Expressions: Folkways in Southern Illinois

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Expressions: Folkways in Southern Illinois is a booklet highlighting folk art and craft culture in southern Illinois. It was the product of the Southern Illinois Folk Arts Project research grant, directed by Terry Alliband. This book was created circa 1980.

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Cover: Ball-in-cage toy carved by Dorris Lingle of rural Pulaski County.

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The findings and conclusions of this project do not necessarily represent the views of the Illinois Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Additional material in slide-tape presentations is available from Learning Resources Service at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Researchers are invited to peruse the more than 3,000 slides and photographs and 80 hours of taped interviews generated by this project.

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INTRODUCTION

Two of the most sensitive interpretations of Southern Illinois, or "Little Egypt," folk culture have arrived at contrasting conclusions. On the one hand, a legendary folklorist has said: "A living folk culture is visible in Egypt, where all the customary forms of tradition cluster and lie close to the surface of daily life." Yet in a recent history of Illinois, Jensen questions the existence of a handicraft heritage in Egypt. He believes that "... it is a false myth to attribute a golden age of arts and crafts to the early settlers. Their craftmanship was limited to the bare necessities of life, and they showed little inventiveness or ingenuity." Therefore, they had little conscious heritage to pass on to succeeding generations. This notion that Southern Illinois has no folk heritage is disputed by the findings of the Southern Illinois Folk Arts Research Project. The project director wondered: Do folk customs and crafts still exist? Which of the ethnic groups still articulates its heritage? How strong are the surviving folkways?

These and similar questions underlay the planning and execution of the project. Now completed, the results of the fieldwork indicate a dominant Scotch-Irish Appalachian heritage, one or two surviving European immigrant communities, and a small black heritage. In terms of the groups with which Jensen was mainly concerned—the Scotch-Irish settlers from Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas—there can be little doubt there is a significant residue of individuals whose fiddle-playing, whittling, quilting, tall-tale telling, and basketmaking measure up to the best still surviving in the United States.

This dominant Scotch-Irish culture reflects the ethics planted by the initial settlers of Southern Illinois. These people, small-scale farmers seeking alternatives to working as wage servants in Kentucky and Tennessee, believed in the dignity of work and in the importance of solidarity and equality among workers. This often translated into efforts made to level people at least socially, if not economically.

Thus, there was little encouragement for the preservation of non-Scotch-Irish folk traditions. The physical and social pressures towards the homogeneity of the "melting pot" were intense; groups gradually began making less and less reference to their distinctive characteristics—speech, dress, folk customs, religious ceremonies—and sought to blend in with their neighbors.

The call of outside employment has lured young Egyptians at least since the 1930's. While many of the idealistic young people of Scotch-Irish descent who fled to urban areas for employment are now returning for their retirement; the children of eastern and southern European immigrant families are not. Gradually, segments of the folk heritage are being withdrawn.

The artists and craftsmen recorded in this book represent their peers and neighbors as well as themselves. The subject of many art works and handicrafts are local and often personal topics, rural in focus, which come from the life experience of the artist. These artists create visible symbols of feelings; they embody pride, affection, excitement, enchantment; anger, futurity, defensiveness, despair. In short, they reveal the emotional lifeblood of Egypt, as told by its most explicit, articulate spokespersons: its artists.

The artists recorded in this book are primarily older people whose techniques have been handed down through their families. One should not assume that younger people are not learning craft techniques. Indeed, there appears to be a growing interest among Southern Illinoisans in the folk arts and crafts of Egypt. But the character of Egypt is once again changing, as Northerners from the Upper Midwest are beginning to migrate to Southern Illinois in significant numbers. It is often these "newcomers" who are the avid students of whittling, game hunting, fox-hunting, hound-raising, quilting, and story telling. The irony, of course, is that one envisions a time when the perpetuation of these aspects of Southern Illinois will be due to people whose native heritage is not Southern Illinoisan.

At present however, the folk arts of Southern Illinois not only stand by themselves as interesting, beautiful, and important, but they are a significant key to understanding the beginnings of Illinois and its culture. 

The folk music of Southern Illinois, like that of other areas in the United States, has evolved from a number of different traditions. The collection made by the Project includes examples from Appalachian and southern traditions, some borrowings from country-western, and other popular song types found in Little Egypt.

The fiddle, one of the most commonly found folk instruments in the western world, is well represented in the area, mainly by people who once played for the community square dances and other social gatherings of years ago. Noah Beavers, 84, of Elkville in Jackson County, was the leader of a square dance band for many years and has only recently resumed performing in public. He comes from a musical family and, like other old-time musicians, plays several instruments including guitar, banjo, and harmonica. Mr. Beaver’s repertoire includes several Anglo-American fiddle classics such as “Sally Goodin,” “Arkansas Traveler,” “Leather Britches,” “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” several waltzes, a number of schottisches (Scottish round dances, no longer common) as well as some country-western selections learned from the radio such as “Take Me Back to Tulsa,” “Steel Guitar Rag,” “San Antonio Rose,” “Faired Love,” and the fiddler’s classic, “Orange Blossom Special.”

Another group of square dance musicians who feature the fiddle are the Bottomlanders from Shawneetown in Gallatin County. The group often varies in size but centers around Edd Bradley, fiddler and accordion player. He believes that authentic square dancing is becoming a lost art through lack of interest. Mr. Bradley recalls: “They had a schoolhouse down there, Buckeye Schoolhouse. They quit having school in it and we’d go down there, play music, square dance and I’d play the fiddle, uncle’d play the fiddle, somebody’d play the harp, and square dance awhile ... we had a damn good time.” But these days, the Bottomlanders mainly perform for senior citizen groups, social gatherings, and fish fries in the Shawneetown area.

Vincent “Pete” Usselton is also a member of the Bottomlanders. Mr. Usselton, who is in his 80’s, plays the old frailing style of banjo. His real showpiece is a tune titled “The Fox Chase” in which he uses the banjo to imitate the sound of baying hounds after the fox.

Another old-time fiddler is High Haynes of Ruma in Randolph County. While the fiddle is his main instrument, he also plays the guitar, harmonica, mandolin, jaw harp, and the bones. Both his father and an uncle were well-known fiddlers in the area and in great demand for Saturday night square dances around Ames. Mr. Haynes still plays many of the tunes popular back then such as “Buffalo Gals,” “Golden Slippers,” and “Redwing” and “Your Cheatin’ Heart.”
QUILTING IN A GERMAN COMMUNITY

One of the most prevalent folk crafts surviving in Southern Illinois is the art of quilting, which flourishes among church and neighborhood groups. One such group, the Ladies Aid of Christ Lutheran Church at Neunert, continues a lengthy heritage of German customs and ancestry.

Members of the Christ Lutheran Church Ladies Aid learned how to sew and quilt at an early age. After they finished the eighth grade, most young women were expected to work either in the area helping other families or go to St. Louis where relatives would board them and help them find jobs doing housework or cooking. Thus, girls often married later in life, sometimes to young men who had come to St. Louis from the Bottoms to work and earn money to buy a piece of land back home.

Quilting was always a part of a German housewife's life. Using scraps of cotton prints for a top, cotton batting for the filling, and muslin or flour sacks for the backing, she stitched together warm covers for her family. The log cabin design (in German "block huette decke") was popular. Other designs filtered in soon after—the simple nine-patch, the star, the windmill, and more complicated patterns like the flower garden.

Quilting was done at home in the front room, sometimes at night with the kerosene lamp propped in the midst of the quilt top. During the preceding fall, pieces had been cut and sewn together to make the top and then, while the winter winds howled and snow piled around the house, the women in the Bottoms quilted. During the long winter months, quilting also provided socializing for the farm wife; she asked her neighbors in to help stitch on her quilt. These neighborhood parties often started after dinner at noon and extended through the afternoon until dark. Five to ten women came in by wagons or buggies and would work until three when their hostess laid out a lunch displaying her cooking skills. Homemade bread with cooked cheese or hand cheese, strong coffee, pies, cakes, and coffee cakes rewarded their labor.

In 1927, a Ladies Aid group was formed at Christ Lutheran Church in Neunert. The ladies decided to continue their neighborhood practice and began to quilt after their weekly meetings in order to raise money for their group. The neighborhood quilting activity has lessened through the years, but its spirit stays alive in the Ladies Aid quilters. Today, quilts by the women of the Ladies Aid include embroidered block quilts set together in stars or with diamonds and many varieties of pieced quits. In judging quilts, the German women of the Ladies Aid maintain their traditional aesthetic standards. It is the stitch that sets the standard, small and even stitches that distinguish a good quilt. These women uphold the tradition of German quilting in the Mississippi River Bottoms.
Glen Hise of Omaha in Gallatin County uses relatively simple techniques to create models out of cardboard and matchsticks of an environment whose definition and appreciation is derived from experiences typical of the many retired small farmers of Southern Illinois.

Mr. Hise was born around the turn of the century on a farm east of Ridgeway in rural Gallatin County. His German grandparents, their name presumably being Heiss, came to Southern Illinois from Evansville, Indiana. During most of his working life, Mr. Hise farmed, raising corn, wheat, oats, and popcorn, a specialty in northern Gallatin County. Like many individuals who have spent much of their lives in general farming, Mr. Hise has built his share of barns and sheds. He has also built several houses, including the one in which he now lives.

Mr. Hise first began his matchstick model building about three years ago. The impetus came when Mrs. Hise returned from a church social at which she and several other women had made two-dimensional crosses of matchsticks. Seeing these, he decided that he could make more elaborate models himself.

The models are usually first built as frames out of pieces of thin cardboard. The matchsticks are then glued to the outsides until they form a loglike panel. Mr. Hise uses the repetition of one unit (the matchstick) to make a design on the building, as well as to make the building itself. By changing the position of the matchstick, Mr. Hise can change the design on the structure he is creating.

Many of Mr. Hise’s models are familiar to farm folk: sheds, barns, farm houses, wagons, granaries, country churches, farm stores, one-room schoolhouses and windmills. One of his most impressive models is of a miniature barnyard. It is his most elaborate creation and depicts the farm of Mr. Hise’s earlier days. There are single buildings including the I-houses, double-pen houses, and transverse-crib barns typical of Upland Southern architecture.

Mr. Hise has also made a doll house. It has miniature windows and doors and even a matchstick chimney. The interior is divided into rooms and decorated with wallpaper.

Mr. Hise does not limit himself to creating buildings. He has also made several table lamps; real working electric lamps made of matchsticks and popsicle sticks. The lamps are delicately made with a variation of design which the use of the two different wooden building units affords. However beautiful the lamps are, though, Mr. Hise seems more at home with the many farm structures that he has made.

Mr. Hise may have been known at one time as a farmer of various crops, but now he is known as a model maker; and as a creator of miniatures, he is able to bring back a touch of the past of Gallatin County.
In 1930, 121 Russian-born immigrants were recorded in Franklin County. The Russian immigrants of Southern Illinois were primarily from the Luhgvod province (the western tip) of the Ukraine. At the time of their emigration, the area was a portion of the Kingdom of Hungary within the Austro-Hungarian Empire (until 1919), and of Czechoslovakia (from 1919-1939). After the Munich Pact, it was annexed by Fascist Hungary, and at the end of World War II, it was added to the Ukrainian SSR. The language is basically a dialect of Ukrainian, but many cultural attributes are distinct, probably due to its period under Austro-Hungarian rule. Although most western Ukrainians were traditionally Eastern Rite Roman Catholics (or Uniates) the Carpatho-Russians are traditionally Russian Orthodox and use Old Church Slavonic as a liturgical language. In spite of similarity to Ukrainians, the Russians of Southern Illinois maintain that they are a completely different ethnic group and it seems practical, in light of historical circumstances, to consider them so.

A total of five Orthodox churches were built in Southern Illinois, all in the early part of the 20th Century, when the immigrants were arriving in large numbers. Best known are the churches in Royalton and in Buckner. Another church is located in Livingston; chapels exist in Muddy and in Dowell. The first Orthodox church to be built in Southern Illinois was in Buckner, in 1913. In 1914, the Royalton church was built. On October 27 of that year, a major mine collapse claimed the lives of 17 church members from Royalton. The church is dedicated to their memory.

Today, due to the diminishing size of the congregation resident in Buckner, the priest from Royalton conducts services at their church once a month. The economic opportunities provided in Royalton may have been one factor in the community's survival. Located on the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railway, Royalton was an important coal producing town in the early 20th Century, with a large, modern plant processing the highest quality of coal.

The Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church in Royalton was built from blueprints of the chapel at Muddy. In nearly all respects, it is today a typical example of Russian Orthodox church architecture. It is small, wooden, faces east, has a single door, an iconostas dividing the sanctuary from the main body of the church, and a front vestibule. The interior of the early Royalton church lacked pews because traditional Orthodox practice was to stand during worship. Originally, the church had three domes; the two smaller domes were later removed (possibly subsequent to a fire in 1917), leaving a single large dome.

The Russian community in Southern Illinois is not large, but in its own way it has provided a distinct touch to the rural landscape.

Mary Savka with photographs of a model made by her grandson.
Alta McLain, of Equality in Gallatin County, is both a painter and a poet of local renown.

She was born in Murtin County in eastern Kentucky some 70 years ago. Her ancestry is a mixture of English, Dutch, and Cherokee. During her early childhood, she lived with her parents in Urbana, Illinois, where her father worked for the Illinois Central Railroad Company.

Later, her family farmed in Prescott, Arkansas, before moving to Southern Illinois in 1938 and settling in Equality where she met and married Godfrey McLain.

Mrs. McLain began writing poems while still a child. When she grew older she wrote poems for friends’ weddings and funerals and then started publishing them on a regular basis in the two local newspapers, the Ridgeway News and the Gallatin County Democrat. Her poems are usually religious or humorous or are reflections upon her rural environment.

In addition to writing poetry in her youth, Mrs. McLain also painted. An art teacher who visited her grade school is credited with giving the fledgling artist inspiration and encouragement.

As in her poetry, Mrs. McLain’s paintings reflect her interest in religion and in her rustic surroundings. Although most of her paintings are of landscapes, she prefers painting religious scenes and has her own ideas of what a religious painting should be like—it should be “natural.” She complains that most religious paintings that she has seen, including some by great masters, are “too stiff,” and that her concept of Jesus, the angels, or the Apostles, is that they are very natural looking, being part of the natural world of things. Her religious paintings include representations of Jesus, the Madonna and Child, and a scene of children being watched by Guardian Angels.

Like Grandma Moses, Mrs. McLain belongs to the primitive school of painting, and her landscapes are prime examples of this popular American art form. She delights in color and pattern and is able to communicate perspective although it is of secondary importance. Mrs. McLain is self-taught and untrained, and part of the charm of her work is due to its unsophistication.

Mrs. McLain is an observer of nature and she concentrates much of her energies on the nearby Shawnee Hills. Many of her paintings note the seasonal changes in the Hills. It requires a person who knows and loves the countryside to capture the warmth evident in her work.

Mrs. McLain confesses that she owns a shoebox filled with clippings from the Ridgeway News and the Gallatin County Democrat—clippings of the poems that she has contributed. Her poems are for others to read, but her paintings are for herself and her family. She is a woman who enjoys her work and who gains a great deal of satisfaction from it.
Kenneth B. "K.B." Boyett, of Harrisburg, Saline County, is a talented woodcarver who has been carving since childhood. His father, a farmer, was also an active whittler. Mr. Boyett was born near Eldorado in rural Saline County approximately 70 years ago. The Boyetts are of French extraction, and his grandfather came up the Mississippi River from Louisiana. His grandfather's ancestors were supposedly pirates in league with Jean Lafitte. As a young man, Mr. Boyett worked in Texas as a truck driver, but he returned to Illinois in 1933. From 1934 through 1943, he worked in a coal mine near Eldorado and was eventually promoted to supervisor. Until four years ago, he supervised an underground coal mine.

Mr. Boyett worked in the mines during a period in which substantial changes took place in mining methods, safety, and technology. He loves to talk about these changes, and how different it is today from the old pick-and-shovel days. "I don't think there has been any industry advanced as much, as fast, as coal mining has. Back when I started to work, why most all the work we had to do was with a pick and a shovel—with a little help, with a little dynamite—to blast the coal loose. Then you had to pick it up and shovel it. Now they have these big monstrous machines that goes in there and tears it up, puts it in the car. I'll have to say coal miners have to be better educated today than they were when I went to work in the coal mines." Like many older miners, he revels in talk about how unsafe the trade was in "the old days," and tells colorful anecdotes about accidents and close calls involving himself and his fellow employees.

Mr. Boyett's mining background is reflected in his woodcarving. The most interesting objects he makes are his figures of coal miners. They are depictions of miners in the pick-and-shovel days, sometimes carved holding those tools, and sometimes holding the typical cylindrical lunch-bucket. He tries to make them look the way he remembers the old miners of his younger days. They show a great deal of animation and character and are obviously derived from a feeling of great familiarity. The former miner also carves dogs, game animals, ducks, and geese; usually from white pine. Animals are favorites because he can depict the appearance of motion. "A lot of kids, boys especially, come around wanting to learn how to whittle. And I tell 'em, I pick up a piece of wood and I'll look at it and I'll say: see that dog there? And, of course, they can't see a dog, because it's just a block of wood. I say, all you got to do is see that dog and then you just cut out everything that don't look like that dog."

Mr. Boyett is an artist who has been carving images typical of his and his neighbors' experiences and vision for over 60 years. He is another example of the Southern Illinoisan who keeps the past alive.
Storytelling is an old and traditional entertainment. Among the Scotch-Irish settlers in Southern Illinois, tall tales and exaggerated stories gave witness to their roots in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas.

Storytellers themselves say they just picked it up around the general store or feed store. Those who remember stories talk about being entertained hour after hour by the storyteller.

Here are some tales we collected, quoted exactly as they were told to us:

"I heard an old man telling about his— he told this one for the truth, uh course . . . (laughter). He said he went out one morning. He said he knew it was cold. He's going out to chop some wood, in the woods, and he built up a fire. He said he got a little fire up so high, and it wasn't a-doin' any good. It just quit burnin'. He said he went over there and it'd just froze. And he said he knew that if he went home and told his folks the fire of a blaze had frozen; they wouldn't believe it. So he broke off a piece, put it in his pocket, and started home. He said before he got there, it melted, and he didn't have any evidence to show." (told by W. L. Morris)

"My grandfather, when he'd broke his leg, he had to set on an old rockin' chair in the front porch. He had his rifle out and there's an old tree about a half-a-mile away from here. And he would shoot at a knothole on that old tree. And after he got to where he could walk, he went down

there. Any everytime he'd shot there, those bullets had welded together. And there was about a hundred foot of welded bullets. And my grandmother, she took those home; made a clothesline out of them." (told by "Butch" Shelton)

"We had a Duddenbooster who worked for us. He said that he was hunting one time and, he said all of a sudden he saw a . . . like a hoop rolling down the hill. And he realized that he was seeing a hoopsnake. And you know what they do, they take their tail in their mouth and then they roll down a hillside. And he said, 'You know, I never thought too much about them because I'd always heard about them and knew there was such things'—now I'm tellin' his side. And he said it ran into a little sapling down there. And he said it made it so mad that it uncoiled, unhooped, whatever you would call it, and it struck that sapling with its pointed, bony tail. And he said he came back in about a week later and that sapling was dead." (told by Lester David)

"On our corncrib, the squirrels would always get in there; eat the corn. Whenever you'd go down there and tried to get in and scare 'em out, they'd run and climb up a big old tree. I started down there one day and they climbed up a tree, so I went out and cut that tree down. And those squirrels, they ran out there and they misled that tree and they runned 40 feet up in the air before they knewed that tree was gone." (told by "Butch" Shelton)
"I knew this guy once, he told several lies. I went by one day and I said, 'Say out there, was you ever on Horseshoe Lake?' He said, 'I've heard a lot about it.' I said, 'You know, I was down there one day.' I said there was a little snow on the ground. And I said I just rolled up a snowball and threw it out in the water. And I said before it hit the water, I said, a bass jumped up and grabbed it. I rolled up another one, I said, another bass jumped up and grabbed that. I said that gave me an idea. I rolled up two snowballs and pitched one out. When that bass jumped up to grab it, I hit that bass with the other snowball and stunned it. And I said, 'You know, it wasn't no time for me to have 11 bass.'" (told by "Butch" Shelton)

"I heard about this fella who was so fast that he could turn a light—they had the old lightbulbs hung down—he could turn that out, the switch hung 10 feet from the bed, turn it out and get in bed before the light went out." (told by Robert McKemie)

"I heard about a hoop snake. Yeh, a feller was tellin' me about it—fella had a wooden leg. He said he's out there and he said that one of those hoop snakes rolled over and bit him on that wooden leg. And he said, that leg swelled up so much. He said, 'I cut enough wood off that wood leg there to burn in the winter, in the stove all winter.'" (told by Robert Wharry)

"They tell about this guy's been fishing down here at Crab Orchard. He's sittin' in the boat there and something bit. He fought the line and he worked and worked and finally he got that fish up to the boat. He said, 'I looked on this side of that boat and I saw the big old eye.' He said, 'I looked on this side of the boat and I saw another big old eye. Now, I thought, now my wife hasn't got a skillet big enough for that fish. And then I looked again. I saw that fish had tears in its eyes and I said I just couldn't kill it. I took my knife out and cut the line loose and let it go." (told by "Butch" Shelton)
Thomas A. Bonner of Mt. Vernon, Jefferson County, is an example of a craftsman adapting his techniques to fit the demands of his public.

A lifetime duck hunter, he has been carving decoys since his teenage years. According to his account, most duck hunters made a few of their own for hunting purposes in the old days. When he was 16, he started making them to sell; he never knew anyone else in the area who did this.

Now in his 70's, Mr. Bonner was born in Freeburg, St. Clair County. His ancestors were Irish. He held several jobs during his working life, including mining coal in Decatur, running a linen route out of Centralia, and operating a filling station in Mt. Vernon. Most of his life was spent in Centralia, Marion County, where he and his father moved during his teens. It was in Centralia that he first became an enthusiastic duck hunter, hunting with friends along a nearby reservoir.

His first decoys were made of cypress and were roughed out with an axe. They were carefully weighted in order to make them float well and painted to make them look like drakes. (Commercially made decoys in those days were sold by Sears and made on a pattern lathe.)

Mr. Bonner's decoy-making has proceeded through several stages. Originally he made them for his own hunting purposes out of cypress posts. After he retired from operating a filling station, he started making them for sale for display purposes. As the demand grew, he started using power tools to do the roughing out.

In recent years, the demand has been for varnished, instead of painted, ducks, thus diverging even further from the decoys' original appearances and intentions; yet another example of a formerly practical item becoming an object bought for decorative purposes.

In recent years, Mr. Bonner started making doll houses and miniature furniture. His doll houses are one or two stories high, are carpeted and wallpapered. The furniture made for these houses includes the usual tables and chairs, as well as bureaus, mantelpieces, and a miniature ironing board and iron.

At one time, Mr. Bonner used to make wind-powered toys of the type often seen in yards in the Midwest. One of them is a very clever weathervane. When the wind blows, it moves not only the weathervane, but also a small windmill which in turn moves the small carved figure of a woodsman and his saw placed atop the weathervane.

Once again, the environment shapes the arts. Woodworking and wood-related crafts flourish here in part because the trees are an expendable resource; they are an impediment to settlement and agriculture. Thus, there is an abundance of wood for the woodworking arts of Southern Illinois.
Mary E. "Lizzie" Cox of Shawneetown (New Town), Gallatin County, is a seamstress and quiltmaker. Ms. Cox was born and raised in Old Shawneetown, her grandparents having come from western Kentucky. Now in her late 60's, she has a considerable recollection of life in Old Shawneetown, particularly among the black community.

One event that Lizzie Cox recalls is the segregation of Shawneetown. In 1937, when she was a child, Old Shawneetown was badly flooded and its residents moved to a new location. Before the move to New Town, black and white residences in Shawneetown were randomly distributed, although schools and public places were segregated. After the move to New Town, all the blacks were relocated south of the railroad tracks.

Ms. Cox's parents were farmers, who raised goats and sheep and who enjoyed catching and eating game, including birds, rabbits, raccoon, groundhogs, and oppossum. She remembers obtaining birds for food by setting a baited deadfall for snowbirds.

"My father used to catch birds with a deadfall. It was a big board; he had a string on it. He could sit in the house by the window and he used to kill snowbirds. He put feed in under this big board and, of course, the birds; they was almost as big as a quail. He pulled the string and sometimes he'd get five or six."

Ms. Cox also recalls the Eighth of August, a black holiday celebrating emancipation and comparable, no doubt, to the June-teenth festivals held many places in the South to this day. Both whites and blacks participated in a day of dancing, feasting, and ball playing. A segregated platform for white dancers was built, but as the day proceeded, segregation broke down.

And in the summers came the showboats: "We used to look forward to coming to town. They used to have showboats, old-fashioned showboats and excursion boats. We would go along; we would go up to the levee, sit and watch the people go on. The ladies would be dressed in their long gowns and dance. In those days you could hear the music, they had what you call a calliope, you know, that played and we could always tell it. They would start playing when it got about a half-mile from coming up the river."

Ms. Cox stitched her first quilt when she was 14 years old. Her mother was not a very good seamstress, but she had an aunt who was very talented with needle and thread and from whom she took lessons. Over the years, Ms. Cox has been a very active seamstress, making clothes for her own family, as well as on commission for others. The scraps remaining are made into quilts. Looking at Ms. Cox's quilts, one is impressed by their bold colors and the careful choice of color contrast. One of her quilts, which she calls "rail fence," is assembled entirely from pieced strips.
Anna Replyuk of Royalton in Franklin County is probably the most unequivocally "folk" of all the material folk artists interviewed in the project. She is a decorator of Slavic Easter Eggs, an art which she learned directly from her father, an immigrant.

Slavic Easter Egg decoration is based upon a system of wax replacement almost identical to batiking. Egg decorating as a spring rite is ancient in Europe and became associated with Easter after this Christian holiday took the place of pagan celebrations. In Eastern Europe eggs are not eaten as part of the Lenten Fast. Instead, the eggs are made as decorative as possible before they are brought to church for blessing during the Easter liturgy.

Ms. Replyuk's father decorated the eggs during his Good Friday fast; she learned the technique from him, step by step, when she was in her late 20's. The decorating is done by replacement of wax, which is applied with a pisanka or stylus—a tool consisting of a tiny pointed funnel on a handle. It is dipped in the melted wax of a burning candle. The initial design (which will be white at completion) is drawn on the egg with wax from the pisanka. The presence of soot gives the lines an initial dark color. The egg is then dipped in a light colored dye. Panels to be retained in the initial dye color are then covered with additional wax and the egg is re-dyed in a darker color. Most eggs consist of white and two dye colors, but when black or very dark dye is used it is possible to add a third by the same method. The wax is finally removed by holding the egg close to the candle flame and rubbing it off with a soft cloth.

Ms. Replyuk is quite articulate about the prejudice against "Hunkies" (general pejorative term for Eastern Europeans) that has flourished in Southern Illinois. She describes, with some emotion, the pain that she and her parents have felt as its consequence.

"My parents had a store in the north part of the house. My mother and dad eventually went bankrupt, and it hurt them, because my mother said, yes, we fed those people so they had every right to call us 'Hunkies.' Because when they went bankrupt, a lot of these people owed my mother and dad hundreds of dollars in bills which they weren't able to pay because the mines at that time, they didn't work like they do now. The salaries that the miners got weren't as much as they get now, so... My mother and father were very hurt when they would hear the neighborhood children calling us 'Hunks.' That was our name."

Like many of the second generation, she is pleased with the recent development of heritage pride among ethnic Americans. She fears, however, that out-migration is gradually destroying ethnic customs among younger people in her area.
Dorris Lingle lives in rural Pulaski County just south of the Union County line. He is an example of an artist-craftsman whose background and aesthetic principles are largely folk, but whose techniques have departed greatly from any which could be considered traditional.

Southern Illinois is noted as a heavily forested area, and it has been typical of creative individuals in this area, as in similar areas elsewhere, to engage in woodcarving and other forms of wood fabrication. Mr. Lingle is best known as a turner, making small wooden articles such as mugs, candle holders, bowls, and lamps.

He is in his 70's and was born on property directly adjacent to the land on which he now lives. He moved into his present home at the age of seven, although he later left to work various places upstate for the Illinois Central Railroad Company, and in East St. Louis for Armour Packing Company. His parents were descended from North Carolina anti-slavery people, and his great-grandparents were among the first white settlers in northern Pulaski County. Mr. Lingle's parents were farmers, raising corn and wheat at first. Later they switched to truck-farming, especially cucumbers, which the area exported in great numbers by rail.

Today Mr. Lingle recalls community fish fries held on the banks of the Cache River in which hoop-nets were set with long leaders, and groups of people waded in the water to frighten the fish into the nets. He also characterizes the area as having been strongly church affiliated, with activities such as dancing, drinking, and fiddling being shunned by most people. He used to travel considerable distances to attend square dances. Revival meetings were a common diversion during his youth, as often for entertainment as for spiritual purposes, and he recalls one area near Elco was famous for its huge brush-arbor revivals.

Although Mr. Lingle began his early woodworking career as a carver, carving the typical chains and ball-in-cage toys, he became active as a wood-turner in the 1960's after securing an FHA loan to buy lathes and a drill press. All of his items are made from local wood; much of it from his own property, and some from neighbors who have had land cleared.

His outdoor property contains literally tons of wood seasoning in great heaps or stored inside sheds. The wood is trimmed down to size with a chain saw, roughed into shape on a lathe in one of his sheds and then brought in to be fashioned, sanded, and finished on a lathe inside his house. He then completes the pieces by either painting or varnishing them.

Mr. Lingle's wood products have been solicited by a New York-based company; his items are sold at the Smithsonian Institute; and many have been designated as "official state souvenirs" by the Illinois Department of Tourism.
Helen Killion of Ava, Jackson County, is a woman of varied artistic skills. She is a craft-revivalist and a folk artisan. Now in her 60's, Ms. Killion, was born on a farm on Kinkaid creek west of Ava. She learned how to knit, lace, hook, and braid rugs from her grandmother. During Ms. Killion's childhood, it was the custom to take scraps of material to a neighbor who owned a loom, who, in turn, made them into the typical "rag rugs" found all over the Midwest and Upper South. When winter was imminent, floors were covered with straw and rag rugs were tacked over it, producing an effective form of insulation. It was most common in those days for only one or two people in a given area to own a loom, and thus to earn money by weaving for people in the vicinity. Ms. Killion's own weaving activities began about eight years ago, and are largely self-taught, although she says that the rugs are the same appearance and design as the ones she remembers from her own childhood.

Ms. Killion is involved in many craft activities today including rug weaving and the making of handbags from woven rug panels; rug braiding and hooking, which she learned from her grandmother; cornshuck dolls, some of which her mother made, but not to the elaborate extent that Ms. Killion makes them nowadays; and Job's tears necklaces, which are common all over the Midwest, and which she remembers making during her childhood.

Ms. Killion's cornshuck dolls are usually made to look like Victorian ladies. Their heads are made of poppy seed pods, with hair and facial features painted on. The dolls (and her rugs) are sold through the Southern Illinois Craft Guild, and the dolls have been sold at the Smithsonian Institution's gift shop.

Five years ago, Ms. Killion and several women from the Ava area organized the Ava Craft Shop for both sales and teaching. It contains numerous display cases and four looms, which are used both for their own rug weaving and for teaching the craft to young people.

Ms. Killion recently bought back the old homestead on Kinkaid Creek and is devoting much of her time to gardening and preserving. She talks at great length about the beauty of the Kinkaid Creek area and the advantages she gained from growing up there.

"Growing up in the country like we did, we were down on Kinkaid Creek there and over a mile out to the highway with no neighbors close. I believe a person is growed up like that has to stop and think, to see what they're looking at, that you get more, you observe more, know the names of all the wild-flowers, all the trees and all the plants. You think more about nature and what you might do with it, to driftwood or a pretty rock."
CONCLUSION

From an artistic perspective, these individual and community portraits provide a glimpse into the rich folk heritage of Southern Illinois. From a humanistic perspective, these portraits raise several important questions. Is it important to preserve the "little community" in the face of urbanization? Who should be responsible for that cultural preservation? What is the main public role of folk artists in this society?

The "little community" concept recognizes the fact that for most of its history, humankind has lived in small-scale bands, tribes, clans, villages, and hamlets. In those settings, human interaction was characterized by local rituals and customs that proclaimed and maintained the social identity of that group. Many of the folk artists in this booklet trace their early roots to such communities. Today, modern communications and transportation are rapidly eroding the efficacy of "little community" cultures and providing national rituals and customs as substitutes.

Whether this erosion of small-scale community is good or bad depends upon one’s perspective, but one thing is certain: our modern, highly complex, interdependent society is unlike anything that humankind has known before. Only time will reveal if this new form of social and economic interaction will provide the needed cohesion to sustain itself.

What is the role of folk artists in this complex society? In essence, they are the poets, philosophers, and defenders of a vanishing tradition. Their art and lore keep alive important human values that are often submerged in urban settings, in a society so often mobile, transient, and goods-oriented. They reflect an emotional closeness to nature, a social identity developed from a lifetime spent within a close network of kin and neighbors, a sense of self-worth, a toughness of spirit inherited from pioneer or immigrant ancestors, and a strong sense of the importance of continuity as well as change in human affairs.

The diverse ways in which the cultures of America’s people reflect these values is the significance of the folk arts. Folk artists are truly among our national treasures.