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Northeast Folklore Society Newsletter

Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History

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## Northeast Folklore Society Newsletter, Vol. 11

Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History

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THE NORTHEAST FOLKLORE SOCIETY

South Stevens Hall  
University of Maine  
Orono, Maine  
04473

Newsletter # 11  
November 10, 1976

Florence E. Ireland  
Editor

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Ta-Da!

After a rather disorganized summer of moving, I have finally unpacked, and actually found, my notes for this Newsletter. Rather than bore you with sorries as to its lateness, let us just proceed from here.

New England Association of Oral History

Last May, at Assumption College in Worcester, about fifty members of the NEAOH met. Besides the usual business-type items, which were kept to a minimum with almost mutinous zeal, were two speakers. The first, Ms. Kate Kenneally of the Boston 200 project, explained how she managed to direct some 15 individual neighborhood groups in precuring and organizing their own local histories. She, as the grand conductor, gave them as much freedom as they wished, including the focus of each project. The neighborhoods participating were not part of the central city, but rather ones peripheral to it, such as Jamaica Plain, Brighton, Roxbury. Fifteen booklets resulted from these efforts, each with many pictures and extensive quotations from tape recordings made of the local informants. It is hoped that this work will be taken up by others, especially in the schools, as well as local historical societies, to further this interest and pride in the diversity of Boston's neighborhoods. Perhaps it may be realized that each area has valuable cultural roots which should not only be preserved, but shared.

The second speaker, Dr. Louis Starr of Columbia University, attempted to dispel the myth of the dichotomy between so-called elitist and "bottom-up" oral history research. He cited several examples of this supposed animosity, and, in my estimation, perhaps blew the problem out of proportion for the sake of argument. The differences are there, to be sure, but I'm not convinced of the hostility. The fact that the elitists consider the transcript to be the primary document while the bottom-uppers prefer the actual tape recordings, results in merely a difference in retrieval rather than a cause for war. And that the two groups (and where is the boundary?) focus on different ends of the social clothesline is a blessing, what with all we can learn from so many. Dr. Starr's talk was most interesting, and he developed his case as only someone of his background could do; I'm just not sure there was a case to begin with.

### Grammie Turner

The Wcbb documentary of 73 year-old Mary Turner aired last May 18th. Since then she has received scores of letters, many more phone calls, and dozens of visitors at her West Peru farm. She's a "star" and she loves it! Even some folks who said they were from National Geographic spent some time with her, snapping pictures and taking notes as she busied about her chores. The program is available from the Eastern Educational Network's (EEN) library for any public television station requesting it. So, if you'd like it shown in your area, bug your station.

### Foxfire

Meanwhile, the R.I.F. (Reading Is Fundamental) volume, funded by the Smithsonian Institute, and edited including an introduction by Elliot Wigginton, is due on the stands sometime in November. The title is *I Always Wanted To Give My Son A Wild Raccoon*, Doubleday is publishing it, and it will cost \$10.00 hardbound and \$4.95 paper. Researched by high school students all over the U.S., and assembled by the Foxfire crowd, it includes chapters on a wide variety of Americans: an Eskimo teacher, an Illinois fireman, a Cajun trapper, a North Carolina banjo maker, and none other than our ubiquitous Mary Turner, to name a few. Keep an eye out at your bookstore.

### Just A Summer Job

Linda Madden, a sophomore at the University of Maine at Orono, kind of fell into an interesting job this summer. When her S.P.E.D.Y.\* supervisor asked if she'd rather interview old folks instead of wash desks, she said yes, even though she'd not the slightest notion of what-all it entailed. Being a bright and energetic young lady, with a more than average amount of perserverance, she set about learning how to interview, who to interview, and why. With only nine weeks in the program, she had to work fast, necessarily limiting her contacts and subjects. She decided that a quick look at her town (Lisbon Falls) through the memories of three lucid and cooperative citizens would yield what she needed. So she set about jogging their memories on such events as the fire of 1906 and flood of 1936, as well as the once-famous Cowing's Tavern, and of course collected all sorts of information about ice-cutting, snow rolling, and town dances in addition. There were three significant results from her labors: 1. a slide show and talk presented by her to the Lisbon Falls Historical Society, 2. a booklet, with pictures, which covers the above subjects, and quotes heavily from her tapes (she being a bottom-upper at heart), and 3. a new sense of respect for people in their 70's and 80's. She said she had always been

\*Summer Program for Economically Disadvantaged Youth

polite, but never really realized how much she could learn from them, and how terrifically interesting they were besides. She also no longer believes that old people have poor memories, after listening one night to a rendition by one man of exactly which businesses replaced which after the fire, who owned each one, and who bought them out in which year.

It seems that Linda greatly enjoyed her summer job. She worked more hours and less predictable hours, than if she'd been washing desks, but somehow I don't think she ever yearned for the Lestoil. Her tapes, transcripts (done by another refugee from the wash bucket, Annette Farnum), and booklet will all be deposited in the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History in Orono.

### Records

Innisfree Records of New Canaan, Connecticut has come out with a Peter Bellamy album on their Green Linnet label. Bellamy, acclaimed in England as a major young revival singer, learned voice skills from great traditional singers, and has developed a style that is traditional-sounding, but innovative and personal as well. The album contains 16 songs: 7 unaccompanied, and 9 with either concertina, guitar, or whistle. It sells for \$6.98 and included are brief notes on the origins of the songs. The title is simply "Peter Bellamy".

Another Green Linnet release, a two-record album entitled "Seamus Ennis-Forty Years of Irish Piping," was three years in the making. It traces the career of Seamus Ennis, a great living Irish traditional musician. As a matter of fact, the Innisfree company was originally formed in order to compile the illustrated and documented biography of this man. Patrick Sky, one of Innisfree's producers and a close friend of Ennis, has done most of the research and compilation, and there is a note from him included with the records. The price for this set is \$13.98 and it comes with a biographical sketch, too.

The Green Linnet productions specialize in traditional performers as well as interpreters and songwriters influenced by traditional folk music. They may be ordered from Innisfree Records, Inc., 134 Main Street, New Canaan, Connecticut 06840.

### While You're Buying

Folk-Legacy Records of Sharon, Connecticut 06060, the nice people who put out all those Gordon Bok albums, would like to share a book with you. The title is *Cold As A Dog and The Wind Northeast* and it's a collection of poetry by Ruth Moore. Meant for reading aloud, it includes "The Night Charlie Tended Weir," a favorite of Bok's audiences, as well as other coastal Maine ballads. It's only \$3.50, so go ahead and treat yourself.

## Announcing A New Canadian Folklore Journal: *Culture & Tradition*

We are pleased to announce that Volume I of *Culture & Tradition* has just been published. This is the first multi-generic, bilingual folklore journal in Canada and will appear once a year. This issue contains the following articles: "Sabot Bottes et p'tite Galoche": A Franco-Newfoundland Version of AT 545, The Cat As Helper; La Marleche (Conte-Type 56B); The Jokes and Joke-Telling of Jim Dawe; La survivance des croix de ch chemin: mythe ou realite; Folk Festival: The Gatineau Valley Church Picnic; Play at the Newfoundland Seal Fishery; La chasse aux oiseaux a l'Isle d'Orleans; Le moulin a scie "Garceau" de Pointe-Du-Lac, Comte de Saint-Maurice; Etudes des toponymes a travers les recits de voyages de Cartier et de Champlain; The Itinerant Movie-Man and His Impact on the Folk Culture of the Outports of Newfoundland. If you wish to receive a copy of *Culture & Tradition*, please send \$3.00 to *Culture & Tradition*, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Nfld., A1C 5S7, Canada.

## On The Live Side..... Folksong Festival in February

There will be a folksong festival on the Orono campus of the University of Maine on February 11 and 12. Sponsered jointly by the Null Family Foundation, The Northeast Folklore Society and the Memorial Union Activities Board, it will bring such well known performers as Sparky Rucker, Margaret MacArthur, Lou and Sally Killen, Slim Clark, Joe Hickerson, Norman Kennedy, Gale Huntington, and Sean Corcoran. There will be evening performances in Hauck Auditorium both nights and a series of workshops all day Saturday (the 12th). It looks like it's shaping up to be a good program. More detailed information will be forthcoming, either in the next Newsletter, or in a special mailing, or both. Watch for it.

## A Passing

We have received word that *Abstracts of Folklore Studies* will cease to be published due to economic and other reasons. The idea has been picked up by Prof. Ray Browne of the American Studies Program at the University of Maryland, however, and he will be putting out a new information retrieval journal which will include folklore and related material. Write to him for further information.

## Prizes!

If you are brave enough to be a contestant on WCBB-TV's "So You Think You Know Maine" quiz program, you may win a year's subscription to *Northeast Folklore*. That's right, our Director has agreed to contribute six such subscriptions for use as prizes on the show. Really, it doesn't take much courage to be a contestant, just a knowledge of Maine, its people, food, vocations, history, folklore, or a little of everything. Even

if you don't get a prize, so why not try? Tapings begin in December and airings in January. For more information about the show, or to register as a contestant, write to Laurie Manny, Producer, So You Think You Know Maine, WCBB-TV, 1450 Lisbon Road, Lewiston, Maine 04240, or call her at 783-9101. Who knows, next year at this time you could be reading us for free°

Not to be outdone, *Salt* has also agreed to contribute subscriptions to be used as prizes. Should be a good year.

### More T.V.

Last May I happened to watch an edition of "Back-Stage", another of WCBB's productions, which featured three very talented young men. They call themselves Schooner Fare collectively-- individually they are Steve and Chuck Romanoff and Tom Rowe. They play and sing Irish and Scottish folk songs as well as original compositions using banjo and accoustical guitars. Their sound is reminiscent of the old Kingston Trio, and wholly worth listening to.

### AnyBody Out There?

We need news if we are to keep this newsletter newsy. If you are reading this, you most likely can write, and surely somebody must be doing something they'd like others to know about. So let's get with it, People, before I start believing only Sandy Ives reads this!

### A Unique Request

Is there anyone in Maine who can teach Scottish-Gaelic? There is someone I know who wishes to learn it. Honest.

### All For Now

Must run. What with Adam starting kindergarten and freeing my afternoons, I have eagerly jumped into several different time-consuming projects, and they are sitting all over the desk and piano, grinning, daring me to finish just one. So, until next time, which should hopefully be in January, take care and keep warm.

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Road, Lewiston, Maine 04240, or call her at 753-3101. We know  
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