Pennsylvania Dutch Quilts
The FOLKLIFE STUDIES MOVEMENT

By DON YODER

The folklife studies movement is a 20th Century addition to scholarship. The term “folklife,” an English adaptation of the Swedish term folkliv, is building about itself a new and exciting discipline, which has already influenced research in the British Isles, from whence it has begun to make itself felt in the United States.

“Folklife Studies” or “Folklife Research”—Swedish folklivsforskning, German Volkslebenforschung or Volkskunde—is a total scholarly concentration on the folk-levels of a national or regional culture. In brief, folklife studies involves the analysis of a folk-culture in its entirety.

By folk culture is meant in this case the lower (traditional or “folk” levels) of a literate Western (European or American) society. Folk culture is traditional culture, bound by tradition and transmitted by tradition, and is basically (although not exclusively) rural and pre-industrial. Obviously it is the opposite of the mass-produced, mechanized, popular culture of the 20th Century.

“Folklife” is a term of Swedish origin, from folkliv, coined by scholars in the 19th Century, following the already established German term Volksleben. The term “folklife research” (folklivsforskning) was coined in 1909 at the University of Lund when Sven Lampa began lectures in Svensk Folklivsforskning (Swedish Folklife Research). The term Folklivsforskning is an exact equivalent of the German term Volkskunde and probably was coined with that intention.

To those who are beginning to use it in Britain and the United States, the term “folklife” is intended to include the total range of the folk-culture, material as well as oral or spiritual. It is consciously intended to be a term of broader

1 Information from the Folklivsarkivet, University of Lund, Sweden, Letter from Dr. Brita Egdard, 26 March 1963, which suggests that the earliest documented use of “folkliv” in Sweden came with Lovén’s book, Folklivet i Skotts härad (The Folklife of the Jurisdictional District of Skytt), published 1847. In 1878 it was used in the title of a new periodical, Svenska Landsmål och Svenskt Folklof (Swedish Dialects and Swedish Folklore), which is still in publication. Of “folklife research” (folklivsforskning), Ake Hultkrantz’s new dictionary, General Ethnological Concepts (Copenhagen, 1960), Volume I of the “International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore,” says only that it was “coined in Sweden in 1909.”
range than the English word "folklore," which, as everybody knows, was coined in England in 1846 by W. J. Thoms, to express in "basic Anglo-Saxon" what the English at the time meant by "popular antiquities." Thoms' definition of his new word was "the study of traditions, customs and superstitions current among common people in civilised countries." Following the definition favored by the English Folklore Society, folklore has been, with a few exceptions which we will discuss later, limited in range to the literary aspects of folk-culture—the folklore, the folksong, the proverb and other oral literature—in other words, the "lore" in folklore.

In a sense "folklore" and the folklore movement represent a 19th Century discovery, in the English-speaking lands, of isolated bits of folk-cultural memoranda—in other words, a partially conceived folk-culture, basically oral tradition. In working on his specialties, whether they were folksongs, folktales, or "superstitions," the folklorist did discover the folk level of his culture, but in limiting himself to oral aspects of culture he very frequently missed the setting of the songs or tales themselves in the total culture of his area. He performed the valuable function of preserving the songs, or tales, of a culture, but was rarely concerned to relate them functionally, sociologically, and psychologically to the culture which produced them.

The Folklore Studies Movement is the 20th Century rediscovery of the total range of the folk-culture (folklore). Folklore is not so much its parent as is anthropology, especially what Americans call cultural anthropology and Europeans ethnology or ethnography. The cultural anthropologist studies all aspects of a culture—farming, cooking, dress, ornament, houses, settlements, handicraft, trade, transportation, amusements, art, marriage, family, religion—to list a few of the subjects included as chapter headings in any basic recent text.

The 20th Century rediscovery of folklore and the consequent emergence of the academic discipline of Folklore Studies would seem to be a converging of several older academic disciplines. Basically, as we have said, it represents the application of the techniques of cultural anthropology—used so successfully with primitive cultures—to the folk levels of the literate cultures of Northern Europe, the British Isles, and now the United States. In addition to anthropology, geography, linguistics, religion, psychology, parapsychology, and sociology all have contributed to the creation of the new discipline of Folklore Studies. Scholars from all of these fields are involved.

Before looking at the emergence and progress of the Folklore Studies Movement, let us take a more detailed look at the vocabulary of the movement.

"Folklore" and "FolkLife"

There are three terms which we must look at as background for the Folklore Studies Movement. These are "folklore," "folk-life," and the German term Volkskunde, which antedates both.

The term "folklore" seems to have been coined independently of the already existing German word Volkskunde which had made its appearance in 1806.* In England the term "folklore"—originally hyphenated as "folk-lore"—was given widespread attention through the foundation of the

Folk-Lore Society in London in 1874, and in America through the foundation of the American Folklore Society in 1888.

The creator of the term "folk-lore," W. J. Thoms, in 1846 described it as "that department of the study of antiquities and archaeology which embraces everything relating to ancient observances and customs, to the notions, beliefs, traditions, superstitions, and prejudices of the common people." The definition adopted by the Folk-Lore Society of Britain is "the oral culture and traditions of the folk, that is folk-beliefs, customs, institutions, periodical, sayings, songs, stories, and arts and crafts, both as regards their origin and their present social functions." The second of these definitions is broader than the first. It attempts to broaden "folklore" to include not only custom and oral tradition, but also something of material culture (arts and crafts).

There are of course as many definitions of "folklore" as there are scholars working in the field. But basically there are two main trends in definitions of the term. One trend attempts to limit folklore to the spiritual folk-culture, the other attempts to stretch folklore to include both spiritual and material folk-culture. An example of the first is the Arnhem Congress definition (1955) of folklore as "the spiritual tradition of the folk, particularly oral tradition, as well as the science which studies this tradition." An example of the second or stretched definition of folklore is Stith Thompson's, who would have folklore involve "the dances, songs, tales, legends, and traditions, the beliefs and superstitions, and the proverbial sayings of peoples everywhere," as well as customs, practices, buildings, utensils, etc., if these latter belong to the materials of culture in a literate society.

The stretching of the term folklore to include the totality of folk culture would seem to be a recent trend, a belated admission of the insufficiency of the term folklore, as usually defined in the English-speaking countries, to deal with folk-culture as a whole.

For the term "Folk-Lore," which first appeared in the Athenaeum for 22 August, 1846, in a letter by "Ambrose Merton" (W. J. Thoms), see the Oxford English Dictionary, IV, 301. For Thoms and his defense of the originality of his coinage against charges that it was borrowed from the German, see Duncan Emrick, "Folk-Lore," William John Thoms, California Folklore Quarterly, V (1946), 355-374.


Compare the twenty or more definitions listed in Maria Leach (ed.), Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend (New York, 1949), 1; also Hultkrantz, op. cit., pp. 135-141.

The Arnhem Congress, which met at the Dutch Open-Air Museum at Arnhem in Gelderland, 20-24 September 1956, was called by Director Wimferd Roukens of the Open-Air Museum for the specific purpose of determining upon international terminology for the folklore-folklore field of research. Roukens proposed the problem in his article, "Folklore. Ein Name und eine Gefahr?", Bijdragen en Mededelingen, XX (1956), 2-9. At the Congress, certain delegates favored "Ethnology" or "European Ethnology" for the international name of the science they were creating. However, the West German, Austrian, and Swiss representatives, who came from the highly scientific development of Volkskunde, opposed the merging of the term Volkskunde into Ethnology, which would have meant a serious loss of prestige for the Volkskunde movement. The Congress emphasized the pressing need for an international term corresponding to the Scandinavian Folkkunskorsamling. For the Arnhem Congress, see the Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde, II (1956), 264; also Volkskunde, 66 (1955), 139-143.

V. Hultkrantz, op. cit., p. 136. See also Stith Thompson (ed.), Four Symposia on Folklore (Bloomington, Indiana, 1953), for debates on the scope of folklore at the Midcentury International Folklore Conference, held at Indiana University in the Summer of 1953. This was perhaps the first national forum at which the term "folklore" was given attention in the United States, principally through the participation of Sigurd Erixon. However, as late as 1953 Stith Thompson complained that "both folklorists and ethnologists in America have failed to make adequate systematic studies of the material culture and customs of the dominant white groups, mostly of European origin. Folk-life in the sense in which the Europeans use it has seldom seemed to be the business of either; but it must be hoped that some of the problems now so well worked on by Swedes, Finns, Irish, French, and others who will be assembling in the Ethnological Congress in Vienna this summer may appeal to our own investigators. It matters little whether they call themselves folklorists or ethnologists or anthropologists" (Stith Thompson, "Advances in Folklore Studies," in A. L. Kroeber (ed.), Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory (Chicago, 1953), pp. 592-593).
For instance, Lord Raglan, in his presidential address before the British Folklore Society in 1946 suggested that it was high time that the Society live up to its broadened definition of folklore. While "arts and crafts" were included in the Society's definition of folklore they had at that time yet to make their appearance in the society's journal, "the contributions to which are almost entirely confined to superstition and what is known as oral literature." He goes on to suggest the need for study of the material culture—cart types and rural architecture, for two examples. "It should, in my opinion, be the task of this Society to collect, and publish in convenient form, information on all aspects of folk life, using that term in its widest sense, in the hope of enabling us to find out how and why changes in custom and fashion come about, and therefore developing a real science of folklore."

The American Folklore Society, like its British parent, has also wrestled with the definition of folklore and has tried to broaden its sights. The results have been disappointing. In a 1957 symposium, "A Theory for American Folklore," there is not a single reference to the "folklore" approach and its possible relation to the "folklore" approach. The key article by Richard Dorson pays lip-service to "folk-culture" and the contributions anthropologists can make to folklore studies, but the image of "folklore" that one retains after reading his suggestions is still limited to oral literature plus custom plus folk art (he does mention "Pennsylvania Dutch fraktur").

In his "prepared comments" on Dorson's address, Melville J. Herskovits praises Dorson's "consideration of the

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*Melville J. Herskovits, "Prepared Comments," Journal of American Folklore, 72 (1959), 216-220. Herskovits was more specific in an earlier article, "Folklore after a Hundred Years: A Problem in Redefinition," Journal of American Folklore, 66 (1953), 89-100, which does contain a brief mention of the "folk-life" or "Nordic Ethnology" approach in Scandinavia and points out the fact that from the very beginning Volkskunde has had a far wider scope than folklore. See also William R. Bascom, "Folklore and Anthropology," Journal of American Folklore, 66 (1953), 283-290: "Folklore, to the anthropologist, is a part of culture and not the whole of culture. It includes myths, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles, the texts of ballads and other songs, and other forms of less importance, but not folk art, folk dance, folk music, folk costume, folk medicine, folk custom, or folk belief" (p. 285).
In more recent years, the symposium “Folklore Research Around the World,” which fills the entire October–December issue of the Journal of American Folklore for 1961, shows almost total unawareness of folklore research. The one article that does mention several Scandinavian folklore research institutions makes no attempt to differentiate them in method and range from the earlier folklore institutions."

May it be that, despite the American and British attempts—halfhearted at that—to stretch the term folklore to include material culture, scholarship in the English-speaking countries has been seriously hindered, is hindered, and will continue to be hindered by the psychological limitations of the word “folklore” itself, whereas European scholars schooled in the Volkskunde and Volkskultur concepts, have without embarrassment accepted material culture as well as oral culture as their natural field of study?

The German term Volkskunde is related to both “folklore” and “folk life.” It is the eldest of the three. In fact “folklore” is an attempt—not a successful one, as time seems to be proving—to find an equivalent in English. “Folk Life” (Swedish folkkultur) is a successful rendering which preserves the total range of interest expressed in the highly developed science of Volkskunde.

Perhaps the late Richard Weiss, the outstanding Swiss folklorist, and one of the shapers of the contemporary folklore movement, can help to clarify American as well as British thought on the subject of the relation of folklore and folk life. According to Richard Weiss, Volkskunde ist die Wissenschaft vom Volksleben. Das Volksleben besteht aus den zwischen Volke und Volkskultur wirkenden Wechselbeziehungen sowohl sie durch Gemeinschaft und Tradition bestimmt sind.” "Volkskunde” (which I would translate “Folklore Studies”) is the science of folk life. Folklore consists of the mutual relations operative between folk and culture, so far as they are determined by society and tradition.”


Richard Weiss, Volkskunde der Schweiz (Zurich, 1966). Richard Weiss (1907–1969) has had deep influence upon folklore (Volkskunde) scholarship in the German-speaking lands through his writings on Volkskunde-theory, principally the work cited, and his teaching at the University of Zurich. His untimely death last summer has deprived the folklore studies movement of one of its principal leaders. For a summary of his importance in the movement, see Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde, Vol. 58 (1962), No. 4, 183–199.

Sigurd Erixon, a founder of “folk life research” as an academic discipline, defines it as “the science of man as a cultural being . . . Folk life research is essentially to be regarded as a branch of general anthropology or ethnology and may therefore be called ethnology . . . The subject of the folk life research we are concerned with is, in my opinion, a comparative culture research on a regional basis, with a sociological and historical orientation and with certain psychological aspects.” The regional delimitation has led Erixon and others to suggest the alternate name “Regional Ethnology” or “European Ethnology.”

In the recent ethnological dictionary issued by Unesco, Prof. Hultkrantz of the University of Stockholm comments on Erixon’s definition as follows. Folk life research focuses upon the whole range of culture—material, social, and spiritual. Hence it is not an equivalent to “folklore.” It is best to say that folk life research includes folklore. In comparing it, however, with general ethnology, folk life research has a regional basis—its aim is to study folk culture in civilized countries. Hultkrantz suggests modestly that for the United States it may prove a better term than “folklore”—it could (better than the vague or more limited term folklore) serve as a name for that discipline which studies the indigenous culture of the white settlers in its totality.”

The term “European Ethnology” has been proposed, and used by some scholars, for the discipline of folk life studies. The advantage of the terminology is that it does set the discipline against its background in anthropology. A disadvantage is that while the term is useful in Europe, to “translate” it into “American Ethnology” brings confusion since ethnology in America has normally been associated with the study of primitive (Indian) cultures of North America, as for instance in the publications of the Bureau of American Ethnology, founded 1879 specifically to study the American Indian and his culture.

FolkLife Studies in Europe

Among the institutions for research in folklore which have arisen in Europe are (1) the International Association for European Ethnology and Folklore, (2) regional folklore societies such as the Ulster Folk Life Society (1956) and the Society for Folk Life Studies (1961), (3) the Folk Life Archive, a research institute usually in connection with a university, and (4) the Open-Air Museum. Let us look at each of these phases.

Hultkrantz, op. cit., p. 133.


On the varying uses of “ethnology” and “ethnography,” see T. K. Fenniman, A Hundred Years of Anthropology (New York, 1959).
Out of the working together of Scandinavian, Continental, and British Isles scholars has come the International Ethnological (Volkskunde or Folkkultur) Association for Central, Northern and Western Europe—usually referred to as “The International Association for European Ethnology and Folklore”—which resulted from a conference at Lund in November, 1935. Its purpose is “to facilitate researches in cultural and folkloristic subjects over an extensive field, ultimately projected to embrace all Europe, by the exchange of information among constituent countries and by the co-ordination of research methods and results wherever possible.”

At the Association’s first international congress, at Edinburgh in 1937, Prof. H. Geijer of Upsala, in the presidential address, suggested that the work with which the congress scholars were occupied “is devoted to sciences that are still young. These sciences are not yet in a satisfactory and definite state, in relation to the older sciences. Our studies are concentrated round human nature and the development of mankind, but from other points of view than those with which the older sciences mostly deal. The most usual and accessible men—that is, the men of our own countries—are the latest to be made objects of scientific interest and research. The exotic and the prehistoric races have occupied the minds of the scientists more than those nearer home.” Not only must science turn to the human cultures closer to home, i.e., the folklife approach—but the materials of folklore and folklife must be studied in relation to the culture as a whole. The Association adopted as its official organ the periodical Folklore.

The regional folklife societies have arisen in Britain in particular as a conscious effort to interest scholars as well as lay collectors in the concept of folklife. In 1960 there was organized the Ulster Folklife Society, whose aim is “to encourage the study of local history and the collecting and recording of material relating to the folklife and traditions of Northern Ireland.” It grew out of the Committee on Ulster Folklife and Traditions which had been organized in 1952. The Society has taken over the publication of the Committee’s annual volume, Ulster Folklife, founded 1955 and now in its ninth year. The first annual meeting of the Ulster Folklife Society was held in the Spring of 1961.

In the Fall of 1961 the first meeting of the (British) Society for Folk Life Studies was held at University College, London, with the second meeting at the University of Reading in September, 1962. Its purpose is “to further the study of traditional ways of life in Great Britain and Ireland and to provide a common meeting point for the many people and institutions engaged with the various aspects of the subject.” The first number of the annual journal of the Society, Folk Life, will appear in the Summer of 1963.

The basic unit in European folklife research, however, is not the international association or the national folklife society, but the Folklife Archive. These are national or regional institutions. There are many names for this type of institution: for example, there are the Folkkvinnaforeningen (Lund), Institutet for Folketingsgransning (Oslo), Volks-
kundliche Kommission (Münster/Westfalen), Institut van Volkskunde (Amsterdam), and the Schweizerisches Institut für Volkskunde (Basel). Some of these “institutes” and “archives” are connected with universities, others with national societies or academies of science, some are state supported and others are privately supported. But basically all these institutions have a common approach and a common set of research techniques. They house, first of all, research libraries which, with few exceptions, put American university “folklore” collections quite in the shade. Furthermore, sizable permanent staffs are engaged in collecting materials in the field and archiving these materials in the central archive. Most of these institutes are involved in museum work, especially open-air museum work.

The common approach of these institutions is the folklife approach—whether it is called folklife, Volkskunde, or Regional Ethnology. The common techniques are the questionnaire, the local collector and informant, the kind indexing of the materials brought in from the field, and the cartographical method (Folk Atlas) with its distribution.

At the organization meeting in 1961, Dr. Jorwerth C. Price, Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum, and Mr. J. Genet Jenkins of the same institution were elected President and Honorary Secretary. The papers read were all on the theme “Folk Life and Its Related Disciplines.” The papers were entitled: “The Study of Folk Life,” by Prof. Sigurd Berg of Stockholm; “Language and Folk Life,” by Dr. R. C. McInnes; “Archaeology and Folk Life,” by Mr. Basil R. S. Megaw, Director, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh; “Archaeology and Folk Life,” by Dr. R. B. Wood-Jones, University of Manchester; and “Geography and Folk Life,” by Dr. R. B. Buchanan, Queen’s University, Belfast.
tion maps of terms, customs, and types of material objects (house-types, barn-types, cart-types, etc.)."

The exciting thing about these institutions, apart from their revolutionary concept of the holistic approach to regional folk-culture, is that they are oriented in two directions. A great many of them are connected with universities—the Folklivsarkivet at Lund and the Volkskundliche Kommission at Munich for two examples. The staffs are on the university staff and supervise research in this growing field. In the past year, 1961–1962, for instance, five doctoral dissertations in folk life studies resulted from the work of the Volkskundliche Kommission in Munich.

The second orientation of these institutions is that they are rooted in the population through the local informants who either contribute oral recorded or written answers to the printed questionnaires which are sent out on every possible subject in folk-cultural studies. Holland’s Instituut voor Volkskunde has, under the direction of Dr. P. J. Meertens, over 2000 local collaborators—school teachers and others—in every area of Holland, who are constantly sending in materials which they have collected in their home areas. In some cases also the institutes are related to the public schools. An example: the Irish Folk Life Commission has used reports on folktales written down on their request by school children in the Gaeltacht.

While the original folk life institutions are Scandinavian and Continental, the movement and its methods spread to the British Isles beginning with the creation of the Irish Folklore Commission in 1935 by Prof. James H. Delargy. Admittedly influenced by and based on Scandinavian, particularly Swedish, techniques for folklore study, the Commission has in turn influenced research in “these islands”—as the Scots and Irish are now somewhat over-tactfully calling what used to be known as the “British Isles.” There are also the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagan’s, Cardiff, and the Ulster Folk Life Society and Ulster Folk Museum, connected through its leadership with Queen’s University, Belfast, and now the latest offspring of the Swedish-Irish-Scottish chain of influence—the Folk Life Survey at the University of Leeds in Yorkshire, initiated in 1960 and headed by Professor Stewart F. Sanderson, who was trained in the School of Scottish Studies."

And so the influence continues. The research impulse and techniques generated in the Volkskunde movement in Germany and the Folklivsforskning movement in Sweden, are applied to the British Isles and eventually to the United States.

The Open-Air Museum

So far we have spoken only of research institutions of the library-architectural type. Most of these, however, have an adjunct institution, an annex called the “folk museum” or “open-air museum.”

To illustrate the material aspects of the folk-culture, a new type of museum was developed in Scandinavia beginning in the 1890’s—the “open-air museum” or sometimes, simply, “folk museum.”

American tourists are familiar with the oldest of these institutions, the Skansen Open-Air Museum located magnificently on a hilltop on one of Stockholm’s wooded islands. Here, beginning in 1891 under the inspiration of the founder, Dr. Artur Hazelius, were rebuilt typical farmhouses, manor-houses, barns and other outbuildings and a magnificent folk-church brought from all parts of Sweden and representative of regional variant types. Hazelius had earlier founded the Nordisk Museum (Nordisk Museet) to study Swedish peasant culture, of which Skansen is a public annex whose purpose is to display to the public, in their natural settings, rural and town buildings from all parts of Sweden.


For the Swedish museum movement, see Museum, II (1949), No. 1, entire issue.

Pennsylvania Dutch food specialties are served each year at the Folk Festival by local church and grange groups.
With Skansen as model, the open-air museum has spread throughout Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia. In Sweden over 400 communities maintain open-air museums or smaller folk museums to display aspects of the regional culture. For instance, at Harnösand, an 80-building open-air museum deals with the Lapp culture. The Culture-Historical Museum (Kulturhistoriska Museet) at Lund is a town museum, with town houses and conventional museum buildings of exhibits. Some small towns have parish museums, some estate owners have private open-air museums. And then there are the craft museums, as that for the glass-making craft at Vaxjö. This frenzy of museum activity—much, though not all of it, directed toward the study and display of the folk level of culture—has led in Sweden to mass collecting of objects of the material culture (how we need this drive in Pennsylvania!) and to the creation of an able corps of officially commissioned and university trained museum men.

From Sweden the open-air museum has spread to Denmark, Norway, Finland, and the continent, where it combines with the German museum movement in which Volkskunde scholars have long since united with regional historians in the highly developed German study of Heimatkunde. Many small German, Swiss and Austrian communities have a Heimatmuseum which displays materials from the folk or peasant level of the regional culture along with emphasis on regional history, architecture, fine arts, costume. Most of these, however, are not open-air museums but folk museums of the more usual museum-building sort. The largest and best open-air museum on the continent of Europe south of Scandinavia is the 220-acre Nederlands Openluchtmuseum (Dutch Open-Air Museum) at Arnhem in Gelderland, Netherlands, founded in 1912 and formally opened in 1918.1

In the British Isles the first folk museum of the open-air variety was the museum of Highland culture begun by Miss Isabel F. Grant on Iona in 1936—since 1944 “An Feasgadh” (The Shelter) at Kingussie, Inverness-shire, Scotland.2 In 1955 the management was taken over by the four universities of Scotland, in collaboration with the Royal Scottish Museum. Other folk museums in the British Isles are the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagan’s Castle, Cardiff, opened 1946; Blaise Castle House, Bristol, opened 1949; the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading, opened 1950; the Manx Museum at Cregneash on the Isle of Man; the West Yorkshire Folk Museum at Halifax, opened 1953; and the Ulster Folk Museum near Belfast in Northern Ireland, opened 1955.

In the United States the trend has been toward the “pioneer village” or “restoration village” type of open-air museum. The pioneer here was that for Norwegian-American life at Decorah, Iowa, founded in 1925—an example of Scandinavian influence. The most spectacular of the restoration projects is Colonial Williamsburg, begun in 1926. The Farmer’s Museum operated by the New York Historical Society at Cooperstown, New York, deals with a wide range of folk-cultural subjects in its displays and annual seminars for research students. Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts and the Shelburne Museum in Vermont are open-air museums dealing with New England culture. The Dearborn Village at Greenfield, Michigan, is an open-air museum but on the historical-museum plan, with “association items” moved to the site.

It is through the direct inspiration of the open-air museums of Scandinavia and the British Isles—with emphasis on the folk culture and upon the museum as a research institution—that the Pennsylvania Folklore Museum at Lancaster is being developed.

1Den Gamle By (The Old Town) at Aarhus in Jutland, begun in 1909, is also an open-air museum of the town variety, balancing the rural folk museum at Liisby near Copenhagen, the Danok Frilandsmuseet.


Regional Folk-Cultures in America

In suggesting the possibilities for folklife studies in the United States, we must first point out that folklife studies is a very young discipline, and, like all new approaches to scholarship, it has to make its way amid the earlier and already established approaches to the study of American life. These already established approaches study American life on the national, regional, and local levels, and include (1) the old-line historical approach with historical societies and historical journals interested in basically military and political history, with some emphasis upon "social history" which begins to approach folklife studies. There is (2) the sociological approach which studies American civilization as a whole. There is (3) the folklore approach which has been crystallized into several academic schools and departments of folklore—those at the Universities of California, Indiana, and Pennsylvania being the principal examples. There is (4) the young and growing discipline of American Civilization, which has however basically concentrated on urban rather than on rural America, and on creative rather than folk-culture, leaving the rural field of traditional regional culture free for the development of folklife studies. Folklore Studies is a new approach. We in America who are concerned with the new discipline feel very much as Dr. Torworth Peate did when he stated, in 1958, in an address before the British Association for the Advancement of Science, that "... the study of folk life is a new discipline and one so far unrecognized by all universities in Britain." So far this is true also of America. There are plenty of scholars working in the field, who look for inspiration to the organized movements in Scandinavia and the British Isles, but thus far there are no departments or schools of folklife studies connected with any American university. However, since Dr. Peate made his statement, a chair of Folk Life Studies has been founded at the University of Leeds in 1960. Possibly during the 1960's progress can be made also in the United States in the recognition of folklife studies as an academic discipline.

One of the difficulties is that one can study "American folklore"—basically folksongs sung or folktales told in America—but to study "American folk-life" one has to divide the folk level of American culture into its regional components. There just is no "American folk-culture" as a whole, in the same sense that one can speak of a Swedish folk-culture, or a Welsh folk-culture, or a Highlands folk-culture.

New England with its Puritan-Yankee culture—its native types of farmhouse, barns, and meetinghouses, its baked beans and boiled dinners, its accent and folkspeech—is one of these. This regional culture has influenced Long Island, Central and Western New York, Northern Pennsylvania, and the Midwest, as well as the Maritimes in Canada. The area of Holland Dutch settlement (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware) can offer certain visible signs of a Netherlands-American folk-culture—the hay barrack being the best specific example. The Upland South and the Deep South had and have differing folk-cultures. The study of these American regions, and the others, can be aided greatly by concentration on folk-cultural concepts.

The Pennsylvania folk-culture is important to the nation for two basic reasons. Here the American process of ac-

"There is a fifth approach, regional rather than national and often amateur rather than academic—the filiopietistic ethnic-genealogical approach represented by the ethnic societies—which have stressed "Scotch-Irishness," "Huguenotness," or "Pennsylvania Germanness" rather than folk-culture as such. This approach is related to the D.A.R. approach to American history, which is highly selective in what it considers of value in the American heritage. The Pennsylvania Folklore Society is concerned not with genealogical heritage but with culture, principally folk-culture. For some of the problems raised by the ethnic approach to history, see John J. Appel, "Immigrant Historical Societies in the United States, 1880-1950," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in American Civilization, University of Pennsylvania, 1960. For the D.A.R. approach, see Wallace E. Davies, Patriotism on Parade: The Story of Veterans' and Hereditary Organizations in America, 1783-1900 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955), Ch. III. "Blue Blood Turns Red, White, and Blue."
The "founding fathers" brought varied talents to the institution. Professors Shoemaker and Frey had Ph.D.'s in Germanic studies from the University of Illinois and were both intensely interested in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect and dialect literature. Professor Shoemaker had made studies of Amish life, German imprints and bibliography of Pennsylvania; Professor Frey had worked on Amish music and Amish folkspeech and Pennsylvania folksongs. The third member of the triumvirate brought a background of study in the history of religion, with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and two and a half years of study and teaching at Union Theological Seminary (1946-1948, 1950). Professor Shoemaker had taught at Lafayette College (1941-1942, 1945-1946), and Muhlenberg College (1946-1947), had served as Curator of the Berks County Historical Society (1947), and in 1948 was called by President Theodor Distler of Franklin and Marshall College to join the faculty to found and head the new Department of American Folklore—the first such department actually established in the nation. Prof. Frey had taught at Southern Presbyterian College in South Carolina and Lehigh University, and had joined the Franklin and Marshall faculty in 1946. I joined the faculty in 1949. All of us had "published" in the Pennsylvania Dutch field—Professor Shoemaker as editor of newspaper columns in the Reading and Lancaster papers—Prof. Frey had issued the first popular Pennsylvania Dutch grammar of the 20th Century, and I had published articles on folklore, folksong traditions, folk speech, and historical source materials on the 18th Century emigration from the Continent of Europe to America. The three of us also represented somewhat different regional backgrounds—Prof. Shoemaker from a completely dialect-speaking area of Lehigh County, Prof. Frey from the Susquehanna-Rivers area of York and Dauphin Counties, and I was rooted in the Allegheny Mountains of Central Pennsylvania. It was a good combination!

Our first step was to found the journal (now Pennsylvania Folklore) which we baptized The Pennsylvania Dutchman. The first issue appeared on May 5, 1949, as a weekly, 8-page tabloid-format. We sprinkled it full of dialect as we hoped it would become widely read in the areas of Eastern and Central Pennsylvania where the dialect was still alive. We found, however, that the largest number of our subscribers were "ex-Dutchmen," or nostalgic Dutchmen, who no longer lived in the dialect areas but were urbanites, or even ex-Pennsylvanians. We built up a large subscribers list (3500). The journal was folksy (in the better sense of this overused term) and it had definite appeal to those interested in the Pennsylvania Dutch and their folkways.

"Professor Shoemaker's Ph.D. dissertation was done in 1941 on the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect of the Arthur, Illinois, Amish community. Professor Frey's dissertation was done in 1941 on the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect of Eastern York County, Pennsylvania.

This was Professor Shoemaker's first application of his European questionnaire techniques to folk-cultural problems. This was later continued in the opening numbers of The Pennsylvania Dutchman. These columns in the Reading and Lancaster papers elicited wide response from local residents in Berks and Lancaster Counties who contributed many letters to the files of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society. Professor Shoemaker's dialect radio and TV programs in the 1950s made use of direct questioning, asking for material on various subjects, to elicit answers from listeners.

'A Simple Grammar of Pennsylvania Dutch' (Clinton, South Carolina, 1942). From 1943 to 1946 Professors Frey, Shoemaker, and Ralph Wood published an all-dialect periodical entitled Der Pennsylvaniaisch Deitsch Bilschluipf, with readers referred to as BIL, which in a sense was the forerunner of The Pennsylvania Dutchman.
In 1950 we held our first Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival in the small and typically Pennsylvania Dutch town of Kutztown in Berks County, halfway between Reading and Allentown. Kutztown is the heart of the dialect-speaking area and of the so-called “Gay Dutch” culture as distinct from the “Plain Dutch” culture of Lancaster and other counties. The festival, held the first year for 5 days, attracted nationwide attention, and has since grown steadily, attracting from 100,000 to 175,000 visitors in an eight-day period over the 4th of July national holiday. With the terrific interest the American tourist has in the Dutch culture—we were able to have on display or demonstration everything in the folk culture from cookery to witchcraft (Hexers). The emphasis has been away from dead or static exhibits and is on live demonstrations, with stage programs on every subject, from water witching to funeral lore, with participation by all our demonstrators.”

Of folk festivals in America there are basically three types: (1) the National Folk Festival of Sarah Gertrude Knott, which is principally a showcase for ethnic folksong and folkdance groups; (2) the craft fairs in the Carolinas and elsewhere, stressing local handicrafts; and (3) our own Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival which attempts to display and demonstrate all aspects of the regional folk-culture.

While the folk festival idea was borrowed from European originals, Americans have made significant contributions toward widening its scope so that it can serve the folklife movement. America is folk festival conscious at the present time, and our Society is happy that it could influence other regional festivals, like the Pennsylvania Dutch Festival of Somerset County, at Springs in the Allegheny Mountains, and the Mennonite Folk Festival held among the “Low Dutch” Mennonites of North Newton, Kansas.

The folk festival has been the Society’s chief means of financial support. Since it is not a state-supported institution, its funds for research purposes must be privately raised, and the folk festivals have provided the major part of them.

In 1951, after working with “Pennsylvania Dutch” folk-culture, we had come to the conclusion that we needed to broaden our sights to include Pennsylvania folk-culture in its totality—Scotch-Irish, Quaker, Welsh, 19th Century Coal Region and other sub-cultures—and Western Pennsylvania.

*The very name “folk festival” suggests its dependence upon the earlier German word Volksfest. The regional folk festival (Volksfest), stressing dialect, regional cuisine and wines, folk costume, folk-dancing and folk-song, was flourishing in the early part of the 20th Century in Germany.
An Old Order Mennonite barn-raising at Elmiria, Ontario. Pennsylvania's "plain" traditions have influenced many other areas in the United States and Canada. This particular building is a horse-barn built to house the farmers' horses when country folk come to town to shop.

as well as Eastern and Central Pennsylvania. In accordance with this broader purpose, we finally changed the name of our journal, now a quarterly, into Pennsylvania Folklife, with the Winter 1967 issue—Vol. IX, No. 1. This was the first official use of the term "folklore" in the United States. At the same time we changed the Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center into the present Pennsylvania Folklife Society.

The Pennsylvania Folklife Society, like its parent institutions in Europe, has a three-fold task—(1) the study of the folk-culture in its entirety, using the techniques of the folklore studies movement; (2) the study and archiving of the material collected, whether from field work or historical source-materials; and (3) making available the published results of the research, in book, pamphlet, and periodical form, to the nation and the world.

A few of the results:
1. 13 volumes of our periodical, now Pennsylvania Folklife.
2. 14 years of the most successful folk festival in the nation—the Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival at Kutztown, 1950-1963—which has become the largest event of its kind in the nation and in the world.
4. A series of scholarly books: Christmas in Pennsylvania—A Folk Cultural Approach; The Pennsylvania Barn; Eastertide in Pennsylvania; Songs Along the Mahantongo; and Pennsylvania Spirituals.

It has been gratifying to see the wider influence of the Society's work on research and public education. H. L. Mencken picked up our theory on why Pennsylvania Dutch family names are spelled as they are and used it in The American Language;” our folksong collecting has resulted in several discs of Pennsylvania Dutch folksongs and the inclusion (for the first time) of examples of Pennsylvania Dutch songs in American school texts on music. Several children's books have been written from material we published.

zoobarn at the Philadelphia Zoo was designed from an illustration of the "lex sign" barn in our periodical and even barn-book. Paul Hindemith used a Pennsylvania Dutch folk tune which we had recorded in the Mahantongo Valley as a theme in his latest symphony, the one commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra for the Pittsburgh Bicentennial in 1955. The list could go on and on. The influence continues to spread.

The two largest research projects of the Pennsylvania Folklife Society are:
1. The Personal Name Index of Pennsylvania Surnames—a card catalogue of over 200,000 cards, indexing all names in The Pennsylvania Dutchman, the 50-plus volumes of the Pennsylvania German Society Proceedings, the 20-plus volumes of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society. This unique research tool is now housed at the Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
2. The Pennsylvania Folk-Cultural Index-the Kartei of some 300,000 cards on the European folk-lore, archive plan, constantly growing, indexing materials, materials, and history, and every source, field collection as well as historical materials, on every subject included under folklore.

The culmination of the program is the Pennsylvania Folklife Museum, founded in 1961 on the Society's museum farm on Route 30 five miles east of Lancaster. This is and will be the headquarters for our continuing broadening research program as well as the site for our permanent open-air museum, on the Society's grounds, to illustrate the main aspects of Pennsylvania Dutch architecture, cookery, religion, costume, transportation, etc.

Research Plans of the Pennsylvania Folklife Society
The Pennsylvania Folklife Society proposes to start the next ten years, as funds or endowments become available, the entire folk-culture of Pennsylvania, its Continental and British Isles roots, and its spread into and upon other areas of the United States. The following projects will be surveyed from every possible source:

1. Folk Agriculture—agriculture as a way of life, the house, farmstead, farm buildings, kitchen gardens, patterns, crops, animals. The seasonal rhythm of local life. Marketing, droving. Farming tools: tills, windmills, etc.

2. Folk Architecture—domestic, meetinghouse, church architecture, the materials of architecture, Continental and British Isles patterns of house exteriors, types of roofing: thatch, tile, shingle.

3. Folk Cookery—seasonal, weekday, and Smokery; what was traditionally eaten for breakfast, dinner; meals carried to the men in the fields, an o'clock piece, etc. Folk-cultural history of meat dishes: scrapple, roilde, sausage, mush, dumplings, kraut, schnitz un gnepp, etc. The Pennsylvania culture; Pennsylvania candy-culture; Pennsylvania cookie-culture. Bread and bake-oven.

"H. L. Mencken, Supplement II: The American Language (New York, 1966), pp. 410-411, picked up our article "Surnamed Surnames," which proposed the theory that the spellings of many Pennsylvania Dutch family names (example, Hirschberger into Horshberger, Huber into Meyer into Moyer) represent not an Americanizing of the names but rather a dialecting of the 19th Century German education dwindled in Pennsylvania during the 19th Century, Pennsylvanians came to spell their names the way they pronounced them in the dialect.
4. Folk Costume—"plain" and "gay" costume. Week-day and churchgoing dress. Men's, women's, and children's dress. Wedding and funeral dress.

5. Folk Crafts—all the traditional crafts of the rural community—weaving, spinning, basketry, quilting, blacksmithing, coopering, etc.—and the relation of the craftsman to the community.

6. Folk Literature—the oral literature (folktales, folklore, folk-rhymes); the broadside and the broadside ballad; the Volksbücher of Pennsylvania; the will; the spiritual testament; the baptismal letter (Gedeldbrief); the love-knot or valentine.

7. Folk Medicine—natural (herbal) folk medicine and occult folk-medicine (powowering).

8. Folk Music—the folksong: children's songs, courting songs, canaller's songs, lumbermen's songs, camp-meeting spirituals, Amish folk-hymnody. The folk dance, fiddling styles, calling styles, sung play-party games. Instruments: fiddle, sither, fife, etc.

9. Folk Recreation—battalion, snitzing party, kicking match, log rolling, spinning party, singing school, quilting party, frolic. The place of the dance in rural society. The folk tale, jest, and humor in the folk-culture. The attitude of organized religion to these aspects of the folk-culture.

10. Folk Religion—survivals of witchcraft (Hexerei) and occult folk-healing (Braucherei). Relation of the Church to the folk-culture in baptism, confirmation, marriage, communion, the funeral. Church and church customs. The relation of religion and folk art: religious folk art, fraktur, the tombstone.


12. Folk Transportation—the farm wagon, the market wagon, the ox cart, the Conestoga wagon, the sleigh, the sled, the stone boat, the bob sled. "Plain" transportation in the 20th Century.

13. The Folk Year—the calendar and the folk-culture. Almanac and church year: the relation of official church holidays (active or obsolete) to the folk practices and beliefs associated with them, especially Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, New Year's Day, and Halloween.

In addition we hope to enlarge our basic research tool, the Pennsylvania Folk-Cultural Index, by indexing every travel book about Pennsylvania, every county history, every significant 19th Century newspaper. We hope to add to this a companion research tool—a Pictorial Index of Pennsylvania Folklife, from every available drawing or printed illustration on every folk-cultural subject.

We hope to produce many significant pamphlets, at least one major book a year, and to continue and enlarge our periodical, Pennsylvania Folklife.

We hope to be in position in the future to aid graduate study in Pennsylvania folklife by grants to university students.

We have a small but devoted staff of workers. We need more full-time or part-time recorders and interviewers in the field. All this depends upon the funds that our Society will need to expand its pioneering work in the field of American folklife studies.

Thus far we have paid our own way, supporting our program mainly through the folk festivals. But for the continuation and enlargement of our research program, which is the heart of our work, the Society will need endowment.

The Application of the Folklife Concept

The application of the folklife concept in the United States could, first of all, provide the necessary corrective to the undisciplined or commercially-slanted "collecting" of "folk-art" and "antiques." In Pennsylvania and elsewhere the "collector" has set his sights on commercially valuable pieces—i.e., items which could be displayed decoratively in the urban home—and left the remaining aspects of the folk-culture behind to disintegrate. The "antique" collectors of the 19th and 20th Centuries ripped individual pieces out of their settings, the "folk art" collectors did the same. The collecting was valuable, as far as it went, and many collections are now in public institutions where, at last, proper attention can be given to their functional relation to the entire culture. Our hope is that in Pennsylvania, through the foundation of the Pennsylvania Folklife Society and its Folklife Museum, much more attention can be given to collecting reals for study and display, of every phase of the folk-culture.

Pennsylvania Christmas traditions have influenced the nation, from the Christmas tree to "Kriss Kringle."
BARN AT PENNSYLVANIA FOLKLIFE MUSEUM

This reconstructed brick barn represents the brick-end decorated barn found principally in Lancaster, York, Cumberland, Adams, and Franklin Counties.