culture, from handiwork to culinary arts. Her husband Bernie attends Mahanoy City’s Slovak Roman Catholic Church where their daughter Mary Ann Jarrett plays organ and leads the choir. At forty-something she is one of the youngest singers of the Slovak Christmas hymns. But back in the Osilka home it was Bernie, Jr.’s Asian American wife who was trying to learn to make mushroom sauerkraut soup.

It seems immigrants found the same or similar mushrooms growing wild in the mountains of Pennsylvania as in the Carpathians. Our Holy Super began the traditional way, with an unusual and delicious tasting mushroom and sauerkraut soup as the first course. Mary followed her soup with homemade *pierogi*, baked fish, two kinds of *babalky*, small dough balls, both traditionally smothered, one in poppy seeds and the other in sauerkraut. Dessert included cakes and nut roll and a prune-filled, or *lekvar*, roll, all baked by Mary and Bernie Osilka. A big mug of Yuengling beer filled out the tradition for Bernie.



*Boilo*, a hot, strong whiskey with sweet spices and varying degrees of honey and orange, takes many forms as a prized secret recipe held by “Schuylks” from Eastern Europe and appreciated by neighbors of various ethnic groups, although it did not seem to be present at Holy Supper in the Osilka home. *Boilo* contests have become popular at county drinking establishments over the holidays.

**At the church the men dressed in sheets and handmade crowns, some taking the parts of angels, some shepherds and one, the recalcitrant woodsman, the Guba, who growls and grumbles, chases children with his ax (now made of cardboard), and ultimately accepts Christ and repents of his ways.**

### RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS AND THE GUBA

The Russian Orthodox Church operates on the Julian calendar, never having adopted the Gregorian calendar. That brings Christmas celebrations to January, and Easter to April or May. As with other Carpatho-Rusyns, Holy Supper is a festive Lenten meal with traditional symbolic foods and no red meat or dairy, as the Advent season does not conclude until the feast of Christmas the following day. Twelve foods are traditional, representing the Twelve Apostles. The dishes vary among households depending on what village or country the ancestors came from and what the family will eat. Common foods are bread, honey, raw garlic, *babalky*, *pirohy*, mushrooms, mushroom soup, pea soup, nuts, cooked dried peas or beans, baked fish and/or pickled herring, prunes, prune soup, stuffed cabbage (*halupki*), sauerkraut and tea.

The largest celebration in St. Clair, and perhaps well beyond the county, takes place in the home of Steve Dudish, age ninety-five. The family has gathered there for Holy Suppers in Schuylkill County for more than ninety years. Invited to participate, we sang hymns sitting and standing around the table, received honey on our foreheads for sweet omens and enjoyed a lavish meal. We then left the party with several men in their thirties and forties who headed to St. Michael’s Church to dress and practice their parts for a traveling play. They were beginning a Christmas pilgrimage which would take their humble performance to nearly sixty households.

**Russian Orthodox Christmas is a joyous, festive celebration, and yet the Guba and his contingent take their work seriously. They fear the tradition will die out. They cannot find boys to learn their parts in the play or the hymns. They worry about their old neighbors who wait expectantly each year, people who have welcomed the Guba, angels, shepherds and Bethlehem Singers perhaps every Christmas of their lives.**

At the church the men dressed in sheets and handmade crowns, some taking the parts of angels, some shepherds and one, the recalcitrant woodsman, the Guba, who growls and grumbles, chases children with his ax (now made of cardboard), and ultimately accepts Christ and repents of his ways. His sidekicks carry a replica of St. Michael’s Church with a manger scene inside. The Guba carries a tin can alongside his ax. The ensemble walks from house to house, reciting a sort of Mummer’s Play at each stop and collecting change for the church. The party is hopping at the Dudish home and the Guba, shepherds and angels stay for an extra drink of *boilo* and a few laughs. But soon they are off. Many parishioners await them. We knock and are let in by a quiet, frail, elderly couple who resume their stations behind a table of nut bread, *boilo* and whiskey from which they refresh their welcome guests.

### THE BETHLEHEM CAROLERS

While the Guba and his entourage (often all called the Gubas) are visiting house to house, another group assembles at the church with a yellowed registry, practices a carol or two in Church Slavonic and begins its own pilgrimage through St. Clair to expectant parishioners. These men will raise hundreds of dollars for the church, writing the name of each contributor. They sing well together, these half dozen devoted men who will also be plied with desserts and potent liquid refreshment.

### TRADITION PRESERVED IN THE PROVINCES

**“In Pittsburgh they talk about remembering traditions like this. But [in St. Clair] we still have it.”**

Russian Orthodox Christmas is a joyous, festive celebration, and yet the Guba and his contingent take their work seriously. They fear the tradition will die out. They cannot find boys to learn their parts in the play or the hymns. They worry about their old neighbors who wait expectantly each year, people who have welcomed the Guba, angels, shepherds and Bethlehem Singers perhaps every Christmas of their lives. The irony is that few of St. Clair’s residents have been to Europe. Does this tradition even survive there? People born in this country nurture and tend traditions brought over by ancestors. In many cases they haven’t visited the land of their roots. Borders and cultures have changed. But here, what the immigrants practiced and held dear when they arrived has been preserved. If you want to experience the traditional culture of a region, visit the provinces, the places where beloved customs have been carried and nurtured in new surroundings. These provinces include Schuylkill County, a cultural gold mine.

Relatives of many generations travel to the Dudish home from several states for Holy Supper and Christmas. They



wouldn't miss it. Every room of the home is teeming with people and voices. Pride abounds. St. Clair's Guba and associates were publicized in *The New Rusyn Times*, a publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society of Pittsburgh. The newsletter reprinted an article from the January 7, 2000 *Pottsville Republican-Herald* by Mary Ellen Maher-Harkins. The article concludes with the words of Steve Dudish's niece Lois Lieberman. "In Pittsburgh they talk about remembering traditions like this. But [in St. Clair] we still have it."

## EASTER

Among the Slavic nations, especially people from the Carpatho-Rusyn area, the custom of bringing an Easter basket to church to be blessed on Holy Saturday is an age-old tradition. Filling the basket are rich and sumptuous meat and dairy products prohibited during Lent. The symbolic foods include Easter bread (*Pascha*), ham, *kielbasy*, bacon, a special cheese called *hrudka* or *siretz*, horseradish, butter, salt. Non-edible traditional items include *pysanky*, which are blown out and ornately decorated eggs, and a lit candle. The basket is covered with a linen cloth.

**Slovanic language and culture are fast dying out in the county, a problem faced by many or most of the immigrant groups who arrived prior to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

## FLOWING INTO THE MAINSTREAM

Slovanic language and culture are fast dying out in the county, a problem faced by many or most of the immigrant groups who arrived prior to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dr. Pete Yasenchak is concerned;

"People leave and don't come back.... Much is lost.... Ethnic churches will close." He longs to make people aware of the traditions which remain. He bemoans the closing of churches and synagogues. He comments on the closing of the Jewish synagogue in Shenandoah. He might have mentioned the Syrian Church there, or synagogues in other boroughs. Only one member of the Original Byzantine Male Choir is well below seventy. The group is vital and yet teetering. Yasenchak laments,

*It's all so interesting and frightening. I can look down at the church pews [when I'm cantoring] and see who's missing. There are not enough people.... Churches are struggling... We hold bake sales, pierogi sales.*

Yasenchak fears communities are in danger of losing their traditions. We documented ethnic food sales, and many of the holders of the recipes are up in years. There are usually some younger cooks and bakers working too. Yasenchak advocates for a resurgence in heritage education, with perhaps a modern, multicultural flavor.

## CHINESE

There are relatively few Chinese or Chinese Americans living in Schuylkill County. We list them here because many people notice them as an ethnic minority due to the presence of Chinese-owned and operated restaurants. At least one can be found in most towns. People of Chinese ancestry contribute their skills to many county activities.

## CORNISH

A history book of Victorian England states that at the bottom of a mine anywhere in the world one can find a Cornishman. When the British copper mines closed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cornish traveled to Pennsylvania, among other places, to find work in the only occupation many of them knew. Mining has been an important aspect of Cornish life for 4,000 years, and the Cornish were integral to early anthracite mining in Pennsylvania. Although many moved west for better opportunities, hundreds remained in Schuylkill County's coal region.

**A rhyme to identify certain Cornish names goes, "By Tre-, Lan-, Ros-, Car-, Non-, Pol-, and Pen- you may know the most of Cornishmen."**

Cornishmen were known for performing in brass or silver bands usually connected with the local Methodist Church, like First Methodist in Tamaqua. They joined in song with the other early Celts, the Welsh. As well as contributing their music to the region, they flavored life with Cornish pasties, a meat pocket perfect for carrying a meal to work, and saffron buns. Listen for their legacy through names ending in vowels as well as surnames also common in other areas of the British Isle as such as Thomas, May, Edwards, Carter and Williams. A rhyme to identify certain Cornish names goes, "By Tre-, Lan-, Ros-, Car-, Non-, Pol-, and Pen- you may know the most of Cornishmen."

One of the major difficulties in documenting the Cornish in Pennsylvania is that they assimilated fairly quickly. They knew English, were hard-working, highly skilled in mining, tended to be Protestant and were more often than



not teetotalers so they quickly made their way up the ladder in the mining industry, or moved elsewhere to scale the ranks. Those who remained in Schuylkill County generally became businessmen. State Representative David Argall's Cornish grandfather stayed in Pottsville to operate his cobbler shop while the rest of the Argalls moved west.

The Cornish are a small ethnic minority, but are revitalizing interest in their heritage through *Penkernewke*, the Pennsylvania Cornish Association.

## GREEKS

Constantine "Gus" Depos and his daughter Georgia Depos DeWire are both lifelong residents of Tamaqua. Gus was born in 1926. His immigrant parents were restaurateurs. After running a restaurant and bar of their own, Gus and his brother John opened The Chili Dog, a popular snack bar and lunch fixture. We wondered why, with the exception of The Beacon Diner in Hometown, Greeks in the county seem to serve hot dogs but not the flavorful dishes of their native cuisine, which some still eat at home on Sundays and holidays. Gus said all the years he owned a restaurant he didn't think Tamaqua was ready for Greek food. "We had Greek food, but not on the menu," he says. You had to know to request it. He considered offering Greek meals, as he relates here.

*My brother moved away.... He came to visit and said we were behind the times [by offering no ethnic foods and by our cheap prices]. We still never went into the Greek food full time.... At The Chili Dog my wife wanted to serve gyros, [but I] still didn't think Tamaqua was ready.... In my opinion Tamaqua still hadn't come forward into different kinds of food.... The exception was Italian.... The people know our Greek pastry.*

**We wondered why, with the exception of The Beacon Diner in Hometown, Greeks in the county seem to serve hot dogs but not the flavorful dishes of their native cuisine, which some still eat at home on Sundays and holidays.**

It was all right to offer one or two baked sweets in the restaurant. Georgia spoke next. She lived with her parents and grandmother over the family restaurant. They took all their meals downstairs at the family table in the public dining room. They ate their share of American food but, like other ethnic groups, they enjoyed the food of their Motherland for Sunday dinner. From her mother and grandmother Georgia learned to prepare Greek egg lemon soup, *avgolemono*, and spinach pie, *spanikopita*. She combined the culinary techniques of both role models, but really learned the recipes after her mother became less able.

*Mom taught me to make baklava, Easter twists, which are a butter cookie, and another type of Greek cookie. It was not until my mother had a stroke in 1996 did I sit down and really learn the traditional foods. She was confined to a wheelchair, but she still helped us in the kitchen.*

The Depos's are a religious family and follow traditions closely. At Easter, held at the same time as other Orthodox Easters, according to the Julian calendar, the Depos family leaves the county to attend the Greek Orthodox Church in Wilkes Barre. There they see other Greek "Schuyllks" whose numbers have dwindled dramatically. Some "Schuyllks" travel to Reading for church. After an in depth, ritualistic Midnight Mass laden with customs from the Old World, the congregation goes downstairs to eat a sacramental meal including lamb, eggs dyed red on Holy Thursday, Easter bread, orzo, *spanikopita*, wine, and Easter twists. Gus always looks forward to the final course which he eats back at home, a traditional soup his sister makes, a clear broth with sliced calf's liver.

Georgia's whole life has been hinged with tradition. She says her father and mother followed identical customs although her father was born in Tamaqua and her mother in Greece. Georgia talks about her surprise in coming to realize that the family traditions she held dear are actually Greek customs. Although her husband is not Greek they participated in a traditional crowning ceremony, a dance and ring exchange, as part of their wedding. "You have to mix in the two cultures when you're not marrying another Greek," she says. The reception included Greek music played on the *bazouki* and clarinet along with circle dancing, sometimes with a napkin or cloth. "Different dances come from different sections of Greece." She seems well versed in them all. "Mixing backgrounds makes you more conscious of your traditions," Georgia reflects.

Babies receive Holy Communion at their Baptism. Georgia explains the ritual. Gus pipes in describing the Godparents', called *Cumbado* and *Cumbada* according to gender, and their involvement in naming and Christening. Georgia speaks of her mother's *Iconostas*, icons denoting the physical and religious center of house. They include relics from religious events, such as wedding crowns kept with certain foods like Jordan almonds, holy water,



palms, holy oil, candles and more. On New Year's, Greeks make a traditional bread, baking in a coin for good luck. Georgia's mother put a New Year's coin into her *spanikopita* or even soup.

Rituals are prescribed for the dead as well as the living. Unfortunately, Gus and Georgia have had recent experiences with memorial and funeral practices having just lost his wife, her mother, the center of their universe. It's traditional to have an open casket viewing with an icon placed in the hands or on the head of the loved one. Greeks hold highly symbolic Memorial services in the church after forty days and again after six months and after a year. Each time they bake and eat a traditional cake according to custom. Women mourn in black for at least forty days. After the forty day Memorial the family provides a traditional fish meal for the circle of mourners.

Gus misses the days when there were enough Greeks in the county to hold lively picnics at Stillcreek near MacAdoo and at Lakewood Park in Barnesville. These picnics helped singles meet eligible marriage partners. When Gus was younger there were many Greeks from places such as Pottsville, Minersville, and Tamaqua. Hundreds of people came to the picnics. "Schuylks" imported Greek bands and visitors from the larger cities. People ate and danced to their heart's content. Gus is still a member of the men's national Greek American organization, HEPA, which has national, district and state conventions. Women have an organization of their own.

Greeks in the county neither hid nor flaunted their ethnicity. In Gus's youth, the Greek Orthodox Church celebrated Christmas on January 7<sup>th</sup> so he joined the ranks of the Carpatho-Rusyn, both Russian Orthodox and Byzantine (the latter of whom now celebrate Christmas and Easter on the Roman Catholic dates) who were out of school for "Greek Christmas." New Year's was the one occasion when he and his brother let their ethnicity shine for their clientele. At the bar they held a Greek New Year's Eve celebration with a band, hats, Greek whiskey and pastry.

Gus is proud of being Greek, American, and from Schuylkill County. "We always had good people in our bar. Tamaqua people respected our place and our family.... I became the only Greek 'Citizen of the Year' in 1990."

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## INDIANS

The first members of today's Indian community arrived in Schuylkill County around 1970. Their numbers are small but growing. Most of the county's Indians are Hindu, though some are Buddhist, Muslim or Christian. Schuylkill County boasts a magnificent Hindu temple in Summit Station called *Vraj* which has dormitories and hosts visitors from many states. Although Hindus observe many holidays, none is more sacred than *Divali*, the Festival of Lights celebrated in November. (We see yet another cultural overlay in considering the Jewish holiday celebrated in November or December, as the Lunar calendar dictates, *Hanukkah*, also called the Festival of Lights.)

More than half a dozen Indian families in the county are Sikh and were instrumental in building the regional temple, or *Gurudwara*, nearby in Berks County, serving worshippers from various locales. *Vaisakhi* is the most significant Sikh holiday, which operates on a Lunar calendar. During this spring planting celebration practitioners recite all of the voluminous *Guru Granth Sahib*, the book of sacred hymns, over the course of a few days. Because the holiday is cultural and religious, Sikh children and adults hold a secular dance concert separate from the sacred events. Recently Penn State Schuylkill has been the site for the cultural dance festival. Sikhs want to welcome visitors to the performance, but haven't yet found a space large enough. Traditionally Sikhs do not cut their hair or beards. Men cover their heads with turbans or caps. People may be pleased to answer questions and explain the ways in which their faith compares with others.

Rosy Narula, beloved by many sectors of the community for her work in county health promotion, incorporates aspects of her Sikh religious philosophy into her hospital work. "We are all one..." she says. "God is energy... formless... We cannot comprehend God." She goes on to express the human bent on existence. "God created us all the same, but we go by the outer layer. Diversity is beautiful. It adds excitement. It gives hope."

A proponent of health and healing, Rosy strives to curb Schuylkill County's suicide rate, which, she says, is double the national average. "Schuylks" have been active lately in learning from workshops on suicide prevention and building hope among the young. As a health promoter, Rosy reflects on the many religions which hold sacred fasts. "Why don't we fast from anger?" suggests.



## IRISH

The mass migrations of Irish peasants in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century delivered to the port of Philadelphia a potential workforce depleted by famine and disease and gaunted by voyages on stormy seas. Instead of finding streets paved with gold in America, the newcomers met overwhelming hostility, overcrowded living conditions and little chance of gainful employment. Many were drafted into the military upon arrival and sent to the Front as cannon fodder for the Union Army as the American Civil War took shape.

**“When we landed in Yankee land, they put a rifle in my hand, Saying, ‘Paddy, you must go and fight for Lincoln.’”**

*(folksong, Paddy’s Lamentation)*

The fast-industrializing landscape of Pennsylvania was hardly an atmosphere in which Irish immigrants could develop positive self-esteem. In the Emerald Isle of their homeland, peasant classes had been dogged and starved for centuries by English landlords and soldiers, forced off their farms and out of their homes and churches. With little access to education or technical training, they had developed few, if any, skills applicable to employment in the new land. As unskilled laborers they were suitable for only the most menial, dirty and dangerous jobs at the lowest pay, jobs that were more plentiful in the coalfields of Schuylkill County, mining coal and building railroads and canals, than in the streets of Philadelphia.

**B. Franklin Gowan, as mine and railroad owner and prosecutor, waged an effective campaign against recalcitrant Irish workers, while Benjamin Bannon provided decades of negative stereotyping in his *Miners’ Journal* editorials. Many claim Bannon invented the use of the term “Molly Maguires,” which he applied to rebellious workers in Schuylkill County as early as 1847.**

Arriving in Schuylkill County in droves, the Irish ran headlong into an economic system already dominated by English and Welsh overlords, with a social dynamic that smacked of the same abuse and discrimination they had known back in Ireland. Forced to live in the hovels of hastily constructed, grimy “patch towns” with inadequate water supplies and nonexistent sewage systems, the newcomers languished in the shadow of huge slag piles as they competed with native-born American laborers for too few jobs in the horrific, underground anthracite mines. Bestly working conditions (mostly as “helpers” rather than miners), long hours, poor pay and frequent closures were unbearable by any standard, and death stalked the hapless Irish workers daily in the deep underground shafts where explosions, fires, floods, cave-ins, and deadly “black-damp” gasses were common.

The kind of isolation and alienation brought on by their lowly position offered the immigrants few models for organizing and self help. Plagued by deep hatreds and resentments of English and Welsh mine bosses, internal disputes—and a penchant for drink as an escape from their woes—Irish workers had little advocacy or any sort of safety net to keep them from the harsh realities of grinding poverty and disease.

### THE AOH

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), an Irish-American benevolent society, began to take root in these harsh settings and to galvanize resistance to the wretched conditions of the Schuylkill coalfields. Through adherence to the society’s vision of caring for its members and the secretive codes by which it operated, Irish workers began to create a framework for an incipient labor movement, in opposition to brutalities brought upon them by the capitalist class of mine and railroad owners, with their anti-Catholic, Know Nothing Party politics and legions of Coal and Iron Police.

**For the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “People around here tucked their Irish, because of the Molly Maguires,” says local historian Rich Fedoriska. Bob Mulhall responds, “Here [in Heckscherville] we were Irish. That’s all we knew. We couldn’t hide it.”**

B. Franklin Gowan, as mine and railroad owner and prosecutor, waged an effective campaign against recalcitrant Irish workers, while Benjamin Bannon provided decades of negative stereotyping in his *Miners’ Journal* editorials. Many claim Bannon invented the use of the term “Molly Maguires,” which he applied to rebellious workers in Schuylkill County as early as 1847. Together, Bannon and Gowan were able to convince the Catholic establishment that the roots of the so-called “Mollies” were to be found in the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Excommunication was shortly added to the list of consequences for membership in the “secret society.” Local historian Rich Fedoriska discusses the almighty, unshakable “power of the priest” in the old days. “If a priest told you to get out of the AOH, you did.” So harsh, divisive and sustained was this journalistic attack, culminating in the mass execution of a score of mine laborers thirty years later, that the divisions and dysfunction within Schuylkill County communities are still evident today.

The uphill struggle of trying to organize against established capital, the stereotyping of Irish laborers by the popular press, and the oppressive tactics of the Coal and Iron Police were further complicated by the mountainous barriers of the terrain itself, as well as by internal struggles of competing Irish groups. And though the allegedly



lawless Irish were rumored to be a major threat to peace and prosperity of the region, they constituted less than eleven percent of the population of Schuylkill County at the time of the hangings of the Molly Maguires in 1877.

### FEAR TURNS TO PRIDE

By 1880, many Irish families, blackballed by the coal industry because of their association with the AOH and linked in popular imagination with the Mollies, were beginning to leave Schuylkill. Some returned to Ireland, while others sought employment in eastern cities or adventure in the far West. For the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “People around here tucked their Irish, because of the Molly Maguires,” says local historian Rich Fedoriska. Bob Mulhall responds, “Here [in Heckscherville] we were Irish. That’s all we knew. We couldn’t hide it.”

There were other ethnic groups, too. A locally written history sheet states that the Welsh lived in the Heckscherville Valley before the Irish arrived between 1830-1850 and that by 1903, after the famous Coal Strike of 1902, the coal companies began introducing Polish, Lithuanians, Slavs and Greeks into the Valley. St. Kieran’s, an ornate, heavily Irish Catholic Church with an impressive grotto chiseled out of the rocky hillside, was built in Heckscherville in 1858 and operated a school from 1913-1970.

After decades of low self-esteem, Irish-American descendants in the anthracite region are experiencing a resurgence of pride and interest in the traditions of their forebears, as evidenced by a regeneration of membership in AOH. St. Patrick’s Day Parades are sacred events. In 2004, in the small town of Girardville, population 1,800, over 5,000 people crowded the parade route as 140 units marched. In 2005, Pottsville held its 30<sup>th</sup> parade. Liz Quinn, an Irish American from Heckscherville, recalls that during her childhood, “Where our ancestors came from was secret or something. Everybody wants to be Irish today.”

A stated goal of the various AOH chapters is to clear the names of their ancestors who were imprisoned and hung as Molly Maguires more than 130 years ago. We interviewed Joe Wayne, great-grandson of the infamous Molly Maguire leader Jack Kehoe. Wayne has already been successful in gaining a pardon for Jack Kehoe. Joe is refurbishing Jack Kehoe’s old tavern in Girardville. The Hibernian House is now open for drink and lodging, and is a museum of sorts with its murals of the Mollies and the actual padlock and chains that bound them in prison. “They gave them a choice,” Joe Wayne says. “They could lie on their stomach or their back.” The county has an annual Molly Maguire weekend for locals, scholars and visitors. Each year the Mollies are tried anew as part of the event, and pardoned annually.

Because the Irish have been in the county for so long, and because of the legacy and fear surrounding the Molly Maguire era, many of the Old World customs have faded. Some Irish were fed traditional fare all their lives unknowingly. Others have recently begun to bake Irish soda bread, scones and Kerry apple cake. Ham and cabbage, shepherd’s pie, bean soup, Irish stew and the ubiquitous potato are Irish soul food.

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## ITALIANS

The last great wave of Italian immigrants to America came in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As is the case for many of the county’s ethnic groups, the traditions have been passed along and preserved down through the generation now in their fifties, sixties and older. Folklorist Joan Saverino wrote her doctoral dissertation on Italians in Reading, Berks County. She observes that, “The Italian American ethnic tradition that has evolved in the last one hundred years grew primarily from southern Italian folklife.” The immigrants were generally farmhands or peasants back home. Between 1880 and World War One, four million Italians immigrated to the United States. They considered themselves members of their home village rather than Italian nationals. They spoke languages unintelligible to one another.

### ITALIAN ARTISANS

By 1890, with a need for laborers in coal, iron, steel, railroads, cement and glass, there were more Italians in Pennsylvania than any state beside New York. Saverino writes that, “While new immigrants were forced to work in what they considered undesirable paid labor jobs... most hoped to move on to more prestigious occupations in their eyes—artisan (e.g. baker, plasterer, barber, tailor) or merchant/businessman—as soon as they could.”



We spoke with Joe Bellucci of Shenandoah who stayed out of the mines by becoming a tailor. Bellucci recalls, “Dad kept us out of the mines. He got me a tailoring job. Dad said ‘You no go work in mines.’ He got my brother a job in a shoe repair shop.” Bellucci’s dry cleaners and tailor shop is still an institution with eighty-two-year-old Joe at the helm.

We also met Lorenzo Guisepppe “Mickey” Padora of Tamaqua who began baking Italian bread in a now 105-year-old anthracite bake oven at age thirteen. Built into the hillside, the brick oven was created around 1900 by George “Dallas” D’Allesio who commissioned experts from Italy for the construction. Padora, now 78, and his son Larry, 32, continue the operation as two artisans. As of a 2000 *Times News* article by Donald R. Serfass, Padora was still producing perhaps 700 loaves daily, 4,200 a week. It has always been owned and operated by Italians and Italian Americans.

### IMMIGRANT WOMEN FIND THEIR OWN BLENDS

Italian women kept together in coal patches found little time or opportunity to learn English. Those who supplemented family incomes through garment factory work learned English as needed. Some mothers assimilated cooking styles with neighbors of other backgrounds, but Saverino found that, “Even women who Americanized their cooking during the week reserved Sundays (and holidays) for Italian fare. Pasta with some kind of tomato and meat sauce was a central dish.”

**Joe Bellucci describes colorful scenes in the Brownsville Patch outside of Shenandoah in which, “German neighbors across the street had pizza and homemade bread and butter with us.... The Germans had a bake oven made by my dad.... [They] made rye bread and invited us over.”**

Immigrants retained some customs from home, adapting and incorporating New World or other Old World practices which fit into their worldview. One notable example of this is a Berks County Italian woman who, researcher Joan Saverino learned, became a proponent of *powwowing*, a Pennsylvania Dutch ritualistic tradition sometimes described as witch doctoring to heal bodies and amend situations. Joe Bellucci describes colorful scenes in the Brownsville Patch outside of Shenandoah in which, “German neighbors across the street had pizza and homemade bread and butter with us.... The Germans had a bake oven made by my dad.... [They] made rye bread and invited us over.”

Schuylkill County Italians were known for their gardening, winemaking and homemade sausage. Women preserved garden produce in jars for winter meals. Bellucci remembers that in his family they “plowed the yard with an old pitchfork. My dad and mother planted tomatoes, hot and sweet peppers, green beans, cauliflower, corn. My mother jarred foods, pickled onions... [They had] peach, cherry, and pear trees. My mother canned the fruit and made jelly.”

**Coal towns have as many different Catholic churches as there were immigrant groups and languages.**

The family lived on the road to the mine. In the summer Joe’s father would stand by the road handing out bags of tomatoes, beans, cabbage and other garden produce. The Bellucci family made full use of their patch of land. Joe describes an age-old process carried out in the New World.

*Dad built a grape trestle and used his own grapes to make wine.... He got a wooden keg, cut it, and put the grapes in. Us kids had to wash our feet really good to chomp up the grapes.... Then it fermented. My dad cleaned off the scum and poured it into gallon jugs. You waited a couple months before you could drink it.*

Italian miners went to Philadelphia to get wine orders. According to Bellucci, “Revenuers never smashed that [operation]; they were looking for whiskey.”

**Known to people of all ethnic groups is Shenandoah’s Our Lady of Mount Carmel summer festival in July, with food, festivities and fireworks. It serves as a magnet for people throughout the county, as well as for visitors, and functions as a homecoming for the Schuylkill County Italian Diaspora.**

### AROMAS FROM THE KITCHEN CARRY US HOME

Joe Bellucci describes a rich ethnic cuisine which thrived in Shenandoah. “In the Italian section on Penn Street they all had goats. There was a man who had a herd of goats who sold milk and meat.” It was traditional to bake a young goat, a kid, for Easter. Joe’s father used to make sausage, as well as blood pudding from goat. They ate goat cheese, ricotta and hard cheeses. “Everything was homemade,” Joe recalls, from his mother’s spaghetti (noodles were cut with guitar strings), to her pies baked from the family’s apple and plum trees, to the bread baked in the outdoor bake oven built by Joe’s father.

Most Italians being Roman Catholic, nearly every coal town in the county bears an Italian Catholic Church. Ethnic groups did not blend in church. Coal towns have as many different



Catholic churches as there were immigrant groups and languages.

Known to people of all ethnic groups is Shenandoah's Our Lady of Mount Carmel summer festival in July, with food, festivities and fireworks. This event coincides with the traditional Catholic Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. In Shenandoah it serves as a magnet for people throughout the county, as well as for visitors, and functions as a homecoming for the Schuylkill County Italian Diaspora.

For those still living in the county or with relatives here, Holy Supper on Christmas Eve is the big family event, with Easter coming second. Traditions remain strong and heartfelt among many who still prepare strictly Italian specialties with anchovies, squid, pasta and, of course, olive oil and garlic.

## JEWES

Most Jews in Schuylkill County trace their ancestry to Germany and Eastern Europe. While not technically an ethnicity, Jews of Eastern Europe and Germany, called Ashkenazi Jews, hold a common breadth of traditions of the hearth and home, along with a legacy of Yiddish-speaking forebears. It is possible to never set foot in a Jewish temple or synagogue and yet hold to Jewish customs, particularly over the holidays. Many of the county's Jews, however, do continue to take part in synagogue services.

Jews were principle figures in the county's textile mills and other businesses. They operated stores and enterprises throughout the coal region. There were several synagogues around the county at one time, including in Tamaqua, Mahanoy City, Frackville, Pottsville, Minersville and Shenandoah. In the wake of a Jewish exodus from Schuylkill County, only the Pottsville synagogue on Mahantongo Street remains open. Services are generally held every other Friday night and Saturday morning with periodic holiday celebrations with Reconstructionist Rabbi Leah Richman presiding.

We attended services in Pottsville. We enjoyed a Hanukkah celebration at the synagogue. We interviewed Tamaqua businessman Ted Block and Shenandoah poet and songster Lester Hirsh. Lester's father owned a shoe store. Ted took over his father's men's apparel store. Both men trace their origins to the same country. Ted doubts if his family name started out as "Block," but figures it was amended along the way. The same may be said of "Hirsh." Lester, Jr. told us a piece of the family immigration story.

"My grandfather... Lester Hirsh was a peddler. He spoke no English. He came from Poomosha, Lithuania.... He brought the family over one by one to Lock Haven, Pennsylvania in the late 1800s." Lester, Sr. came for the proverbial "better life." He had also, his grandson adds, experienced some *pogroms*, the state-sponsored raids on small Jewish villages called *shtetls*. Here the Shenandoah poet, singer and songwriter depicts his parents' origins.

"My father... Max Hirsh... was the first of his generation born in America... around 1901.... He got into the shoe business." Max Hirsh courted and married Miriam Friedberg, born and raised in Mahanoy City. "People from Mahanoy City thought they had more class than the people in Shenandoah," Lester has heard. Miriam was from a close knit Jewish community and a "good family." She had been sent to the Bronx to school and came home with good nursing skills. Lester, Jr., keeper of the past, has home movies and pictures of his parents' wedding and of Shenandoah. His mother tells of Babe Ruth coming to town. Shenandoah was still thriving in Lester's boyhood, with two theaters, the Capital and the Strand where young Lester spent Saturday afternoons.

## EXPORTING TALENT

At Lithuanian Days this year we met an elderly gentleman who could name perhaps a dozen or more Jewish shops that flourished in Minersville in his earlier years. Ted Block recalls a "decent size Jewish community" in Tamaqua, including a veterinarian, two clothiers, grocers, junkmen, a dentist, a window washer and a shoe store operator. The community began to dissipate in the late 1940s, and the synagogue closed in the '60s. Block says he is one of only two Jewish county natives remaining in Tamaqua today. This is close to the number left in Shenandoah, Lester Hirsh reflects, where he says there were once 150 Jewish families. "We export a lot of talent," Ted Block sighs.

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## MIX BUT KNOW THY GROUP

***“You knew your place in the community.”***

***This seems a common thread for children in many ethnic groups. They intermingled in certain ways and felt like outsiders at the same time.***

Ted Block remembers well the trials of being a minority in a small community. His parents were Orthodox and “keeping Kosher required a lot of effort in a small town.” Ted, born in the 1930s, sometimes felt a bit on edge as one of few Jews. “Certain people took it upon themselves to harass you,” he remembers, matters which the boys settled with their fists. He smiles to think back on the parties at the Jewish Community Center. “We loved to watch the men fight. Izzy Rubin was a real slugger.” Lester Hirsh explains that, as a Jew, an ethnic minority, “The idea was to get along with everyone, but to know your own group.” He recalls anti-Semitic gangs in Shenandoah and, with the exception of such all-American activities such as baseball, Hirsh “felt like an outcast as a kid,” especially on Wednesday afternoons when Jewish kids had to stay in school instead of going to religious class. “You knew your place in the community.” This seems a common thread for children in many ethnic groups. They intermingled in certain ways and felt like outsiders at the same time.

## DAY BY DAY

As ethnic minorities, Jews interacted in the daily life of their hometown just like other citizens, many of whom considered themselves ethnic minorities as well. Block paints a picture of a vibrant Tamaqua in the days when there were dozens of places to shop:

*Non-Jewish stores— Polish grocers, Dutch, you name it. People just shopped for that day. They went to the store with a basket, European-style. “Hoarding” started in World War II during rationing; you got all you could at once.... After the War station wagons came in and people started shopping in large quantities. People used to shop on ‘The Book,’ charging their groceries.... Storekeepers lost thousands when they closed.*

## LATKES FOR ALL

***Every Friday night and Saturday are sacred times as well, celebrating the Jewish Sabbath, called Shabbas or Shabbat. Lester Hirsh recalls, “My grandfather invited a stranger in for a meal each Friday.”***

We attended a *latke* party during the Hanukkah season with synagogue president Alan Kaplan and his family in Frackville. Since the Frackville synagogue closed they have devoted their energies to the Pottsville synagogue. Parking on a back street in Frackville our noses led us to the Kaplan’s door. As we entered the kitchen bits of grated potatoes and onions were flying, the food processor whining and *latkes* (potato pancakes) deep frying. On the dining table was sister Bonnie’s homemade apple sauce along with sour cream, traditional companions to *latkes*.

Jews and Gentiles streamed in from well beyond Frackville to take part in the annual ritual. Some of the non-Jews in attendance insisted *latkes* were identical to the year-round Eastern European staple, the *bleenie*. If you don’t believe *bleenies* are sacred in the county, go to any fair or festival and witness the length of the *bleenie* line as compared with the lines for any other food item. Listen to families and friends conspiring to secure and take home as many *bleenies* as possible. Everyone loves *halupki* (pork and/or beef and sometimes rice wrapped in cabbage with at least a hint of tomato) and *halushki* (noodles and cabbage), but there seems to be something about *bleenies*. Does the passion extend beyond the human affinity for fried food? There is

something endearing about potatoes, putting potato pierogies high on the list of worshipped foods. Jews and their neighbors feel this way about potato *latkes*. Add to the aromas and flavors the lifetime memories of warmth, family and friendship. After the assembled throngs had eaten their fill the Kaplans recited a Hebrew prayer and began to light the half dozen Hanukkah menorahs, traditional Jewish candelabras.

Yom Kippor is the High Holy Day of the Jewish faith. It is the annual Day of Atonement and includes fasting, prayer and religious services. Lester Hirsh is drawn to “the introspection of the High Holidays... the fasting... the ritual of examining your life.” Passover is the next most beloved holiday. Like many Jewish traditions, much of the holiday takes place at home in the kitchen and around the table. Synagogues may offer a communal meal as well, honoring the Exodus from slavery to freedom by reading and singing through the history and prayers written in the *Haggadah* and eating symbolic foods at prescribed times. Every Friday night and Saturday are sacred times as well, celebrating the Jewish Sabbath, called *Shabbas* or *Shabbat*. Lester Hirsh recalls, “My grandfather invited a stranger in for a meal each Friday.” Sometimes holidays were crowded. “We just piled around together.”

## DREAMLIKE

Lester Hirsh left the coal region as a boy. From Florida he had a recurrent dream of walking down the streets of



his hometown. He has returned to write about his Schuylkill County roots. Clad in slightly large and long khakis handed down from an elderly Jew still in town, Lester somehow fits in, walking dreamlike down the streets of Shenandoah, and like so many other amblers, living out another era, soaking up and adding to the mystique of this once-teeming borough. Lester sees a degree of hope amidst the dwindling population. "People have died, and at same time things come together... [in] cycles of change and continuity."

After a Historical Society potluck holiday party in Shenandoah, a motley crew of poets, barbers, folklorists and others spontaneously toured the borough's well-preserved synagogue. Our guide was one of the two keepers of the keys. Both are in their eighties. We could envision throngs filling the seats into the balcony above, and imagine whispering, chatter and singing through the now damp air. Our guide continues to pay to keep the building clean, just in case or just because.

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## LATIN AMERICANS

There is a small but steadily growing presence of Latin Americans in the county. According to the 2000 census more than half were Puerto Ricans, outnumbering Mexicans, the next largest group of Spanish speakers, by a 4:1 ratio. Since then many Latinos, including some Puerto Ricans, Central Americans, and plenty of Mexicans, have been arriving to work in Tamaqua's turkey farm and processing plant, as well as Mahanoy City's mattress plant and other jobs. Two Mexican groceries have opened over the past year in Tamaqua alone. The census is a particularly inaccurate means of understanding the presence of Latinos due to language and legal issues. Even if people have gained legal status, fear can persist.

### WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

Newcomers have been struggling to learn English between long shifts, few classes and sparse public transportation. Those Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in the county with a stronger command of English have often arrived after a stay in New York City. Just across the county line, Hazleton boasts a much larger Hispanic population and publishes *El Mensajero*, a monthly newspaper covering Hispanic life in Northeast Pennsylvania. Here in Schuylkill, lifelong Tamaqua resident Bob Evans believes, "Past generations did better with welcoming newcomers than we seem to be doing now with Hispanics." He elaborates that, "banks in this town always had an Irish or Lithuanian teller to attract minority groups, token folks," but not so with Latinos.

**Tamaqua resident Bob Evans believes, "Past generations did better with welcoming newcomers than we seem to be doing now with Hispanics." He elaborates that, "banks in this town always had an Irish or Lithuanian teller to attract minority groups."**

In 1980 Wally Baran analyzed the trend toward bigotry:

*The history of our great American democracy has been tarnished enough by discrimination and resentment. It is easy to understand how this happened. Each succeeding group which came to this country, beginning with the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, worked hard to carve out a life of freedom and prosperity. It is only human nature that they should fear the next group to come along as a threat to what they had accumulated. Each new group was a little more ambitious, a little more willing to endure hard work and mean conditions, a little hungrier than those who had gotten established.*

*It was not the fact that they were German or Dutch, or Irish or Polish or Italian, but the fact that they were newcomers, perceived as a threat. This... syndrome is what made America great, as new and vigorous blood was constantly being infused. At the same time it manifested itself in many ugly forms of ethnic persecution along the way. This has become even more complicated in recent years, as Blacks, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, Vietnamese and... Cubans have arrived on the shores of this country with the same hopes and dreams of a better life as our own forefathers had.*

In these cases ethnic barriers are further complicated by color. Baran concludes by urging us to learn from our national past, rather than repeat it. His advice is based on practicality. "All Americans must remember the lessons of discrimination which they or their forefathers once faced. Discrimination only hinders the process of achievement and assimilation into American life."



## HIDDEN LIVES OF LATINOS

**We enjoyed the empanadas, meat pies and bacalau, a savory baked codfish a Puerto Rican family brought to the Shenandoah Historical Society potluck. You could have a field day eating your way across the county, and we have.**

We met two Mexican pizzeria owners, in Auburn and in Ashland and interviewed one, John Rodriguez. We met many other Mexicans and made our way toward conversing through what Spanish we knew and what English they could offer. We conducted a bilingual interview with young Mexican musician Gerardo Hernandez. We spoke with Iraidita Vila Zengotita in her Tamaqua High Rise Apartment. We enjoyed the *empanadas*, meat pies, and *bacalau*, a savory baked codfish a Puerto Rican family brought to the Shenandoah Historical Society potluck. You could have a field day eating your way across the county, and we have.

Sharing portions of their stories may illuminate the real lives of the people we see working in restaurants, waiting on the street for pay from the mattress factory, coming home from the turkey plant, or shopping in our stores. John Rodriguez has lived in the U.S. long enough to be able to share his story and feelings in fluent English, his young daughter by his side, at a table in his establishment, Auburn's E & T Pizzeria.

John was born in Mexico on April 15, 1969.... "My mother still lives in Mexico. I was raised in a small, poor community." John loved living in the country and by age ten was helping the family grow corn and beans. "It was rough," he admits. "Sometimes there was no money. Sometimes we didn't get presents for Christmas.... I came to America just before my sixteenth birthday.... I wanted to work and make money. My mother let me decide."

## MAKING IT IN THE U.S.

John landed in Chicago, working as a bus boy. It was difficult because he didn't understand English. The waitresses tried to help him learn. He was determined and bought books to aid his progress. Rodriguez then moved to Pennsylvania to pick apples. In the orchard there was a lot of pressure to work both quickly and carefully or get fired. Those with more skill and experience survived. At eighteen he began working in a pizza shop. He gained the trust of the owner who often left him in charge.

"I worked in pizza shops since then.... I kept improving.... I decided to open my own shop." Rodriguez has a warm and amiable relationship with his patrons. "You learn who you can and cannot pick on."

## FOOD FROM HOME

We asked John what Mexicans eat back home. "Rice, chicken soup. About seventy-five percent of Mexicans are poor.... [They have to] manage their money between food and other needs." His story was sounding more and more like the tales of earlier immigrants. For an in-depth look at Island cuisine we turned to Iraidita Vila Zengotita of Puerto Rico. In her estimation, "We are a nation and United States citizens." Iraidita describes *majorca*, a bread made in Spain and Puerto Rico. "I make it.... It's a custom to eat it everyday in Puerto Rico." In terms of other standard fare, "There is a special pea called *gandules* grown on the Island. Rice and beans are eaten once a day, and the family is always together for supper," she recalls. For a treat, families eat pork stomach cleaned and filled with rice. This reminded us of the Pennsylvania Dutch tradition of stuffing the stomach with potato filling.

## WE CELEBRATE EVERYTHING

The Mexican Christmas celebration starts at midnight with people singing and dancing in the streets. In addition, Latin Americans celebrate Three Kings Day in January. John Rodriguez remembers as a boy struggling to stay up to see the Three Kings come. In Puerto Rico, "We celebrate everything!" Iraidita Zengotita exclaims. She describes Christmas Eves rich in dancing, drinking, and presents, with roast pork cooked outdoors on a stick. The meal concludes with desserts, or *pasteles*, such as rice and sugar with milk and cinnamon, and pumpkin pie with almonds and raisins. New Year's Eve is another occasion for pork in Iraidita's Puerto Rico, along with special colored sandwiches, yellow for good luck, green for hope, blue for love, and pink for stability.

At Easter, following a ceremony in church, Puerto Rican families join together for a meal of chicken, ham or seafood. Like other "Schuylks", Puerto Ricans are fond of their Easter baskets. And "Valentine's Day is for everyone, not just lovers, in Puerto Rico," Iraidita explains.

Puerto Rico is known for its music and dance traditions. Iraidita describes *Plena*, *Bomba*, and *Araito* dancing, the first two of which have become quite popular in the U.S.



She knows no other Puerto Ricans in Tamaqua. “There are Mexicans, but they have different traditions,” and there were probably few if any of them when she first arrived in the county. “I suffered a lot when I first came to Tamaqua,” Iraida confesses. “I was looked at like an animal. Then people got to know me.... The Dutch people were very kind, nice, helpful.... The Russians and Czechoslovakians were wonderful.”

### A YOUNG MUSICIAN AND VISIONARY FAR FROM HOME

Twenty-three-year-old Gerardo Hernandez was raised in the small town of Puebla, Mexico. His quotes appear here courtesy of interpreter and translator Shoshana Silberman.

*We were humble people. My mother raised corn, beans.... I was last in line with seven brothers and sisters.... The family struggled so I could pursue an education.... When I was six or seven my father came to the U.S. ... I emigrated here with the hope of finding my father.... I spent a month with him in the Bronx.... It didn't work out so I came here with brother.... Mexico is my culture; I value what I have and believe in helping those with less. I have dedicated myself to bringing people of all ages together to teach reading and writing.... My dream is to help people.... People in Mexico... abuse those who cannot read or write.*

Gerardo is known as a gifted musician on guitar, accordion and voice and has performed in various towns in Mexico with different ensembles. He wants to teach regional music. He sang us a mariachi style song, struggling occasionally for words.

“The guitar helps the memory,” he says. “I have been nine months without playing, but the movement is in my mind.” Hernandez speaks of a festival in Mexico that takes place on June 24<sup>th</sup>. “We play music in the church and at different houses.... People request songs in mariachi or ballad style.... Mariachi music is happy, sometimes romantic.” The instruments used include trumpet, guitar, violin, guitarron, and something like a flute. “In my town,” Gerardo explains, “the culture has been passed down. There are older people, people who have no knowledge of what school or study is.... Every little town has own, unique custom.”

### THEY SAID THEY'D WAIT FOR ME

Hernandez seems in the same bind as so many Mexicans in the U.S., needing to make money for the people at home and wishing he were there himself, to make more of a contribution and to be among loved ones.

*Sadly, I'm here... I hope to earn money and return to Mexico to continue to help my people. I know that I abandoned them; I can't continue teaching if I'm here. They said they'd wait for me.... Saving money to give to my family keeps me here. The little money I earn I send to Mexico, and the situation in Mexico is very difficult so I decided to stay a little longer.... Sometimes I like it here, sometimes not.... It's easier to find work here that pays better than in New York. But it's lonely.*

### MORE IS BETTER

Settled in Schuylkill County with a wife and two children, John Rodriguez says, “We go the American way, follow American rules” when it comes to holidays and ways of life. But then he begins to describe recent celebrations with the joyous piñata tradition, a party for children unrivaled by pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey.

If he and his family were in Mexico, Rodriguez says, “We wouldn't learn other traditions. But learning them is positive; more is better.” Like other “Schuylks” through the decades, Rodriguez doesn't feel the community is ready for the food of his homeland. “I know what my customers like.” But when our intern Hanna Thurman suggested advertising Mexican food instead of Italian one night a month and seeing what happens, John seemed to light up.

Rodriguez works practically all the time. He has little opportunity to meet Mexicans beyond his own family. Yet he has heard stories of life in the county where, as a newcomer, even if you have a job, you have to struggle to shop, bank and count change in a foreign language.

Latinos have graced the county with grocery stores smelling of lime, cilantro and corn tortillas. They introduce ripe tropical fruits and sumptuous music to the region. Not only do stores sell an array of Latin CDs, but the new residents also sing, dance and play a wide

**Hernandez seems in the same bind as so many Mexicans in the U.S., needing to make money for the people at home and wishing he were there himself, to make more of a contribution and to be among loved ones.**

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variety of instruments. As the groceries sell make-it-yourself food items, county parties and festivals are also starting to be flavored with popular Latin American dishes. The two Minersville area Mexican restaurants, Casa de Teyas and Amigos, seem to be thriving. Notice that more and more of the county's pizzerias are Mexican owned and operated. Encourage proprietors to try a night a month of food from their homeland. Lease profitable restaurant space to one of the area's skilled Puerto Rican chefs. Smile and say hello, or "Hola," on the street as a word of welcome. Step inside a new grocery.

## LITHUANIANS

Lithuania, located along the Baltic Sea of Eastern Europe, originated in 2500 B.C. Lithuanian is the oldest European language in use today and has striking similarities to Sanskrit as well as Greek and Latin. Its keepers of an ancient tongue, even those who simply bear remnants of old family names, enrich Schuylkill County. Alexander Carolus Kursius, known as the father of the American high school, is the first recorded Lithuanian to arrive in what is now New York City in 1659. Lithuania had a severe famine in 1850 pushing many toward exodus. Lithuanians first arrived in Shenandoah in Schuylkill County in 1869 and continued to enter the county in significant numbers through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This coupled with bitter religious and political persecution and compulsory military service instated in 1874 sent many Lithuanians overseas and ultimately down into the mines of Schuylkill County.

**At the turn of the last century, according to Chernoski, "Schuylkill County was essentially the center of Lithuanian activity in America and Shenandoah was its capital city (known to the immigrants as Shenadorius.)" A quarter Lithuanian, Shenandoah was home to several newspapers published in the mother tongue, the first Lithuanian brass band, and St. George Catholic Church, one of the first Lithuanian churches in America if not the first.**

We interviewed the Honorable Judge Domalakes in his Chambers in Pottsville. He was first elected in 1993, then re-elected in 2003. Born and raised in Frackville, both of his father's parents came from Lithuania in 1905. His grandfather, "a real capitalist," was a tailor in Lithuania and came to America at age sixteen. "In those days," Domalakes explains, "people bought a suit for life.... They bought suits with the idea that they would be buried in them." The Judge's grandmother, also from Lithuania, was a member of the nobility but land poor. Domalakes tells the story of his grandmother hiding diamonds in her hair to prevent their confiscation. She came to Massachusetts, had an arranged marriage with the tailor, and they moved to Gilberton. After one of their children drowned in a coal mine, they weathered the devastating trauma and moved to Frackville where they settled in among another community of Lithuanians.

### AN ATTRACTION TO LITHUANIANS THEN AND NOW

John J. Chernoski, writing in *Lithuanian Heritage Magazine*, researched the 2000 census to conclude that Schuylkill County has the greatest percentage of Lithuanian residents in the U.S. He found that in twelve Schuylkill County communities Lithuanian Americans make up more than ten percent of the populace. The highest concentration as of 2000 was in New Philadelphia where 25.8 percent of the residents had Lithuanian ancestry. At the turn of the last century, according to Chernoski, "Schuylkill County was essentially the center of Lithuanian activity in America and Shenandoah was its capital city (known to the immigrants as Shenadorius.)" A quarter Lithuanian, Shenandoah was home to several newspapers published in the mother tongue, the first Lithuanian brass band, and St. George Catholic Church, one of the first Lithuanian churches in America if not *the* first.

Judge Domalakes notes that immigrants wanted their own churches, a place to worship and speak their own language. "Poor families sacrificed financially to build them." Since Vatican II, today's priests rarely speak or hold services in the old languages. Members have been concerned about the survival and continued accessibility of St. George Church. Chernoski, on his Lithuanian heritage tour of the county, visited the church and writes:

*"This beautiful Gothic church, with its original altars decorated in gold and white, contains the statues of the Twelve Apostles in the lower portion on the main altar with statues of St. George and other saints above the Apostles. Fifteen murals on the ceiling above the main aisle depict the Mysteries of the Rosary, and their titles and those of the Stations of the Cross are written in Lithuanian. If I did not know my current location in space, St. George could have easily been in Kaunas or any other Lithuanian city."*

In considering why his grandfather came to Schuylkill County Judge Domalakes reminds us that, "Most people came for the dangerous jobs in the mines.... Immigrants took the jobs no one else wanted." In his family's case,



“My grandfather probably came to avoid inscription into Czarist Russian Army.... He came because there were many other Lithuanians.” And the host of European immigrants made for a promising customer base. “He set up his own tailoring business.... He was easily accepted because the clientele were other Eastern Europeans. He knew European styles.”

## LITHUANIAN ARTS

A hundred years ago many of the county’s communities could have been called “Little Lithuania,” with Mahanoy City’s Lithuanian Miner’s Orchestra and newspaper, and Lithuanian-owned establishments throughout Schuylkill’s coal region. Today, county residents have Americanized their names so it would be hard to know that Snyder’s grocery in New Philadelphia and Yorke’s Market in Tamaqua are operated by Lithuanian families, the latter known for its Lithuanian sausage. Other businesses continue in nearby towns. Lithuanians have been and continue to be civic leaders and politicians. Both Catholic and Jewish Lithuanians have made important contributions to county life and cultural preservation.

The Knights of Lithuania operate a cultural museum in Frackville, open by appointment. Mahanoy City boasts *Gintaras*, a youth ensemble of dancers and musicians. Lithuanian Days, now held in the Frackville Mall, have always been and continue to be a mecca for local and far flung Lithuanians and members of many ethnic groups who want to take in the music, dance and food. German miner and musician Bill Marquart of Girardville recalls that in the old days he would board the train in Gordon with friends and family, bearing instruments, tablecloth and picnic fare for a good time at Lithuanian Day in Lakewood Park in Barnesville. Even now, held over two days at the beginning of August, visitors can sample food, watch and participate in folk dances, watch local artisans, and take home amber jewelry.

Gerry Suzadail of Tamaqua and New Philadelphia is the son of Yorke Market’s sausage maker, who just retired last year at eighty-four. Gerry went to Lithuanian School for eight years in the 1950s and ’60s and has traveled in Europe, including Lithuania. He has heard that “there was a Lithuanian theater here in Tamaqua over where Yorke’s Market is.” He proudly adds that, “My church [in Tamaqua] still sings Lithuanian songs and sells Lithuanian cheese.” Suzadail speaks of Lithuanian life in New Philadelphia, similar in some ways to the village lives of Old Europe. The community was “wrapped around the church. It was like a feudal system. The church gave people hope to survive the ‘feudal system,’ so it endured. The old people only spoke Lithuanian. There were chickens in the yard there and in Tamaqua. . . . They kept their peasant habits of raising chickens.”

Chernoski concludes his article in *Lithuanian Heritage* with this ode to the county:

*“You have to scratch the surface a little, but you will find a thriving Lithuanian community in Schuylkill County that is mindful, respectful, and proud of its ethnic heritage and strives to keep the Lithuanian spirit alive and burning for future generations. Yes, Schuylkill County may certainly be considered Lithuania-USA.”*

## KUCIOS, HOLY SUPPER

*Kucios*, Holy Supper on Christmas Eve, is the most reverent and traditional celebration among Lithuanians. We attended services at St. Casimir’s in St. Clair in mid-December and stayed for *Kucios* in the church basement, sponsored by the Knights of Lithuania. We also spent Holy Supper night itself at the home of Judge John and Suzanne Domalakes. As in other Eastern European traditions, people place hay on or under the table or linen cloth. After a prayer everyone at the table breaks off and eats a piece of *plotkeles*, Christmas wafer. The meal consists of at least twelve symbolic foods to commemorate the Twelve Apostles, a Lenten meal as with other ethnicities, but with its own Lithuanian bent, including clear red beet soup, mushrooms, salty herring, dry peas, prunes, bread, fish, boiled potatoes, sauerkraut, sweet wine, *kisielius*, a hot oatmeal pudding, and poppy seed milk over dough balls. Community elders recall their mothers making the poppy seed milk by grinding the poppies and adding water and honey. The filling meal traditionally concludes with apples, nuts, dried fruit and candy.

***“You have to scratch the surface a little, but you will find a thriving Lithuanian community in Schuylkill County that is mindful, respectful, and proud of its ethnic heritage and strives to keep the Lithuanian spirit alive and burning for future generations. Yes, Schuylkill County may certainly be considered Lithuania-USA.”***  
**–John J. Chernoski**

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## MUSLIMS

The Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian Street in Mechanicsville is peopled by Pakistanis, Indians, Egyptians, Bosnians, Libyans, South Africans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and Caucasians. With a simple but strikingly peaceful prayer room upstairs, the large downstairs hall offers a spacious kitchen and room for more than a hundred guests. The Imam, spiritual leader of the Islamic Center, is gentle, South African-born Shiraz Mansoor, Vice-President of the county's Unity Coalition. The Center opened its doors to the Schuylkill County Ethnic Heritage Study and all its friends for an evening of savory food and sharing.

Although most sections of this report correspond with an ethnicity formed through a nation or region of origin, Ethnic Heritage Study Advisory Committee member Rubina Tareen advocated for focusing on the cultural community of faith as the tie that binds for Muslims in the county. She writes, "I feel that Islam falls into a difficult category for one who studies cultures, because a devout Muslim is a part of, and has the same basic daily routine as almost every other Muslim, whether he or she resides in China, Indonesia or Arabia." She goes on to explain the Islamic interpretation of ethnic grouping, quoting the Holy Book of Islam. "The Qur'an says: 'We have divided you into different tribes and nations so that you may know one another.'"

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—Rubina Tareen**

Rubina Tareen continues her discussion asking us to "Please remember that Webster's definition of 'culture' (or 'heritage') is 'socially transmitted behavior patterns, or traditions which have been handed down from generation to generation.'" She concludes that, "Anyone who becomes a Muslim is handed these traditions."

Tareen states that over forty percent of Muslims residing in the U.S. are converts, not immigrants. The first *Masjid*, or Muslim House of Prayer, built in Schuylkill County was erected by boxing champion Muhammad Ali at his Deer Lake training facility many years before the first immigrants arrived from Asia.

Muslims pray five times a day but can do so at home or work, facing east. Listen for beautiful, ancient tones sung in Arabic, a language of prayer but not of daily life for most members of the Islamic Center of Schuylkill County. Muslims have been an integral part of the county's medical community for perhaps thirty-five years. Their children have excelled in the classroom. Members of the Islamic community have been involved in a wide variety of peace-promoting and county betterment programs.

**Count yourself lucky if you are an invited guest at a wedding party. Traditionally, after the formalities, Muslim men and women separate to sing, dance and drum. Women will apply henna and "let their hair down" in their own company.**

### FAITH AND FUN

Like Orthodox Jews and practitioners of other faiths, devout Muslims cover their heads in public. They also share the practice with their Jewish cousins whereby men and women do not shake hands or otherwise touch if they are not married. Anticipate delicious cooking in their midst, especially at the breaking of the fast during the sacred month of Ramadan. Count yourself lucky if you are an invited guest at a wedding party. Traditionally, after the formalities men and women separate to sing, dance and drum. Women will apply henna and "let their hair down" in their own company.

I felt privileged to be invited to the weekly gathering of Muslim women at the home of Rubina Tareen. The group gathers for religious study and, on this occasion, to share a meal. After the delicious flavors had settled, the women began to verse me in the topic of the day, traditional preparation of a body for burial.

Rubina introduces the subject saying, "We prepare for death every day." And as in Judaism, she reminds me that in Islam, "Embalming is not permissible."

*Muslims are obligated to go to the funeral.... Crying is permissible, complaining is not....  
We are supposed to cry for three days and move on, accept death and pray for the person....  
Death is mentioned often in the Qur'an.... Death is not final.*

Rubina explains the seven stages of life according to Islam. "This life is a waiting room."

"This life is a blink of an eye," chimes in Alinah Rashid. She is second generation Schuylkill County Pakistani Muslim, a twenty-eight-year-old math professor at Penn State Schuylkill. Today she is here with her young



daughter and her mother Shaheen. Zarina Wahhab, an elegant woman in browns, is a community elder. She and her husband were among the first Pakistani Muslims to arrive in Schuylkill County, perhaps thirty years ago. Now she speaks of the nature of God:

“There is only one Creator... Each human has some attributes of God Almighty in them.” Alinah takes the ball and runs with this. “No one person is better because of... lineage.” Rubina concurs. “There is no hierarchy.” The conversation then turns to the prevalence of women’s rights in Islam and back to human destiny, and the temporary nature of mortal life on Earth.

**PERPETUATING PAKISTANI TRADITIONS IN SCHUYLKILL COUNTY**

After a while I ask Zarina why she and others came to the U.S. “There were different motives for coming to America... The first generation of doctors came for income and education... America needed doctors.” She herself arrived in America in 1972. Her family had one of the first homes in the county among the community of Muslim doctors. “Then slowly everybody came.” Wahhab speaks of making adjustments for cultural differences. Her children were born in Schuylkill County. She is grandmother of four.

Born and raised in Schuylkill County, Alinah Rashid has clearly been brought up with an ethnic identity. “Our families kept Pakistani food... clothing... language... entertainment... and rituals.” To hear her describe a local wedding you might imagine the event took place in Pakistan. Then she gets a glint in her eye relating the ways “you know you’re in a Pakistani home,” particularly the aroma of traditional herbs and spices.

Alinah refers to her “dual life,” particularly in terms of wardrobe and foods. “I have two of everything,” she says, American and Pakistani. “Parents in our community have done a good job of keeping the culture... Many people here travel to Pakistan; we’ve been exposed to the culture.”

Shaista Akbar, dashing in purple and white, joins the conversation. She makes frequent trips to Pakistan and watches Pakistani television. “I’ve been living in this country for twenty-six years... I married then came here... And by the way,” she adds, “marriages are not always arranged. Mine was not arranged.”

In the traditional way of proposing, explains Zarina, “the girl is asked three times for her consent.” Alinah discusses the misconceptions surrounding arranged marriages. Really, she explains, “the community acts as a facilitator.” Greek Gus Depos had described his experience similarly, saying that communities simply help available singles to meet. This spurs a discussion of women’s rights. Rubina says it is not the religions but the pre-existing cultures and nationalities that are sexist. “Women in pre-Islamic Arabian culture and pre-modern Western culture were oppressed.”

Now the conversation turns to nationalities and culture. When people want to assimilate, Rubina says, “the clothing goes first.” She adds that, “There is no certain way of dressing in Islam.” Alinah then asserts, “Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and the United States.” “Any culture can fit into Islam,” Rubina says.

The women are still thinking of dress, looking down at their own and one another’s colorful, flowing garments. Alinah wants to be sure I understand that “[we] have American clothes as well... The women of our community enjoy dressing up. My daughter, at age three, has two wardrobes.” Members of the group reiterate that they like to dress up for other women. Now Zarina joins in. “Dressing up is part of our culture.”

This sparks Rubina. “There is no word for culture in the Arabic language... Islam is a way of living... Humanity should bond over the idea of one God... Culture should not become your religion. Religion is our culture.” Rubina points out members of the group who are from various nations including Puerto Rico, the United States mainland, and India.

After more discussion and explanation Alinah’s mother, Shaheen Rashid, enters the room with a traditional drum. She throws back her head to sing and drum. Soon the group joins in, and I am photographing and recording haunting, Pakistani folk singing and drumming in Schuylkill Haven.

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To the unaccustomed eye it may be difficult to discern which South Asians are Pakistani, which Indian, and which are Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist or of another faith. Practitioners of more than one religion traditionally cover the head, cook with flavorful spices and dress in colorful South Asian fabric. Ask people about their background. It **is** respectful if you ask in a friendly way. We'll all be richer from greater exposure to one another's gifts.

## PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH, ALSO KNOWN AS GERMAN

Germans, or Pennsylvania Dutch, are the largest ethnic group in the county. They are so much in the majority and have been here for so long that they sometimes think of everyone else as ethnic while they are “just normal”. When people in the county advertise “ethnic food” they mean Eastern European treats, as if Dutch or other Western

*Pennsylvania Dutch people were named “Dutch” rather than “German” by their neighbors, perhaps because these immigrants spoke “Deutsch,” meaning German.*

European delicacies were too commonplace to mention. The foods and customs that many consider the norm in Pennsylvania are often Dutch. Some of what we consider American has origins among German speaking immigrants: meat and potato German-style meals, a method of gardening, traditional American square dances and German polkas. Germans living in town sometimes think all their ethnicity is gone, but Bob Evans, a Welshman, recalls break time at Tamaqua's Atlas Dynamite Factory up into the 1950s when his colleagues would gather up and “talk Dutch.”

Pennsylvania Dutch people were named “Dutch” rather than “German” by their neighbors, perhaps because these immigrants spoke “Deutsch,” meaning German. Old

timers in the county wince at the unkind label, “Dutchified.” People use the terms High and Low in describing dialects of German spoken. This refers not to the quality of the language, but to its roots in the high, mountainous, versus low, flat regions of Germany. From 1683-1776 about 85,000 German speakers from Germany, Switzerland and Alsace in present day France arrived in America. About 70,000 of them settled in Pennsylvania. A series of wars in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, followed by famine and cruel winters, forced people to seek refuge in England and America.

Upon meeting and forming community in Pennsylvania, immigrants blended the various dialects they had spoken

*[Pennsylvania Dutch] children learned English principally in school, where, like children of the newer immigrants, they were often punished for speaking the language of their parents.*

in Europe. Most of the “Dutch” speakers in Pennsylvania became farmers, and many became miners as well. In close knit rural communities, they held to their language and customs into the 1950s. Until then, children learned English principally in school, where, like children of the newer immigrants, they were often punished for speaking the language of their parents. Families continued to sing Dutch folksongs at least until this period. There were newspapers written in Pennsylvania Dutch.

With the World Wars, particularly World War Two, the Dutch began to hide their language for fear of accusations of ties to the nation's enemy. This disrupted the transmission of the language and even traditions of the hearth. Only the oldest members

of the community today can speak the dialect, unless they are Amish, Mennonite, or use it in church. There are two Mennonite but no Amish churches or communities in the county. We attended services at the New England Valley Mennonite Church on the outskirts of Tamaqua and were thus privy to some of the most beautiful, harmonic acappella singing imaginable. After church we were invited home with local families and joined around a table of perhaps fifteen children and adults to pass homemade dish after dish, laugh, talk and share stories. We also interviewed Pennsylvania Dutch farmers in a public panel at the County Fair, gathering rich recollections for an archive and for the young people who moved in close to hear the stories.

### FARM-MADE CUISINE

Other Pennsylvania Dutch tend to belong to Lutheran, United Church of Christ, the occasional Brethren, and United Methodist congregations. Watch for chicken pot pie suppers offered locally. These are not pies in crust, but a rich, chicken soup with thick, homemade noodles. You may find a homemade relish known as “chow chow” served on the side, perhaps along with lettuce and hot bacon dressing. Springtime brings ham and dandelion suppers. With limited resources, farmers used everything. Thus Dutch are known for meat dishes using innards, such as cow stomach, tripe, tongue, and scrapple. Cavities in meat were baked with *filling*, often with potatoes as the base.

The Pennsylvania Dutch are known for custard, mincemeat and shoofly pie, funnel cake and other baked delicacies. Incidentally, shoofly pie is not found in Germany, according to Pennsylvania Dutch scholar Alice Spayd.



This provides evidence that Pennsylvania Dutch traditions are not German but made in America, similar in this way to African American culture, formed by an amalgamation of traditions from two continents and many ethnicities.

### HOEDOWNS AND HOLIDAYS

The Pennsylvania Dutch of Schuylkill County knew how to relax with homemade drink, music and dance. They would clear out barns, lay down their hoes and have a hoedown complete with local string bands, and a pork and sauerkraut supper for an extra quarter. Along with this memory, Mae Wolfe can picture the holidays. Around Christmas the *Bellsnickle* would come, something like the Carpatho-Rusyn Guba, the grizzly alter ego of today's kindly Santa Claus, who would travel house to house and from whom children ran in fear.

### SIGNS AND WONDERS

Some members of the oldest generation still engage in traditional medicine, supplementing modern approaches with gathering and preparing medicinal herbs, *powwowing*, visiting a doctor of the spirits to cure injury, pain or sickness, or undo *hexes* or spells. Ninety-three-year-old Auburn resident Mae Wolfe recalls her mother bringing her to a *powwow* doctor for a leg wound. Her mother used to go to this same Mr. Heim for her rheumatism. In 2005, wary of judgment, Wolfe questions superstitions and then haltingly speculates that there may be something to them. But about good nutrition and gardening practices she is clear. The last time we visited she was still preparing parsley tea for herself every morning ("good for the kidneys," she says) and comfrey tea in the evenings, warding off cancer and diabetes. She, along with other Dutch, planted by the signs; the Farmer's Almanac specifies which crops to plant at which sign of the moon. Gerald Milnes, scholar of West Virginia's German heritage, has found centuries-old references in German to living by the signs, including advice for crossing the ocean to the New World.

*According to Alice Spayd, the round, hexagonal or octagonal painted signs on barns were misnamed "hexes" by an Englishman and are strictly ornamental, made for the love of color and design.*

### DUTCH LIFE TODAY

Good farmers, Pennsylvania Dutch organized themselves into local Grange Halls, community agricultural fraternities. We attended a meeting at the Jefferson Grange in Auburn and observed secretive and ritualistic customs reminiscent of the Masons, both having been created by the same founder. Lewistown and Weishample are also home to Schuylkill County Grange Halls. Farmers as well gathered at grist mills where they turned grain into flour. Mae Wolfe recalls that while one man used to travel from farm to farm to grind, the mill closest to her home was in Cressona.

Pennsylvania Dutch are present in most every occupation the county offers, from mining to business. Some of those living in towns seem to call themselves German while many of those on the farm hold to the term Dutch, or "Dutchy". Sample the goods at Mootz Candies in Pottsville, now operated by the family's third generation. Eat a meal at the Dutch Kitchen or Granny's Restaurant, both in Frackville. Stop at a local church for a ham and dandelion dinner in the spring. Talk with Dutch farmers in the Agricultural Museum at the County Fair in Summit Station.

## POLISH

Those claiming Polish ancestry show up near the top of the Schuylkill County 2000 census. Some of Schuylkill County's Polish are Carpatho-Rusyn. Some are Jewish. Many are Roman Catholic. Shenandoah, the borough once teeming with the most immigrants for its size, has two Polish Catholic churches, St. Stanislaus and St. Casmir. In addition to numerous Catholic churches are the county's Polish National congregations. Watch for pierogi and Eastern European delicacies sold at churches throughout the northern part of the county year round.

Some of the most famous ethnic food merchants in Shenandoah are Polish. One is Mrs. T's Pierogies, a frozen wholesale business started by Ted Twardzik, Sr. after observing his Polish mother at home. Another is a holiday mecca, Kowalonek's Kielbasy Shop. Like most of the county's older immigrant groups, the Poles have their own specialty in the sausage line, *kielbasy*, the beloved garlicky Polish link. It is highly sought after during holidays. We interviewed the present owner Mark Kowalonek's Aunt Mary Andrulonis, whose parents founded the business. Today Kowalonek's draws crowds from around the county and

*Some of the most famous ethnic food merchants in Shenandoah are Polish. One is Mrs. T's Pierogies, a frozen wholesale business started by Ted Twardzik, Sr. after observing his Polish mother at home. Another is a holiday mecca, Kowalonek's Kielbasy Shop.*



well beyond in pursuit of its regional favorites.

Walter Baran, in his 1980 speech, discusses Polish history and geography as roots of cultural strength and ethnic character:

*Poland is a country that developed in the middle of a continent. It has practically no natural defensive barriers. As a consequence, it became a target for conquest by a military force from almost any direction. War and subjugation were a constant threat. There was a period of 125 years when Poland as a sovereign state did not exist. She was literally removed from the map of Europe. Yet, the people survived. The culture survived.*

Baran goes on to make the case for the strength of ethnic character we see in Pennsylvania today. “Perhaps because a people were able to survive over a century of subjugation and persevere may explain why we are . . . loyal citizens of our own country but still very much aware of our ancestry.”

Christmas Eve is called *Wigilia*, and Holy Supper, *Wieczerza Wigilijna*, is a sacred meal. Advent and St. Nicholas Day build up to Christmas. Poles traditionally remind children that how they behave on Christmas marks their behavior and its repercussions the year over. As in other Eastern European Christmas traditions, the Polish put hay on or under the table and serve at least twelve meatless dishes. Poles call their Christmas wafer *oplatek* and add their own flair to the Holy Supper menu.

While Polish immigrants were miners and farmers, Polish “Schuyylks” are involved in most of the county’s business and fun today. Try dancing at the Coal Cracker Polka Association’s weekly gatherings, open to the public most Sunday afternoons at Lakeside Ballroom. Members are not all Polish American, but many are. Imbibe the culture at Polish Heritage Day in Primrose the first Sunday in August. Ask Polish acquaintances which traditions they keep. This will encourage them to preserve their customs.

**Byzantine and Russian Orthodox cantors also sing in a Slovak tongue, Church Slavonic. For many Carpatho-Rusyns, Slovak is the mother tongue and culture.**

## SLOVAKS

Slovakia is at the geographic center of Europe. It became an independent nation only in 1993. Slovaks, once part of other nations, possess rich and deep traditions, their own language and an extensive literature. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Pavol Dobšinsky, called the Jacob Grimm of Slovakia, collected and published a series of outstanding Slovak folktales now available in English on the Internet.

There are many Slovak Roman Catholic churches in the county. Byzantine and Russian Orthodox cantors also sing in a Slovak tongue, Church Slavonic. For many Carpatho-Rusyns, Slovak is the mother tongue and culture. Although Slovaks have their own lilt on cultural traditions, the overlap with other Eastern Europeans is great since national boundaries shifted. Slovaks immigrants mined, farmed patches of land, and built cathedral-like churches in the county.

Tradition runs deep among Slovak “Schuyylks” devoted to Christian and pre-Christian practices from *pysanky* making, which originated in Pagan times, to leaving an empty setting until midnight for a Holy guest on Christmas Eve, traditions other groups keep as well. It is hard for Slovak “Schuyylks” to point to their homeland on the map. Some point to Hungary, others to Poland, but regardless of geographic parameters, many are loyal to the ways of their forebears. Today Slovak Americans take part in most of the county’s affairs. As with most ethnic traditions in the county, their customs and language are fast dying out.

## UKRAINIANS

**According to Borchik, whose *pysanky* are on exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of American History, Ukrainian immigrants carried a legacy of fear into the New World.**

Many but not all Schuylkill County Ukrainians are members of Carpatho-Rusyn ethnic groups, originating from the Carpathian Mountain region. “My grandparents on my father’s side from were from the province of Galicia,” says master tradition bearer Georgine Postupack Borchik. “There are twelve provinces in all. My mother’s side is Lemko,” which Georgine describes as a tribe belonging to the Carpatho-Rusyns. She outlines the characteristics of the various tribes of the region, including differences in *pysanky*, which some embroider and others carve and wax. Modes of dress also differ.

Coal region Ukrainians attend Byzantine Catholic, Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches as well as the Jewish synagogue. According to Borchik, whose *pysanky* are on exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of American History, Ukrainian immigrants carried a legacy



of fear into the New World. She and her siblings would be treated to a fresh display of *psyanky* and embroidered fabrics at holidays, but for many years never knew how or when the artwork was created. Adults fashioned their work deep in the night and hidden from view. Borchik's aunt broke through this trend and before long, family and community members were preserving their traditions in public and even formed a Ukrainian community chorus. Music and dance were always part of Ukrainian life.

### SYMBOLS ON EGGS

At her home in McAdoo Borchik met us at the door bearing a tray of homemade, braided *paska* bread for Easter, along with wine, salt and a wooden mushroom. She wore a hand-embroidered Ukrainian blouse. Borchik can read *pysanky* like a fortune teller reads a palm, with patterns for longevity, success, love and money, but unlike the fixed destiny of a palm, the symbols on *pysanky* are prayers. On Easter Monday, American Indian potlatch-style, the tradition is to give away your best egg. Georgine explains that:

*Farmers buried their eggs for a good harvest. To the Pagans gold [on the eggs] meant riches in ground. Then St. Andrew and Christianity changed [the meaning of] gold to Son of God... orange for moon... blue for the teardrops of a mother.... Circles mean never-ending eternity.... On Easter Monday they put red eggs in the stream when a child went to Heaven to meet Christ.*

According to Borchik, *pysanky* started with Ukrainians and spread to other lands. She reaches into baskets and cases of *pysanky* to show us different egg styles she has made which typify the traditions of other Eastern European countries. "A Lithuanian egg is etched," she explains. She points to Polish, then Russian *pysanky* styles. "Men do carving on eggs," she says, picking up a wooden egg. High on a shelf is her decorated ostrich egg. "All six of my children do eggs," she tells us proudly. And here again she is pointing: "The sunflower and poppy are flowers of faith in The Ukraine."

### COMPASSION BEYOND COMPARE

Georgine's mother was born in International Waters as the family made their way to America. She spoke seven languages. "She made yeast bread, cheese, nut and poppy bread. She baked for the whole neighborhood." Arriving in the county she lived in a patch town called Park Place. The patch had "a combination of people," Georgine has been told, and of course, coal company-owned homes. Borchik can still recall the smells of her mother's kitchen in McAdoo, with homemade bread and soup. "People came after church; our home was like a banquet hall. My mother made roast beef, soup, veal pockets, sweet potatoes, different kinds of veggies, potatoes." Sunday was the only day they ate meat. The other days they ate pierogies, potato, "anything that would stretch."

Traditional Christmas Eve dinner, Holy Supper, consists of thirteen foods, hay under the table, an empty setting for a guest, and a trip to the barn with tasty morsels for the animals. Easter includes the blessing of the basket, sacred church rituals and a holy breakfast at home. Borchik is exemplary in her knowledge and skill in practicing and teaching Ukrainian folk art. She believes, "Sharing leads to caring. Caring leads to liking, which leads to loving one another," following the model of her Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. Her other role model, her mother, "wouldn't kill a spider that bit her."

### CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Georgine teaches *pysanky* making and needle arts around the county. Her mother, able to choose her citizenship, chose America. Yet she was wedded to Ukrainian tradition. Maybe this is part of why we find in her daughter an ardent multiculturalist as well as a keeper of her own arts. She speaks with great excitement about an ethnic heritage gathering at Penn State Schuylkill perhaps twenty-five years ago. "There were Ukrainians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Polish, Africans, Lithuanians, Scots, and more.... And people didn't hold back." They exchanged ethnic foods and arts. They danced. They talked. "That festival was one of the most remarkable weekends I've ever spent.... The children played each other's games; they danced together. The children really opened it all up for the rest of us.... My mother used to say, 'When you sing and dance you pray twice to God.'"

**High on a shelf is [Borchik's] decorated ostrich egg. "All six of my children do eggs," she tells us proudly. And here again she is pointing: "The sunflower and poppy are flowers of faith in The Ukraine."**

**[Georgine] speaks with great excitement about an ethnic heritage gathering at Penn State Schuylkill perhaps twenty-five years ago. "There were Ukrainians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Polish, Africans, Lithuanians, Scots, and more... And people didn't hold back. They exchanged ethnic foods and arts. They danced. They talked."**

**"This region could really boomerang into something... People will come because they're curious to see so many people practicing their art and getting along. That in itself is a spectacle."  
—Georgine Borchik**



We asked Georgine whether she sees a role for ethnic heritage in tourism. She replied emphatically in the affirmative. “This region could really boomerang into something. Curiosity will bring people here. People can enjoy each other.” When the tape had finished I asked her again what connection she saw between ethnic arts and economic revitalization. She responded that the ethnic heritage weekend she attended had outstanding turnout with plenty of spectators. People will come, she said, because they’re curious to see so many people practicing their art and getting along. That in itself is a spectacle. Add to that, she continued, the music, dance and arts we share.

## WELSH

On the heels of the Germans, experienced Welsh miners entered Schuylkill County in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. After drudging in the mines themselves, some moved up the social ladder to operate mines as new immigrants arrived. Some Welsh had been in America since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to a booklet published by the National Welsh-American Foundation, seventeen signers of the Declaration of Independence, five signers of the U.S. Constitution and eleven Presidents of the United States had Welsh ancestry. Interestingly, the same source notes that the U.S. census of 1990 shows a twenty-two percent rise in Welsh ancestry from 1980, probably not because of a rise in immigration, but rather more individuals are recognizing and reporting their Welsh origins. The booklet prints this bit of doggerel which former Bishop of Lichfield is said to have composed. It may serve as a guide to identifying Welsh ancestry in the county:

*“Take ten,” he said, “and call them Rice;  
take another ten and call them Price;  
a hundred more and dub them Hughes;  
take fifty others, call them Pughes;  
Now Roberts name some hundred score;  
And Williams name a legion more;  
And call,” he moaned in languid tones,  
“call all the other thousands Jones.”*

The publication continues this guide to the Welsh in our communities with the following comment on the poet:

**It is common and fascinating to see siblings choose the ethnicity of one parent or the other. “My sister leans toward the Welsh heritage,” says Tommy Symons. “I’m half Irish and half Welsh; I wake up fighting with myself every morning,” he jokes.**

*How ill-informed he was. To his list can be added the Bevan, Davis, Davies, Ellis, Evans, Griffiths, Harris, Howell, Jehu, Jenkins, Llewellyn, Lewis, Lloyd, Morgan, Owen, Phillips, Powell, Pritchard, Reese, Richards, Rowlands, Thomas, Watkins and Wynne families and one begins to get the idea.*

Of course a name or a drop of blood doesn’t form one’s character or allegiances. We interviewed Tommy Symons, whose father, an English and Welsh miner, married his co-worker’s Irish daughter. Tommy feels himself more culturally Irish and has a weekly Irish music radio show. Yet he knows he can’t generalize about people, being the product of a mixed marriage. It is common and fascinating to see siblings choose the ethnicity of one parent or the other. “My sister leans toward the Welsh heritage. I’m half Irish and half Welsh; I wake up fighting with myself every morning,” he jokes.

**The entire crowd raised its voice in songs translated from the Welsh, with one hearty participant singing in her ancestral tongue.**

Bob Evans, President of the Schuylkill and Carbon County St. David’s Society, the Patron Saint of Wales, invited us to the Society’s Sixtieth Annual Dinner and Welsh Song Festival this spring in Pottsville. As is the custom, the entire crowd raised its voice in songs translated from the Welsh, with one hearty participant singing in her ancestral tongue. Local high school age winners of the Society’s 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Vocal Competition, open to youth of any ancestry, performed. The St. David Society has been active for a long time. As with so many ethnic groups, summer was a time to picnic and celebrate in Lakewood Park. A program book from the 1950s heralds the Fifth Annual Welsh Day to be held in the Park, “A Festival of Fellowship for American Cymry and their friends.”

We photographed John Jones of Orwigsburg using his grandmother’s Welsh cookie cutters at Christmas and sharing the art with his energetic grandchildren. At the St. David Society Dinner and Song Festival we met, and later interviewed, Faye Lewis of Coaldale. Bob Evans gave us a wonderful photo from the *Times News* entitled “St. David’s Day tradition continues in Coaldale,” showing members of the Women’s Class of the First Congregational United Church of Christ with trays and trays of Welsh cookies cooling. The caption goes on to state that:



*For nearly 70 years the Women's Class baked the popular Welsh Cookies as a fund-raiser for the church. This year the 28 women... produced 700 dozen cookies in two and a half days. The highly successful event has never been advertised yet orders are received annually from as far away as Maryland.*

Welsh have been in the county for so long, and, unlike Pennsylvania Dutch farmers who kept much more to themselves, Welsh intermarried with other coalfield ethnicities. It's sometimes harder to untangle Welsh customs from those of other Europeans with whom they have shared community for so long. In addition to baked goods, Welsh are known for a variety of dishes using organ meat, in the tradition of utilizing all of what they had. They are associated with Congregational and Primitive Methodist churches. In terms of cultural personality traits, if there is such a thing, the National Welsh-American Foundation quotes the late Hywel Davies, former head of the BBC Wales:

*...Welshness is a sense of kinship with all men born of closely shared danger and privation with deprivation in farming and mining and quarrying communities...The Welsh voice is unimportant and insignificant in the councils of the world. But, whenever men gather to tell tales and to breathe fire, to make intricate poetry, and to define the rights of man, to start a revival and break down barriers, to sing Messiah, and to score a try, there will be Welshmen....*

***“Whenever men gather to tell tales and to breathe fire, to make intricate poetry, and to define the rights of man, to start a revival and break down barriers, to sing Messiah, and to score a try, there will be Welshmen.”***

## CONCLUSION:

### WHOSE CHOW CHOW?

Sifting through the items for sale at Lithuanian Days in the Frackville Mall my eyes lit on bright yellow jars of *chow chow*. I was concerned. I had just written in my report that *chow chow* was Pennsylvania Dutch. I startled shoppers, absorbed in crafts and food, as I pointed to the jars and inquired with a degree of angst as to whether *chow chow* was indeed Lithuanian. “Oh yes, my mother used to make it,” many told me. Some tried to explain how it differed from the Dutch version: sweeter, more mustard. A few speculated that some Dutch had snuck it onto the table for sale. I wondered if *chow chow* at Lithuanian Days provided a key to another story of ethnic intermingling. Like the Italian woman who used Dutch *powwow* doctors, had Lithuanians learned from their Dutch neighbors to make *chow chow*? A woman who had visited Lithuania said she had eaten a similar relish there, though it was not called *chow chow*. This led me to thoughts of the profound connections we all share.

I have been fascinated, writing these pages, to think of communities in the county holding fast to distinct traditions formed so long ago. Yet comparing traditions from far corners of the globe leads to commonalities in surprising places. Some Greeks and Slovaks share Easter dates and customs. Jews and Hindus both celebrate a Festival of Light in the late fall, not far from the Muslim holiday of Ramadan. Perhaps all traditions celebrate a festival of light in the time of darkness, just as the *tannenbaum*, now called a Christmas tree, preceded Christianity as a pagan ritual. We all have means of seeking light, of tunneling our way through murky darkness to a place of vision.

Psychologist Karl Jung spoke of the “collective unconscious,” an underlying unity of thought, action and belief among communities of humans who have never met. Anthropologists have found parallel cultural patterns and remarkably similar customs in remote regions. Our customs and values have intriguing overlaps. Needs are consistent among all humans, from food, clothing and shelter, to respect and appreciation. We have an opportunity to utilize our cultural resources toward a common aim, the fulfillment of our personal and community needs.

I conclude this chapter with the words of Ukrainian master artist Georgine Postupack Borchik. “We’re all from somewhere, and we’re all one.”



## Chapter 2

### BUILDING STRONGER, MORE FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIES

By Michael Nobel Kline

#### TALKING TENT AT THE COUNTY FAIR

In late March Carrie and Hanna, traveling a winding back road through hilly country, by chance stopped at the farm of David and Linda Wolfe to buy eggs and met David's ninety-three-year-old mother, Mae Wolfe. Mrs. Wolfe willingly gave recorded interviews on Dutch farming life, and David later invited Carrie and Hanna to a Jefferson Grange meeting to learn more about Grange customs. The Wolfes have become friends of the Ethnic Heritage Study and seem interested in promoting an active presence for Pennsylvania Dutch traditions in the study.

When David, treasurer of the Schuylkill County Fair, invited the Ethnic Heritage Study to conduct public interviews in August of 2005 at a "Talking Tent" at the fair, linking ethnicity with agriculture, he provided an unanticipated opportunity for the Study to gain wider visibility and begin to diversify the content of the Fair.

#### A TALKING TENT?

The Talking Tent idea began to evolve for me twenty-five years ago through my work with folk arts panels, where far-flung folk artists, many of them inexperienced public speakers, not only found their own voices, but interacted with one another and with audiences in a public setting. We have facilitated Talking Tents in West Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, New York and Massachusetts over the years and have advanced a style of moderating local sessions calculated to encourage participation from even the shyest of speakers.

Listening to panelists discover from one another similarities in cultural backgrounds and overlapping artistic sensibilities is a powerful human experience and a revelation of cultural insights which a public audience cannot access in any other way. Such discussions can cast light on a wide range of cultural and social issues and can widen understanding across class and racial lines to pave the way for building stronger communities and economies.

#### THE SCHUYLKILL COUNTY FAIR: A LOT TO BE PROUD OF

The Schuylkill County Fair, now in its twenty-first year at Summit Station, is an outgrowth of earlier 4-H and vocational agricultural programs of the 1970s and '80s. It is the home of an impressive agricultural museum with an assortment of farming machines and implements from past eras. Located just a few miles from the Schuylkill-Berks County line, the Fair attracts farming families from a number of neighboring counties. David Wolfe says that in a more centralized location the Fair might draw greater interest from northern Schuylkill County, a largely coal mining region with fascinating agricultural traditions of its own. But the Fair seems well-established where it is for the present.

*As a well-organized host to a major event, the Fair has a lot to be proud of. But Schuylkill County has other resources significant to its agricultural past which might enrich the offerings of the Fair and widen its appeal: Schuylkill's diverse ethnic heritage.*

With food vendors coming from as far away as Philadelphia and New Jersey and stage performances featuring acts such as an Elvis Presley imitator, the well-attended Fair emphasizes mainstream cultural attractions. And while everyone seems to be having a good time, the Fair offers few clues about the place itself and the incredible richness of the Pennsylvania Dutch traditions here which shaped agriculture, architecture and the social institutions of farm life for over two centuries. Besides the arts and crafts displays with especially dazzling exhibits of local needlework, the Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau booth, and homemade funnel cakes at the Jefferson Grange concession stand, it could be any fair anywhere. That's fine. As a well-organized host to a major event, the Fair has a lot to be proud of. But Schuylkill County has other resources significant to its agricultural past which might enrich the offerings of the Fair and widen its appeal: Schuylkill's diverse ethnic heritage.

#### THE ROOT OF WHO WE ARE

Ethnic heritage is at the root of who we are and at the source of our vitality. We are a wash of cultures, ideas and world views. Why not acknowledge this deep and abiding quality and begin to program a sense of Schuylkill's stunning diversity into the Fair's offerings and public offerings generally throughout the County?



Want to attract wider participation in the Fair from the folks north of Broad Mountain? Begin to build multicultural offerings featuring local arts, foods and entertainment that highlight the ethnic heritage of Schuylkill County as a whole. Recruit food and craft concessionaires from the coal town churches and present church cooks preparing traditional recipes at cooking workshops. Offer prizes for art and poetry exploring ethnicity and agriculture and to school kids for the best essay on multiculturalism in Schuylkill County. Have the kids read their essays center stage to cheering crowds. Present multicultural panels on local history and occupational traditions. Feature Schuylkill's industrial heritage alongside practices of agriculture.

**Build multicultural offerings at the County Fair featuring local arts, foods and entertainment that highlight the ethnic heritage of Schuylkill County as a whole.**

*The county is diverse. Lumbering is still important; you have farming that's still important. Coal mining... still has some importance here. By the way, our anthracite coal reserves in Schuylkill County alone could supply the country's energy needs for the next 400 years if you used only coal. So there's plenty of it still here....*

*—Hon. John Domalakes from an interview in his chambers at the Court House (12/29/04)*

### OLD WAYS AND FARMING DAYS

With the advent of the Talking Tent at the County Fair in early August of 2005, five local farmers between sixty-one and eighty-six sat down at an afternoon outdoor, public session entitled “Old Ways and Farming Days” and collectively spun out their local history, from the names of ships on which their 18th century ancestors crossed the Atlantic, to detailed descriptions of the Dutch-speaking households in which they were raised and their earliest training as childhood contributors to farm family economies. They remembered the one-room schools in which they were educated, community thrashings and barn raisings, a horse-drawn farming economy and lamented the waning dairy industry. They remembered grandparents who planted by the signs and fed their families homegrown foods prepared with time-honored recipes. And they spoke with great passion about the love they felt for the land on which their families have lived and died, and of their determination to preserve their farms in perpetuity through conservation easements and the selling of development rights. The discussion was joined toward the end by a daughter of the oldest farmer who spoke about how her life had been shaped by family patterns of work and accomplishment. In the audience was the teen queen of the Fair who said she loved to hear the old men spinning yarns because it reminded her of her recently departed grandfather, who told great stories.

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At a later afternoon session, “Taste of the Old World in Schuylkill County,” a Ukrainian-American *pysanky* maker and needlework artist from McAdoo described the family farm established by her Ukrainian immigrant great-grandparents in northern Schuylkill County. The farm sustained generations of the extended family who also worked in the coal mines. This subsistence farm, patterned on methods of small-scale Ukrainian agriculture, produced fruit, vegetables, eggs, poultry, milk and meat—and an enduring relationship with grandparents who knew the old ways and values, recipes and religious folklife, on which the family fed.

*My grandmother kept all of the kids together in the Ukrainian faith and kind of insisted that we kept it up, from the children to the grandchildren on down. She showed us how to love the Ukrainian faith and not be ashamed of it.*

*— Georgine Borchik interviewed in her McAdoo home (4/05/05)*

### SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY OR INSTRUCTIVE REFLECTION?

The testimonials recorded during these talking tent sessions are significant additions to the archive of nearly sixty life story interviews generated by the project so far. You may be wondering, is all of this a prolonged sentimental journey down memory lane? Or can we find useful wisdom and relevant social and educational models in the reflections of our elders? And can we build intergenerational connections that will engage our young people in restructuring the economy and revitalizing local life and values?

It's clear to us that these stories and perspectives need to be told, heard—and gathered. We need to organize them as texts for our children and future generations. We need to look to all corners of Schuylkill County in



piecing together a broad base of truths. That doesn't mean that everybody has to agree. Life's not like that. But by listening to all the perspectives we cultivate local autonomy and begin a collective process of assessing the past. An important first step in County-wide healing and redevelopment is setting the story straight about the history and ecology of our surrounding communities and landscapes. Cultural affirmation, preserving a sense of place, listening to those voices not usually heard in public debate, are all sources of empowerment for people who see themselves as average—and powerless—which is most of us.

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“The critical point rests with how much opportunity community members have to disagree and try to settle among themselves the terms by which they are represented.” (Chambers 2000). Documenting, interpreting and disseminating our collective history, gathering our recorded testimonials, photo albums, recipes, and traditions of stewardship can become the stuff of inclusive vision-making and a widening of the democratic process. It can enable us as a diverse community to claim our mutual heritage and own the past in ways that begin to enrich the present.

### EXPRESSION OF ETHNIC HERITAGE IS COOL

Back in February we got a call from Catherine Clifford who heads up the Irish Weekend held annually in Heckscherville for the past eighteen years. She wanted to know when we would be bringing the Ethnic Heritage Study to Heckscherville and arranged for us to interview a group of community residents. We enjoyed a memorable evening with that group in an old school building no longer in use, which they had attended as youngsters. Each of them had something to say about the repression of earlier generations of their Irish families by the coal industry to the point that many changed their names or left the community.

**The... annual [Irish] weekend celebration [in Heckscherville] attracts thousands of visitors, including Irish tourists who think it's cool to be Irish in this luscious green setting, despite deep scars on surrounding hillsides left by the coal industry in a previous era.**

Those who survived the extreme hardships of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were inclined to keep their Irish ethnicity to themselves. Black balling and stereotyping were rampant throughout the era of “No Irish Need Apply,” and even into the 1960s and 1970s people played their Celtic cards close to their chests. But with the Kennedys and Clancy Brothers came a rebirth of Irish identity. In 1988 Joe Callaghan, Catherine's younger brother, chaired the first Irish Weekend, an offshoot of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Clover Fire Company. Joe, along with his family and neighbors, was feeling better about being Irish and decided to express a little exuberance about it. The resulting annual weekend celebration attracts thousands of visitors, including Irish tourists who think it's cool to be Irish in this luscious green setting, despite deep scars on surrounding hillsides left by the coal industry in a previous era.

*We are entering a new age, where interest and pride in heritage among all groups is being displayed as never before. Ethnic groups, religious groups and racial groups are discovering the culture that is theirs, and they are no longer embarrassed to admit their differences. On the contrary, they are proud of their unique contributions to society, and they are proclaiming this pride loudly and publicly.*

– Hon. Walter Baran addressing the Polish Heritage Club of New Salem, October 5, 1980

### IRISH WEEKEND: AN EXUBERANT EVENT

Like the County Fair, Irish Weekend features far-flung concessionaires selling a variety of tee-shirts expressing everything from Irish sentiments to the names of Mollies hung in 1877, along with Irish caps, religious objects and Irish music CDs. Volunteer high school students staff the food concession featuring delicious local versions of Irish stew, ham and cabbage, and vegetable soups. Youth add a special energy to the occasion and are engaged in all kinds of sub-plots which older festival goers can only imagine. Stage performances feature regional musicians, along with professional bands from other places. Irish dance performances and workshops are scheduled. And, best of all, a local history teacher, Rich Federiska, gives daily history sessions focusing on the Irish in the Anthracite Region, including the Civil War draft riots and the Molly Maguire labor wars.

The quality of these presentations and the intensity of discussion among audience members is notable and adds a level of authenticity not usually found at local festivals.



I come away imagining a panel of three or four additional historians from nearby coal towns offering other ethnic perspectives to the discussion. I imagine a whole schedule of panelists in a Talking Tent exploring other aspects of Irish culture in the context of surrounding ethnicities. Maybe the Weekend could include a tour of churches in Heckscherville and Minersville. Visitors will marvel at local church art and music and at the parallels in the various church histories, despite their apparent differences. Visitors to the Weekend might begin to contribute to the churches in all kinds of unforeseen ways.

### UKRAINIAN SEMINARY DAY

Sunday morning, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the last day of the Irish Weekend, we get an early start because we also want to visit a Ukrainian celebration and picnic at Primrose, just a few miles from Heckscherville as the crow flies. A local polka band is playing on the stage when we arrive and people are dancing. The Original Byzantine Men's Choir is gearing up to go on next. The Churches offer authentic food at outdoor stands and hundreds of people crowd around picnic tables under tents in the hot sun. In a nearby hall crafters display *pysanky*, paintings of Ukrainian heroes, needlework, and a newly released CD of a Lemko folksinger who visited the community last spring. The celebration exudes good feeling. Schuylkill County natives relocated in far off places look forward to this occasion to come home. We meet up with three Ukrainian-American brothers raised in St. Clair, now living away from the County, who have staged a small reunion here. With spouses they are enjoying platefuls of *halupki*, *halushki* and *pierogi*. We first met them two nights earlier at the Irish Weekend just across the mountain eating Irish stew. I have to wonder what might happen if these two celebrations at opposite corners of Cass Township merged.

The Visitors Bureau in Pottsville has published a calendar including similar ethnic events around the county which seem to flourish in the summer months. Ethnicity, it seems, is flowering around Schuylkill County in isolated settings, or beds. What about gardens with intermingling varieties all in bloom? Is it appropriate to imagine a County-wide coalescence toward a larger celebration of our multicultural natures?

### PARADE OF NATIONS

Consider the following, published a year ago in *The Republican Herald* (Monday 30 August, 2004)

*SHENANDOAH – Some things never change. By Lisa Price, Staff Writer*

*Polka music playing in one block, bagpipes in another. Traditions run deep in the diverse neighborhoods of a historic town.*

*Shenandoah celebrated its rich, long and varied ethnic history Saturday with the town's sixth annual Heritage Day and fifth annual Parade of Nations. Marchers representing Poland, Mexico, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Lithuania, Puerto Rico, Scotland, Slovakia, Wales, Ukraine, El Salvador, Germany and the United States marched before hundreds of appreciative spectators lining Main Street.*

*William F. Shafransky, Brandonville, marched as a miner in the parade, accompanied by "breaker boys" Nicholas A. and Tommy F. Twardzik, 7 and 9. Shafransky said that sharing the work of mining was a hardship that united ethnic groups in the area.*

*. . . "People respected and helped each other knowing the work they did."*

*. . . Valerie Macdonald, chairwoman of the Shenandoah Area Historical Society's Heritage Day, said that the ethnic groups are organized alphabetically in the parade lineup, with bands and musical groups mixed in between them. This year, marching bands from Shenandoah Valley and Cardinal Brennan high schools participated, as well as the Hawk Mountain Highlanders bagpipe group, which always marches along with the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Jack Kehoe Division, Girardville.*

*During the parade, participants and spectators alike danced, changing their style to keep up with the notes from Polkas or Mexican music. . . .*

***Maybe the (Irish) Weekend could include a tour of churches in Heckscherville and Minersville. Visitors will marvel at local church art and music and at the parallels in the various church histories, despite their apparent differences. Visitors to the Weekend might begin to contribute to the churches in all kinds of unforeseen ways.***



***Occasional jealousies and strong local pride among boroughs on both sides of Broad Mountain have indeed created an arena of sorts, though not one that always works to the realization of County-wide success and unity.***

Valerie Macdonald is also the director of Shenandoah's Main Street Program. In addition she has organized a number of successful annual church tours attended mostly by borough natives, in Shenandoah and nearby patch towns. She serves on many boards including the Advisory Committee of this Ethnic Heritage Study. For civic leadership she is a model. Schuylkill County has many others contributing in their own ways to cultural and historic preservation. We also attended compelling church tours in McAdoo and St. Clair.

Every community has a historical society and these societies generate astonishing creative energies, especially in the arena of preserving structures and material culture. Occasional jealousies and strong local pride among boroughs on both sides of Broad Mountain have indeed created an arena of sorts, though not one that always works to the realization of County-wide success and unity. This sort of divisiveness is to be expected among

communities which were long locked in the grip of a coal economy. In their heyday, mining companies thrived on divided communities and encouraged the kind of competition which may be better for realizing production goals than engendering human progress. Shenandoah's Parade of Nations has been an important step in addressing this bleak social dynamic and breaking down barriers of the past.

### **UNITY COALITION: RESPECT, HARMONY AND JUSTICE**

Another model of multicultural celebrations is the Unity Coalition, led by Ray L. Moyer of Pottsville, which produces annual Unity Day celebrations. The organization's mission is "to foster a community of respect, harmony and justice for all its diverse peoples." The group formed initially in response to a rally in Pottsville by the KKK in September of 1998 and has focused heavily on espousing and affirming minorities and New Americans, often most vulnerable to abuse. Tolerance alone doesn't satisfy Moyer, a native of Summit Station. He insists on respect, harmony and justice.

We attended Unity Day last October at the Fairlane Mall and were astonished to find participation by Muslims, Jews, African Americans and Native Americans, among others. Though many shoppers gave little more than a passing glance, the event seemed to have a solid following, and the participants came a step closer to standing on some sort of common ground as a result of spending the day together. We made many good contacts, including Rubina Tareen and her husband, Tariq Scherfen, who now serve on our Advisory Committee. Rubina has invited us to make presentations of this Study at the Islamic Center in Pottsville on two occasions. Tariq devoted most of a week to creating a power point presentation featuring images gathered in our research.

Ray Moyer and his committee have chosen the campus of Penn State at Schuylkill Haven as the site of this year's Unity Day. They hope to reach out to ethnically diverse students and involve them in the celebration. With minimal financial resources and the limitations of a volunteer board, Ray is standing firm in his determination to celebrate diversity.

### **IF YOU DON'T STAND FOR SOMETHING . . .**

***We need to stand on Schuylkill County traditions of cooperative work, compassionate values, love of family, and good stewardship that brought us somehow through the last century.***

A popular country song recorded over the past five years asserts that "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." We need to stand on Schuylkill County traditions of cooperative work, compassionate values, love of family, and good stewardship that brought us somehow through the last century. Models of highly functional neighborhoods and patches, where no one fell through the cracks, even during the horrors of the Great Depression, are to be found in the reflections of our elders. With a record like that, we don't need to look beyond Schuylkill County for solutions to our problems and viable visions for moving on. The wisdom we need is in our midst. One of the panelists in the Talking Tent at the County Fair acknowledged that, for reasons unknown to her, Schuylkill Countians are clueless about the vast cultural riches here. "If we could see what we have, we could be anything we wish," she affirmed.

Understanding and valuing the vast cultural riches in our midst widens our understanding of who our neighbors are, which helps us begin to coalesce as communities, to form coalitions and collaborations with those who were formerly "them," the newcomers, or those "others" you always had to watch. Once we have tasted each other's foods and danced to each other's music, all kinds of new possibilities begin to emerge. We can start by reinventing a sense of neighborliness, of what it means to be good neighbors. Look back to Brownsville, a little patch town outside Shenandoah in the 1930s, for some social and educational templates.



## WHETHER OR NOT THEY SPOKE THE SAME LANGUAGES

In Brownsville Patch everyone had something to offer. Joe Bellucci's father, fresh off the boat from southern Italy, had a green thumb, could grow all kinds of fruit and vegetables and planted a family vineyard. He was a bricklayer and very soon laid up a substantial brick bake oven in the yard. A small wood fire would heat the bricks, and the oven could bake all day. Joe's mother baked Italian bread and pizzas. Then she would invite the German neighbors in for pizza. The German neighbor woman baked rye bread in a brick oven that Joe's father built for her. Joe's family would go to her house for hot rye bread with fatback. The taste of that rye would stay with you for a week. Wheat bread and rye, dark bread and light, all over the patch you could smell these different breads baking, while up and down the road women watched each other's children. The patch was its own world with its own school and churches.

Joe remembers his Irish school teachers. They lived in the patch and knew all of the immigrant families.

*I can remember when I went to school talking Italian at home with my mother. . . . So I'd go to school and the teacher would ask you a question and then you put your hand up, you know, for the answer. So I'd put my hand up and then I'd start off in Italian. I'd have to stop and say, "Sorry," and then say it in English. My mother and dad, we lived down the patch there and that patch had a school that went to 8th grade. . . . But the school teachers, they lived right there. If you did something wrong the principal lived right in the patch, and when he seen, like my dad, he'd see my dad at church and tell him, "Your son, you know, did this and that. . . ."*

*"The school teachers taught my mother and dad to read and write English and talk English. . . . No charge. . . . And all those Lithuanians and Polish, they taught them, every night a different place."*

*But what I want to say is the teachers, they lived in the patch. Most of the school teachers were Irish. . . . They were already Americanized, they had the language, where the Lithuanians and Italians, they all talked their own language. So when school was over they'd go home and eat. Then they'd come down and knock at my mom and dad's door, and my mother had one of them big old fashioned round tables. My mother and dad would sit there and the teachers would take turns and they. . . . taught my mother and dad how to read and write English and talk English at no charge. Today if you tutored with somebody you'd have to pay, right? But they taught them. And all those Lithuanians and Polish, they taught them, every night a different place, like your night was Tuesday night, they'd come there, and somebody else was Wednesday or Thursday and the whole week, that's what they'd do. We of course didn't have electricity, so they'd have the big lamp in the middle of the table. And they taught my mother and dad."*

*—Joe Bellucci in a recorded interview at his home in Shenandoah (4/13/05)*

Everyone was a community activist and advocate. In the hand-loading days of coal mining, all the families were up against incredible odds. The memories we've recorded suggest that again and again they faced those odds together. If a woman fell sick or languished in childbirth, the others flocked to the house bringing covered dishes, or getting out a wash, whether or not they spoke the same languages or attended the same churches. There was a whole lot less "me" in those days and a whole lot more "us." Times were hard and you couldn't make it by yourself. Are there lessons to be learned from these earlier models?

## SHAPING OUR OWN DESTINIES

Certainly being a good neighbor, a good citizen, requires active participation. By coming together to reclaim our common ground through a process of multicultural appreciation and collaboration, we Schuylkill Countians can position ourselves to take more of a hand in shaping our own destinies and local economies.

"In a relatively short period of time, beginning with the end of World War II, tourism has become a significant if not vital part of economic development strategies of most regions of the world. . . . Within nations, some ethnic minorities have in their own right begun to view tourism as a means of creating new employment possibilities and economic opportunities for their people." (Chambers 2000)

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In study groups, committees and classrooms we must tackle the heady issues of tourism science, theory and practice if we are ever to have solid success in these areas.

### UNRIVALED CULTURAL TOURISM

By bringing more of an ethnic heritage focus to the County's nascent tourist industry, for example, we can become active in shaping a local tourist economy, broadening its base, so that local residents can reap more of the harvest.

"The marketing of indigenous arts and crafts, of local performances and festivals and of places and sites associated with a people's heritage has grown rapidly to become a major sector of the tourist economy." (Chambers 2000).

*Could we promote tourism? I think the answer is clearly yes, because we have so many of these diverse ethnic groups within a relatively compact area. You have the Pennsylvania Dutch in the western part of the county, which is the rural, farming area. If you go to those areas and interview people you'll hear them speak in a very distinct Pennsylvania Dutch accent.*

*You have the northern parts of the county which have all these ethnic groups that came in because of the necessity to mine coal. It's basically through those ethnic churches that their ethnicities have persevered through the generations. That's not unusual because if you look at Poland and Lithuania, the nationalist movement in Poland centered around the church. In the face of oppression from the Soviets (and before them the Czars) and the Germans, it was the churches that held onto the language, the culture and the traditions. Through the [practice of] making the ethnic foods for fund raisers, or church block parties and gatherings, food sales, that sort of thing, the pierogies and the bleenies and the kugul and the didashilie and all of the other ethnic foods have been preserved. And people in this area know what they are.*

*Every year in August we have our Lithuanian Days which are held at the Schuylkill Mall. At center court we have ethnic dancers... and there's entertainment, but there's also the food, the shalta borsht... It's cold, red beet soup and we sell it by the gallons. And it will go in the first hour, because people who are originally from this area, who have moved away, come back just to enjoy the food. They know they're going to get the authentic thing. This is not something that comes out of a package. This is homemade food, made by the ladies of the parish and carted to the Mall by people like myself... But that's an example of how one little two-day festival on a Saturday and Sunday in August can bring in people from outside who come here to see the entertainment, to hear the Lithuanian songs, to see the folk dances. And we have vendors that come in to sell amber jewelry. These festivals bring in people...*

*There's a festival in Shenandoah, the Italian festival, and it's centered around Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, which is the Italian parish in town. The streets of Shenandoah are mobbed with people at that time. Not just local people either, but people from outside the area [who] were born and raised here. These ethnic events are like little homecomings for the communities.*

*So those things exist, and I think they could be expanded upon and perhaps marketed to the public at large. [That way] someone who has no connection to this area, who wants to get a real feel for Lithuania, for example, and Lithuanians in this country, could come to our folk festival and watch folk dancers... Perhaps a little more could be done to explain to [the larger audience] why they are doing this particular dance, how it evolved... So there are things in place today that already bring tourists in. And they need to be broadened... with some additional interpretation. You'd need some sort of marketing scheme to let people know that these things are going on.*

*Now the local newspapers do a pretty good job of advertising these festivals, not just by paid advertising, but they have stories on them every year, publicizing what's going on, but you need to go beyond Schuylkill County's borders to fully [advertise the events].*

– Hon. John Domalakes in an interview in his chambers at the Courthouse (12/29/04)

We can capitalize on our legacy of Old World hospitality to take more active roles in building and hosting an infrastructure of cultural tourism offerings and interpretation unrivaled in the coalfields. Erve Chambers warns that



if we remain passive in these areas, our tourist economy will continue to be “mediated by persons and institutions who are neither hosts nor guests... and who may not live anywhere near where the tourism occurs.”

*“These mediators include tourism planners and promoters, travel agents and guides, government officials, investors, and representatives of hotel and transportation industries. They are the people whose business it is to create and maintain a tourism industry by anticipating tourist needs, re-creating tourism places, and trying to imbue would-be tourists with new expectations.... In each case... the physical and cultural characteristics of a place contribute to the ways in which tourism is received and to the further consequences of its presence.” (Chambers 2000)*

I recently asked an old farmer to reflect a little bit on the potential of an increased tourist industry to improve Schuylkill’s economy. “It’s a lot of aggravation,” he scowled, “for a few service jobs.”

### AGGRAVATION MANAGEMENT

I was reminded of Cherokee, North Carolina where I conducted folklife research for three years in the late 1980s. Located as the southern gateway of the Great Smokey Mountain National Park, Cherokee, with just a few thousand inhabitants, hosts between seven and eight million tourists each season. Since 1949 the Cherokee Historical Society has produced nightly summer performances of an outdoor drama, “Unto These Hills,” recounting the story of the removal of Cherokee people by the Georgia Militia in 1838. Their death march, called the Trail of Tears, occurred during the administration of Andrew Jackson. Night after night, bus loads of tourists flock to the drama and fill local motels and restaurants. The outdoor drama shares a parking lot with the Oconolufy Village, a re-creation of an 18th century Cherokee settlement, with local artists producing authentic weavings, carvings, pottery and beadwork. Tourists wander through the village visiting with the artists and learning about traditional craftsmanship and life ways.

In the town below is the memorable Museum of the Cherokee People just across the street from the acclaimed Qualla Artists’ Cooperative. These enterprises have created scores of jobs for local actors, artists, museum professionals, and associated jobs that support the local tourist infrastructure. The “strip” in town, with its well-lit shops, restaurants, “chief shows,” high-stakes Bingo halls, and a Harrah’s gambling casino, occupies the attention of the tourists, allowing the outlying towns and settlements to remain relatively hidden from view and their inhabitants to keep a low profile, as desired. You could call it aggravation management. Tourist traffic is channeled through the community in ways that reduce the social and environmental impact of so many visitors.

*It’s vastly important for communities to decide which sacred spaces they wish to reserve for local use only and keep the paying public moving through areas designated as tourist destinations.*

It’s vastly important for communities to decide which sacred spaces they wish to reserve for local use only and keep the paying public moving through areas designated as tourist destinations.

### “LEAKAGE” IN CHEROKEE’S TOURIST ECONOMY

Yet major wrinkles remain to be ironed out in the tourist economy of Cherokee. Despite the above mentioned seasonal wage employment opportunities available to local residents through the Village and outdoor drama, ninety percent of tourist dollars wind up in corporate hands. Mediating establishments like Harrah’s gambling enterprise, Holiday Inn, Best Western and the plethora of fast food chains and transportation companies bank their profits elsewhere. The foods and spirits they serve are purchased and trucked in from other places. The skills needed to manage these profitable endeavors are not available locally and need to be recruited from elsewhere, or so it is believed by the corporate offices. When tourist dollars are siphoned out of local communities in this way, it’s called *leakage*. (Chambers 2000) In Cherokee the leakage is rampant. Manipulation of the tribal government through kickbacks and payoffs guarantees that the tourist economy will continue to work for the primary benefit of a few imbedded mediators and distant investors rather than the local people of the host community.

### EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

Here in Schuylkill County we need to build a degree of local autonomy that will minimize this kind of leakage and broaden the base of what appears to be an emerging tourist economy. It will remain a major challenge for us if we decide to take it on. Any successes will invite co-optation and corporate take over. Sudden infusions of big capital frequently overwhelm local initiatives. We’ve all seen it happen.

That’s why we need to proceed inclusively and cooperatively to develop a vision of an enterprise that will draw on



**Schuylkill County has an amazing wealth of cultural and ethnically diverse attractions, varied landscapes and beautiful rivers—and a story that will keep visitors coming back for more. What’s lacking is the experience of working in a collaborative, entrepreneurial way across ethnic and community lines to achieve broadly based goals.**

locally produced and renewable resources, employ local hosts and interpreters, feature local artists and musicians, build an equitable infrastructure, and keep the profits here at home. That way it will belong to all of us. To achieve any sort of goal of that magnitude will require careful and broadly-based study, not only of our considerable ethnic heritage, but of the economics of cultural tourism and the complexities of organizing a tourist industry county-wide. Schuylkill County has an amazing wealth of cultural and ethnically diverse attractions, varied landscapes and beautiful rivers—and a *story* that will keep visitors coming back for more. What’s lacking is the experience of working in a collaborative, entrepreneurial way across ethnic and community lines to achieve broadly based goals.

**IT’S ALL IN HOW YOU LISTEN**

Learning to listen to one another is crucial to the process of working productively together. A widespread lack of trust is in large part a by-product of living for nearly two centuries under the thumb of the coal industry, a way of life which worked against collective initiative and alternative economies. The paternalism of the coal companies in years gone by convinced us over generations that we had to be dependent on them for employment, housing, schooling and supplies. In a company store economy, we all grew “another day older and deeper in debt,” as Tennessee Ernie Ford’s song asserts. That’s a lot of history to overcome, a complex dynamic to have to change. All of us are deeply affected by traumas of

the past, even if we are unclear about the details and don’t acknowledge the connections.

Yet this brief Ethnic Heritage Study has documented a resiliency that clearly has the capacity to overcome excesses of the past and usher in a new era of collective self-realization. As local residents look to one another for solutions and a shared vision, we offer here an outline of strategies and social exercises aimed at reaching across ethnic and political lines to find a common ground for launching imaginative initiatives.

Remember that our ancestors were undaunted by the challenge of carving new communities out of a wilderness. We can be pioneers in a whole new level of cultural and economic development for Schuylkill County, carving out for ourselves an economy that is not dependent on outside ownership and top-down handling, but is instead an

expression of local enterprise based on renewable resources and inclusive management. It takes a lot of hard, well-coordinated effort. It takes a lot of reaching out to the other side of the tracks and establishing engagement and trust.

**The Borough of Tamaqua has done its share of acting locally to preserve historic structures. Its crowning glory is the salvaged and rehabilitated railroad station. Abandoned, then slated for demolition after a fire, the Tamaqua train station now offers art shows, locally made chocolates, a bridal and home furnishings store, and an outstanding new restaurant reminiscent of the borough’s heyday.**

**CHALLENGES IN EFFECTING A COUNTY IDENTITY**

*Everyone likes to talk about regionalism and partnerships, but if you can’t run an efficient local organization, trying to partner with another organization that can’t do the same thing is going to be difficult. . . . Each community needs to look within itself and come up with a concrete idea of where it wants to go and start to develop some capacity to get there. Only then will they be able to partner with neighboring communities. I think we have to “think globally, act locally.” Each of us really has to do what we can in our own communities. . . . save historic properties and things like that before we start doing joint promotions in heritage tourism. If you can’t treat your own sewage, how are you going to attract tourists?*

*If you go outside a certain geographic area, and you don’t have to go very far, you’ll find people who never heard of Tamaqua. . . . People just don’t know who you are. . . . People aren’t going to fly in here from Seattle to go to a coffee shop or gift shop in your downtown. We have to better understand what the market is.*

*But I think if we could start identifying ourselves as a region, and good, quality communities within a region, then I think we might have a better chance of extending the circumference of that area. . . . because right now. . . . nobody gives a hoot about the county, they really don’t. There’s no county identity. It’s a political/geographic boundary. There is a coal region identity, but most people don’t identify themselves as Schuylkill Countians the way that the French think of themselves as French.*

– Micah Gursky in a recorded interview in Tamaqua (12/13/04)



The Borough of Tamaqua has done its share of acting locally to preserve historic structures. Its crowning glory is the salvaged and rehabilitated railroad station. Abandoned, then slated for demolition after a fire, the Tamaqua train station now offers art shows, locally made chocolates, a bridal and home furnishings store, and an outstanding new restaurant reminiscent of the borough's heyday. The small but dedicated group comprising the Tamaqua Save Our Station, partnering with other entities such as the Tamaqua Historical Society, Downtown Tamaqua, the Tamaqua Chamber of Commerce and State Representative Dave Argall's office, spearheaded efforts to revitalize the railroad station, complete with a public park and fountain in front of the famous station. The Society also owns and preserves structures of historic worth in surrounding small towns and plans to open a museum in downtown Tamaqua.

*...our ancestors were undaunted by the challenge of carving new communities out of a wilderness. We can be pioneers in a whole new level of cultural and economic development for Schuylkill County...*

## COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH ARTS AND LISTENING PROJECTS

The recommended strategies and local projects that follow are listed in such a way as to suggest a process by which diverse groups can begin working together—on both sides of Broad Mountain—to try new approaches to generate local redevelopment and cultural tourism. The process is designed to create a more highly aware citizenry who, through sharing stories, arts and traditional recipes, come to appreciate, espouse and embrace the complexity and diverse wonders of Schuylkill County as a whole, citizens who embrace the potential for involving young people in the documentation and interpretation to shape the new effort.

The Foxfire Project, which bubbled up in a ninth-grade classroom in the north Georgia mountains in the mid-1970s, is a stunning model of what is possible when students begin to look with a whole-learning approach at the local community as a unit of study. Students venturing out into the surrounding region with questions on their minds make connections across both ethnic and generational lines. All kinds of study are possible, drawing from the wells of Folklore, Anthropology, Sociology, Journalism, Ethics, Photography, and multi-media arts. Use your imagination. Communicate and collaborate!

First, as a symbol of a willingness to entertain a level of widespread collaboration, the boroughs and towns might like to jointly design and erect new welcome signs at every entrance to the County that read something like:

**WELCOME TO SCHUYLKILL COUNTY**  
*Multicultural Capital of the Anthracite Coal Region*  
*Stop and Savor the Unity of Our Diversity*  
**SHALOM!**

If a working taskforce can come up with the precise wording for new signs that summarizes a fresh and exciting County identity, let's put it out front where everyone can see it. Let's proclaim it and then own it. In this way we will create a climate in which changes can begin to happen; we will highlight and merge our major assets—our diversity—and our strategies of inclusiveness. Each of the signs might have additional lines of greeting in different languages as a way of recognizing all of the various Schuylkill ethnicities.

What are some other ways of strengthening regional identity while maximizing public involvement in county-wide redevelopment? Here are some fun projects to try.

### GREETING NEIGHBORS: REACHING ACROSS BOROUGH AND TOWNSHIP LINES

- 1. ORGANIZE LISTENING PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY INVOLVING LOCAL CITIZENS IN INTERVIEWING ONE ANOTHER,** assembling community memory into meaningful history products for classroom and library use, as well as for tourism. Recorded interviews can be archived at public libraries and historical societies. Be sure to interview and integrate into documentary projects the stories and arts of New Americans. Let's make newcomers to Schuylkill County feel welcome. This kind of inclusive approach will ease the adjustment of newcomers and help them become integrated, productive members of the community. It will encourage the flourishing of whatever cultural arts they brought with them.
- 2. Produce a weekly series of newspaper articles with interwoven excerpts of recorded interviews and other field research** to affirm Schuylkill County values, arts, and history. Work with the newspapers for wider cooperation in the area of multicultural coverage. Point out that stories on ethnic diversity will increase



out-of-town subscriptions by Schuylkill Countians who relocated to distant places and hunger for news and voices from ethnic neighborhoods and Pennsylvania Dutch farming townships back home.

3. **Produce a weekly series of short radio programs highlighting a conversational flow of voices from the Ethnic Heritage Study's broadcast-quality recordings** telling various aspects of the Schuylkill County story, mixed with local music and ambient sound. Both the newspaper and radio series will help Schuylkill Countians to get the story straight and provide a measure of healing from industrial degradations of the past. Story sharing can be a major step in negotiating the kind of interpretation that will unify diverse communities around strengthening cultural tourism economies.
4. **Organize a weekly or biweekly course on Schuylkill County history as told by local residents.** This combination of presentation and discussion will compare the experiences of diverse ethnic and religious communities in the county. The course could move around to different sites, perhaps offering college credit. Students of all ages would be expected to read, listen and participate, with goals of coming to terms with various accounts of local history, healing schisms of misunderstanding. Also offer courses in tourism economics and management.
5. **Organize local storytelling festivals including the voices of all community members,** young and old, newcomers and old-timers. Program storytelling events in the County schools and public meeting places. Build appreciation for the spoken word, the sound of our own voices.
6. **Continue Schuylkill County ethnic heritage recording project, gathering and archiving testimonials from diverse ethnic and religious communities.** Involve students and volunteers in transcribing and archiving recorded materials for increased accessibility. This will aid in creating the radio and newspaper series. Copy and preserve old photographs and documents. This project will involve local citizens as community interns. Schools and historical societies can collaborate.
7. **Generate documentary arts classes and clubs (ala Foxfire) in local schools to get youth in contact with older citizens** to gather local spoken recollections, along with photos and other documents, as grist for public exhibits rotating through the boroughs. Young students can realize the challenges and satisfaction of publishing locally in a public setting and on-line. The network of Schuylkill County historical societies will be an asset and need to be mobilized.
8. **Index collection of recordings and photos through Inter-Clipper for maximum public and scholarly access to materials.** Inter-Clipper is a multi-faceted indexing program for making materials permanently accessible for various uses. Contact Michael Frisch at [716] 834-7957 or frisch@acsu.buffalo.edu.
9. **Generate county-wide music festivals celebrating diverse artistic traditions.** Jazz traditions and polkas alone could float a major festival with national appeal. (See interview of Anthony Kurdilla and Billy Zee of Frackville.)

#### SHADES OF EUROPE NO LONGER FOUND ON THE CONTINENT

*Over the years I worked with Jan Levin's Polka Band from Hazleton. Now that was Jan Levindowski, and he's from Poland. I first started working with him about twenty years ago. I found him to be a fascinating man. Any time I had an opportunity I'd pick his brains about what it was like in Poland, especially behind the Iron Curtain....*

*I often asked him, "What kind of music do they listen to in Poland? And he smiled at me and said, "Classical music and rock and roll." And I'd say, "And what about the polkas, the obeticks and cardishes?" And he'd say, "Only in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Chicago."*

*And then I asked him, "Well what kind of food do you eat in Poland?" "Well, pork and chicken and beef." And I said, "What about the pierogies and halupkies?" And he smiled at me. "Only in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Chicago."*

*And I asked him, "Why is that?" And this is how he explained it to me. He said that at the beginning of the last century, the early 1900s, all the people immigrated from eastern Europe and settled in different cells or pockets in the eastern United States. And they created these ethnic communities. And they desperately tried to maintain the dignity of their country*



by keeping especially the religion, the polkas and the food. And they kept it here. And they never outgrew it because they just wanted to keep that going. And he said, "In Poland they outgrew it," which I thought was a very interesting story. He said that the little clans would get together, and let's face it, in Schuylkill County we have all different kinds of ethnic groups here. In Shenandoah alone we have Mexicans, Italians. We have Lithuanians, Polish, Ukrainians, and they would all settle in these little neighborhoods, especially keeping their religion and the ethnic foods and the ethnic music.

Probably some of the best polka music that's ever been written or played has been played here in the United States and not in Eastern Europe. . . . I think Schuylkill County had some of the best ethnic music ever. . . . We're talking about polka bands. There was a Billy Urban who had a great polka band, Steve Babinsek, who had a great polka band. In Minersville there was Joe Misti. Actually his name was George Kabillis but his name was Joe Misti. He had a polka band. I'm talking – these bands had done recordings! From Coaldale were the King Brothers, Wash, Johnny and Eddie King. They had a King Bros. Orchestra.

And back in the '50s and '60s everyone would follow these bands. If they were playing in St. Clair on Friday night, everyone went there, and if they were playing in Minersville Saturday night, they would just follow these bands around. . . and support them. And I mean polka dances were the big thing. We had some marvelous musicians around here who played polkas. I think the heritage we have here in Schuylkill County is tremendous. It's a great music area here.

– Anthony Kurdilla in a recorded interview at his Frackville music store (12/16/04)

Many musicians from an earlier generation are still thriving here. The Kurdilla-Zee interview provides a detailed look at the contemporary music scene, as well as immortalizing musicians of the past

10. **Begin work with a county-wide committee to plan Schuylkill County Multicultural Festival** with "Come Back Home to Schuylkill County" theme pulling together all the music, dance, arts, food and storytelling identified by the festival organizing committee. As much as possible it will be a "home grown" event featuring local artists.
11. **Produce an anthology of Schuylkill County music** in a series of CDs to be sold at gift shops, restaurants, museums and civic centers. Advertise and review these products in the newspapers to reach out-of-town markets, and on websites dealing with Schuylkill cultural treasures.
12. **Generate a program of folk arts apprenticeships** which link older practitioners of local arts with younger folks eager to learn. This approach will guarantee that art forms and techniques are passed along to succeeding generations. Our study has documented fragile knowledge of diverse traditions of song and dance, for example, still surviving among people now too old to practice these forms. It's crucial to keep Schuylkill County arts, music and dance alive. Amy Skillman ([717] 238-1770) at the Institute for Cultural Partnerships in Harrisburg is a resource for finding state support for folk arts apprenticeships. Imagine being able to stage a Lithuanian Day event without having to recruit dance troupes from Baltimore and crafts vendors from Philadelphia.
13. **No store window left boarded up:** Create Main Street exhibits featuring art, photo and history panels in empty store windows. (See collection of photos and texts generated by a group of middle school students taught by James Trusky for the Mahanoy Area Historical Society.) Offer exhibit design workshops as needed to stimulate further interest.
14. **Organize church tours** featuring musical performances, interpretation of liturgy along with church history and life stories of individual congregants whose family stories are intertwined with church history, combined with religious, or holiday feasts. The tours can be packaged in such a way as to help far-flung descendents of Schuylkill County families get back to their roots. Schedule church, mosque and synagogue events so visitors can attend a different service or celebration each day, especially around the holidays. Coordinate visits to religious events with stops at local shops and restaurants serving ethnic dishes.
15. **Open closed, but safe churches, temples and synagogues for minor holiday services.** For example, hold Purim festivities in the old Shenandoah synagogue instead of in the consolidated Pottsville temple and bring in Jews from around the county to celebrate this one holiday in Shenandoah. Do the same to enjoy and revive other dormant religious centers.



- 16. Generate cross-cultural cooking classes in homes and schools**, where parents of school age children and other adults take turns each week teaching one another recipes for feeding body and soul, according to their own tradition. Include ethnic cooking workshops at local festivals. These have proven enormously popular at the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festivals on the Mall.
- 17. Adopt “Come back home to Schuylkill County,” as a theme for promoting the kind of cultural tourism that will attract visitors with some previous connection here**, the Diaspora of displaced working families from the anthracite region scattered far and wide over the face of the nation. These approaches will include genealogy workshops and assistance tracing the depths of Schuylkill County and Old World roots.

“Some host [communities], which have experienced considerable out-migration during periods of their history, have come to base much of their tourism on inviting such people to return to their ethnic ‘roots.’ ” (Chambers 2000)

### ESPOUSING STEWARDSHIP

A study in West Virginia found that National Forest lands will produce nine times the tourist dollars that a clear-cutting operation will generate in timber sales. We need to restore the ecological balance in the Schuylkill River Watershed while repairing our landscapes and preserving our natural resources for future generations. Some visitors are intrigued with decaying industrial landscapes, but most want to enjoy interesting, pleasant, historically and culturally intriguing destinations where they will meet engaging locals who are enthusiastic about their own surroundings, or spend time in pristine outdoor settings.

- 18. Strengthen water monitoring programs in local schools and communities.** Teach our younger citizens to espouse stewardship of the Schuylkill River Watershed while celebrating its cultural past and vibrant, diverse present.
- 19. Work to find intersections between ethnic heritage and natural heritage.** Interweave cultural programming into hiking and biking trails.

### ONGOING

- 20. Support local arts organizations and individuals to jumpstart community theater, coffee houses, storefront galleries, and other venues for musicians, dancers, poets and visual artists.** Produce theater and performances about life in the County. Develop close working relationships with the Pennsylvania Arts Council and the Institute for Cultural Partnerships in Harrisburg. Affirm especially those art forms reflective of our industrial and ethnic heritage. These local arts will form a base from which we can begin to tell our story as a post industrial, culturally diverse community, with shades of Old Europe no longer to be found in Europe itself, and historical social models available for redeveloping fractured, depressed, post-industrial communities. There are currently funds available for folk arts apprenticeships. All we have to do is find interested pairs of masters and students. Whether the apprenticeship revolves around preserving a baking technique, salvaging ethnic dance steps or musical repertoires or learning needlework, funds are available to help compensate the master artist and assist the apprentice with costs of material and travel.
- 21. Support and increase local genealogical efforts to learn more about Old World families and cultural connections.** Irish Weekend features a successful genealogy tent which others might want to try. A surprising number of genealogists are at work around us.
- 22. Generate widespread interest in Schuylkill’s incredibly diverse traditions of faith**, a story which, if fully understood, would stand alongside the Molly Maguires for compelling drama.
- 23. Bring on consultants with expertise in teaching drama/musical writing (i.e. Billy Edd Wheeler, Roadside Theater folks, etc.) to conduct county-wide workshops with a goal of collectively producing an outdoor drama/s featuring the stories, music and dance of Schuylkill County.** (Examples: *Unto These Hills*, the epic story of Indian Removal, produced by the Cherokee Historical Society, has been playing continuously to millions of visitors since its opening more than fifty years ago. It has employed hundreds of locals as actors and producers. *Sweet Honey in the Rock* and *Hatfields and McCoy’s*, two outdoor dramas by Billy Edd Wheeler, have played to full houses in Beckley, West Virginia, for 25 years, attracting thousands of visitors to the region.) Further examples are numerous. Imagine a full scale outdoor drama telling Schuylkill’s story.



**24. Create a multi-cultural center with galleries, reading and listening rooms, multi-media production studios and an indoor venue for performances year round.**

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The Republican-Herald sells 500 papers a day outside Schuylkill County and gets frequent calls from readers as far away as California requesting additional information. Daily on-line versions of the paper have untold numbers of readers. Add to this figure out-of-county readers of the other papers published here. As stories of cultural redevelopment begin to appear in print, readers from distant places will begin to find reasons to come back home. Ukrainian-Americans nationwide, for example, will take an interest in the fact that Schuylkill County has the second highest concentration of Ukrainian people anywhere in the country. Local religious institutions can cultivate distant sources of support, as visitors carry away fond memories of what they have seen and heard.

Stories of heartland America are becoming more and more marketable in a society weary of Disney and “theme park” interpretation. As we have found in just a few months, the real thing is here in Schuylkill County, making this place compelling and irresistible. Capture these stories for posterity. Provide venues in which they can be told and shared.

*The tourism industry is changing... to things that are more in the hearts of people, their heritage and their ethnicity. It's important for us to be able to tell the stories of the area so that we can appeal to a bigger crowd of people and not just keep [our cultural assets] inside a box we call Schuylkill County—and not turn everything into a Disney World. There's so much more out there that the generations coming behind us need to know to appreciate what they have, what we're leaving them, and what we've been through to get where we are—where they are today.*

*This ethnic study is going to be important... to the younger generation too, to make sure the stories of the past aren't forgotten... I'd like to see kids do living histories. We have a wealth of elderly people in this community who have stories to tell. And it's really sad. [If we don't take these steps] they're going to take [the stories] with them when they go. We're missing out on a connection between the generations... We are missing the boat if we do not get to our younger generation. The little bit of heritage education they get in school is not enough. [New approaches in the curriculum] need to come from the school districts and families, and we who are involved in [heritage preservation] have an obligation to get it out there and make it available to our youth... so that it's not lost.*

– Linda Yulanavage, Tamaqua Main Street Manager, interviewed 12/09/04

**CONCLUSION: FOR OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER**

Remember that we have suggested the above recommendations primarily as a process by which the people of Schuylkill County can discover the diverse wonders of their unique surroundings as they collaborate with neighbors across ethnic, class, and borough lines. They can begin to conduct research and produce events which are pleasing to themselves and each other. The process will build autonomy, inclusiveness, and authenticity into the reinvention of the County as a living multicultural celebration. Remember that forty percent of tourism income nationally is generated by local audiences and local consumers of culturally based events and products. If our work is good enough to attract the attention of our neighbors, it is probably of a quality and authenticity that will fascinate visitors as well.

**Remember that forty percent of tourism income nationally is generated by local audiences and local consumers of culturally based events and products. If our work is good enough to attract the attention of our neighbors, it is probably of a quality and authenticity that will fascinate visitors as well.**

*I think it is important that all groups take this special interest in their own particular heritage. And I think it is equally valuable and important that they understand, learn from and enjoy the cultural distinctions of other heritage groups. We can learn from one another even more than we can learn from ourselves, and in doing so, we gain a new mutual understanding and respect that will lead to greater harmony among all God's people....*

– Hon. Walter Baran addressing the Polish Heritage Club of New Salem, October 5, 1980

If we can please ourselves through the effort of getting our story straight, we will be well on the way toward



generating compelling tourist destinations and offerings. We will collectively design and build infrastructures that keep the fruits of our labors here.

*It's important for the communities to appreciate their heritage before developing the business of tourism. We need to make sure local people are involved, because they are the ones who are going to promote it on the street. . . . They need to appreciate it before they can be glad to share it with someone else. . . . We need to share it with as many people as we can, and that way, when tourists do start coming in, everyone's got a story to tell. . . . I don't think heritage tourism can survive without [personal engagement]. Otherwise it becomes a Disney World.*

*– Linda Yulanavage, Tamaqua Main Street Manager, interviewed 12/09/04*

In addition to the benefits of an improved economy, we're way ahead because we've become more cohesive, compassionate, and productive and had a lot of fun in the process of collaborating and partnering. We've found all kinds of ways to reconnect with our kids—and ourselves—through inventorying our cultural resources, retelling our stories and reassessing the past. The kids have become more engaged students. We've had a resurgence of creativity exploring the deeper meaning of our lives—and a reduction in teen suicides. Through learning to include the arts and stories of newcomers, we've built safer, happier places to live. We're cleaning up our surroundings and will be able to leave to our children a legacy that celebrates the unity of our diversity and our realization of Schuylkill County potential. So let's get to work.



# Appendices

- A. Bibliography
- B. List of Interviews and Events Recorded on Digital Audio
- C. Schuylkill County Ethnic Heritage Events Calendar
- D. Advisory Committee Members
- E. Resumes of Principal Researchers, Michael Nobel Kline & Carrie Nobel Kline,  
Talking Across the Lines, LLC     [www.folktalk.org](http://www.folktalk.org)



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## LIST OF INTERVIEWS AND EVENTS RECORDED ON DIGITAL AUDIO

More than 60 life-story interviews, musical performances, religious services, and public meetings and gatherings were recorded for this project by Michael and Carrie Kline of Talking Across the Lines, LLC between September 2004 and November 2005. All persons interviewed signed releases authorizing the use of the material gathered in publications and other approved purposes. Participants were afforded the opportunity to restrict the use of that material as well and these restrictions are noted on the release forms. The interviews are available as digital audio files on compact disc.

The full collection of audio recordings is on file at the following locations:

Pottsville Free Public Library  
215 West Market Street  
Pottsville, PA 17901  
570-622-8880  
www.pottsvillelibrary.org

Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area  
140 College Drive  
Pottstown, PA 19464  
484-945-0200  
www.schuylkillriver.org

Access to and use of these materials is subject to the restrictions placed by the individual informants.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Theme/Ethnicity</i>
1. Wayne Bowen	9/27/04	PA Dutch/Environment
2. Arthur Harris	9/27/04	African Americans
3. Frank Selgrath, Tom Ward, Raymond Eichman	9/28/04	Mahanoy Area Patch Life/ Preserving History
4. Advisory Board Meeting	9/28/04	
5. Donnie Serfass	9/27/04	Tamaqua/Regional Overview/PA Dutch
6. Mark Major	9/30/04	Regional Overview/Molly Maguires
7. Valerie MacDonald	11/29/04	Scottish/Irish/Organizing Multi-Ethnic Events
8. The Polish Choraliars	11/30/04	Polish Concert (Florence Bulcavage, director)
9. Shenandoah Borough	11/30/04	Meeting
10. Dan Reed	12/2/04	Canal men/Schuylkill Haven History
11. Marian Johnston	12/5/04	Patch Life
12. Interfaith Paths to Peace Public Panel	12/5/04	Schuylkill County Religions
13. John R. Jones	12/5/04	Welsh/ Environment
14. Dr. Peter Yasenck	12/7/04	Eastern European Faith Communities
15. William Marquardt	12/7/04	Coal mining/ Art
16. Linda Yulanavage	12/9/04	Cultural Organizing/Downtown Revitalization
17. Gintaras Lithuanian Youth Group	12/12/04	Lithuanian Concert
18. St. Mary's Orthodox Church, St. Clair	12/12/04	Byzantine Church Service
19. Micah Gursky	12/13/04	Community Revitalization/Russian
20. Lester Hirsh	12/13/04 & 1/4/05	Jewish/Shenandoah Jewish life/poetry
21. Ted Block	12/14/04	Jewish/Tamaqua Jewish life
22. Tamaqua High Rise	12/15/04	multi-ethnic discussion of holidays
23. Anthony Kurdilla and Bill Zee	12/16/04	Italian/Jazz in the region
24. Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mahanoy City	12/24/04	Slovak Catholic Christmas Eve Service
25. Tour of Patch Churches around Shenandoah	12/26/04	
26. St. Mary's Byzantine Slovak/Carpatho-Rusyn Church	12/26/04	Sunday Morning
27. Reverend John Fields	12/30/04	Ukrainian
28. Robert Evans	12/28/04	Welsh/Tamaqua/Immigration and assimilation



<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Theme/Ethnicity</i>
29. Honorable John Domalakes	12/29/04	Lithuanian/Molly Maguires
30. Charlie Snyder	1/3/05	PA Dutch recollections and songs
31. Dr. Steve Couch	1/4/05	Sociological look at regional issues
32. Dorothy Setcavage	1/4/05	Lithuanian/Shenandoah/St. George Church
33. Emil Simodejka	1/6/05	Russian/Eastern European Music
34. Gerry Suzadail	1/10/05	Lithuanian/Irish/Regional Revitalization
35. Iraida Vila Zengotita	1/11/05	Puerto Rican/Spanish
36. John Rodriguez	3/23/05	Mexican traditions and assimilation
37. Mae Wolfe	3/23/05	PA Dutch traditions
38. Gerardo Hernandez	3/25/05	Mexican music
39. Jeffrey and Rose Snowell	3/26/05	African-American issues
40. Laverna Beard	3/30/05	African American issues/Pottsville
41. Alice Spayd	4/4/05	PA Dutch
42. Constantine Depos, Georgia Depos Dewire	4/4/05	Greek traditions
43. Georgine Borchik	4/5/05	Ukrainian traditions
44. Joe Wayne	4/6/05	Irish/Molly Maguires
45. Paul Lohin	4/7/05	Carpatho-Rusyn traditions
46. Heckscherville Group Session	4/7/05	Irish
47. Mae Wolfe	3/23/05 & 4/11/05	PA Dutch
48. Roger Stine, Grange Meeting	4/11/05	Farming/Grange Hall
49. Joe Bellucci	4/13/05	Italian/Shenandoah
50. Jay Smar	4/19/05	Czech/Coal region music (performs on tape)
51. Tommy Symons	4/19/05	Irish
52. Rosy Narula	4/26/05	Indian/ Sikh/ County Mental Health
53. Faye R. Lewis	4/27/05	Welsh/Organizing Coaldale Celebrations
54. Gathering of Muslim Women	4/20/05	Pakistani Muslims
55. Walter Baran	5/3/05	Polish
56. Mrs. Mary Andrulonis & Sr. Mary Louise Andrulonis, SSC	5/10/05	Polish/Lithuanian/Kowalonek's Kielbasy
57. David Argall	5/13/05	Cornish/Community Revitalization
58. Mantura Gallagher	5/19/05	Lebanese/ County Politics/ Public Education
59. Schuylkill County Fair Panel with Larry Guinan Georgine Borchik Ray Moyer	8/2/05	Taste of the Old World Irish Ukrainian PA Dutch
60. Schuylkill County Fair Panel PA Dutch/ Agriculture with Harry Kurtz, Bertram Leiby; Charles Luckenbill, Paul Moyer, Sr. and Ray Moyer	8/2/05	Country Ways and Farming Days



## SCHUYLKILL COUNTY ETHNIC HERITAGE EVENTS CALENDAR

Note: This is a list of events that specify ethnic content in their advertising. This is not a full listing, but a few of the events of 2004-2005. Confirm dates and continuity of events before traveling.

### JANUARY

**Jan. 2** McAdoo Church Tour 1:00-6:00 p.m.

**Jan. 6** Russian Orthodox Christmas Eve Service, St. Michael's Church, St. Clair

**Jan. 6** Russian Orthodox Christmas Eve Service, St. Mary's Church, Coaldale

**Jan. 10** Muslim Holiday of Eid al Adha

This holiday of sacrifice highlights Allah's order to The Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son and the eventual reprieve. Muslims sacrifice, or order the sacrifice of a lamb, goat, camel, or cow and donate the meat to a poor person or community. They also celebrate with those on pilgrimage at Mecca during this time. Prayers are held in the morning, followed by breakfast, and later a homemade ethnic dinner at The Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian St. All holidays strictly follow the lunar calendar and fall back 10 days every year on the solar calendar. All are welcome. Just call (570)622-6860.

**Jan. 31** Muslim New Year - 1st of Muharram

The Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian St. \*Note: All Muslim holidays strictly follow the lunar calendar and fall back 10 days every year on the solar calendar. All are welcome. Just call (570)622-6860.

### FEBRUARY

**Feb. 4** Coal Cracker Dinner

Homemade ethnic food. Halushkie, halupki, mashed potatoes, apple sauce, plus dessert and beverage. Advance tickets only. Cost \$7. Sponsored by St. Canicus Church, Mahanoy City; contact Anne Marie Keck (570)773-0550.

**Feb. 11, 18, 25** Lenten Food Sales noon-5 p.m

Bleenies, halushki, pierogi, Lenten soups and baked goods will be featured; sponsored by St. Stanislaus Church, Minersville; call (570)544-5485.

**Feb. 20** Lithuanian Independence Day

Heritage day celebration during Mass and dinner around noon. St. George Catholic Church, Shenandoah.

### MARCH

**March 4, 11, 18, 25** Lenten Food Sales. Noon-5 p.m.

St. Stanislaus Church, Minersville Bleenies, Halushki, Pierogi, Lenten soups, and baked goods will be featured. Large orders must be called in by 10 A.M. Call (570)544-5485.

**March 9-11** Pierogi Sale

St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Oak and Second Sts., Frackville. Call (570)874-0602 to order.

**March 11** Food Fair. 10 a.m.

Pierogi, haluski, soups and baked goods; Polish Cultural Club, Mt. Carmel.

**March 11** Pierogi and Bake Sale. 11 a.m. to sell out

Bring containers. Take out only. Annunciation Rectory, 218 W. Cherry St., Shenandoah.

**March 11 & 12** St. Canicus Annual Irish Minstrel. 7 p.m.. both nights

St. Canicus Church, Mahanoy City. Sponsored by the St. Canicus Holy Name Society. Food and beverages available. Live band after Saturday show. Contact Jack Burke for more information at (570)773-0550.

**March 12** St. Patrick's Day Parade. 11 a.m.

Pottsville

**March 15-19** St. Patrick's Party

The Basket Shack, Pine Grove. Green "ale" and Scottish music.



- March 17**      **“A Celtic Celebration”. 7:30 p.m.**  
Folk music of Ireland, Scotland and Wales presented by Schuylkill County Community Chorus with an Irish band at the Simon Kramer Institute, New Philadelphia; tickets Adults \$10, Students & Senior Citizens \$7; tickets available from any chorus member, the Schuylkill County Council for the arts or by calling the Chorus office (570)628-3388.
- March 17**      **Saint Patrick’s Day Dinner. 5:00-8:00 p.m.**  
Featuring Irish specialty dishes at Twin Grove Campground, Pine Grove in the Restaurant Lodge. Contact Twin Grove Campground at (717)865-4602.
- March 19**      **St. Patrick’s Day Parade**  
Girardville. Hosted by the Jack Kehoe Division No. 1.
- March 19**      **Beef-n-Brew. Doors open at 8:00 p.m.**  
Father Walter J. Ciszek School, 233 W. Cherry St., Shenandoah.
- March 19**      **Ham & Dandelion Supper. 3:00-7:00 p.m.**  
Black Creek United Methodist Church, Sugarloaf.
- APRIL**
- April**            **Russian Orthodox Easter Eve Service**, St. Mary’s Russian Orthodox Church in Coaldale.
- April**            **Russian Orthodox Easter Eve Service**, St. Michael’s Church, St. Clair.
- MAY**
- May 2 & 3**      **Pierogie Sale. 11 a.m. until sellout**  
Homemade pierogie sale (potato/cheese). Cost is \$4 per dozen. Call (570)462-0809 to place an order.
- May 6**            **Annual Gymanea Ganu & Te Bach . 3:00 p.m.**  
Traditional Welsh hymn sing with tea and Welsh cookies following light supper; featuring the Minersville Community Choir; sponsored by the First Congregational Church, 321 Sunbury St., Minersville.
- May 7**            **Chicken Pot-Pie Supper 11:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. eat in or take out**  
Sponsored by St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, 213 Coal St., Port Carbon; call (570)622-1590.
- May 16**          **Wedding Soup and Porketta Sandwich Sale. 11 a.m.-1 p.m.**  
Italian Wedding Soup and porketta sandwiches, sponsored by Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Men’s Society; contact (570)462-1989.
- May 16**          **Square Dance Club. 2-4:30 p.m.**  
With Roy Leiber; meets at First U.C.C.- Schuylkill Haven, \$5 donation; contact (570)366-1873 or (610)589-2928.
- May 23**          **Polka Family. 3-7 p.m.**  
Part of Coal Crackers Polka Club; Lakeside Ballroom, Barnesville; contact Joe Grabowski (570) 622-3321.
- May 26**          **Yuengling Mansion Garden Party. 5:00-7:00 p.m.**  
Ethnic food and entertainment; meet professional sports figures and members of the Yuengling family; sponsored by American’s Oldest Brewery; contact Schuylkill County Chamber of Commerce at (570)622-1942.
- JUNE**
- June 10-12**      **Annual Block Party. 5 p.m.-12 a.m.**  
Ethnic foods, rides, entertainment; sponsored by Goodwill Fire Company, Port Carbon; contact Susan Smith (570)640-6067.
- June 13**          **Polka Fest. Noon**  
Featuring Stanky & the Coal Miners, refreshments and ethnic food; free admission; St. Michael’s Grove- Brandonville; call (570)462-0809.



- June 17**      **Molly Maguire Historical Symposium**  
Historical presentations by members of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County; call (570)622-7700.
- June 19**      **Tamaqua Summerfest, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**  
Craft fair, ethnic foods, free entertainment, music, working blacksmith shop, horse-drawn carriage rides, antique and classic car show. (570)668-6899.
- June 23-25**    **Fireman's Carnival, Daily from 4 p.m.**  
The event boasts some of the area's best ethnic foods, award winning bean soup and world famous Schuylkill County refreshments. Annually this hose company hosts one of the largest fireman's carnivals in the area featuring nightly entertainment, a huge Saturday night fireworks display, and ground displays. On Thursday night families pay one price and ride all night. Sponsored by Independent Hose Company #1, Diener's Hill; for more info. (570)527-0837.
- June 24-25**    **Summer Festival, Fri. 3 p.m.-10 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m.-10 p.m.**  
Delicious foods of coal region tradition, games & music; St. Mauritius Church Grounds, Ashland; sponsored by the Catholic Churches of Ashland.
- June 24-26**    **Summer Bazaar, 4-10 p.m.**  
(bleenies and pierogies from 11 a.m. on Friday only.) Enjoy homemade ethnic food, baked goods, adult games of chance, children's games and nightly entertainment. Location is 218 W. Cherry St., Shenandoah. Sponsored by the Annunciation Church.
- JULY**
- July 2-3**      **St. Nick's Annual Picnic, Sat. 3-11 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-11 p.m.**  
Ethnic food, games, rides and entertainment. St. Nick's Picnic Grove, Primrose (Rt. 901) (570)544-9653.
- July 8-10**     **Annual Slavic Festival**  
Homemade ethnic foods and live entertainment, games and prizes; sponsored by St. Mary's Byzantine Church, Mahanoy City, (570)429-0520.
- July 15-17**    **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Italian Festival**  
Shenandoah; call (570)462-1989.
- July 16**      **St. Clair Community Day, 9 a.m.**  
Craft stands, ethnic foods, entertainment followed by the Saint Clair Car Cruise (5 p.m.) and fireworks (9 p.m.); call Dorothea (570)628-4837.
- July 17**      **St. Vincent's Church Mid-Summer Picnic, noon-10 p.m.**  
Featuring entertainment by "Stanky and the Coal Miners," homemade baked goods and ethnic foods, bingo, games, rides, money drawing and basket of cheer. South Cass Fire Company Picnic Grove, 14 Water Lane, 901 West – Primrose (outside of Minersville); contact Rev. Eric, J. Gruber (570)544-4741.
- July 17**      **Square Dance Club, 2-4:30 p.m.**  
With Walt Stoner; meets at First U.C.C.- Schuylkill Haven, \$5 donation; contact (570) 366-1873 or (610)589-2928.
- July 22-24**    **Annual Block Party, 6 p.m.-midnight**  
Truck parade, ethnic foods, games, famous Schuylkill County refreshments and entertainment; sponsored by the Mount Carbon Fire Company; call (570)628-5415.
- July 29, 30, 31** **Clover's Annual Irish Festival**  
Music, dance, genealogy, food, history, vendors, Irish Mass, games, prizes Heckscherville; call (570)544-2706 or email ccc1@losch.net.
- July 31**      **Ukrainian Seminary Day, Fri. 5-10 p.m., Sat. 2-10 p.m., Sun. 1-7:30 p.m.**  
Food, games, entertainment and refreshments. St. Nicholas Picnic Grove, Primrose (near Minersville off Rt 901). Call (570)429-1711.



- July 31**      **St. Ambrose Church Annual Summer Picnic, Noon-9 p.m.**  
Halupki, bleepies, pierogies, funnel cake, baked goods, homemade soups and more; hot platters served in Deer Lake Inn; huge Pot Luck Stand, kid's corner, games, raffles, live entertainment, plenty of seating at Deer Lake Picnic Grove, Deer Lake. Call Marge Unavage (570)385-1031.
- AUGUST**
- August 7**      **Polish Day Festival**  
Ethnic and American food, entertainment and games. South Cass Fire Company Grounds, Primrose. Call (570)628-4647.
- August 6-7**      **Lithuanian Days**  
Lithuanian food, music, dance, crafts and history displays, Frackville Mall.
- August 13-14**      **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Indian Pow Wow, 10 a.m. -Dusk Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sun.**  
Crafts, food, native dancing and educational experiences; held at Mt. Sprigs Camping resort; sponsored by Bear Creations; call (610)488-6859.
- August 20**      **Pioneer Day, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.**  
Breaker Boys and ethnic food favorites among many other activities; Pioneer Tunnel Coal Mine & Steam Train in Ashland; to arrange a group tour, call (570)875-3850 or (570)875-3301.
- August 20**      **Peach Festival, 4-7 p.m.**  
Join us for a great meal of ham, turkey and filling served family style, also a peach sundae for dessert. Baked goods will be on sale. First UCC, Schuylkill Haven (directly in front of Penn State Schuylkill campus) ; admission \$8 for adults and \$4 for children; contact Jen (570)385-2049.
- August 27**      **Shenandoah Heritage Day, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**  
The day begins with the "Parade of Nations" on Main St. in Shenandoah. Girard Park is the setting for crafters, games, entertainment and a large variety of ethnic foods. Bingo games begin at noon. Call Edie Sinkiewicz (570)462-0339.
- SEPTEMBER**
- Sept. 4**      **End of Summer Picnic, Noon-10 p.m.**  
Picnic with ethnic foods, live music and entertainment. Crafts, games of skill & chance for all ages. South Cass Twp. Fire Co. Picnic Grounds, Rt. 901, Primrose. Sponsored by St. Patrick Church in Pottsville. Everyone is welcome.
- Sept. 10**      **Bleepie Sale, 11 a.m.-sell out**  
Selling bleepies, homemade soup and coney dogs; St. Canicus Parish Garage, Mahanoy City; call Anne Marie Kleck, (570)773-0550.
- Sept. 17-19**      **Germanfest**  
Jolly Joe's Polka Band, hayrides, funnel cakes, doggie roast; Pine Grove; Twin Grove Park Campground; call (717)865-4602.
- Sept. 24**      **Schuylkill Haven Borough Day**  
All day fun! Heidelberg Polka Band, crafts, free entertainment, children's activities, antique & classic auto show, train excursions. For more information call (570)385-3134 or visit [www.shboroughday.com](http://www.shboroughday.com)
- Sept. 25**      **Unity Day, 1pm to 7pm**  
Student Center of Penn State University, Schuylkill Campus, Schuylkill Haven.  
A multicultural and ethnic festival highlighting the rich heritage of the county through presentations, booths, drama, music, and dance. The festival will conclude with an Interfaith Service which will highlight the musical and cultural aspects of the religious traditions of the county. Contact Jean Maffeo (@ St. Mark's UCC) (570) 385-0242 for more information.
- OCTOBER**
- Oct.**      **Muslim Holiday, Month of Ramadan, Every Saturday**  
This holiday commences with the sighting of the Hilal or New Moon, which was October 5 in 2005. (Note: All Muslim holidays follow the lunar calendar and fall back 10 days every year on the solar calendar.) Meal to break fast offered every Saturday evening at the Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian St. All are welcome. Just call (570)622-6860.



**Oct. 9 Tamaqua Heritage Festival.** 10:00 to 5:00  
Historical displays, demonstrations and reenactments, music, large craft fair, ethnic foods, free entertainment, fall foliage train excursions, historic walking tours. (570)668-6899.

#### NOVEMBER

**Nov. 4 Muslim Holiday of Eid al- Fitr**  
This is a big celebration for the end of the Ramadan fasting. A short prayer service in the morning is followed by breakfast and a generous evening meal at The Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian St. All are welcome. Just call (570)622-6860.

**Nov. 27 Christmas Bazaar and Craft Show, 9:00-3:00**  
Ethnic foods, sweets, raffle, St. Michael's Hall, Shenandoah; call (570)462-0809.

**Nov. 28 Boilo Contest**  
Coal Street Cafe, Shenandoah.

#### DECEMBER

**Dec. 3 Christmas food and bake sales including Pierogi sale, 9:00-12:00**  
In St. Clair at St. Casimir's Lithuanian Church.

**Dec. 10 Hanukkah dinner and service**  
Pottsville Synagogue.

**Dec. 11 Annual Christmas Tour**  
Featuring German heritage, literature, food and music, as well as church and home tours in Mahanoy City; call Kathy Wufus at (570)773-1048.

**Dec. 12 Kucios, Lithuanian Holy Supper and Installation of Knights of Lithuania**  
Sponsored by Knights of Lithuania, held at St. Casimir's Church, St. Clair.

**Dec. 19 St. Nicholas Day Celebration**  
8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy in SS Peter & Paul Church, 10:00 a.m. Deluxe Breakfast Buffet, Hillcrest Hall; co-sponsored by S.S. Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Minersville & St. Mary Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church, St. Clair. Event held in Minersville.

**Dec. 26 Shenandoah Church Tour, 1:00-4:00 p.m.**  
Sponsored by the greater Shenandoah Area Historical Society; call Edie Sinkiewicz.

**Dec. 29 St. Clair Church Tour, 4:00-7:00 p.m.**

#### THROUGHOUT DECEMBER

Look for performances in nursing homes and other places by Byzantine Male Choir, Polish Choraliers and other ethnic ensembles.

#### YEAR-ROUND

**Coal Cracker Polka Association weekly polka and ballroom dance, Sundays 3:00-7:00 p.m.**  
With occasional date changes and additional times and locations; dances generally held at Lakeside Ballroom, Barnesville.

**Salat al Jummah, Friday Prayers. Every week at 1:30 p.m**  
Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian St.; all are welcome; call (570)622-6860.

**Monthly dinner Second Friday of every month**  
Islamic Center of Schuylkill County on Norwegian St.; All are welcome. Just call to let cooks know at (570)622-6860.



# Advisory Committee Members

**Project Manager:**

Cory Kegerise  
Program Manager  
Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area  
140 College Drive  
Pottstown, PA 19464  
(484) 945-0200  
ckegerise@schuylkillriver.org; www.schuylkillriver.org

**Consultants:**

Michael and Carrie Nobel Kline  
Talking Across the Lines: Worldwide Conversations, LLC  
114 Boundary Avenue  
Elkins, WV 26241

klines@folktalk.org; www.folktalk.org

**Committee Members:**

Jennifer Bowen-Frantz, Orwigsburg Historical Society  
Catherine Clifford, Clover Fire Company, Heckscherville  
Dale Freudenberger, Tamaqua Historical Society  
Peg Grigalonis, Mahanoy Area Historical Society  
Micah Gursky, Office of Representative David Argall  
Arthur Harris, PhD, Penn State, Hazelton, Instructor, African American Studies  
Kay Jones, Schuylkill Haven  
Valerie Macdonald, Greater Shenandoah Area Historical Society  
Mark Major, Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau  
Ray Moyer, Unity Coalition  
Dan Reed, Schuylkill Haven Historical Society  
Rubina Tareen, Islamic Society of Schuylkill County  
Becki White, Reference Librarian, Pottsville Free Public Library  
Pete Yasencack, Historical Society of Schuylkill County  
Linda Yulanavage, Downtown Tamaqua  
Kurt Zwikl, Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area



## Michael Nobel Kline, Ph.D.

### Talking Across the Lines: Worldwide Conversations

114 Boundary Avenue  
Elkins, WV 26241  
(304) 636-5554 • [www.folktalk.org](http://www.folktalk.org) • [kline@folktalk.org](mailto:kline@folktalk.org)

#### EDUCATION

Ph.D., Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1991  
University Professors Program: Folklore

M.A., State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York, 1984  
American Studies

B.A., The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 1964  
Anthropology Major

#### AWARDS

**Media Arts Fellowship Award**, West Virginia Commission on the Arts & Humanities, Charleston, West Virginia, February, 1999

**Non-Print Award**, Oral History Association, November, 2005, for audio documentary, "Born and Raised in Tobacco Fields: A Changing American Landscape," exploring impact of controversial government buyout on 350 years of southern Maryland tobacco farming

#### EMPLOYMENT

**Co-director, Talking Across the Lines: Worldwide Conversations, LLC**, a multi-media production firm specializing in audio histories based on recorded testimonials. Research for future productions is ongoing. Our production studio features Micro Sound digital editing and production capabilities. Twelve documentary audio CDs ready for broadcast are listed at [www.folktalk.org](http://www.folktalk.org)

**Ethnic Heritage Study Consultant**, (September, 2004–November, 2005) With Schuylkill River State and National Heritage Area, Pottstown, Pennsylvania, to produce a study of ethnic heritage resources of Schuylkill County with recommendations for strengthening economy of cultural tourism. Involved five months of on-site research, including more than sixty recorded interviews and events, which cast light on the county's multi-cultural complexities and potentialities for increased offerings to tourists. Final report read publicly in three Schuylkill County towns in early November, 2005

**Audio Driving Tour CD Contractor**: (September, 2004–Present) With the Pendleton County Chamber of Commerce, Franklin, West Virginia, to produce a four-part series of eighty minute CD driving tours, one for each of three river valleys and one for the county seat. Based on fifty field-recorded testimonials by county elders. Completion date: April, 2006

**Contract Public Folklorist**: (February–April, 2003) With Planning Commission of Calvert County, Maryland, to conduct a dozen recorded interviews which would cast light on the changing culture of agriculture in the wake of a State Tobacco Buyout in 2000. From these recordings produced "Born and Raised in Tobacco Fields: Portrait of a Changing American Landscape" (Oral History Association's selection for *Non Print Award*, 2005), a one-hour audio documentary CD looking at the complex impact of a controversial government program on 350 years of tobacco farming.

**Folklorist, College Instructor & Audio Producer**: (Nov. 1, 2001 to Present) Under contract with St. Mary's College of Maryland and Historic St. Mary's City Commission to conduct a folklife survey of the five county region of Southern Maryland. Produce fifty field recorded interviews in the first year. Position funded by the Division of Folk Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, with oversight from Maryland Traditions, a folklife initiative of the Maryland State Arts Council and Maryland Historical Trust. Conducted folklife documentation field school during summer of 2002 at St. Mary's College. Produced audio walking tour tape for visitors to Historic St. Mary's City to provide audio interpretation for each of forty-two sights around the historic park. Taught course in documentary arts at St. Mary's College (Spring, 2003). Produced anthology of documentary CDs featuring sacred music and preaching styles recorded in rural Southern Maryland African-American churches



**Contract Recording Engineer:** (June, 2002 to October, 2003) For the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, made digital audio recordings of Native American groups singing Christian hymns in their own languages. Eastern Cherokee of North Carolina, Oneida of Wisconsin, Mohawks of Ontario and Inuits of Alaska provided performances for commemorative CD, *Beautiful Beyond*, released at the opening of the Museum in 2004

**Audio History Contractor:** (Oct., 1998 to Dec. 2001) With Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation of Beverly, West Virginia, researched, wrote and produced four 72 minute CDs on the history of the Staunton-to-Parkersburg Turnpike, based on sixty-four recorded interviews with historians, archaeologists, surveyors, local historical society members, elderly residents. Replete with authentic regional music and ambient sound

**Institutional History Contractor:** (March, 1996–99) Under contract with the Huntington District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers produced *In Their Own Words*, a 350 page narrative history of District activities and built environment since the 1960s, based on 60 recorded interviews with staff, contractors and citizens. Also produced "Working a Square Watch," a ninety-minute audio documentary of commercial navigation on the Ohio River

**Director, Wheeling Spoken History Project:** (April, 1994 through November, 1995). Under contract with Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation and National Park Service conducted a twelve month Ethnographic Survey to collect spoken history of the City of Wheeling emphasizing cultural and industrial heritage through recorded interviews with 175 City residents. Public presentations, volunteer training, coordinating with civic groups, local scholars, historical societies and colleges. Extensive writing and speaking about project. From recorded interviews produced interpretive audio products for city exhibits

**Independent Radio Producer:** (Feb., 1999) "Riding Freedom's Train" and "I Believe in Angels Singing," documenting the Underground Railroad in the Upper Ohio Valley on WVPB, Charleston WV; (1997) "Working a Square Watch," documenting navigation on the Ohio River on WMMT, Whitesburg KY; (May, 1995) "Talking Across the Lines," a 22 part series of 15 minute radio programs on WWVA-AM, Wheeling WV; (Sept. 1994) "Reaching Home" and "Sing Me Back Home," two one-hour radio documentaries produced from field recordings of the Western Massachusetts Folklife Project, on WFCR-FM, Amherst, Massachusetts, Public Radio for Western New England; (1987) "Hey, You Want To Talk About It?" documenting a killing flood in Tucker County, WV; (1985) Program consultant for "Voices From the Mountains," a series of 13 one-hour programs of music from the Augusta Festival, distributed to over 60 stations nationally by American Public Radio; (1985) "We're Here to Take You Out," a 58" program documenting a community in final stages of destruction by flood control project (see *Oral History Review* (Fall, 1987) Vol.15, No.2); "The Home Place," (1980) a thirteen-part radio series documenting West Virginia folklife under joint grant from The Humanities Foundation of West Virginia on WVPB, Charleston

**Staff Folklorist:** Pioneer Valley Folklore Society, Greenfield, MA. (Dec. 1990 to Feb. 1994) The Western Massachusetts Folklife Project was supported by the Ruth Mott Fund, the Mass Foundation on the Humanities and the Mass Cultural Council. Research and documentation of local folkways, festivals, public programs and presentations, school outreach programs, teacher training, community workshops

**Resident Folklorist:** Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC (Feb. 1988 to Nov. 1990). Mountain Heritage Festival folklife component. Taught folklore courses at WCU documenting local Cherokee traditional song and dance

**Coordinator of Folklife and Traditional Music Programs:** (October 1981–December, 1988) Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, West Virginia. Classes, concerts, festivals involving students in arts, dance, crafts, music and folklore of many cultures. Folklife research and documentation throughout West Virginia

**Founder, Producer, Augusta Heritage Records:** Augusta Heritage Center, Elkins, WV (1983–88). Produced first four of a series of recordings of outstanding folk musicians, two with support from Division of Folk Arts at NEA. "Fiddlin' John Johnson" (1983) and "Elk River Blues" (1986) were cited in *American Folklife Center's American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings; A Select List*, published annually by the Library of Congress

**Public Television Productions:** (1984) "Even The Heavens Weep," composed music for this 58" documentary of West Virginia mine wars by WVPB-TV, Huntington, WV; (1983) "Play It for the Trees," documenting West Virginia folk music, BBC TV, Cardiff, Wales; (1984) "Cold Frosty Morning," documenting WV folklife, WOUB-TV, Athens, OH; (1984) Program consultant to BBC-TV, Manchester, England on Mike Harding's travel series; (1985) "They Shall Take Up Serpents" by BBC-TV, Cardiff, Wales, featured in Everyman Series and shown at film festivals throughout Europe



**Artist in Residence:** Davis & Elkins College and Randolph County Creative Arts Council (1978–80), Elkins, WV. Taught college courses in folklife research and documentation

**Assistant Editor, *Goldenseal Magazine*:** Department of Culture & History, State Capitol, Charleston, WV (1978). Three years of field research for the state-wide Vandalia Gathering, a major festival of traditional, music, and dance on the Capitol grounds

**Ford Fellow:** Award from the Leadership Development Program of the Ford Foundation, New York, NY (1971–73). Studied singing for social change in the Appalachian Region

**Music Director, Appalachian Leadership Program, Highlander Research & Education Center:** Riverside Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee (1968–70) Carried out leadership development programs in impoverished Appalachian communities in three states

**Field Staff, Appalachian Volunteers:** Council of the Southern Mountains, Berea, KY (1965–67). Community organizing work in four southeastern Kentucky counties



**Carrie Nobel Kline, M.A.**

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**EDUCATION:**

M.A. in American Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1996

B.A. with Individualized Concentration in "The Politics and Cultures of the United States," University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1989

**AWARDS AND HONORS RECEIVED:**

**Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship/Scholar-in-Residence**

Marshall University Center for Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia, Spring, 2001

**Oral History Association 2005 Non-Print Award** for Production of Audio Documentary CD, "Born and Raised in Tobacco Fields: Portrait of a Changing American Landscape"

**Media Arts Fellowship Award**, West Virginia Arts and Humanities Commission, February, 1999

Graduated **Summa Cum Laude**, May, 1989

Elected to **Phi Beta Kappa Society**, February, 1988

**PUBLICATIONS AND WRITING CONTRACTS:**

May 26, 2005: "Gospel Singer Mackall Dies but Leaves a Legacy of Joy." *The Washington Post*, Southern Maryland Section, p. 3.

March, 2001: Wrote and produced staged reading, *Revelations*, a celebration of resiliency in Appalachian gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people created from verbatim recorded quotations; performances are ongoing.

Spring 1998: "Ohio River Voices: Echoes of the Army Corps." *Goldenseal Magazine: West Virginia Traditional Life*, Vol. 24, Number 1, pp. 28-35.

August 1994-September, 1995: "Wheeling's Spoken History," a 32-part bi-weekly series of articles published in the *Wheeling News-Register*, Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation.

Summer 1996: "Giving It Back: Creating Conversations." *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 23, Number 1, pp. 19-39.

March 1996-March 1999 Institutional History Researcher and Writer for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Supervisor: Allan Elberfeld, P.O. Box 190, Tupper Plains, OH 45783 (740) 667-6465

Produced an institutional history of the Huntington District based on 60 interviews recorded by my company—Final products included a 90-minute audio production on the history of navigation on the Ohio River and a 350-page narrative history of District activities since the 1960s.

**SCRIPTED AND PRODUCED AUDIO PROGRAMS AND CDs:**

Unity Productions (Independent Label) 1996-2005:

- 1) "Riding Freedom's Train: The Underground Railroad in the Upper Ohio Valley," hour-long audio documentary aired on West Virginia Public Radio and marketed independently
- 2) "I Believe in Angels Singing: Songs from the Underground Railroad Era," hour-long audio documentary aired on West Virginia Public Radio and marketed independently
- 3) Voices From the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike, a 4-part audio series exploring life in central West Virginia from American Indian settlements through the Great Depression, available on CD and cassette, based on 65 recorded interviews interwoven with West Virginia music
- 4) "Twelve Gates to the City: An Anthology of Rural Singing and Preaching Styles in African-American Churches of Southern Maryland"



- 5) "A Bright Side Somewhere: Old Time Church Piano Playing and Singing by Brother Elmer Mackall"
- 6) "Born And Raised in Tobacco Fields: Portrait of a Changing American Landscape"
- 7) "All Smiles Tonight" An Anthology of Hampshire County, West Virginia Heritage Music
- 8) "Eyes of a Painter," the music of Michael and Carrie Kline

**Produced for Pendleton County, WV Chamber of Commerce 2004-2006:**

Four, fast-paced audio driving tours celebrating the oral history, music, and landscape of Pendleton County

**Produced for the Huntington District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Summer, 1997:**

- 1) "Working A Square Watch: A History of Navigation in the Huntington District," a 90-minute audio documentary

**Produced for the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation, Fall, 1994-Spring, 1995:**

- 1) "Gathered At The Ohio River," 65-minute interpretive museum tape
- 2) "Looking Down at Downtown Wheeling," 45-minute interpretive museum tape
- 3) "Big Bill Lias: Wheeling's Gangster Era," 52-minute interpretive museum tape
- 4) "Centre Market: A Spoken History," 45-minute interpretive museum tape
- 5) "Talking Across The Lines," a series of 22 15-minute programs aired on WWVA, Wheeling, WV
- 6) "Stories from the Old World and New," 30-minute interpretive museum tape

**EMPLOYMENT IN CULTURAL, FOLKLORIC, AND ETHNOGRAPHIC PROGRAMMING:**

1994-Present: **Co-director of "Talking Across the Lines: Worldwide Conversations, LLC"** a multi-media folklore production firm specializing in written, audio and theatrical presentations of individuals, families, organizations and communities based on recorded testimonials. Research for future productions is ongoing.

September 2004–Present: **Folklife Contractor, Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area**

Supervisor: Cory Kegerise, 140 College Drive, Pottstown, PA 19464 (484) 945-0200

Responsible for conducting Countywide Ethnic Heritage Study of Schuylkill County, PA to document local traditions and assess opportunities and recommend a process for creating cultural heritage tourism. Under contract with Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area.

September 2001–2005: **Co-director and College Instructor, Southern Maryland Folklife Documentation**

**Project**, a regional folklife endeavor supported by St. Mary's College of Maryland, Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland State Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Division

Supervisor: Dr. Martin Sullivan, P.O. Box 39, St. Mary's City, MD 20686 (240) 895-4960

Conducted a full spectrum folklore collection project exploring and documenting Southern Maryland life in a three-county area among diverse cultural practitioners. I supervised and taught high school and college students and out of school adults in the methodology of folklife documentation and presentation, presenting work publicly through music CDs, print media and public programs. The project focuses primarily on African-American sacred music.

January–May 2001: **Rockefeller Fellow, Researching Appalachian Resiliency in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered People.** Marshall University Center for Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia

Supervisor: Dr. Lynda Ann Ewen, Sociology Department, Marshall University, Huntington, WV 25755 (304) 696-2797.

Supervised graduate assistants, presented in college classes and conducted life story interviews with a dozen West Virginian sexual minorities, producing *Revelations*, a staged reading comprised of interwoven quotations and storylines from the interviews celebrating human strength, variety and resiliency. This theatrical production with 13 actors has been performed seven times to date.



2001–Present: **Academic Residencies on Gender and Ethnography and Director of Performances of Revelations**, various locations

October, 1998–October, 2001: **Folklorist and Audio Producer Featuring Appalachian Culture**

Supervisor: Phyllis Baxter, P.O. Box 227, Beverly, WV 26253 (304) 637-7424

Under contract with the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation of Beverly, West Virginia researched and wrote 4 hour audio CD set about life along the Staunton-to-Parkersburg Turnpike, based on sixty-five recorded interviews with historians, archaeologists, surveyors, and elderly residents who recall stories their fore parents told about Civil War campaigns along the old roads and railroads of western Virginia

April, 1994–November, 1995: **Co-Director of The Spoken History Project, a City-Wide Ethnographic Survey**

Supervisor: Don Briggs, U.S. Park Service, P.O. Box B, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425 (304) 535-4016

The National Park Service and the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation had oversight of this twelve month contract to conduct an ethnographic study of the City of Wheeling emphasizing cultural and industrial heritage through recording detailed interviews with 160 city residents and creating interpretative museum audio products. Included public presentations, volunteer training, coordinating with civic groups, local scholars, historical societies and colleges, as well as extensive writing and speaking

April, 1992–April, 1994: **Community Folklorist**, Pioneer Valley Folklore Society, Montague, MA.

Involved with inter-generational, multicultural public folklore programs in four Western Massachusetts counties including work in survey of folklife resources, journalism, radio production, public presentation, folklife study of Berkshire County Jews, and development and implementation of middle school folklore curriculum for African-American and Latino youth.

#### **ORGANIZING AND PLANNING:**

December, 1989–October, 1992: **Coordinator of Educational Events**, Institute for Community Economics, Springfield, MA. In charge of planning and running week-long national conferences and day-long regional trainings in developing permanently affordable housing.

#### **MUSIC:**

September, 1992–Present **Folk singer**, performing tight, clear country harmony duets of traditional Appalachian and contemporary music with guitar, fiddle, bass and mandolin accompaniment in a variety of venues

#### **LANGUAGE SKILLS:**

\* Facility in speaking and understanding Spanish

\* Facility in Mac and PC computer software

#### **AFFILIATIONS:**

January 2001–Present: Board Member, Middle-Atlantic Folklife Association (MAFA)

January, 1998–Present: Founding Member, Cultural Awareness & Enrichment Group, Elkins, WV

October, 1994: Selection Panel for West Virginia State Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program

February, 1993–February, 1994: Advisory Board, El Arco Iris Youth & Teen Arts Center, Holyoke, MA



**SCHUYLKILL RIVER**  
NATIONAL & STATE HERITAGE AREA

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