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Northeast Folklore Society Newsletter

Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History

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## Northeast Folklore Society Newsletter, Vol. 29

Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History

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# NORTHEAST FOLKLORE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Newsletter # 29

January 1986

Michael Chaney--Editor

Joan Brooks--Asst. Editor

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## EDITOR'S UPDATE

This issue is coming simultaneously with Northeast Folklore XXIV and XXV, "The Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History: A Catalog of the First 1800 Accessions." This 200+ page guide to the holdings at the Northeast Archives has been long-awaited by many, and I am sure will enlighten many more on the depth and breadth of material available in Orono. In addition to the Society's publishing the Catalog, the Archives has been involved over the past year with the production of From Stump To Ship: A 1930 Logging Film. Details on this historic film are included in this issue.

The Newsletter Editor has a new address. All correspondence, queries, and news items should be sent to: Michael Chaney, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405.

## WILMOT MACDONALD: MICHAMICHI FOLKSONG GREAT DIES

(The following story is reprinted from one of the major New Brunswick papers. Ed.)

CHATHAM (Special)-- One of the Miramichi's great folksong performers, Wilmot J. MacDonald, 81, died Tuesday, September 3, 1985, at Mount St. Joseph extended care facility here after a lengthy illness.

MacDonald, of nearby Glenwood, was a farmer and lumberman in his early career. Later he worked for 18 years at CFB Chatham.

He was an acquaintance of the late Lord Beaverbrook and was one of the Miramichiers responsible for sparking Beaverbrook's interest in the rich folk heritage of the region.

With the formation of the annual Miramichi Folk Song Festival in 1958, Mac-

Donald's singing became famous on The River and beyond. The Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. sent a film and recording crew to the Miramichi in the 1960s to record MacDonald for its collection of folk material.

He was renowned for the number of songs and folk stories he carried in his head. Region favorites, mentioned time after time in connection with MacDonald's name, include, The Alimony Song, Peter Emberley, The Lumberman's Alphabet and The Bull Song.

Chatham Mayor Michael Bowes said Tuesday evening MacDonald "was an institution... he takes alot of knowledge with him." MacDonald's performances "were one of the highlights of the festival," Bowes said.

Born in Glenwood, MacDonald was the son of the late William and Christine (Sullivan) MacDonald. He attended St. Stephen's United Church, Black River Bridge. His wife, the former Lena MacDonald, died in 1978.

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So passes on one of the truly great traditional singers of our time. On Thursday, November 7, Bobby and I visited his grave in St. Stephen's churchyard, Black River Bridge, a beautiful spot overlooking Black River and an arm of Miramichi Bay. I was reminded of what Nikola Vujnovic said about the great Montenegrin guslar Avdo Mededovic: "When Avdo is no longer among the living, there will be no one like him in singing." Wilmot MacDonald was in that class. For a lifetime of songs, we left a few flowers and drove on. He enriched us all.

EDI

## MIRAMICHI FOLKSONG FESTIVAL

The Nineteenth Miramichi Folksong Festival will be held August 4-8 in Newcastle, New Brunswick. I can't tell you much more about it than that at the moment, but we'll have further information in the next Newsletter. If you want more information before that, write the Director, Susan Butler, P.O. Box 13, Newcastle, New Brunswick, E1U 3M2.

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR JOINS LIBRARY FACULTY At The UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Michael Chaney has been appointed Project Archivist in the Special Collections Department, Baily/Howe Library, University of Vermont. His primary duties include the arrangement, indexing, and microfilming of several large manuscript collections that contain material relating to Canadian-United States economic and business relations. With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Strengthening Library Resources Program, a guide to Canadian holdings at Baily/Howe Library will be published in late 1986.

### From Stump To Ship: A 1930 Logging Film

In the early 1930s, Machias lumberman Alfred Ames made a film to record the end of an era in the logging industry, when mechanization and the transition from sawlogs to pulpwood made river driving obsolete. Ames, armed with a 16mm movie camera, filmed every aspect of the river drive on the Machias River, from the cutting of the sawlogs to loading lumber on schooners. The lumberman with 40 years of experience left a unique record of the lumber industry as it was on the Machias over 50 years ago.

With funding from the Maine Humanities Council and Champion International Corporation, the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History and several research and technical consultants preserved and printed copies of the original film and did research for a soundtrack produced by Sheldon Weiss Productions of Blue Hill Falls, Maine. The script for the soundtrack was based on a 13 page narrative script written by Ames for the original silent footage.



In the fall of 1985, the film was shown in Orono, Machias, Portland, Bethel, Presque Isle, Patten, and Augusta. Sandy Ives reports below on the Orono showing: "The opening on September 20 in Hauck was

great! They had to have two showings, and the place was packed for both. The Archives put up a splendid display of lumbering photographs in the hallway; Pat Phillips and the rest did a great job selecting and mounting. NFS had a table there at which we sold NF's and postcards. The postcards went like we were giving away Baby Ruth bars. In fact, we made over \$400 for the Society that evening.

The other showings have gone well. The Bethel showing was in the auditorium at Gould Academy (just about filled), and there was a reception afterward at the Moses Mason house.

As soon as we get through showing this movie around the state this way, it will be available for loan or rental. I'll get some details on that for you as soon as I can." (EDI)

### ARCHIVES RECEIVES HUMANITIES COUNCIL GRANT FOR MACHIAS RIVER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History was recently awarded a \$20,000 grant by the Maine Humanities Council to conduct a yearlong project that will include interviews with former woodsmen from the Machias River region, production of two broadcast-quality videotapes, and a series of six statewide workshops on oral history fieldwork.

The project is a follow-up to the rejuvenation of the 1930s logging film From Stump to Ship. At the statewide screenings of the film, viewers were asked to fill out comment cards; and in reviewing these, it has become clear that there is a great deal of interest in the lives of the woodsmen of that era and that there are numerous former woodsmen/river drivers "out there" willing to talk about their experiences.

The interviews will be conducted by Dr. Ives during the spring and early summer, prior to which an extensive search for informants in the Machias River region will be conducted. Also adding their expertise to the project will be UMO history professors David Smith and Richard Judd.

For the production of the two videotapes, the Archives will collaborate with Henry Nevison, UMO media specialist, and Sheldon Weiss Productions of Blue Hill Falls, Maine. The first videotape will document the oral history process as seen through the eyes of Dr. Ives. It will be designed to increase the effectiveness of locally conducted oral history field work and as a first of its kind promises to have a national audience. The second videotape will combine footage of From Stump to Ship with excerpts from the videotaped interviews. MPBN, Maine's

public broadcasting network, has expressed interest in airing the videotapes early next year.

The final aspect of the project, the six statewide oral history workshops, will be conducted by Dr. Ives during the fall of 1986. These workshops will provide the setting for the inaugural showings of the oral history process videotape.

As the budget for the project is \$36,000, additional funding is being sought throughout Maine and New England. Toward that end, the Maine Humanities Council has offered to match, fifty cents on the dollar, any additional money raised.

#### VOICE OF AMERICAN HOMEMAKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The National Extension Homemakers Council in Rushville, Indiana has recently completed a National Endowment for the Humanities funded project which produced a collection of 200 oral history interviews on the lives of American homemakers in the twentieth century. Nationwide in scope, the interviews with women describe homemaking, child rearing, and family life in small towns and rural areas. The transcribed and edited interviews (with releases and cassette tapes) have been reproduced and made available to one repository in each state at no charge. The Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History has acquired the collection, which includes the tapes, bound transcripts, and indexes. The entire collection amounts to three linear feet of material.

#### NEW ARCHIVES CATALOG IN NORTHEAST FOLKLORE XXIV and XXV.

The Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History: A Catalog of the First 1800 Accessions is finally in print. It will be, as you already know, a double issue (XXIV and XXV covering 1983-84) of over 200 pages, containing brief descriptions of each accession plus a subject and place-name index. It doesn't make for exciting reading, unless you happen to be one of those people who enjoy reading catalogs (I do, from time to time), but it should be a useful research tool. As I look it over I'm amazed at the variety of materials the Northeast Archives has brought together over the past quarter century, and the two indexes, for all their shortcomings and imperfections, will make it a whole lot easier for people to get at these materials.

We've had problems putting this volume together. Since it was to be largely a research tool, we decided it would be all right to save on typesetting by going with a straight computer printout. Fine and dandy, but we discovered we had a few things to learn about our word pro-

cessor-- and we still do! Joan Brooks, who has done all the paste-up and layout, is very unhappy about the number of widows the process created, for instance. Well, so it goes. But don't mistake me, it is still eminently readable.

I've already started editing the next volume, which will be the autobiography of Wilbur Day, a famous hunter, guide, and poacher from down in Washington County. He wrote it, or rather dictated it to his wife, the year before he died in order to prove to the world that he was not the "great spill blood desperado" he was reputed to be. The manuscript is penciled in longhand, and while I have a typescript copy of it, I'm going to have to check it rather carefully before I even begin doing any "editing"-- and I'm going to try and keep that process to a minimum. If the Catalog is not a "reader's volume," Day's autobiography most certainly is! (EDI)

#### VOLUNTEER ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE ELDERLY IN PORTLAND

The Portland Folk Club and the Community Intertainment Agency co-sponsor a calendar of folk performances in the Portland area. For \$2.00, you can get a year's worth of calendars, issued quarterly.

Community Intertainment was set up in 1979 to provide quality performances for the elderly, the sheltered, and the confined in the greater Portland area. Currently, CI serves 29 institutions, primarily nursing homes and elderly group housing. There are about 20 shows booked each month, from a pool of more than 40 acts. The volunteer performances include slide shows, comedy routines, classical music, jazz, and folk music. Community Intertainment has put out a call for volunteers to help with office related tasks, as well as performances. For more information on CI, contact Norris Dale at 774-1203, or write to the Portland Folk Club, c/o Charlie Ipcar, 80 Quebec Street, Portland, ME 04101.

#### ETHNICITY ORAL TESTIMONY, AND THE WORLD OF WORK

A conference, "Ethnicity, Oral Testimony, and the World of Work", will take place at Baddeck, Nova Scotia, October 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1986. The conference will be sponsored jointly by the Society for the Study of Ethnicity in Nova Scotia (SSENS), Canadian Oral History Association (COHA), and Atlantic Oral History Association (AOHA). Papers from the disciplines of history, folklore, sociology, political science, anthropology, economics, etc. will be presented. Interested individuals should contact: John DeRoche, Sociology Department, University College of Cape Breton, P.O. Box 5300, SYDNEY, N.S., BIP 6L2.

PAID STUDENT INTERNSHIPS AT THE ARCHIVE OF FOLK CULTURE, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress has announced the beginning of a paid internship program (\$3710 for fifteen weeks) for those enrolled in a graduate program leading to the MA or PhD in folklore, library science, anthropology, ethnomusicology, American studies, museum studies, or related fields. An internship can run from January-May, May-August, or September-January, and offers "diversified experience in processing and servicing a large collection of general and special materials--sound recordings, photographs, manuscripts--in the fields of folklife and ethnomusicology." Gerald E. Parsons, Reference Librarian, stresses that applicants should have interests in both the study of traditional culture and the operation of special materials collections. Service to Library patrons will be a significant aspect of the internship.

The first internship will be awarded in the summer of 1986, and the application deadline is March 1, 1986. Write or telephone for the Intern Program Prospectus and other application materials to Folk Archive Intern Program, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 (202) 287-5510.

AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER PUBLISHES 1984 FOLK MUSIC RECORDING LIST

The American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress announces the publication of American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1984: A Selected List. This illustrated, annotated booklet lists 30 outstanding records and tapes of traditional music and folklore which were released in 1984. This year's selections were chosen by panelists Thomas A. Adler of the University of Kentucky, Norm Cohen from the John Edwards Memorial Forum, David Evans of Memphis State University, William Ivey from the Country Music Foundation, and Ethel Raim of the Ethnic Folk Arts Center.

Alan Jabbour, Director of the American Folklife Center writes: "We hope that the Selected List, by increasing the availability of well-annotated, high-quality recordings through libraries and educational institutions, will foster awareness and appreciation of America's traditional music and speech. Greater appreciation in turn will promote a better understanding of the varied folk arts and expressive cultures of our nation's many peoples, encourage the production of records and tapes of these materials, and ensure the continuity of the living heritage of the performers, communities, and traditions they document."

American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1984, is free. To obtain copies please write: Selected List, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.

Book Review: THE CRAFT OF PUBLIC HISTORY: AN ANNOTATED SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

By David F. Trask and Robert W. Pomeroy, general editors. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983. Pp. xix + 481, preface, list of contributors, author index, \$49.95 cloth).

This massive bibliography prepared under the Auspices of the National Council for Public History is an interesting book that illustrates the different disciplines and methodologies that are considered by many to be "public history". For the editors (and the National Council), public history is the practice of history and history-related disciplines in settings other than educational institutions--schools, colleges, and universities. These other settings include government, historical societies, libraries, museums, private businesses, research groups and historical consulting firms. The debate over the usefulness of the term public history will not be entered into here, yet the following brief look at this diverse bibliography will give an indication of the broad ground that the field covers.

There are 1700 works referenced here, which are usually books, articles, and the occasional multi-media production. These citations are cross-referenced between chapters and sections of chapters. Although there is an author index, there is no subject index. However, careful use of the detailed table of contents will take one surprisingly close to one's goal. The annotations are short and descriptive, and since they are produced by seventy-five different contributors, the style and information varies. While some chapters are better than others, the general editors have done very well in bringing this massive collaborative effort into a coherent whole.

There are eleven chapters in the book: "Public History: Research and Writing," "Public History: Training," "Public History," "Business Management," "Archives, Records, and Information Management," "Genealogy and Family History," "Historical Editing," "Historical Resource Management," "Library Science," "Media and History," "Oral History," and "Policy History." Each Chapter is edited by a specialist in the given field, and in the case of oral history the editor is Enid Douglass. The contributors are an impressive cast of scholars in many fields. Again, in the case of oral history, William Moss, Willa Baum, Thomas Charlton, Sam Hand, Ronald Grele, Charles Morrissey, Elizabeth Mason, David

Dunaway, Cullom Davis, and others provide useful annotations.

Admittedly selective, a book of this broad scope cannot hope to cull all the relevant research for each of the eleven fields. Not everything is here, so what were the standards of inclusion in the bibliography? The oral history chapter cites "significant and representative statements that have been made about oral history," listing just over 200 references. It is comforting to note that contributors to this chapter are leaders in the field of oral history, and compared to some of the other chapters, the annotations are quite long and detailed.

In the final analysis, this selected bibliography is a useful reference work. A significant amount of scholarship is referenced in an orderly fashion between two covers. Trask and Pomeroy are to be credited for undertaking such a massive task and have succeeded in producing a coherent whole from a diverse number of pieces. The research institution, historical society, records center, museum, or libraries would do well to have a copy on their reference shelf. It is, as reference librarians would say, a good first stop.

Michael Chaney

#### An Archive Sampler

"Wreck on the Grand Trunk Railway"  
(from Joe Scott, Woodsman-Songmaker  
by Edward D. Ives. University of Illinois  
Press, 1978)

The wreck itself was sensational. There had been a number of collisions along this division of the Grand Trunk over the preceding weeks, "and some of them," the reporter for the Bethel News said, "were not altogether tame affairs." But the one that occurred at one o'clock in the morning on Friday, January 18, 1901, made them all seem piffling. Eastbound was the fourth section of regular freight number 92, heavy laden and powered by two locomotives. It had just passed through Bethel and was going full throttle (about thirty miles an hour) to gain momentum for the uphill grade west of Walker's Mills. Westbound was regular freight number 85, another doubleheader, traveling flat out at about the same speed, having just come down the Walker's Mills grade. They met about two miles east of Bethel, "and in an instant," said the Bethel News, "four engines and thirteen loaded cars lay in one frightful mass, extending a distance of not more than ten rods along the track, but piled some forty feet high." The Bangor Daily Commercial had a story on it that very evening. "One of the trains," it said, "had a large quantity of explosives on board and as the cars took fire just after the collision there were numerous

explosions during the early morning and forenoon and nothing could be done to clear away the wreckage. At nine o'clock the cars were still burning and explosives were scattering the embers in all directions."

The wrecking crews set to work under fantastic difficulties, and the curious arrived with the Kodaks. "People flocked from all sections to view the scene," said the Bethel News, "all of whom looked upon a sight that they will always remember. All who had cameras took them along but smoke from the consuming mass made it difficult to get a good view." The wrecking crew persevered, but it took them seventeen perilous hours to clear the right of way. "It was not until 6 p.m.," said the Bethel News, "that a tunnel of sufficient width was cut through the mass to allow trains to pass, and when the afternoon express passed through at that hour, the burning wreck towered up for several feet on either side." Nothing is said about it, but I hazard the passengers on the express saw something they wouldn't forget, with or without cameras.

Miraculously, all of the crew of eastbound 92 leaped to safety in time, and so did the crew of the head engine on westbound 85, but the men on the rear engine didn't make it. Engineer Peter Thompson was taken from the wreck alive but died a few minutes later. Nothing was ever found of fireman Clarence Tibbetts and brakeman W. C. Oliver except a few charred bones.

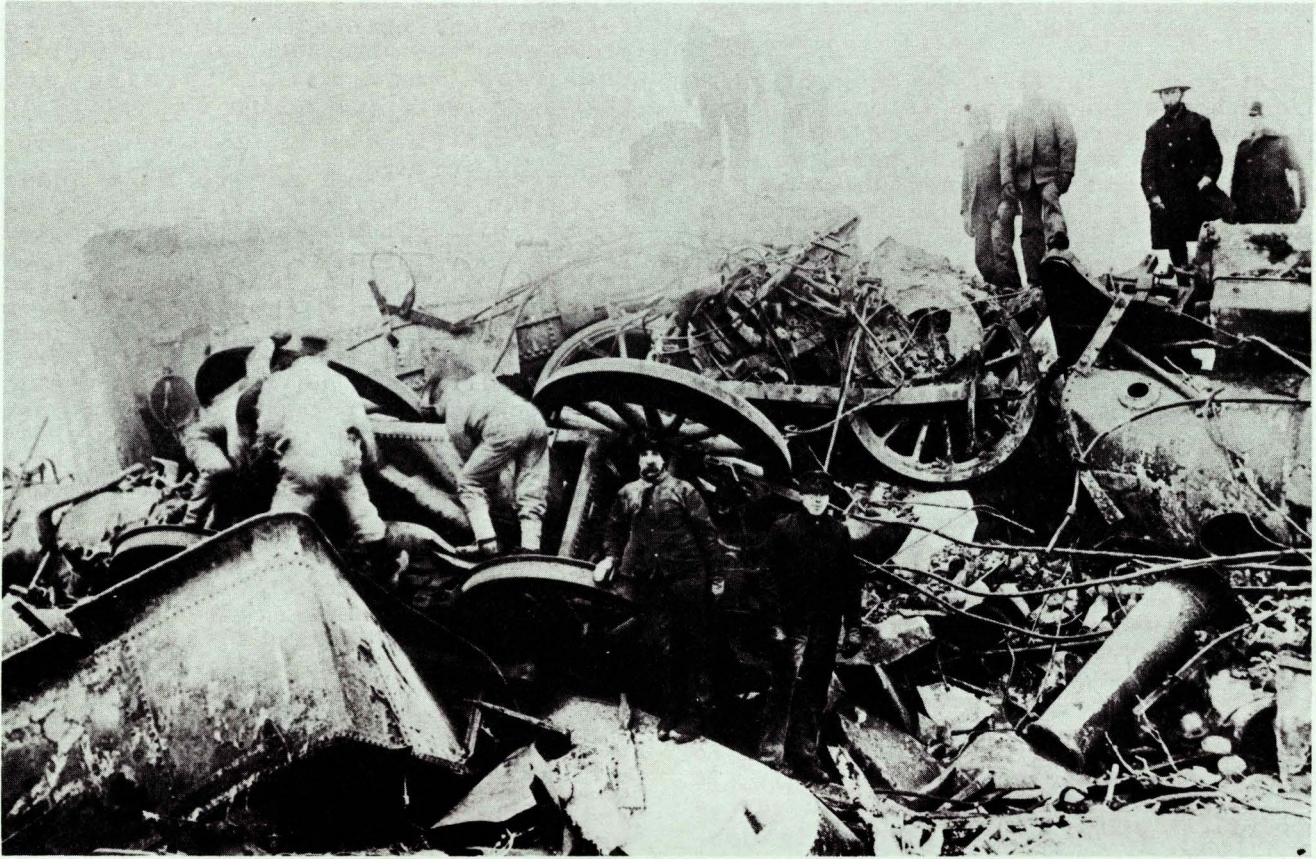
#### CULTURAL HERITAGE WEEK

In 1979 an act was passed to establish a week in mid-March to bring attention to the importance of Maine's cultural heritage. This year the Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities invites you to participate in CULTURAL HERITAGE WEEK, a celebration of Maine's people, on March 10-16, 1986.

Many organizations throughout Maine are planning special events, performances, exhibits, parties, open houses, festivals, films, lectures, and demonstrations all to share the pride of their community. The Commission is coordinating State House activities and organizing statewide publicity. We are also producing a poster listing all of the events. If your organization would like to participate in any way, big or small, please let us know by February 10, 1986.

Join us in applauding Maine's Cultural Heritage.

Contact: Amanda S. McQuiddy  
Traditional Arts Coordinator  
Maine State Commission on the Arts  
and Humanities  
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Augusta, Maine 04333  
289-2724 or 773-1192



"Wreck on the Grand Trunk Railway" (NAFOH P-572)

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