

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress



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

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ONLINE INFORMATION RESOURCES

The American Folklife Center's Web site provides full texts of many publications, information about AFC projects, multimedia presentations of selected collections, links to Web resources on ethnography, and announcements of upcoming events. The address for the home page is <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>. An index of the site contents is available at <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/afcindex.html>

The Web site for The Veterans History Project provides an overview of the project, an online "kit" for participants recording oral histories of veterans, and a brief presentation of some examples of video- and audio-recordings of veterans' stories. The address is <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets>

The *Folklife Information Service* is now a cooperative announcement program of the American Folklore Society and the American Folklife Center. It is available only on the American Folklore Society's server: www.afsnet.org. The service provides timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities, and news items of national interest.

EDITOR'S NOTES

New Staff

We are happy to report that Rosemary Graham, Todd Harvey, Judy Ng, and Marcia Segal have accepted full-time positions as processing technicians at the American Folklife Center. Rosemary Graham is completing a master's degree in public history from Colorado State University. Todd Harvey holds a Ph.D. in musical arts from Ohio State University, and has been working at the Center on a temporary appointment processing
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Cover: Chum Chan Chavvy, of the Khmer Traditional Arts Ensemble, portrays the Golden Deer at the 49th National Folk Festival, Lowell, Massachusetts, July 24-26, 1987. Photo by Rick Reinhart, courtesy of the National Council for the Traditional Arts

NFFA to NCTA: The Organization Broadens Its Mission



Los Pleneros de la 21 at the 49th National Folk Festival, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1987. Photo by James Higgins

By Andrew Wallace

The first part of this article, "The National Folk Festival: The Sarah Gertrude Knott Years," appeared in the winter 2002 issue of Folklife Center News.

By the late 1960s the National Folk Festival Association (NFFA) had reached a crossroads. The National Folk Festival had been moving to a new location each year, to Florence and Covington, Kentucky; St. Petersburg, Florida; Denver, Colorado; Syracuse, New York; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Knoxville, Tennessee; and prospects for finding a perma-

nent home were slim. Program director Sarah Gertrude Knott (1895–1984) and the association's board of directors hoped to establish Eastern and Western sites for the festival, in alternating years, but no serious candidates presented themselves. The organization was in a precarious position financially, and there was no consensus between the board and Knott as to what direction the NFFA should take programmatically.

Sarah Gertrude Knott's health was fragile, as she approached seventy-five, and she was unable to pursue her ideas as energetically as she once had. Several business managers had

failed to put the organization on a sound footing, in large part because there was no money to pay for a qualified executive.

Knott felt that the festival should continue as it always had, relying on unpaid performers, and using the revue format (a single stage, with a series of short acts) that the festival had followed from its earliest years. Others felt that, in order to present the best traditional artists, groups and individuals should be paid, and the format include some of the features that festivals such as the Newport Folk Festival and the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife had developed. These two

events revolutionized folk art presentation. Newport, beginning in 1963, popularized the multistage format, mixed popular and highly traditional artists, and relied heavily on fieldwork and workshop presentations. Ralph Rinzler brought many of these concepts with him when he came to Washington to work on the Smithsonian festival, first held in 1967.

At this critical moment, three Kentuckians, old friends of Knott, came to the rescue of the NFFA. John Whisman, states' representative of the newly formed Appalachian Regional Commission, became chairman of the president's committee of the board. To stabilize the organization, Whisman restructured the board, laid out a business plan, and applied for a grant from the new National Endowment for the Arts.

In 1970 T. Sutton Jett, an official with the Department of Interior, engineered a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, whereby the NFFA would provide advice and programming to the National Park system in exchange for an annual stipend. As part of that agreement, the 33rd National Folk Festival would be held at Wolf Trap Farm Park, a recently completed facility located in Vienna, Virginia, and the first national park devoted to the performing arts. The board hoped that Wolf Trap would provide a permanent home for the festival.

Harlowe Dean, another board member who worked for the National Park Service, recommended that the NFFA hire Leo Bernache, with whom he had worked at Columbia Artists' Management, one of the country's largest artists' management agencies. Bernache had considerable experience as an

arts administrator, although none of it was in the folk or traditional arts.

At the same time, several new people became involved in the NFFA as program advisors, bringing new ideas and a fresh perspective to both the festival



Maybelle Carter at the 35th National Folk Festival, Wolf Trap Farm Park, Vienna, Virginia, 1973. The festival was the occasion for a reunion of the Carters and the Addingtons, the first families of country music. Photo by Julie Snow. Courtesy of Andrew Wallace

and the organization. Mike Seeger was a noted musician and expert on Southern traditions. Richard Spottswood, a librarian by trade, was a record collector and radio host with an encyclopedic knowledge of early ethnic and vernacular music. (He later produced a fifteen-volume set of recordings for the Library of Congress, entitled *Folk Music in America*, to celebrate the U.S. Bicentennial.) Gene Rosenthal owned the Adelphi record label, which featured legendary blues artists from Memphis and Saint Louis. Charles Perdue, who had just completed a doctorate in folklore at the University of Penn-

sylvania, had been active in presenting traditional music through the Folklore Society of Greater Washington, which he helped found in 1964. Perdue had taken a faculty position at the University of Virginia, and he was to become president of the NFFA during the following critical years of transition.

In the spring of 1971, as plans were moving forward for the festival at Wolf Trap, Sarah Gertrude Knott became seriously ill. She went into the hospital in Princeton, Kentucky, and subsequently resigned as program director on the advice of her doctor. At this same time I was working at the National Park Service programming folk and traditional music for a project called Humanisphere that was to take place on the National Mall, next to the Reflecting Pool, in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Less than a month before it was to open, the Nixon White House abruptly cancelled the project, and I was detailed to the National Folk Festival Association, under the cooperative agreement, to pull the Wolf Trap festival together. The program advisors had full-time jobs, and Bernache had little or no experience in

producing live events. That job fell to me, and for the next five years I served as festival director and program director for the organization, on detail from the Park Service.

In several respects, the 33rd National Folk Festival, held August 26-29, 1971, was unlike any that had gone before it. Performers received a small honorarium and all their expenses were paid. The festival was divided into evening concerts, held in the Filene Center, a 3,500-seat indoor-outdoor amphitheater, and daytime concerts and workshops, held on multiple stages throughout the

park grounds. The National Folk Festival was the first event to use the park grounds for performances, and it set a precedent for other events at Wolf Trap. Most significantly, the festival featured artists who would never have appeared at the earlier festivals. Payment opened new possibilities for engaging performers, and the program committee (Spottswood, Rosenthal, Seeger, Perdue, and myself) called for a new approach to programming.

To cite one example, African-American music had usually been represented at the festival by gospel choirs, often from educational institutions such as Fisk University. The blues, urban and rural, and other secular musical forms, had been largely passed over. In 1971, one whole evening concert was devoted to these genres, with performances by the Beale Street Jug Band, Hacksaw Harney, Mose Vinson, Rev. Robert Wilkins, John Jackson, and the young interpreter Taj Mahal. These now legendary musicians were brought to the festival by programmers with a deep knowledge of and interest in commercial recordings of black artists, from the 1920s to the present.

Commercial recordings, and the people who produced them, were to become a fertile source in identifying artists for the festival, a trend that continues to this day. The releases of specialty labels devoted to country, bluegrass, polka, Native American, French Canadian, Cajun, as well as companies producing a broad spectrum of traditional music, such as Rounder, Arhoolie, and Smithsonian Folkways, have been mined to provide an unending stream of great musicians from throughout the country.

There was, of course, some continuity with past festivals. A number of the performers at the 1971 festival, particularly dance groups, had appeared at earlier Nationals, and would continue to do so for the next two or three years. A scholarly symposium, organized by folklorist Ben-



Poster used to advertise the 38th National folk festival at Wolf Trap Farm Park, Vienna, Virginia, 1976. Courtesy of NCTA

jamin A. Botkin, continued to be held in conjunction with the festival through 1973. Botkin continued to be an active board member right up until his death in 1975. The transformation of the festival, and the organization, was a gradual process that took place during the 1970s, as old board and committee members left, new ones arrived, and those of us working on program development explored new approaches to presentation and new partnerships.

Regional festivals were initiated in Seattle, Washington; El Paso, Texas; San Francisco, California; and Lexington, Kentucky. The Northwest Folklife Festival, begun in 1972 in cooperation with the National Park Service, the Seattle Center, and the Seattle Folklore Society, has

gone on to be one of the country's most successful community events, drawing 250,000 people each Memorial Day weekend. The Border Folk Festival, begun the following year, has been held every year since at Chamizal National Park, located on the border between El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico. Cosponsored by the Park Service, the festival presents a wide range of Hispanic traditions, as well as those of other regional cultures. The National Council for the Traditional Arts is no longer involved in these festivals, but the NFFA was instrumental in their founding. Seeding festivals throughout the country was a goal of the NFFA from its earliest years that took on a new significance as the National Folk Festival took to the road again during the 1980s.

One of our primary challenges during the early 1970s was to establish an identity for the National Folk Festival at a time when the Festival of American Folklife (now called the Smithsonian Folklife Festival) was being held on the National Mall a few miles away. The Smithsonian's festival was free, received lots of attention from the press, and extended over two weeks in late June and early July as it geared up for a three-month-long run for the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976. The National Park Service became a cosponsor of that event in 1973, and thus had involvement in both festivals. As the Park Service's folklife coordinator, I was drawn into the programming for the Smithsonian festival as well. Our approach to programming the National Folk Festival was to focus on excellence and diversity, representing the whole range of performance in the worlds of folk and traditional music and dance. Thus, though the emphasis was always on primary tradition bearers, we also presented artists who were noted interpreters. John Hartford, Taj Mahal, John Prine, David Bromberg, John Fahey, the New Lost City Ramblers, and Pete



Ricky Skaggs, Buck White, Sharon White, Cheryl White, and Jerry Douglas performing in Karachi, Pakistan, during the 1980, two-continent "Southern Music, U.S.A." tour, sponsored by the USIA. Photo by Joseph T. Wilson

Seeger appeared at the National during these years.

At the same time we sought to present genres and traditions that were little known outside of their regions or cultures. Folklorist Jim Griffith brought, on separate occasions, a Tohono O'odham *waila* (chicken scratch) dance band, from the San Xavier reservation near Tucson, and Yaqui deer dancers from southern Arizona. Guy Logsdon introduced us to Speedy West and his Oklahoma Swing Band, the first of its genre to appear at a folk festival. The Wild Magnolias were the first Mardi Gras Indian group to appear outside of New Orleans. The groundbreaking Cajun band Beausoleil, founded by Michael Doucet, appeared at the 1976 festival, as did Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, with his multiethnic jazz and R&B band "Gate's Express."

Beginning in 1971, National Public Radio (NPR) recorded the evening concerts at each festival, and they were aired nation-

ally as part of the "Folk Festival USA" series until the late 1970s. This began a relationship between the festival organization and public radio, both nationally and with local affiliates, which introduced listeners throughout the United States to a broad spectrum of traditional music. NPR coverage was a strong motivation for recording the entire festival and other events, using professional equipment and engineers. (The ultimate result is the National Council for the Traditional Arts Collection, which will reside in the Archive of Folk Culture. See *Folklife Center News*, winter 2002, p. 7.) In 1974 PBS videotaped the National Folk Festival, which was broadcast nationally as part of the "In Performance at Wolf Trap" series. Since then, many of the festivals and tours have been videotaped, and these tapes form a significant part of the collection.

Also in 1974 the organization established a relationship with the United States Information

Agency's (USIA) overseas touring program. Immediately after the 36th National Folk Festival, a group of twenty-three musicians and dancers, representing Cajun, Appalachian, Puerto Rican, and African American traditions, departed on a six-week tour of Latin America. Participants included Marc Savoy, D.L. Menard, and Lionel LeLeux; the Highwoods String Band with the Bannerman Family Cloggers; Martin, Bogan, and Armstrong; Angel Luis Catala with Ernestina Reyes; myself, as program manager; and Jim Griffith, as presenter. The tour, called "Rascos Musicales del Pueblo" (dubbed "the musical rascals" by participants), toured nine countries in Central and South America, introducing audiences to aspects of American music and culture never before presented overseas.

We landed in Guatemala City, Guatemala, our first stop, on August 6 and, walking into our hotel, were greeted by the image of Richard Nixon on a television

screen in the lobby, resigning as president of the United States. Over the past twenty-five years the NCTA has organized seven more multicultural tours for the USIA, covering a large part of the globe. In addition the organization has served as a consultant to the agency and recommended many of the traditional artists who took part in the USIA-sponsored tours.

The bicentennial year marked another turning point for the organization, one that would set it on the course it has held down to the present. In the spring of 1976 the board hired Joseph T. Wilson as executive director, to replace Leo Bernache.

At the time, Joe Wilson was working on Madison Avenue, but he was from the little town of Trade, the easternmost community in Tennessee, and had deep roots in Appalachian culture. He had spent years writing about and recording traditional artists and working with folklorists, collectors, and record companies. He had spent time in Nashville, managing country singer Marty Robbins. He had a broad knowledge of folklife in the United States, was a great judge of authenticity and virtuosity in grassroots culture, and knew how he wanted to present it to the public. He also had organizational and political savvy and a vision for the future of the National Folk Festival Association.

The first part of that vision involved changing the name of the organization. Wilson, and many of us on the board at the time, felt that the NFFA's role in the field extended beyond producing festivals. Moreover, the term "folk festival" conjured up images with the public of folk-

revival singer-songwriters, "Hee Haw" TV characters, and women in antique costumes languidly strumming the dulcimer. Accordingly, in late 1976 the board of directors voted to change the name of the organization to the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA). Not long after this, the board made another fundamental change and did away with the decades-long practice of public membership in the organization. There were never more than two hundred or so members, and the cost of servicing the membership far outweighed any benefits that accrued to the organization.

Previously, the trustees had been elected by the membership, but now they would be selected by the executive director and a nominating committee, with the review and approval by the full board. This completed a process of restructuring the board that had begun in the early 1970s. Wilson could now involve key people in moving the organization forward. The paid staff at the time was a minuscule three people, so board members had real work to do. They were active in planning events and were vital in staffing festivals. Over the next two decades, public folklorists, musicians, and cultural activists

from throughout the country served on the board: Charles Camp, Timothy Lloyd, David Whisnant, Barry Lee Pearson, Peggy Bulger, Ellen Lovell, Gerald Parsons, Marc Savoy, Nick Spitzer, Chris Strachwitz, Michael Doucet, Horace Boyer, John Vlach, and John Cephas, to name a few.

In the early eighties John Holum, who had joined the board in 1974, became chairman, a position he continues to hold today. Holum is an attorney from South Dakota with a keen interest in traditional music. He was active in George McGovern's and Gary Hart's presidential campaigns, and served as an undersecretary of state under President Clinton. Charles Camp, Maryland state folklorist, became president at about the same time and served for over a decade. Barry Lee Pearson, professor of folklore at the University of Maryland, is the current president.

The National Folk Festival continued to be held each summer at Wolf Trap through 1982, and the program continued to present a wide range of traditions from across the country, broadening its scope to include some of the recent immigrant art forms, particularly from Asia. There was one major change: Wilson felt that because other festivals were available for interpreters and revivalists, the National Folk Festival should concentrate on presenting the great traditional artists that were rarely featured at other festivals. During this time, in 1977, Lee Udall, wife of former Interior Secretary Stuart Udall, joined the staff of the NCTA as associate director, bringing her experience as an administrator and



Michael Flatley, of Riverdance fame, performing in a workshop at the 41st National Folk Festival in 1979, when he was still a teenager. Photo by Margo Newmark Rosenbaum

spending several years with the organization. Among other things, Udall and Joe Wilson coauthored a folk festival handbook, published by the University of Tennessee Press, that became required reading for anyone interested in producing a traditional arts festival.

In 1978 the NCTA put together "Greenfields of America," a tour of Irish-American music and dance organized by folklorist Mick Moloney that visited Irish-American communities throughout the United States. This was a pioneering effort, and nothing like it had been done before. It was to be one of the NCTA's

greatest contributions to the field of traditional arts, or for that matter to the arts as a whole in America. There had been a couple of pilot touring projects about this time, a Franco-American tour in northern New England and an Irish tour, but it was the NCTA that took traditional-arts touring to a new level. Over the next twenty years, the organization put on the road over thirty tours that

traversed the entire country, including Hawaii, from large cities to small rural communities, introducing the public to an astonishing range of traditional music and culture. Every performance on all of these tours was recorded and/or videotaped, significantly expanding the NCTA Collection.

These tours can be broken down into two broad categories: in-reach and outreach. In-reach tours are targeted towards a specific group, as was "Greenfields of America," and tend to play in communities where there are large concentrations of the per-

formers' ethnic groups. Some of the other in-reach tours targeted Franco-American, Yiddish, Swedish, Mexican American, and Cambodian communities. Outreach tours, on the other hand, are designed to introduce the public as a whole to the diversity and virtuosity of traditional American artists. The acclaimed Folk Masters series of the late eighties and early nineties (Folk Violin, Steel String Guitar, Banjo) played mainstream venues throughout the country, from Portland, Maine, to San Diego, California.

In 1982 the Filene Center at Wolf Trap burned to the ground

try to present its vision of artistic and cultural diversity and to establish ties with communities on a national level. Moreover, the cooperative agreement with the National Park Service stipulated that the NCTA would assist with programming throughout the national system. An opportunity awaited.

The NCTA had been working with Cuyahoga National Recreational Area, a newly formed park an hour south of Cleveland, Ohio, in presenting traditional music events at the rural site. Bluegrass, polka, and tamburitzan festivals had drawn large and enthusiastic

crowds. Paul Squire, who had previously worked with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, was on the staff of the park, and Tim Lloyd, on the NCTA board, was the Ohio state folklorist. It was decided that the 46th, 47th, and 48th National Folk Festivals would be held at Cuyahoga. The festival would be a partnership between the NCTA, the National Park Service, and the local park cooperating



The Masters of the Folk Violin in the finale of the highly successful 1988 tour. Performers, left to right: Kenny Baker, Mike Doucet, Dave Doucet, Seamus Connolly, Joe Cormier, Claude Williams, and a sixteen-year-old Alison Krause. The next year Krause appeared in the National Folk Festival in Lowell with her new band, Union Station. Photo by Richard Bram

for the second time in its short existence. As one of the few events that used the entire park facility, the National Folk Festival was able to go on as scheduled, with multiple stages located around the park grounds, but the fire galvanized Wilson and the board into taking action on an idea that had been fermenting for several years. The festival had been very successful at Wolf Trap. It paid its own way, attracted large audiences, and garnered respect for the organization. But the National Folk Festival was historically a road show, moving around the coun-

association, a nonprofit organization. The three-day event would be free to the public, present evening concerts and multiple daytime performances on several stages, and feature the traditions of the region. The NCTA would be responsible for programming the stages, in conjunction with a local program committee, while the local sponsor would program the craft and material culture portion of the festival. This was, in a way, a return to the concept of the earlier festivals of the Knott years.

The agreement between the NCTA and the local sponsor



New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians meet Chinese Dragon Dancers from Atlanta in a mock street confrontation at the 56th National folk festival, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1994. Photo by Michael P. Smith

stipulated that the sponsor would continue to produce a festival, on an annual basis, after the National departed for a different site. This, too, was a twist on earlier festivals. Knott's concept had been that the organization would sponsor state and regional festivals all over the country as feeders for the national event. The new concept reversed this idea. The new National Folk Festival would seed regional festivals all over the country, remaining at a site for three years to develop local organizational and programming expertise. The local organization would continue to produce a traditional arts festival, with NCTA's help as needed, after the National Folk Festival moved on to a new location.

The festivals at Cuyahoga were highly successful. They brought large crowds, provided an opportunity for programming innovations, and laid the groundwork for future festivals. Cuyahoga continued to hold an annual festival through the mid-1990s, when lack of financial support forced its demise.

In 1986 the National Park Service requested that the National Folk Festival be held in New York City, in lower Manhattan, as part of a larger summer event celebrating the reopening of the Statue of Liberty on its hundredth anniversary. The festival drew huge crowds but was somewhat swallowed up in the mammoth celebration. A few months later Joe Wilson received a call from another Park Service site that was to result in the most successful of all the NCTA's partnerships.

In 1977 Wilson had visited Lowell, Massachusetts, America's oldest industrial city, an hour's drive northwest of Boston. At that time, Lowell National Historical Park was in its early formative stages, and Lowell was just beginning to emerge from a long period of economic decline. A unique partnership between federal, state, municipal, and private organizations had been designed to help rejuvenate the city. A decade later Lowell was a model for such partnerships and the city was, once again, thriving. The old mill city, which had

attracted entry-level workers from Yankee, Irish, Greek, Portuguese, Polish, and a host of other nationalities, was now drawing immigrants from Southeast Asia to work in the new high-technology industries.

By the fall of 1986, Park Superintendent Sandy Walters and Joe Wilson felt that Lowell would be an ideal place for the festival, with over fifty-five ethnic groups in the area and a huge regional population from which to draw an audience. The Lowell Festival Regatta Committee had been producing successful ethnic festivals for over a decade. Coincidentally, the American Folklife Center was in the midst of a year-long study of traditional arts and culture in Lowell (see *Folklife Center News*, winter 1988, Vol. 10, No. 1).

The National Folk Festival at Lowell was an immediate success. Over 150,000 people attended in 1987, the 49th festival, and the crowds got larger every year. In 1988, the National Folk Festival celebrated its fiftieth year, in healthier shape than it had ever been, a free event celebrating cultural diversity in the heart of a city noted for its diver-

sity. The organization was, Joe Wilson has remarked, reinventing the folk festival as a joint effort between local organizations and the NCTA, and creating the largest audiences ever to attend such events in the process. When the National Folk Festival left Lowell, organizers feared that attendance at the new Lowell Folk Festival would drop, but during the 1990s the Lowell Festival saw an increase in attendance. Under a continuing partnership with the NCTA, it has grown to become the largest and most respected event of its kind in the United States.

Johnstown, Pennsylvania, hosted the next three National Folk Festivals, from 1990 to 1992. The cosponsor in this gritty industrial town was the Johnstown Area Heritage Association, which operates the Johnstown Flood Museum. Whereas the Lowell festivals were held in the center of the city, the Johnstown site was Cambria City, a ten-block-long ethnic neighborhood about a mile from downtown with the abandoned Bethlehem Steel mills as a backdrop. The Johnstown festivals emphasized the eastern European cultures that are prominent in the makeup of the industrial heartland. There are eight ethnic churches in Cambria City, and many of these churches held social events to coincide with the festival. The Johnstown festivals were held over Labor Day weekend and many of the community residents held family reunions at the same time. The National Folk Festival thus became the impetus for a larger community celebration, a huge block party with the festival at the hub. One of the programmatic highlights of the Johnstown years was in 1990, when an extraordinary group called Voices of the Soviet Union appeared at the festival before embarking on an NCTA tour of the Mid-Atlantic and New England states. The entourage consisted of a women's vocal ensemble from Archangel, in the far north of the Russian Republic; a throat

singer from Tuva, in central Asia; a Georgian male choir; and instrumentalists from central Russia.

The National Folk Festival at Johnstown drew annual crowds in excess of one hundred thousand. The Johnstown Folk Festival has been held each year since 1993, on Labor Day weekend, and is a highly successful event. The NCTA still offers programming advice, but has no other direct involvement.

In 1993 the National Folk Festival moved south, returning to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where the second National Folk Festival had been held in 1935. Folklorist Douglas Day, who was working for Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga at the time, laid the groundwork for their sponsorship. The Festival was held in early October and was plagued by bad weather the first two years, but it had a significant impact on the community nevertheless, and drew good crowds in the final year. The programming at Chattanooga was very strong, with the rich cultural stew of the Southeast to draw from. Highlights of the Chattanooga festivals included a shape-note singing convention and a street parade that featured a mock confrontation between Mardi Gras Indians from New Orleans and Chinese dragon dancers from Atlanta.

The National Folk Festival then moved on to Dayton, Ohio, for a three-year run (1996–98) in cooperation with Cityfolk, one of the country's oldest and most successful folk-arts presenting organizations. Dayton is a rust-belt city with a dying industrial base and has had trouble attracting people to the downtown area after business hours. Executive Director Phyllis Brzozowska worked for several years to bring the festival to Dayton, hiring Timothy Lloyd to direct the event for Cityfolk. The festival was held in the heart of the downtown business district, had major support from the city government, and brought the largest crowds to the central core of this racially mixed city within living memory. Dayton

has a substantial minority population, approaching 50 percent, and through careful programming, the National Folk Festival succeeded in drawing thousands of African Americans to the festival. Attracting mixed audiences has always been an elusive goal for folk festivals in general and the National Folk Festival in particular. Performers such as Little Milton, Fontella Bass, and the Blind Boys of Alabama assured that Dayton audiences were a true reflection of the population. Cityfolk has continued to produce a large festival, called the Cityfolk Festival, each year since the National departed.

For the past three years the National Folk Festival has been held in East Lansing, Michigan, in partnership with Michigan State University Museum and the City of East Lansing. Once again the festival was held in the downtown area of the community, but had a very different feel from Dayton, Chattanooga, Johnstown, or Lowell. The festival was held in mid-August, shortly before classes resumed at MSU. East Lansing is a university town and this ambience permeates the community. Audiences were huge, sophisticated, diverse, and appreciative. The local sponsors had produced a folklife festival for several years before the National arrived, and will continue to do so afterwards. Preparations are now under way for the National Folk Festival to be held in Bangor, Maine, the Pine Tree State's second-largest city. The next three years will undoubtedly add another unique chapter to the festival's history.

Andrew Wallace is a folklorist and musician who served as program director of the NFFA from 1971 to 1975, and as associate director of the NCTA, 1988–97.

NEA Heritage Fellow Opens New “Homegrown” Concert Series



Eddie Pennington, Alonzo Pennington, Linda Lay, and David McLaughlin on the Library's Neptune Plaza for the opening of the Center's new concert series Homegrown 2002: the Music of America. Photo by James Hardin

By James Hardin

Guitarist Eddie Pennington, his son Alonzo, Linda and David Lay of the Appalachian Trail Band, and David McLaughlin were the first performers in a new series of concerts presented by the American Folklife Center, in cooperation with the Folklore Society of Greater Washington and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, and with the assistance of state folklorists from around the nation.

On a bright spring day, April 24, they took the stage on the Neptune Plaza in front of the Library's Jefferson Building, where tourists, Library and congressional employees, and other Capitol Hill workers and visitors sat on the steps to enjoy an hour of "homegrown" music. Pennington was introduced by Kentucky state folklorist Bob Gates. In attendance as well was Congressman Ed Whitfield from Kentucky's First District.

Eddie began with virtuoso solo performances of "Guitar

Rag" and "Mose's Blues" and was then joined by Alonzo for duet renditions of "Nine-Pound Hammer," "Chicken Reel," and "Preacher and the Bear." Alonzo's own remarkable performance ably demonstrated the folk process of passing on one's skills to the next generation. Eddie then brought to the stage Linda and David Lay and David McLaughlin, old friends from NCTA's Masters of the Steel String Guitar Tour, who entertained the audience with renditions of "Angel Band," "I'll



Kentucky state folklorist Bob Gates, Congressman Ed Whitfield (of Kentucky's First District), Eddie Pennington, and Alonzo Pennington on the Neptune Plaza, with the dome of the Capitol in the background. Photo by James Hardin

See You in My Dreams," and "I'll Fly Away," among others.

The Center's new series, "Homegrown: The Music of America," will present traditional music and dance from communities across the United States. "We are working with federal and state folklorists, and other professionals from associated fields, to identify performing groups noted for their excellence in presenting authentic community-based musical traditions," said Peggy Bulger, director of the American Folklife Center.

The "Homegrown" concerts will be audio- and video-taped

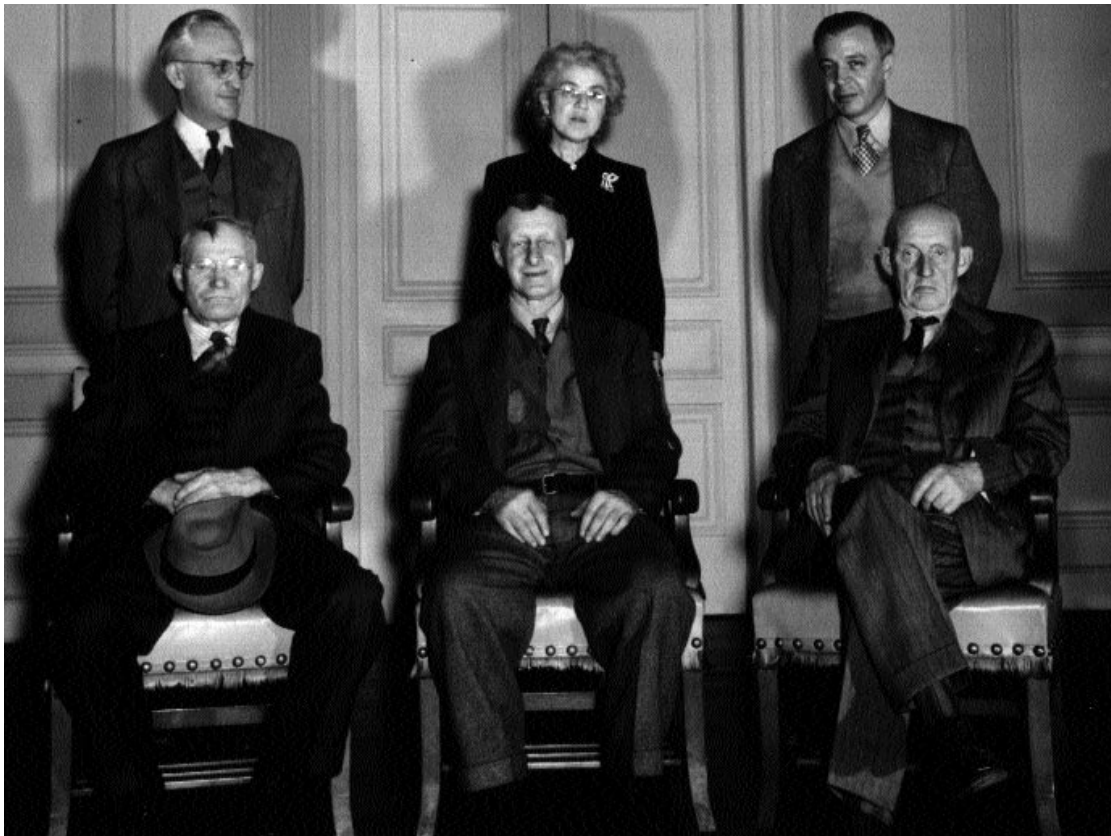
and photographed, and the documentation added to the Center's Archive of Folk Culture. The concerts will be broadcast at a later time on "Traditions," hosted by Mary Cliff, on WETA 90.9 FM, an NPR affiliate. Diane Kresh, director, Public Service Collections, helped launch the new series, which revives the tradition of summer events on the Neptune Plaza. "Folklife is about community," she said, "and the American Folklife Center is devoted to preserving the ties that bind us together so that future generations will know us as we are today. Folklife connects human beings of all races,

religions, and ages. I can think of no better way for the Library to celebrate the Center's role in preserving and presenting folk culture than by sponsoring these outdoor concerts."

Eddie Pennington's guitar-playing style, a complex form of thumb-picking, originated in a rural area of western Kentucky, in Muhlenburg County. Popularized by Merle Travis and further developed by instrumentalists such as Chet Atkins, this music had a common source in Mose Rager, a guitarist from the region. Eddie Pennington, the son of a coal miner, also learned to play guitar from Mose Rager, but he stayed at home, in Princeton, Kentucky, to become a county coroner and funeral director. (Pennington noted recently that he presided at the funeral of National Folk Festival founder Sarah Gertrude Knott, also of Princeton.)

Music was a part of his family heritage. Relatives say that his great-great grandfather, Edward Alonzo Pennington, who was unfairly convicted of a murder, played a tune still played today called "Pennington's Farewell" as he sat on his coffin watching the hangman prepare the noose. Eddie's father, a coal miner, played fiddle and taught his son songs about the life of a coal miner. Today, Pennington continues to play this ornamental instrumental style, enlivening his public performances with humorous stories about his experiences as a funeral director. He has recently been featured on stages at the National Folk Festival, as part of the Folk Master series at the Barns of Wolf Trap, and on the Masters of the Steel String Guitar Tour. He was named a National Heritage Fellow for 2001 by the National Endowment of the Arts.

The Library of Congress has a history of presenting folk music concerts that dates to December 20, 1940, when Alan Lomax arranged for a Coolidge Audito-



In 1948 Vermont folksong collector Helen Hartness Flanders brought three folksingers to the Library of Congress for a concert. Shown here in the Coolidge Auditorium are (front row) Charles Fennimore (from Maine), Elmer George, and Asa Davis (both from Vermont); (back row) Harold Spivacke, chief of the Music Division; Flanders; Duncan Emrich, chief of the Folklore Section. Library of Congress photo

The Golden Gate Quartet was featured in an article in *Time* magazine after their appearance in Washington, D.C., January 27, 1941. Photo by Libsohn-Ehrenberg



rium performance of the Golden Gate Quartet, with Josh White on guitar. A month later, in January 1941, the Quartet appeared at Constitution Hall at an Inaugural Gala, under the sponsorship of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The hall is owned by the DAR, which two years earlier had forbidden a performance there by African American contralto Marian Anderson.

In 1948 folksong collector Helen Hartness Flanders, wife of Vermont senator Ralph Flanders, presented a lecture and concert of New England ballads, with three New England folksingers, again in the Coolidge. A folk music concert, September 23, 1976, on the Library's Neptune Plaza, featuring "Big Chief" Ellis, John Cephas, and Phil Wiggins, celebrated the U.S. Bicentennial and the open-

ing of the front doors to the Thomas Jefferson Building. The success of that event led to the "Neptune Plaza Concert Series," sponsored by the newly created American Folklife Center and, initially, with the assistance of the National Council for the Traditional Arts. The series lasted for nineteen years and included a culturally diverse range of performers, such as Andean singers; Egyptian, flamenco, Polish, and Hungarian dancers; blues guitarists; African drummers and African American dancers and singers; and bands representing Cajun, zydeco, klezmer, Indonesian, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Swiss, Irish, and many other cultural traditions.

Recently, folk performers have been included in the celebrations for the hundredth anni-

versary of the opening of the Jefferson Building (1997) and the two-hundredth anniversary of the Library of Congress (2000).

The Homegrown Concert Series will be conducted in cooperation with the Millennium Stage at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Folk groups will appear at the Library of Congress at noon and again, at six in the evening, at the Kennedy Center. Washington, D.C., area residents who would like to be put on a mailing list to receive notices of performances in this series and other free public events sponsored by the American Folklife Center should write or email the Center.

Thanks to the National Council for the Traditional Arts for background information on Eddie Pennington.

This year's Homegrown Concert Series performers include:

May 15: Yuqin Wang and Zhengli "Rocky" Xu are extraordinary Chinese rod puppeteers, originally from Beijing, and now living in the Portland, Oregon, area. Chinese rod puppetry is an ancient traditional art form dating back more than a millennium. Many of the featured stories also have ancient origins. Wang and Xu have performed all over the United States, since coming to this country in 1996. Nancy Nusz, director of the Oregon Folklife Program, will introduce and interview them.

June 5: The Blind Boys of Alabama, featuring lead singer Clarence Fountain, formed as a group in 1937 at the Talladega Institute for the Deaf and Blind. Today the group performs throughout the United States and around the world. Their recent CD "Spirit of the Century" won the 2002 Grammy Award for Best Traditional Soul Gospel Album. This performance is sponsored by the Music Division and is part of the Library of Congress program *I Hear America Singing*.

June 19: Karl and the Country Dutchmen, from Trempealeau, Wisconsin, are one of the country's finest German "Dutchman" polka bands. Led by Karl Hartwich, on accordion and concertina, the band, with its thumping tuba marking the beat, plays to packed dance halls throughout the Midwest. Karl has also played at the National Folk Festival in Lowell, Massachusetts, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., and on Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion." Wisconsin Folk Arts Program director Richard March will be on hand to introduce this band.

July 24: Chuck Brown is a Washington, D.C.-area institution and the father, and inventor, of the regional musical style known as go-go, that swept the area in the 1970s. Brown will lead an eight-piece band for the Homegrown concert. One of D.C.'s many folklorists with expertise in this musical form will introduce and explain the traditionality of "go-go."

August 28: The Campbell Brothers present Sacred Steel, African American gospel music with electric steel guitar and vocal. This

tradition is just now emerging from the House of God Keith Dominion Church, where, for over sixty years, it has been an integral part of worship. The tradition has its roots in Florida, where folklorist Bob Stone of the Florida Folklife Program has brought it to national attention, but it has spread throughout the country. The Campbell Brothers, Chuck and Darick, are from Rochester, New York, and their lead singer, Katie Jackson, lives in Baltimore.

September 19: To Be Announced. A National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Fellow for 2002.

October 8: Bob McQuillen, the dean of New England contra-dance musicians, will bring his group "Old New England," from New Hampshire, to play a traditional dance on the Neptune Plaza. McQuillan has been playing accordion and piano and writing tunes for more than fifty years. He is the acknowledged master of this venerable genre, and has led countless groups over his long career. Lynn Martin, New Hampshire Folklife Program Director, will introduce the group.

Rosenberg Donates Bluegrass Music Collection

By David A.
Taylor

Folklorist Neil V. Rosenberg, a leading authority on the distinctive type of American traditional music known as “bluegrass,” has agreed to donate his large and important research collection on the subject to the American Folklife Center. This announcement was made by Center director Peggy Bulger at the Library of Congress on February 27, before the start of an illustrated lecture, by Rosenberg and Carl Fleischhauer, based on their new book *Bluegrass Odyssey: A Documentary in Pictures and Words* (University of Illinois Press). The authors discussed their fieldwork and how they assembled and selected the photographs and texts for the book, which is a lively exploration of the bluegrass music community from the 1960s to the 1980s. The lecture was sponsored by the American Folklife Center, the Office of Scholarly Programs, and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Rosenberg’s collection, which he has amassed over the course of the past forty-three years, includes: sound recordings of bluegrass shows, interviews with musicians and other important figures in the bluegrass scene; off-air recordings of radio



Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys at the Chautauqua Park Bluegrass Festival, Franklin, Ohio, September 8, 1968. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer from *Bluegrass Odyssey*. Courtesy of the photographer

programs featuring bluegrass music; photographs of musicians and fans; songbooks sold at bluegrass shows; early bluegrass publications; correspondence with musicians and others; fieldnotes; files of academic research materials; and commercial disc recordings.

Through his research and writing, Rosenberg has made major contributions to the study of bluegrass music. His many publications include the seminal *Bluegrass: A History* (1985) and *Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys: An Illustrated Discography* (1974). His article “From Sound to Style: The Emergence of Bluegrass,” published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1967, was a significant contribution to the then-nascent field of bluegrass scholarship. He is in demand as the writer of the liner notes for blue-

grass and old-time music albums. In 1998 he received a Grammy award for his contributions to the notes for the album *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Smithsonian/Folkways). As the author of the column “Thirty Years Ago This Month,” in *Bluegrass Unlimited*, the leading popular magazine on the genre, he shared his historical insights with a broad audience of enthusi-

asts for many years.

Rosenberg is a professor of folklore in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he has been based since 1968. He is also an accomplished musician. While a graduate student at Indiana University in the early sixties, he played the banjo in the house band at Bill Monroe’s Brown County Jamboree, a country music show park in Bean Blossom, Indiana. In 1963 he managed the jamboree, and in 1967 and 1968 he helped run the band contests at Monroe’s first two Bean Blossom bluegrass festivals. This immersion in the scene provided him with a rare opportunity to learn the bluegrass repertoire and perform it on stage; meet, and in some cases perform with, many

of the leading bluegrass musicians of the day; and become acquainted with the business side of bluegrass. As well, he developed a unique relationship with Bill Monroe—"the father of bluegrass"—that helped inform his later analysis of the history and style of bluegrass music. Currently, in addition to his academic work, Rosenberg maintains a career as a performing musician. He is a member of two bands in Newfoundland: Crooked Stovepipe, a bluegrass group; and The Black Auks, a collaborative improvisational ensemble.

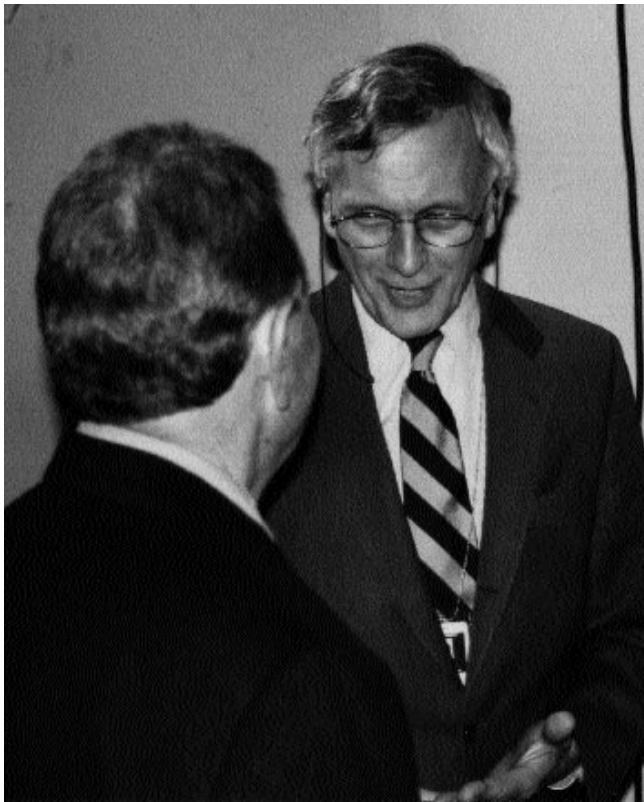
"We are thrilled that Neil's collection is coming to the Archive of Folk Culture," said Folklife Center director Peggy Bulger. "Neil Rosenberg is arguably the preeminent scholar on bluegrass music, and his unique, meticulously organized research materials will be a treasure trove for researchers who seek a deeper understanding of the sound, the style, the meaning, and the movers and shakers of bluegrass music during the second half of the twentieth century. What's more, his collection will complement and

in turn be complemented by the Archive's celebrated field recordings of traditional music from the South that were made during the first half of the twentieth century by John and Alan Lomax, Herbert Halpert, and others."

"Over many years of following bluegrass music, I've amassed quite a collection," said Rosenberg. "I'm happy to know that it will have a secure home at the Library of Congress, and that the music made by bluegrass greats like Bill Monroe, the Stanley Brothers, and the Country Gentlemen will be preserved and housed alongside the collections of such formidable researchers as Robert W. Gordon, John and Alan Lomax, and Herbert Halpert. I'm particularly pleased to know, too, that this material will not only be preserved for the future but that it will also be made available to future students and interested members of the public."



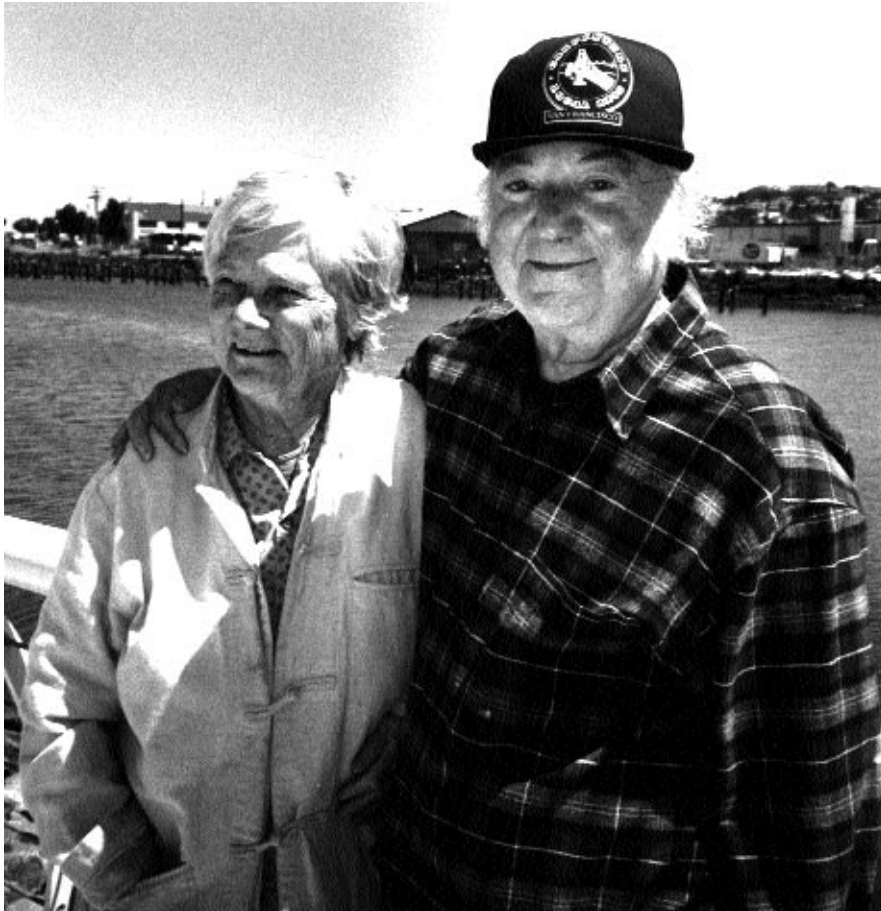
Center director Peggy Bulger accepts donation of the first increment of the Neil V. Rosenberg Bluegrass Music Collection from Rosenberg on February 27. Photos by James Hardin



American Folklife Center board trustee William Kinney (left) congratulates Carl Fleischhauer on the publication of *Bluegrass Odyssey*.

The collection, to be called the Neil V. Rosenberg Bluegrass Music Collection, will be donated to the Center in increments in the coming years. Under the terms of the agreement with the Center, Rosenberg will continue to use parts of the collection that are important for his ongoing research, and will ship materials to the Center when he no longer needs them for this purpose. On February 27, he transferred the first increment of his collection: five reel-to-reel tapes containing recordings of bluegrass shows, live radio broadcasts, and disc recordings, which are part of a larger body of tapes he began making in 1959 that he calls his "bluegrass anthology." Other materials will follow in due course. After the entire collection has been received and processed, it will be made available to the public.

Folklife Center Board Creates the Archie Green Union



Archie Green (wearing a carpenters union hat from his local) at the San Francisco waterfront, with his wife, Louanne, May 2000. Photo by David A. Taylor

By Jane Beck

Archie Green already had spent two decades in the building trades on the San Francisco waterfront—first as a shipwright, then “going uptown” into carpentry—before he ever entered graduate school in folklore at the University of Pennsylvania in the mid-sixties. To that experience he brought with him a rich body of songs and traditional lore—so much a part of him from his years immersed in

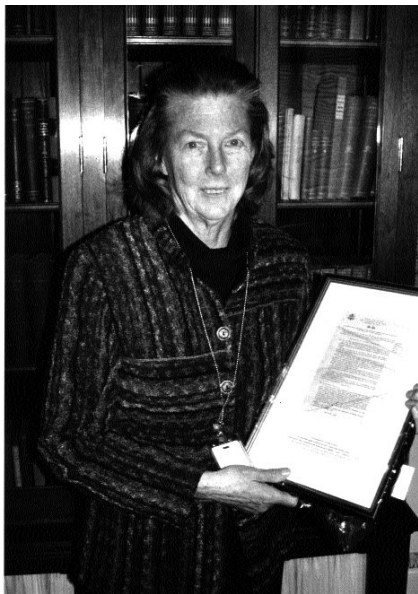
his trade and in his membership in the union. He lived and breathed it. He was a participant. As one of his fellow students in MacEdward Leach’s class on the ballad, I remember being drawn to Archie’s enthusiasm for the material, his extensive knowledge of it, and his focus and deep love for the people who created this lore. They were truly his brothers, people he had shared life with. He brought us the understanding that this was living lore we were

dealing with—not just remnants of songs from an older time. This was real, the fabric of life. He made his case with real examples, real situations, and we listened to and questioned our comrade who was older and wiser, but still one of us. These were stimulating and memorable discussions.

The late sixties saw Archie working part-time for Ralph Rinzler at the Smithsonian. Rinzler had created the Festival of American Folklife, which was

held for the first time in 1967 on the National Mall in Washington. The following year he invited Archie to come to the Smithsonian to work on labor studies for the next festival. Archie accepted and, with his love of politics, it wasn't long before he found himself involved in a full-scale lobbying effort. He believed ardently in this field of folklore he was so much a part of, and he was one of the first to realize the significance of having it recognized on the national scene as an established part of our governmental structure. Legislative aides had found their way down to the festival on the Mall during their lunch hour, and Jim Hightower, then an aid to Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough, was astounded to hear Bill Monroe playing. That touched a responsive chord and led to a collaboration with Archie to introduce the initial folklife bill.

This first attempt at legislation failed because some key people in the folklore field testified against it, but the disheart-



Jane Beck, the first president of the Archie Green Union, with a framed copy of Public Law 94-201, the American Folklife Preservation Act, which was "presented to Archie Green in grateful appreciation for his vision and dedication, which led to the creation of the American Folklife Center, January 2, 1976." Photo by James Hardin



Archie Green with Sen. Mark Hatfield at the twentieth-anniversary celebration of the American Folklife Center, September 18, 1996. Hatfield was an original sponsor of the legislation that created the Center. Photo by Larry Glatt

ening experience didn't stop Archie. Instead he learned from it and drew his battle lines. Archie always brought an immediacy and a passion to whatever he was doing. For two years, with no money coming in, he ignored the pressures of daily life and walked the corridors at the Capitol unceasingly. With the zeal of a missionary, he regaled all who would listen. He was a visionary, button-holing key senators and members of the House and indoctrinating them on the import that folklife held for the federal government. Gradually he made believers out of them. Through dint of his labors, in 1976 the Congress passed the American Folklife Preservation Act, which both defined American folklife and established the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

This was a watershed event in acknowledging the important role played by folk traditions and cultural heritage in our lives as Americans. Just last year the American Folklife Center celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday, and over the years its strength and influence have grown and

matured. Throughout that time Archie has been in the wings, advising, cheerleading, saluting every milestone—supportive at every turn. It is the right moment in the history of the Center to honor that person who almost single-handedly enabled the American Folklife Center to come into being, and what better way than through the Archie Green Union, an organization created by the Center's Board of Trustees and made up of friends and supporters, nominated by the current board, to assist the American Folklife Center through advice and fund-raising activities in carrying out its mission to preserve and present American folklife. The symbol of the union captures the essence of the man who led the way and stands as a monument to his life-long struggle to establish a permanent and recognizable folklife presence within our political system.

Jane Beck is director of the Vermont Folklife Center, a trustee of the American Folklife Center, and the first president of the Archie Green Union.

the International Storytelling Collection. Judy Ng, who began as a temporary employee at the end of last year, holds an MLS from Syracuse University. Marcia Segal holds an MLS from Catholic University and has been working at the Center on a temporary appointment, processing collection material for the Save Our Sounds preservation project.

Director Peggy Bulger could not be happier: "The Center has had a strong staff of professionals since the beginning, and many have worked valiantly to do the vital day-to-day work of preserving, arranging, and managing the vast amount of ethnographic material in the Folk Archive. But there has never been a fully staffed processing section. The arrival of several large collections, such as the International Storytelling Collection, and the work of the Save Our Sounds audio-preservation project have focused new attention on the importance of archival management. With our four new processing technicians at work, we will be better able to preserve our priceless heritage of folklife documentation, and assure future donors that their collections, which often represent a lifetime of work, will receive the care they deserve."

In addition, the Center was fortunate to have three participants in the Library's Leadership Development Program working on special assignments for a number of months: John Lewis (coordinating relations with veterans' organizations at the Veterans History Project), Robert Saladini (developing fund-raising strate-

gies for the Save Our Sounds project), and Tsai Hong Miller (processing the Eleanor Dickinson Collection). When he completes his work for the leadership program, John Lewis will return to the Center as assistant to the director. This position has been vacant since Tim Lloyd left the Center in 1995 to become director of folklife programs at Cityfolk in Dayton and director of Dayton's National Folk Festival, which was held there 1996-98.

"John has years of experience in library administration and a great sense of humor," says Peggy Bulger. "Both will be extremely useful to him here, especially at this time when so many new projects and activities are under way."

Folk Music Revival

Across the street from the Library of Congress, on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol's "East Front," preparations are under way for a new underground visitor center. A few grand old trees have been taken down along the approach from East Capitol Street (a shock at

first for anyone familiar with the Capitol grounds). But plans for the completed center, scheduled for 2004, promise a newly landscaped plaza, enhancing the appearance of the historic landscape designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. The visitor center will include a link to the Library of Congress's Jefferson Building, and in general provide a more congenial experience for tourists visiting the Capitol. Visitation to the city has been down markedly since September 11, but *The Washington Post* for April 15 reported an unexpectedly healthy rebound in the number of visitors coming to the District.

The American Folklife Center will be ready. On the Neptune Plaza, a new program of outdoor concerts has begun. Carrying on the tradition of the popular Neptune Plaza series and an even longer history of folk music presentations at the Library of Congress, the first concert featured guitarist Eddie Pennington (as described in this issue). Other concerts will include Chinese puppeteers, Southern gospel, Wisconsin polka music, and New Hampshire contra dancing. Signs of spring!



The Smokey Town Singers, Native American drummers and chanters from Wisconsin, performed at an outdoor concert on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, in celebration of the Bicentennial of the Library of Congress, April 24, 2000. Photo by James Hardin



Phil Wiggins and John Cephas on the Library's Neptune Plaza in 1985. The well-known Washington-area blues musicians met at the National Folk Festival in 1976, at Wolf Trap in Vienna, Virginia, and have been playing together ever since. They performed on several occasions at the Library of Congress for the American Folklife Center's Neptune Plaza series, and they have had a long-standing relationship with the National Council for the Traditional Arts. Articles in this issue recount the history of the NCTA and of folk music presentations at the Library of Congress. Library of Congress photo

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