Henry W. Shoemaker and the Fable of Public Folklore

On October 2, 1947, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission made history by unanimously adopting the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Historical and Museum Commission hereby authorizes the creation of the position of State Folklorist; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Henry W. Shoemaker, Senior Archivist, be transferred from the Public Record Division (Archives) to the New Division of Folklore.

Receiving front-page attention from Pennsylvania newspapers, Henry Shoemaker (1880–1958) officially began his tenure as America’s first state folklorist in March 1948 and served until February 1956. Despite leaving behind a documentary record of his accomplishment, his pathbreaking role for public folklore has gone mostly unrecognized. At least four chronicles of public folklore activities credited Henry Glassie with holding the first state folklorist position beginning in 1966, and formed a dominant narrative of public folklore’s development disseminated in classrooms and professional forums (Baron and Spitzer 1992; Feintuch 1988; Loomis 1983; Hufford 1969). In fact, the official publication of the American Folklore Society describing the work of the folklorist singled out Glassie’s position as a memorable first toward the “great expansion” of “state and local folk cultural programs” (Jackson, McCulloh, and Weigle 1984). The agreed-upon fable enthroned a young academic hero who ignited the charge demanded by a pluralist awakening of the 1960s and propelled numbers of unbroken folklore trajectories to the present day in the public sector. The historical illusion spread by this narrative raises two central questions I will address. First, if it was not the populist consciousness of the 1960s that prompted the creation of the state folklore position, what forces actually lay behind its formation in 1948? Second, why did
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chronicles insist on a peculiar chronology commencing in the 1960s? Or put another way, why has Shoemaker’s role been neglected? While the answers force an account of specific historical events, they also impel me to close the chapter with the revised historical narrative of public folklore work as state roles became diminished during the 1990s. From Progressivism to multiculturalism, the backgrounds of state folklore from Shoemaker’s beginning to the end of the twentieth century raise issues of governmental responsibility for cultural programming, public attitudes toward folklore in cultural conservation, and scholarly conciliation of applied and “popular” folklore with academic scholarship.

The man who would become America’s first state folklorist, Henry Wharton Shoemaker, was born in 1880 into one of America’s wealthiest families in New York City. He was the first of three children born to Henry Francis and Blanche Quiggle Shoemaker. Neighbor to John D. Rockefeller and living in the vicinity of Vanderbilts, Havemeyers, and DePews, the Shoemakers were considered nouveau riche outsiders to the New York scene. Henry Wharton’s parents had come a few years before his birth from Pennsylvania. His father had made his fortune in coal mining and railroading in the coal region around Schuylkill County and his mother came from a family of judges and diplomats in the forested Pennsylvania highlands near Lock Haven, west of the anthracite coal region. His father, a life-long member of the Pennsylvania Society of New York City, treated Pennsylvania nostalgically like the “old country.” As Henry remembered, “As a boy [I] loved to listen to [my] father tell tales of old Orwigsburg, of Regina Hartman, the Indian captive.” From these narratives, he recalled Pennsylvania as a marvelous land of “romance,” somehow removed from “the maelstrom of higher historical criticism” he gained in school (Shoemaker 1923, 2).

Shoemaker acquired his early education from private tutors followed by attendance at the prestigious Dr. E. D. Lyons Classical School from 1889 to 1896. The work at school on the classics—especially English, Greek, and Roman—apparently stuck with young Henry Shoemaker. His sister later reminded her older brother of his youthful love of myths and epics in tracing the source of his sense of “romance.” At Lyons, he came under the tutelage of William Edgar Plumley, originally from Lackawanna County in Pennsylvania, who instilled in his pupils a reverence for natural history. “Nature,” one remembrance of Plumley pasted into one of Henry Shoemaker’s scrapbooks stated, “possessed a most remarkable charm for him. It was his delight to wander among the fields and woods and to commune with nature when at her loveliest.” A Presbyterian preacher, Plumley emphasized the spiritual experience of nature as manifestation of the divine. The Lyons School prided itself on developing students’ skills in prose and poetry, music performance, and above all, immersion in the classics. Shoemaker’s scrapbooks show that schoolteachers honored him for his command of Greek myths and French literature, and they also reveal by his notes that they neglected American history. While still at Lyons, Shoemaker edited and his brother managed the Argyle News, a monthly
devoted to schoolboy athletics. Despite this stated purpose, Shoemaker strayed into a range of topics. To the announcements of club football, biking, and racing, Shoemaker added interviews with hunters, romantic poetry, and "mystery" stories. Shoemaker's editorializing in the magazine included an attack on control of New York politics by Tammany bosses and support for the Spanish-American War.

Shoemaker attended Columbia College in 1897 near his New York City residence. He intended to take up commercial art (owing to his admiration for Currier and Ives prints), but soon turned to literary interests, including classical studies, when he was not vigorously engaged in outdoor sports, including track, golf, and boating. He continued his interests in journalism by joining the staffs of the Columbia Spectator and Columbia Jester. At the tender age of eighteen Henry published a volume of poetry drawn from his work on Argyle News (1898), and two years later he published his first book of prose, calling it From Lancaster to Clearfield, Or Scenes on the By-ways of Pennsylvania (1900). Recalling the inspiration for the travel tale, Shoemaker stated, "I travelled over hilly, winding back roads where I enjoyed meeting interesting people and visiting strange, out-of-the-way places." And while Shoemaker was doing all this, he volunteered his press services to the Republican County Committee in Manhattan. He was voted in by his classmates as class treasurer in 1900, and as his parting task, addressed the class dinner on "How to Become Famous.

Shoemaker credited a Columbia professor for turning his focus to folklore. As a junior, he took a composition course in which the rhetoric professor, George R. Carpenter, required a "daily theme" paper. "For want of subjects," Shoemaker recalled, he drew on the "old Pennsylvania stories" told by his family, and to his surprise, the professor raved about them."Go on with them," he said; "you have found an original field" (Shoemaker 1917b, 6). Shortly after this incident, he published a character sketch of a folklore raconteur entitled "John Q. Dice, The Pennsylvania Mountaineer" in the Columbia Jester. Dice was a real-life figure from his mother's childhood home in Clinton County and the story, delivered in dialect, is a hunting tall tale about a wrestling match between buck and hunter after the ammunition is gone. Set against the backdrop of John Dice's rustic cabin, the tale-teller spun his yarn.

Shoemaker spent summers at his maternal home in the Pennsylvania mountains called "Restless Oaks" in McElhattan. A two-and-a-half-story country house near the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and the Bald Eagle Mountains, Restless Oaks stood beside extensive forestland. It was Shoemaker's favorite home and the all the more so because of the romantic history it offered. His ancestor Michael Quigley, "descendant of the Waldensian martyrs in the Piedmontese Alps of Europe," first settled there in 1768. His grandmother Cordelia, who died at age eighty-six in 1914, regaled the boy there with stories of the family and region stretching back into the eighteenth century. She also entertained him with folk songs accompanying herself on the piano, songs that her
grandson well remembered many years later. She nurtured Shoemaker's interest in literature and the outdoors by reserving a room of the house for his use, and she arranged for him to inherit the estate. Recalling his summer days of boyhood at Restless Oaks, Shoemaker wrote that “those early impressions decided my whole life and I have been ever a loyal son of Pennsylvania.”

With the developed instincts of a Victorian naturalist “field collecting” specimens that revealed a hidden past, Shoemaker gathered in the details of what he saw and heard in the Pennsylvania highlands. Shoemaker reminisced,

The collecting began when [I] was a small boy, on ostensible hunting and fishing trips, with certain old hunters in Clinton County, and it came to pass that [I] enjoyed their story-telling more than the game-slaying, and took more pleasure writing the stories than any other form of “compositions” in school and at college. Living mostly in a large city at the time, and born with an insistent longing for the woods and mountains, probably a heritage from some Indian ancestor, the quest for quaint stories of the long ago grew with the years, until it is now [my] favorite form of “hunting” (there is an open season twelve months in the year), with no “bag” limit, working in beautifully with [my] activities in forestry organization and the Pennsylvania Alpine Club. (Shoemaker 1924, 11)

While Shoemaker was at Columbia, his father made plans to shift his base of operations to Ohio as chairman of the board of the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Railroad. When the move came, the son came along as his father’s private secretary. While in his father’s employ he traveled through Ohio and Kentucky and was fascinated by the folk speech and legends he heard. “The desire came to write,” he remembered, “and write [I] did, on the trains, in the evenings, at any spare time” (Shoemaker 1917b, 7). He reflected on the strong connections between the lore of this region and that of his favored Pennsylvania mountains. He read popular romantic writings steeped in Appalachian folklife by authors such as James Lane Allen (1849–1925) and John Fox, Jr. (1863–1919). Praising the “primitive strength and romantic chivalry” of the people from whom this folklore came, Shoemaker bemoaned the loss of “simplicity, sincerity and romance” as the “train of modernization,” for which he worked, sliced through the mountains of Kentucky. “Big mining towns now flourish,” he wrote, “in the most out-of-the-way valleys, railroads penetrate everywhere, old customs are being put to the test, will simplicity outlast the thirst for ease and prosperity?” (Shoemaker 1931, 9).

Increasingly disturbed by the environmental and cultural consequences of his father’s railway business, the young Shoemaker rebelliously embraced the Progressive politics of conservation. To his father’s dismay, he was a Progressive delegate to the Republican Party Convention in 1904 and became swept up by Roosevelt fever. Apparently referring to industrialists in his father’s New York circle, young Shoemaker wrote that Roosevelt “possessed a remarkably clear understanding of the problem created by the abuse of wealth. Like David of old, he set
out after the Goliath of ill-diverted wealth and privilege” (Shoemaker 1917a, 3). If Roosevelt was in his restraint of industrial development more moderate than Shoemaker would have liked, Shoemaker agreed wholeheartedly with Roosevelt’s assertion that “the conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our national life.” Calling for practical management and invoking “forward-thinking” or “progressivism,” Roosevelt explained that “the government has been endeavoring to get our people to look ahead and to substitute a planned and orderly development of our resources in place of a haphazard striving for immediate profit” (Roosevelt 1926a, 443). His goal was to increase the “usefulness,” rather than exploitation, of the land to insure prosperity. He promised that with governmental regulation, he could promote industrial growth while protecting the precious American landscape.

Shoemaker joined in the broad Progressive impulse of the early twentieth century toward criticism and change. He chimed the theme of restoring economic individualism and political democracy associated with an earlier American tradition crushed by monopolized heavy industries and corrupt political machines. Shoemaker emphasized Progressivism as a nationalist American approach to industrial problems so as to separate it from supposedly “un-American” socialist and other radical “European” ideas. Conservation was important to this Progressive view because it protected the resources of the early American tradition and represented the control of industries for the public good. The rhetoric of conservation carried the implication of allowing for use of natural resources and also had the ring of a “conservative” rather than radical approach to reform.

The senior Shoemaker softened his suspicions of Roosevelt when the latter chose as his running mate Charles Fairbanks, formerly a senator from Indiana, who was the chief counsel to Shoemaker’s industries and a family friend. Fairbanks acted to reconcile the Shoemaker father and son and courted their favor, not to mention their enormous wealth, for Roosevelt campaigns. The Shoemaker family frequently were guests at the Roosevelt White House and young Shoemaker’s aspirations to be a diplomat, following a path in his mother’s family line, became a topic of conversation. Fairbanks helped seal the deal that appointed young Shoemaker as secretary of American legations in Costa Rica and Portugal, followed by a post as third secretary of the American embassy in Berlin. But after five months in Berlin, Shoemaker wrote his mother to say that he had all he wanted, “namely the prestige and the experience,” and he was tempted by an offer his brother made him for a brokerage partnership on Wall Street. Despite President Roosevelt’s personal request that he stay on, Shoemaker returned to the United States in 1905.

The Wall Street enterprise was short-lived. Henry relied on the business acumen of his brother William to make the venture a success, and a year into the partnership William tragically died in an elevator accident. Henry kept the firm going for a few more years before dissolving it and concentrating on newspaper publishing. He
envisioned using newspapers to advance his conservationist stands and apply his literary interests. He anticipated relocating out of the city to the forests of rural Pennsylvania, but his father pleaded with his son to tend to the family businesses after falling seriously ill in 1912. He wrote a friend in 1914 that “were it not for my business interests which I must have to keep things going, but which take so much of my time, I would have been able to have written more of Pennsylvania history and perhaps done something really worth while.” The family adviser sensed the son’s frustration and bluntly counseled him, “It seems to me your gifts are pronounced as a writer along literary lines. Your tastes are not for figures and statements of account. You do not inherit the business traits of your father.”

After his father died in 1918, young Henry dove back into his cultural pursuits. Shoemaker had perhaps his most active period of writing stories on the Pennsylvania mountains in this period. He defended the coverage of folklore in his newspapers by claiming that “it is more than a pastime; it is a spiritual necessity. It is the inner life’s history of the Pennsylvania frontier people. It is interesting to collect and valuable to preserve” (Shoemaker 1917b, 7). Echoing calls by Roosevelt, Shoemaker hoped that folklore would inspire an authentic American artistry based on the soul of the folk in the wilderness. Unlike Roosevelt, Shoemaker did not venture into the wild West to find America’s soul; he came to the Pennsylvania highlands. Folklore there for Shoemaker identified a “source of a new spiritual renaissance in Pennsylvania,” a reminder of an American tradition steeped in community and nature. As an officer of several historical and conservation groups, he encouraged recording local legends as the intersection of history, literature, and nature study. “In a humble way I want to be able to preserve the old traditions, which are fast passing away,” he explained to the Reverend George P. Donehoo, a local historian in his own right. From this conservation, he professed, “will come a genuine literature.”

Writing Traditions

Henry Shoemaker had since the turn of the century been publishing collections of Pennsylvania legends he “bagged.” He made his biggest splash by writing the legend of “Nita-nee” in 1902 connected with the tourist attraction of Penn’s Cave in Centre Hall, Pennsylvania. The tragic romantic legend concerned the sad fate of a French Huguenot by the name of Malachi Boyer who fell in love with an Indian princess, Nita-nee of the Lenni-Lenapes, the chief’s “Diana-like daughter.” “But this was all clandestine love,” Shoemaker wrote, “for friendly as Indian and white might be in social intercourse, never could a marriage be tolerated, until—there always is a turned point in romance—the black-haired wanderer and the beautiful Nita-nee resolved to spend their lives together, and one moonless night started for the more habitable East.” Nita-nee’s seven brothers caught up with Boyer and shoved him from the ledge above the mouth of Penn’s Cave in Centre County to
Henry Shoemaker with the “Dauphin Sycamore” (near Linglestown, Pennsylvania, October 1920). Making a connection between nature and folklore, his inscription on the photograph reads: “It is said that this tree stands as a memorial to John Goodway, the last of the friendly Indians. Colonel Shoemaker is standing upon the spot where the Indian is believed to be buried.” Photograph by Joseph Illick. (Pennsylvania State Archives, Department of Forestry Photo Collection)
Frontispiece to *Black Forest Souvenirs* (1914) by Henry Shoemaker. It creates icons of Shoemaker’s favorite subjects from the extinct past. Above Shoemaker is a depiction of wild passenger pigeons, and below is rafting down the Susquehanna River. Clockwise from the top right are a mountain lion or panther, a frontier “Nimrod,” an “Indian princess,” a bison, an elk, an “Indian brave,” a highland lumberman, and a wolf.
drown in the “greenish limestone water” below. “And after these years those who have heard this legend declare that on the still summer nights an unaccountable echo rings through the cave, which sounds like ‘Nita-nee,’ ‘Nita-nee.’” From the time Shoemaker published this apparently romanticized account, controversy followed him. Critics were skeptical about his sources for a previously unreported legend (he claimed it was a “full-blooded” Seneca Indian he met in 1892) and questioned the intrusion of his imagination into his stories. Whether fabricated or real, it is Shoemaker’s legend that has found its way onto innumerable postcards, travel brochures, and student papers explaining the origin of the Penn State Nittany Lion and the Nittany Mountains, and most recently even an advertisement for Wendy’s Hamburgers.

Shoemaker the journalist sought narrative “scoops”—stories that had been usually uncollected and rooted in prominent natural sites or local events. He had an eye, he said, for the “picturesque” and “unusual.” Owing to early criticism he received from a newspaper that he had not offered much that was unfamiliar, he vowed “to preserve legends that otherwise would be lost, not to rechronicle tales that had been told over and over again by newspaper paragraphers” (Shoemaker 1922). Thus his books contain few legends on familiar regional cycles such as Lewis the Robber, the Paxton Boys, or the Blue-Eyed Six, or ethnic tales such as those featuring the Pennsylvania-German trickster Eileschpigel. Shoemaker the writer sought stories that were “novel,” mysterious, and surprising to his readers, rather than to present the most representative oral tradition, as folklorists might. Indeed, in some books it is unclear whether he qualifies stories as folklore because they are orally transmitted through time, a “folksy” mountaineer related the tale, or whether they had a deceivingly “folkish” feeling.

Yet there is in Shoemaker’s many books the folklorist’s sensitivity to the people for whom narrative was an everyday art. And if his descriptions of settings are to be believed, he equally demonstrated attention to the places, the contexts, in which storytelling thrived. Complaining that his collection of folklore began too late among central Pennsylvanians, Shoemaker offered that “people looked upon their individual lives as of little consequence, their deeds as simple duty” (Shoemaker 1912, xvii). Going on to discuss Native Americans from whom he recovered legends, he explained that “as to the Indians or their history, they were regarded with loathing or indifference. We have no one to-day who would collect the annals of English sparrows or Cooper’s hawks. Fifty years ago, even, was not too late, as Indians were met with from time to time, and aroused no particular attention; they were tolerated as itinerant basket weavers or harvest-hands.... When the present writer came upon the scene ‘all was over,’ but there were gleams in the embers of romance and folk-lore that showed that they contained life. He was able to learn the legends from a few of the old people, who were boys when there were still borderers and Indians whose talk was interesting enough for them to listen to and remember.” So Shoemaker concluded, “As there seemed to be no one else bent on
chronicling and preserving them, the author, with a full realization of his limitations, has "stuck at it" (Shoemaker 1912, xvii-xviii, xvi).

The natural wilderness, Shoemaker argued, deserved preservation because every tree and rock potentially had history and folklore attached to it. And to him they seemed to have more "spirit" as a result than the products of his industrial age (later he bemoaned the advent of the nuclear age). Especially up in the mountains, befitting Christian mythology of wisdom derived from going to isolated mountaintops, one somehow had a clearer vista of life's meaning. In rivers, Shoemaker depicted the constant flow of the past and people who used them to explore the wilderness. And "it is in the forests that voices were first heard, linking us to the beyond" (Shoemaker 1913, xvi). In Black Forest Souvenirs (1914), Shoemaker recounted his trips "into the forest in 1908, 1909 and 1910." He romantically wrote: "These visits only accentuated the sense of sadness for the arboreal paradise that was no more, which on the wholesale plan, lumbering had swept away. The hand of man had changed the face of nature from green to brown. It was during these latter visits that [I] thought more of the ancient legends which were so easy to hear in 1898, but so difficult to obtain in 1910" (Shoemaker 1914, xvi). The titles of Shoemaker's books such as Tales of the Bald Eagle Mountains, In the Seven Mountains, Juniata Memories, Black Forest Souvenirs, Allegheny Episodes, and Susquehanna Legends thus refer repeatedly to endangered natural sites, particularly mountains, rivers, and forests.

For Shoemaker, folklore represented the realm between history and fiction, nature and culture, and it got everyday people talking about themselves, their past, and their preindustrial surroundings. To him folklore came from the spirited age of romance before "modern civilization" took over, and it reflected America's roots as the "glorious land of romance." Collecting and reading folklore "gives us greater pride of home and birth," Shoemaker reflected, "it enables us to love deeper our hills and valleys, by feeling that they were once the homes of brave and true men and women, white and red, whose lives were as highly colored as the heroes and heroines of classic antiquity, Theseus and Helen, Orpheus and Eurydice" (Shoemaker 1917b, 10). More than a field for scholars, appreciation for folklore was to Shoemaker a civic duty that should be spread by community organizations. As early as 1915, Shoemaker informed his audiences that "in some countries it [folklore] is collected under government patronage. England and Ireland have been devoting much time to it of late; Scotland has always made it a part of her national story. France, Germany, Russia, Japan and India would lose much of the picturesqueness of their literature did it not exist" (Allison 1915, 19-20). With his booster spirit and popular goals, Shoemaker found himself at odds with folklorists over what folklore was and how it should be presented. If he failed to woo scholars, he convinced his pals in government that promoting folklore perpetuated what Pennsylvania was all about—a modern-day Eldorado—and it became a centerpiece of the conservation and tourist program that eventually jumped ahead of other industries of steel, coal, oil, and lumbering.
The American "age of romance" that Shoemaker wanted to promote served to allay fears that America would be built over by a pernicious version of industrial capitalism. He worried that money and materialism were goals that overshadowed traditional values of civility and community. The cities and their new residents that commanded the artificial light of industrialization appeared to him a threat to America's colonial heritage. Like many other leaders who traced their roots to colonial settlement, Shoemaker was startled by the flood tide of eastern and southern European immigration raised by turn-of-the-century industrialization. In the mythology of Shoemaker's wilderness, not only Pennsylvania was being promoted, but old Protestant America itself. Pennsylvania held the wilderness, the "frontier," that epitomized the original American consciousness of the invitation extended by the New World's fertile Eden. Shoemaker was hardly alone in believing that in such a place, democratic principles and civil values thrived, and assimilation, or "Americanization," would be realized. In rhetoric that dripped old-time religion and evolutionary natural history, one could hear that from the mix of many pilgrim groups coming to the American Promised Land emerged a unique American type, a new Adam born of the Edenic wilderness. Shoemaker's distinction was his promoter's, some even said preacher's, zeal for spreading the good news in the marketing revolution brought by newspapers and periodicals around the turn of the century. Building a reverence for an imagined past that translated into Pennsylvania's special mystique, Shoemaker used his newspapers as his pulpit and his stories as testament for a modern era.

The kind of folklore he published had several persistent themes, most notably the intermixing of ethnic strains to produce a vigorous American type. His stories romanticized a harmonious golden age in the American wilderness before industrialization brought destruction to the land and its people. He was inspired by the work of fellow New Yorkers George Bird Grinnell, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Theodore Roosevelt who used stories of the wild to promote wildlife conservation. Although these leading conservationists centered their efforts on the romantic West, Shoemaker remained focused on Pennsylvania, which he considered America's first wilderness. From his position of cultural authority as the publisher of several city dailies, he became a leader of a Progressive campaign in the twentieth century to restore Pennsylvania's woods and preserve the state as a cherished home to wildlife as well as folklife. Touting rugged frontier figures of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett as the new American pantheon born of the wilderness replacing Old World classical heroes, Shoemaker and his Progressive cronies in the Boone and Crockett Club in New York City (led by Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell) set out to explore and save the wilderness. By saving a source of American distinction and wonder, they thought that they could recover a sense of American nationhood and spirituality at a time of rapid industrialization, immigration, and urbanization.

Shoemaker and his Progressive friends used their imaginations and their pens to promote a unified vision of America's genuine landscape and legend. It was a
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patriotic movement, Shoemaker often declared, to preserve the roots of America in the forested wilderness, and where better than in the only state with forests, or sylvan, in its name? Not born in the state, he nonetheless trumpeted Pennsylvania as "God's chosen wonderland," the "mystic region," "wooded paradise," and "glorious land of romance." His campaign is significant because while he was glorifying the abundance of the Pennsylvania wilderness, Shoemaker's adopted state was symbolizing the heights of industrial transformation. Railroad, coal, oil, iron, steel, and lumber industries laid their claim to the state's land and people in dramatic fashion after 1870. As Pennsylvania's image went—rustic or industrial—so it seemed the nation's would go.

Publicizing Traditions

In addition to writing the legends he heard for Pennsylvania newspapers, Shoemaker encouraged others to contribute similar material for newspapers he had bought in Altoona, Reading, Jersey Shore, and Bradford. His editorials expressed strong support for Progressive causes, particularly the conservation stands of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot. The Progressive stance Shoemaker took called for state management of natural and historical resources. Thus he vigorously supported the creation of state boards to create and manage wilderness areas, state parks, and public historical sites. In his newspaper editorials, in his books and many addresses, his many organizations and state commissions, he lobbied for restoring balance with nature, and the harmonious life and values it fostered.

If collecting and archiving folklore represented the preservation of folklore, encouraging its perpetuation by restoring its original settings and applying it to education, entertainment, and literature signified its conservation. Even before Shoemaker took the official state folklorist position with conservationist goals in 1948, he hosted "Raftsman Reunions" at Camp Shoemaker where he encouraged musical and narrative exchanges. The camp also served as a Boy Scout center, and Shoemaker held programs for storytelling around the campfire. His Alpine Club outings were also meant to explore and restore the original settings of the wilderness that he felt gave rise to folklore. He arranged for Pennsylvania Folklore Society meetings to be held in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Storytelling League or Poetry Society and he organized creative readings based on local folklore.

Besides meetings and books, festivals provided another opportunity for Shoemaker to popularize folklore among the general public. He served as chairman of the Pennsylvania Folk Festival and advised the Americans All Folk Festival (formerly the Festival of Nations). Bucknell University hosted the Pennsylvania Folk Festival through the 1930s and gave the festival's direction over to folklore collector George Korson. Korson wrote Shoemaker to state his aim to "popularize folklore by means of the folk festival and thus create interest in the subject and
build up audiences who will enjoy such interesting works as yours.” Always one for pointing out the “usefulness” of public folklore activity, Shoemaker complimented Korson for enabling elderly and retired workers to have new life as performers. As chairman, he helped publicize the festival’s goals and activities. The festival was remarkably successful, attracting as many as thirty thousand visitors.

Shoemaker had been involved in state efforts for conservation of natural resources as a member of the State Forestry Board and the State Geographic Board after 1918 and he used this experience to argue for historical and cultural conservation. Shoemaker served on the Forestry Board with Gifford Pinchot who went on to run for governor on a Progressive platform. Shoemaker wrote a biography of Pinchot for his successful campaign. Upon becoming governor in 1923, Pinchot appointed Shoemaker chairman of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, an early example of a state-sponsored commission for public history. In this post, Shoemaker directed an extensive program for marking historical sites and undertaking archaeological excavations of Indian and frontier sites. Shoemaker claimed to have written over four thousand markers himself. He hoped that marked sites would increase appreciation among Pennsylvanians for local contributions to national history, instill a regional sense of pride, and help protect historic locations from industrial development. He expanded his public history role as officer of several county historical societies and president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies.

Shoemaker founded and introduced the Pennsylvania Folklore Society to the federation in 1924. Shoemaker explained that the society would preserve “unwritten history” and encourage all Pennsylvanians to be involved in the collecting task. By the end of the 1920s, Shoemaker was Pennsylvania’s best-known worker in the folklore and history fields. He published a daily column featuring folklore, conservation, and history topics for the *Tribune* that was carried throughout the state. A strong backer of Republican politics, Shoemaker was rewarded in 1930 by being named ambassador to Bulgaria.

Shoemaker credited his experience in Bulgaria between 1930 and 1933 with the idea of state-sponsored folklore organization. As early as 1936, Shoemaker told reporters “that the Bulgarian idea, that the government should subsidize the work of preserving folklore is worthy of emulation in the United States” (“Introducing” 1936). He touted government sponsorship of collecting trips and archives for folklore for its contribution to protection of the environment and its promotion of national spirit. Shoemaker admired the promotion of Bulgarian folk dances and costumes as a source of pride in national celebrations. He was particularly impressed by the work of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education. The ministry guided Bulgarian teachers in the collection and teaching of folklore, and published volumes to record “source materials of Bulgarian culture,” such as folk songs, folktales, legends, and proverbs. Shoemaker contributed to the effort by offering a silver cup prize for the best book on Bulgarian folklore published each year. His
interest in folklore research while he was minister resulted in his being awarded honorary membership in the folklore societies of Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey. He also had a forest preserve in Bulgaria named in his honor. Apropos of Shoemaker's advocacy for wilderness areas, his preserve was the only one of twelve parks to be kept a primitive area where all forms of trees, plants, and wildlife were left undisturbed.

While in Bulgaria, Shoemaker's investments suffered greatly during the Depression. His banks failed, his newspaper went into the red, and his real estate values plummeted. He lost the family fortune but managed to hang onto his newspaper. His friend from the diplomatic corps, George Earle, had been elected governor of Pennsylvania in 1936 and gave Shoemaker a lift by appointing him to the paid position of state archivist, a post he held until 1948, except for two years as director of the State Museum. At the archives, Shoemaker began a folklore section, but complained that the post did not allow for "outdoors work collecting oral traditions." He may have startled an audience of historians by asserting that the State Archives,

the most authoritative source of Pennsylvania history are entirely lacking in human interest. They consist of page after page of cabals of cunning politicians and self seeking soldiers. They contain nothing concerning the social, domestic, economic or cultural life of colonial and Revolutionary times. They give us no picture of the home life of the people, of that medley of races who made up colonial Pennsylvania. We soon become tired reading of the rancor, jealousy and hatred between various military and civilian factions and seek for a new fountain head of history. Therefore it is in the folklore and oral traditions of the people themselves that we must look for the adequate picture of the times.  

Such a call for an "adequate picture of the times" based on folk cultural research had more than the usual reception in Pennsylvania because of a growing number of folkloristic efforts related to public history after 1935. Arthur D. Graeff, who had been involved in the American Guide Series sponsored by the New Deal's Work Projects Administration, thought of the years after 1935 in Pennsylvania as a renaissance period of interest in lore that drew national attention. He thought that it was at least partly due to American response to Nazi folklore to make a claim for a superior Aryan folk spirit or character (Graeff 1955). Many writers during the 1930s touted American folklore as a rich trove of democratic society. It showed that unlike fascist regimes, a national society could be plural, including a special trinity of regional, "racial" or ethnic, and occupational cultures. Indeed, the Pennsylvania Folk Festival chaired by Henry Shoemaker used these categories to organize the sections of the festival. Benjamin Botkin offered his *Treasury of American Folklore* against Nazi efforts to speak "of folklore in terms of the 'racial heritage' or insists that a particular folk group or body of tradition is 'superior' or 'pure'" (Botkin 1944, xxvi). A familiar call went out for recovering authentic American lore before
it disappeared, especially in Pennsylvania where “traditions preserved orally flourished as vigorously as in any North American region,” according to Penn State professor Samuel Bayard (1945, 1). “To rescue it,” Bayard advised during the 1940s, quick action will be necessary, for to all appearances it will not survive delay. And its disappearance through neglect will be a cultural loss to both the state and the nation” (Bayard 1945, 14).

New Deal programs such as the American Guide Series recast the central issue of cultural loss during the Great Depression. They marked a shift of attention from the ways that previously poor “foreign elements” would assimilate to the dignity that native-born workers could muster in the face of Depression poverty. Images of farmers forced off their land and migrants in search of work suggested that the regional map of America was rapidly changing. Passage of immigration restrictions had quieted the debate over the Americanization of ethnic cultures, but reports of foreclosures and natural disasters increased awareness of breaks in regional traditions. As industry suffered and migrations forced by the hunt for economic opportunity spread, a new consciousness of workers and their attachment to place arose. Reminiscent of Shoemaker’s Progressive campaign to “sell Pennsylvania to Pennsylvanians” early in the century, the federally sponsored American Guide Series—structured as state travel manuals featuring sites of historical and cultural interest—to “introduce America to Americans” as a “rich culture.” Another indication of regionalism during the period was the American Folkways series edited by novelist Erskine Caldwell. Over twenty regional overviews connecting landscape, people, and culture came into popular circulation. With titles such as Short Grass Country (by Stanley Vestal) and Blue Ridge Country (by Jean Thomas), writers extolled the virtues of “old-timers” and “unlettered farm workers,” especially those in the South and West. Stories of cowboys in the West, sharecroppers in the South, and lumberjacks in the upper Midwest gave the impression of American ruggedness and persistence in the face of crisis.

In Pennsylvania, the voice of the folk in mines and mills, farms and forests, came across in popular festivals and publications—many of them government sponsored—to bolster the public spirit. The Pennsylvania installment of the WPA-sponsored American Guide Series opened with a section on history followed by chapters on ethnic folkways and traditions of mine, mill, and factory. S. K. Stevens in his foreword underscored the connection of this documentation to economic conditions and cultural re-creation. He wrote that the guide “should be a contribution to better citizenship through making Pennsylvanians conscious of their traditions and backgrounds. In these troubled times such a work may well aid in the preservation of those fundamental values so essential to the maintenance of our democracy” (Writers Program 1940, vii).

Amidst this outburst of regional documentary activities stood Henry Shoemaker, the genial elder statesman of Pennsylvania folklore, whose major claim was not so much the professionalization, but the “popularization” of
Pennsylvania's traditions. As a devoted Progressive, he advocated the conservation of cultural and natural resources belonging to the "common citizen for the public good." If Shoemaker earned respect for his Progressive efforts especially during the 1920s, during the New Deal he lacked a flock of professional followers. New workers in the field stressed the realistic depiction of working-class industrial culture and the persistence of ethnic-regional communities. Through the 1940s the growing university system ascended as a source of cultural authority and young folklore professors in Pennsylvania's public eye such as Samuel Bayard, Alfred Shoemaker, and Don Yoder voiced skepticism about the appropriateness of government's involvement in the administration of regional heritage. Shoemaker pushed on, however, for a state program for building romantic regionalism around Pennsylvania's history and folklore. Later, Shoemaker quietly defended his stand in the conflicts over Pennsylvania's cultural re-creation: "I think if I can in any way uncover a portion of the magnificently rich lore of Pennsylvania, preserving it for posterity, I shall feel that the time and effort I put into the study has been greatly repaid me. Indeed there is no greater thing that a man can leave to posterity than the fruit of his life's work, knowing it will be preserved and widely used."8

In 1939, Shoemaker met with the national Federal Works Project editor Benjamin Botkin at the State Museum. Known for popularizing regional folklore, Botkin admired Shoemaker's work and he included two of his stories in the best-selling *A Treasury of American Folklore* (1944). If the New Deal project Botkin described at their meeting provided an inspiration for the state folklorist post, Shoemaker for his part did not admit it. Shoemaker was a vocal critic of the New Deal, although he agreed that government should be involved in conserving heritage in the name of the constitutional directive to care for the public's welfare.

Shoemaker received a chance to air his views when Governor Edward Martin, campaigning for the preservation of Pennsylvania historical sites as a way of instilling civic pride, took office in 1943. As an opponent of the New Deal, Martin was not usually one for adding governmental programs. He nonetheless advocated strong governmental promotion of state and local heritage to build "loyalty to those ideals and institutions that have fashioned the American way of life" (Pennsylvania Historical 1950, 24). He invoked the need for local patriotism during World War II and considered public history a way to foster American values. The governor proposed the creation of a powerful independent historical agency reporting directly to him. In 1945 he reached his goal when legislation merged the Historical Commission, the State Archives, and State Museum into a more active Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission that had a conservationist mission. Donald Cadzow, formerly state archaeologist, was named the first executive director and Sylvester Stevens became state historian. Both officials had interests in "conserving" the cultural heritage of the state. Stevens announced that "by arousing pride in what Pennsylvanians have done in the past for the state, for the
Nation, and for mankind, the Commission seeks to build up and encourage sound patriotism and true civic feeling” (Stevens and Kent 1947, 5).

The patriotic posturing that was occurring after World War II owed to the climate of political nationalism of the war years. The country’s leaders urged Americans to stand together as a nation and define themselves by the democratic ideas and moral values for which the nation stood against evil fascism. The story the new commission planned to present included the patriotic events of the state and the popular story of its people. Key phrases recur in the commission’s rhetoric of the period such as “the American way of life,” “conserving heritage,” and “love of country.” The commission report for 1945–1950 declared, for example,

We need in our Nation and in our Commonwealth, as never before, a new appreciation and understanding of our heritage. The danger of being deprived of the cherished institutions that constitute the American way of life is very real and imminent. Understanding must rest upon a greater diffusion of popular knowledge about our history and the historic roots of our development and progress. A deeper love of our country and appreciation of our heritage should rest upon the firm bedrock of love of state and community. This naturally translates itself into love of country and understanding of all our national ideals and aspirations as Americans. (Pennsylvania Historical 1950, 1)

In a statement that probably owed to Shoemaker’s lobbying, the report emphasized that “conserving the raw materials of history is as necessary to the well-being of the Commonwealth as is the conserving of natural resources to its material strength” (Pennsylvania Historical 1950, 11).

The story the new commission planned to present included the patriotic events of the state and the popular story of the everyday people. For the latter, folklore and its image of people cooperating in communities entered the picture the commission wanted to prominently display. Indeed, several directors of state historical societies (especially in Progressive strongholds of New York, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), representing local and family legacies, took the lead in publishing and promoting public folklore as a means of publicizing the cultural connections of citizens to the state (see Jordan 1946; L. Jones 1950; Halpert 1985). Pennsylvania’s state historian Sylvester Stevens argued that if the commission was to present the story of the state’s people in various forms, it would need to actively retrieve oral as well as documentary materials for interpretation. He loudly announced: “I can testify in person to the serious lack of the folklore materials which are badly needed to enrich our understanding and enliven our appreciation of many aspects of our early Pennsylvania history” (Stevens 1965, xi). For the commission, the folklore coming out of “distinctive regional areas, from the occupational groups that comprise the laboring population, and from the numerous nationalities that have Pennsylvania their new home” was especially significant. Shoemaker’s work had demonstrated to the commission that folklore was interesting to the public and that including it in conventional historical work could “invest the written record
with an imagination and color that reflect the deep-seated, inner forces which lie close to human conduct” (Pennsylvania Historical 1950, 15).

**Creating a Public Folklore for the State**

The State Archives had the primary responsibility for maintaining the written record, but the structure of the unit needed revision to accomplish the new goals of the commission. A committee reviewed the archives and recommended that a Folklore Division be created in the state historian’s unit and a professional archivist be hired. Shoemaker was at first suspicious of the recommendation, because he thought that Cadzow and Stevens planned to remove him or minimize his influence. He accepted the post after receiving assurance that the Folklore Division would be separate from history and that a deputy could be hired. To underscore his independence, Shoemaker asked for the title of state folklorist, equivalent to Stevens’s of state historian. He confided to a legislator, “Folk Lore has been a main interest of my life and the position seemed like official recognition of my life time’s effort to collect and preserve Pennsylvania folk lore, and I would receive a salary in keeping with my long services and general training and experience.”

John Witthoft, formerly the State Museum’s curator of anthropology, remembered that “many people in the state wanted folklore represented on the Commission. It was a popular subject after the 1940s, and Shoemaker seemed a logical person to do it. He had many friends across the state and he was closely associated with folklore.” Dolores Coffey, who served in the commission’s executive director’s office, added that “the position of chief or Director of the Folklore Division was a natural for Colonel Shoemaker. He was President of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, a friend to many of the big folklore writers and collectors such as George Korson.”

On March 11, 1948, the commission announced Shoemaker’s historic appointment and the next day, the Harrisburg Patriot featured on its front page the news that went out across the state’s news wires: “Archivist Gets Folklore Post.” “It is an interesting assignment,” Shoemaker told the paper, for “Pennsylvania has the richest folklore heritage of any state in the union” (“Archivist” 1948, 1). Cadzow’s explanation was that “the Commission decided that fuller use should be made of Colonel Shoemaker’s abilities as a folklorist, and the new division was created to give full scope to his talents in this field” (“Archivist” 1948, 15). In his first day on the job, Shoemaker excitedly wrote a friend, “I am taking over a new department in the State Historical Commission, to collect and compile the Pennsylvania Folklore, and I think it is going to be interesting work with considerable time out-of-doors.” It was a position essentially created by and for Shoemaker, but Shoemaker hoped that such positions would be established in other states. He expansively planned, he informed Cadzow, to “correspond with all the American
folklore societies.” Shoemaker’s prime office space on Capitol Hill across from the governor’s office seemed to confirm the importance of the position.

The *Journal of American Folklore* carried an announcement of the position in its fourth issue of 1948. Louis C. Jones, editor of *New York Folklore Quarterly*, also carried news of the groundbreaking role, and Shoemaker wrote him personally to thank him for acknowledging “the fact that our State of Pennsylvania was the first to have a State Folklorist.” Fired up, Shoemaker went on to brag of other developments in the state: “It is not only the one to have the first State Folklorist, but it is also the first to have a chair in folklore in a university, at Franklin and Marshall College; also the Wyomissing Institute of Fine Arts, near Reading, has established a Division of Folklore.” Shoemaker testified to a sudden outpouring of folkloristic activities. “It looks as if Pennsylvania folklore,” he gushed to Arthur D. Graeff, “after a long time in getting started, has taken on real life and there seems to be no end to it and its ramifications and details, which take in every aspect of our daily life.”

Shoemaker began a folklore archives in the office and wrote a weekly column on folklore that went to newspapers across the state. He took excursions into the countryside gathering material at least once a week and appeared at numerous state functions as representative of the commission. He used the office as headquarters of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society and issued its publications. Despite these groundbreaking activities, Shoemaker wrote many memos to Cadzow expressing his disappointment. After Don Yoder turned down the job of deputy, Shoemaker failed to get approval for another assistant. He did not get support for a publication series and his requests for new equipment went unfilled.

Well into his seventies as the Democratic administration of George Leader took office in 1956, Shoemaker hung onto the position in the hope that a successor could be named, but academic folklorists in the state such as Samuel Bayard and Alfred Shoemaker resisted the idea of a state folklorist position and discouraged others from being involved. Bayard and Alfred Shoemaker hurled criticism at Henry Shoemaker for distorting folklore study with political and romantic leanings. Alfred Shoemaker at first tried to take over the Pennsylvania Folklore Society and, when that bid proved unsuccessful, then formed the rival Pennsylvania Folklife Society. He publicly criticized literary distortions and political uses of folklore and named the state folklorist’s work as a prime example.

The public row came to a head when Alfred and Henry vied for control of the huge and valuable Unger-Bassler collection of Pennsylvania-German manuscripts. Henry was sure he had snared the collection for the state for deposit in the public historical site of Conrad Weiser Park. Alfred Shoemaker meanwhile worked on Bassler to convince him that Henry had a Republican political interest in using the collection to present an assimilationist view of ethnic culture. Henry shot off a letter to Representative Daniel Hoch to complain: “As to the news concerning Dr. Bassler, his recent visit to me would indicate that he is one hundred per cent sold on Weiser Park, and he seemed very enthusiastic about the meeting and the
Henry Shoemaker as state folklorist giving an address at Tiadaghton Elm, July 4, 1951, legendary spot of the declaration of independence made by the “Fair Play Settlers” of Clinton County in 1776. Shoemaker referred to the incident as an example of folklore revealing “unrecorded history.” (Lock Haven Express)
prospect of depositing the Unger collection in the old Marschall House. I cannot conceive of an organization less politically minded than the Weiser Park Board, as at the table the other night sat Democrats, Republicans and independents, and I know that I am one of the least politically minded persons in public life, and have served under Democratic presidents and governors as well as Republicans." Bassler ended up reneging on his pledge to Henry Shoemaker and donated the material to Franklin and Marshall College and Alfred Shoemaker's Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center. Dolores Coffey recalled that "it was a terrible blow to him [Shoemaker] when Alfred Shoemaker and Don Yoder began to criticize his work, and even more so when the criticism was published in the press.... I do know the Commission did not feel it could come to the Colonel's defense which might have been another blow."16

Alfred Shoemaker became especially annoyed at Henry's invitations to creative writers to elaborate on folklore, and resisted associations that the state folklorist made between the Folklore Society and storytelling leagues and poetry societies. The rift grew when Alfred, who promoted an ethnological approach, publicly ridiculed the superficiality of Henry Shoemaker's literary folklore collections. Alfred accordingly announced at one Pennsylvania Folklore Society meeting that to make the distinction between the shallowness of Henry's folklore and the depth of folklife research, "we will drop the term folk lore and substitute 'folk life' and 'folk culture.'" Brandishing his expertise as an experienced publisher and journalist, Henry Shoemaker meanwhile made unflattering remarks about the appearance and content of Alfred's *Pennsylvania Dutchman*. "As to my personal comments on the 'Dutchman,'" Henry wrote Alfred, "I realized that the Pennsylvania Dutch, a far more valuable culture than New England, deserved a more fitting mouthpiece, on good paper, well illustrated, and ploughing out into new fields rather than repeating the old stories we have known all our lives." In his statement, Henry Shoemaker revealed philosophical differences between his literary view of folklore and Alfred's ethnological perspective. Alfred systematically gathered objective data—mostly material and social such as barns, customs, foods, and crafts—that could be quantified and analyzed. For Alfred, the goal was to record the ordinary and characteristic lifeways of traditional communities, in their totality, and he demonstrated this goal in his special attention to the "Dutch Country" within America. In Alfred's view, America had a diverse social landscape underscoring the persistence of ethnic-religious cultures such as the Pennsylvania Germans. Henry, on the other side, wanted to record lore to inspire the public with imaginative local narratives that recovered America.

At the time, the feud between Alfred and Henry Shoemaker was reminiscent of a national one shaking the foundations of the American Folklore Society. Outspoken Richard Dorson (1916–1981), who taught folklore at Michigan State University and later chaired the Ph.D.-granting Folklore Institute at Indiana University, unleashed a firestorm by discouraging figures he called "popularizers"
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and "amateurs" from the leadership of the American Folklore Society. He located the center of this censurable activity in New York and Pennsylvania. In Dorson's view, the popularizers undermined the serious study of folklore, destroyed the integrity of authentic traditions, misrepresented folklore's meaning, and endangered the academic growth of a folkloristic discipline. He assailed literary tampering with a tradition bearer's texts as akin to desecrating a historian's manuscripts. While MacEdward Leach, secretary-treasurer of the American Folklore Society, thought that popularizers did a service by keeping folklore interests before the public hungry for colorful regional literature, Dorson damned their efforts as "fakelore" (Dorson 1971a, 26-27). Contrary to Shoemaker's conception of "state folklorist," Dorson thought that collection and analysis properly belonged in the authority-wielding academy, carried out by unsentimentalized students trained in a separate, objective discipline of folklore, and he argued against the expansion of public folklore positions like Shoemaker's (Dorson 1971a, 40-42).

As the first state folklorist, Shoemaker was given great latitude by the executive director of the commission to define his responsibilities. His planning for the position began with a two-year plan. In it he envisioned supervising three branches to the division: "collection, compilation, publicity." He planned for four "departments" engaging in fieldwork to insure that the division would have state-wide coverage:

As there are four folk cultures in Pennsylvania, Western, Northern, Southern, and Eastern, four departments, with a collector assigned to each county, as the ultimate aim, equipped with typewriter, recording machine, to range these localities all the year round, gathering up ballads, legends, customs, proverbs, old words, but in the next two years if the Division could have four, or even two collectors in the field, one for each locality, all provided with a knowledge of Pennsylvania Dutch, in which form most of the Folklore exists, a beginning could be made. In the home office these collectors would [turn] in their findings monthly, either in shorthand notes or in typed form, where four office assistants would separate as to topics, and file in the most available manner for public use. There should be a secretary stenographer for each of these helpers, a secretary stenographer for the chief, a secretary stenographer for his assistant, and a messenger. The chief and his assistant would act as general program directors, interview callers, give out interviews, make addresses, write articles, and go out in the field as advisors. To the searchers, or on personal quests which seemed [expedient] for them to run down. Once a year the Division should publish an index by topics and localities of all materials collected, under the imprint of the Historical and Museum Commission. For the next two years in order to collect before it is too late, the ranks of old people, for example the old canal boatmen, raftmen, log drivers, charcoal furnace hands, wagoners are thinning, and we know hardly a civil war veteran survives. It would seem essential to have at least two workers in the field, their sustenance, returning to their homes Friday afternoons until Monday A.M., with automobiles, etc. provided, by State and (serviced, equipped with typing machines, recorders, etc.) Four compilers in the home office with Secretary stenographers, machines, etc. The chief
with Secretary stenographer, his assistant similarly equipped, and a messenger. This would mean a staff of fifteen including the chief and same as was Division of Archives in 1912. When they were doing a good piece of work, but gradually cut down to four, including the Archives, when became only partly effective. It would seem that the Chief of Folklore should receive $5,000, as he gives the Division the experience of a life time, an energy and enthusiasm which only comes to one who began the work fifty years ago and knows every nook and corner of Pennsylvania, its people, history and folklore, to give him less discourages, especially after his years of research.

The four men in the field should receive $200 each monthly, and keep of selves, car stationery. The office compilers $40 weekly, the six stationery stenographers, at the current rate of such employment, the messenger on the same basis. The assistant should be paid $3500, in which event would not have lost Prof. Don Yoder, and might still secure a great man like Prof. Sam Bayard. If it should be this level could not be reached, 1949-1951, I would feel that two field men the most important the compilers in the Harrisburg office cut to two, and four secretary stenographers instead of six and keep the messenger. The recapitulation of the reduced force would be, 2 field men, 2 cars, 2 recording machines, 2 office compilers, 4 secretary stenographers, 4 machines, 1 messenger, or 11 in staff. The work would lapse and lag on less. Why not get it off to a good start, or abandon it, single-handed your chief has done his best, but it is like putting him to count the grains of the sands of the ocean. Cutting down from four men in field to two, four office helpers to two, secretary-stenographers to two, I feel some progress could be made yet far out of line to my look ahead of March 13, 1948, yet the growth can only come by the size of staff in the field.19

After a year in the job, Henry Shoemaker reported feeling frustrated by the lack of staff. It forced him, he said, to follow a "conservative path." He outlined a "two fold purpose" for the position: "Not only does it preserve the history of a people according to law, geography and economics, but it preserves the manners, customs, the heart and soul of a people as well."20

Shoemaker prepared monthly reports to the executive director during his tenure as state folklorist, so he left a good record of what he accomplished. According to the reports, he went on an average of two to four collecting trips a month, mostly to areas he had not covered during his peak years of collecting before 1930. He wrote a weekly release on folklore for Capitol News, which was distributed to the state’s newspapers. He delivered between two and four addresses per month, attended a similar number of organizational meetings, and appeared frequently on radio and television shows. He made appearances at ceremonies and other official functions, including dedications of historical markers, openings of exhibits, and events at inaugurations and Pennsylvania farm shows. He answered between 70 and 130 letters a month and received a similar number of visitors to his office. He prepared scrapbooks and card indexes on different topics with clippings, mostly Shoemaker’s, on folklore. He distributed mimeographed folklore collections for distribution to members of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society and interested parties. He organized branches of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, with the
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goal of placing one in every county of the state, “under competent chairmen, who will collect and send to the Folklore Division at Harrisburg, all material collected in their localities.” By 1949, he claimed “a hundred enthusiastic volunteer workers in all the counties throughout the state” contributing material to the division.\textsuperscript{21} To reach these far-flung workers, he proposed a number of regional meetings of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society to replace the annual meeting in Harrisburg, and he spoke frequently on “county” folklore, encouraging its collection by local historical and folklore societies. He hoped to compile these results into a massive state folklore archives and build a library of folkloristic books.

Shoemaker needed extra staff and funding to realize his ambitious plans. During one brief interval, he had paid fieldwork help from Victoria Smallzel, and on occasion he benefitted from extra secretarial or archival assistance, but for the most part he worked alone with a secretary. This is the way he described his day:

I usually arrive at 8 a.m. and put out the things that I am planning to work with during the day. At 8:30 the mail begins to arrive, and by 9:00 I am ready to dictate answers to secretary-stenographer who arrives around 8:30. By 11 o’clock I am generally through the mail and have many of the letters answered. Around 11 my secretary goes for my light lunch and often gets her own. On other days, she goes out from 12 to 1 o’clock. Generally visitors do not come in until about 1, and they appear off and on for the rest of the day, some on appointments, others happen in. I have many phone calls, generally asking for information from nine until four thirty. In my spare moments I work on articles for Capitol News, and folk tales from my notes, being typed and filed. Or I work up my notes so as to make stories from them ready for typing. I endeavor to clear my days work by “going home time,” and often succeed at this. The scope of folklore is the time put on it. I do about all that is possible with one helper.\textsuperscript{22}

Early in television’s development, Shoemaker, ever the communicator, saw great potential in using media to spread interest in folklore and gain research outlets. He wrote Cadzow, “I believe that television would be an ideal means for bringing the facts of Folklore to the public’s attention and thereby getting more help from outsiders who know where some of the dying Folklore can be found. I have spoken on radio a number of times and on television two or three times and from the number of letters and phone calls I receive after these talks it seems to me that the public is interested and would be more so if they hear of it oftener.” “Probably the best stroke,” he added, “was connecting ourselves with Capitol News as these stories go to many newspapers every week and I get very interesting responses from people who know stories that I have not previously heard.”\textsuperscript{23}

In effect, Shoemaker had created a folklore wire service feeding information to the community outlets of local newspapers. Well experienced in column writing, Shoemaker made the most of the weekly news releases to publicize and popularize Pennsylvania folklore. While giving public notice to state folklore work, the releases also made many academic folklorists and historians cringe because of the sugared
and watered-down versions of collections peddled to the public. Responding to the popularity of Paul Bunyan as a journalistically developed frontier folk hero, Shoemaker quickly offered a real-life Pennsylvania version in “Cherry Tree Joe McCreery,” “his heroic deeds from Cherry Tree to Williamsport being sung in every lumber camp and mountain cabin.” Scrambling to come up with fresh material weekly, Shoemaker frequently paraphrased the collection of others, such as his elaboration of Arthur Graeff’s research into the Pennsylvania-German legend of the recluse Mountain Mary. Shoemaker’s releases especially gained notice when he issued timely columns on the origins and customs of holidays such as Halloween and Christmas. He additionally issued releases with flashy headlines commemorating anniversaries, particularly for the state’s ethnic groups. He used the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of Jewish settlement in Pennsylvania, for example, to briefly trace other “lost colonies” in Pennsylvania of Acadians and Waldensians.

**Professionalism and Authenticity**

Samuel Bayard wrote in *Pennsylvania Folklife* that the damage done in Pennsylvania from Shoemaker’s public work was “enormous” and “probably irreparable.” He protested the marriage Shoemaker had arranged between folklore and the Historical Commission and howled that the work of Shoemaker’s office “had the long-run effects of misleading some of the public, alienating others, hampering normal collection and study of the material, and completely destroying the ethnological value of anything published.” In the popularizer-professional debates of the 1950s, Bayard flatly dismissed Shoemaker “as arrant a faker and ‘fakelorist’ as ever existed.” Bayard wanted to legitimize the folklorist’s work as a trained academic specialty. He expressed annoyance at Shoemaker’s attribution of folklorist to every naturalist, local colorist, or historian he admired. Popularization in Bayard’s opinion distorted, indeed dumbed down the complex reality of tradition and tampered with the authenticity of the folk’s own literature. Bayard thought that Shoemaker had used folklore for political rather than scholarly ends and worried that any connection of heritage to a public agency corrupted the hard facts of tradition.

Exploding Shoemaker’s public presentation of Pennsylvania folklore, Bayard struck at the state folklorist’s most cherished assumptions. Of the idea that Pennsylvania folklore arose anew out of local conditions and events, Bayard argued for its being properly understood in reference to its diffusion from European sources. As to Shoemaker’s claim that folklore is unrecorded history, Bayard asserted that “what the historian considers important is usually disregarded and forgotten by bearers of a folk tradition, while legends tend to cluster thickly around happenings that, historically speaking, are quite obscure.” Bayard recognized Shoemaker’s purpose of promoting the state’s cultural uniqueness, but he pointed out that too much evidence denies this sentimental notion. Related to
"Purists" and "popularizers" at the American Folklore Society meeting, July 28, 1962, Indiana University. In the bottom row, far left, "popularizer" Benjamin Botkin sits next to his academic defender MacEdward Leach of the University of Pennsylvania. In the second row, far right, stands Richard M. Dorson of Indiana University, leader of the "purists." In the top row are Pennsylvania folklorists Samuel Bayard (second from left), a vocal critic of Shoemaker’s "state folklorist" work, and George Korson (second from right), Shoemaker’s successor as president of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society. The full roster is, from left to right, 1st row: Benjamin Botkin, MacEdward Leach, Erminie Wheeler Voegelin, Catherine Luomala, Thelma James, Wayland Hand, Francis Lee Utley; 2d row: Charles Seeger, Warren E. Roberts, Newbell Niles Puckett, Mody P. Boatright, Louis C. Jones, Stith Thompson, Archer Taylor, Arthur Palmer Hudson, Richard M. Dorson; 3d row: Morris E. Opler, Samuel P. Bayard, D. K. Wilgus, Edson Richmond, George Korson, Sol Tax.

...this romanticism is Shoemaker’s implication that folklore especially attaches to "picturesque" groups such as lumbermen, railroaders, and canallers. Yet it is among ordinary farmers in Pennsylvania, Bayard declared, “that the oldest, most enduring, and most enlightening popular lore normally persists.” Then Bayard targeted Shoemaker by stating that “this piece of common knowledge to folklorists throughout the western world has never been emphasized by an ‘official historian’ publicizer of folklore in Pennsylvania” (Bayard 1959, 11).

Bayard’s harshest cut may have ultimately been to Shoemaker’s public service for Pennsylvania. He shattered Shoemaker’s goal of finding the unique traditions of Pennsylvania. This obsession with uniqueness, Bayard grumbled, must be influenced by Shoemaker’s position as state folklorist, which serves purposes of publicity and patriotism, not the mission of furthering cultural knowledge. “What a folklore investigator is concerned with in the traditions of a region,” Bayard wrote,
“is not the distinctive and unique … but the characteristic and revealing” (Bayard 1959, 12). Bayard was not even willing to grant Shoemaker the usual credit for blazing new trails for others to follow, because “attempting a synthesis long before the folklore materials for it were available … is none the less lamentable,” especially since it may have the consequence of inhibiting solid fieldwork. Because Shoemaker gave the mistaken impression that folklore constituted a certain bygone romantic type of story, “the empty gesturing of the past,” so Bayard called it, other genuine traditions that could have been collected have been neglected. Bayard advocated a scientific regionalism being developed by academic linguists, cultural geographers, and folklife scholars during the 1950s. It called for a comprehensive mapping of regions on the basis of objective data subject to variation across space and stability over time such as dialect words, houses, barns, foods, and town forms (Glassie 1968; Zelinsky 1973).

Scientific regionalism challenged cherished American myths of the country’s ancestors in romantic highland “regions.” In Pennsylvania, academic studies suggested that a “Pennsylvania Culture Region” differed markedly from Shoemaker’s portrayal of a heartland in rugged northcentral Pennsylvania. The objective map showed a Philadelphia “cultural hearth” fostering a strong Pennsylvania-German imprint on the landscape in central and southeastern Pennsylvania and extending down into western Maryland and Virginia. Out of this farmland “core” a Middle-Atlantic region formed moving westward toward Pittsburgh (Glass 1986). So much for Henry Shoemaker’s mystical priority of Pennsylvania’s forested wilderness. This challenge extended to other romantic highland regions of the southern Appalachians, Ozarks, Rockies, and Adirondacks. The romantic regionalism that gave rise to the highland myths was subjective. It was based on the way that people narrated themselves, or rather, the way that the narrative was invented and popularized for some national or state need. Besides magnifying, indeed symbolizing the ruggedness of highland existence, as well as the equalizing and renewing effects of the woods, romantic regionalism offered a religious overtone to America’s ideals by placing them on the holy mountaintop close to God and nature. Henry Shoemaker summarized that Pennsylvanians have their soul in the highlands and forests because they imagine their values in the legends of the fertile wilderness. He insisted that they use them to provide the “inner meaning,” or self-perception of locality and national experience (see Bronner 1996d, 45–52).

Whether academic criticism or the aging Shoemaker’s ill health and erratic behavior had an influence, the facts are that in 1956 Shoemaker was unceremoniously fired from the commission by Democratic governor Leader, then the youngest governor Pennsylvania had ever had. Shoemaker’s line to friends was that he “was let out for ‘age.’” His health failing, Shoemaker also stepped aside as president of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society in 1956 and George Korson took over the helm. The society made its farewell with a reception honoring Shoemaker after the spring 1957 meeting and the publication of a special “Henry Shoemaker” issue
of *Keystone Folklore Quarterly* edited by Frank Hoffmann. As if to rebuff Bayard’s and Dorson’s criticisms of the popularizers, Korson titled his piece “Henry W. Shoemaker, Folklorist” following a dedication by New York’s popularizer Harold Thompson. During the summer of 1957, Shoemaker returned to his beloved home Restless Oaks, but in August he suffered a heart attack forcing him into the Lock Haven Hospital for seven weeks. After a second attack a year later he died at a Williamsport hospital on July 15, 1958. The *New York Times* carried a full column on his life accompanied by a photograph the next day. It highlighted his role as diplomat and historian, while Pennsylvania newspapers typically dwelled on his newspaper publishing, public service in Pennsylvania, and writings on folklore.

After Henry Shoemaker’s departure from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, another reorganization occurred when Governor Leader placed Frank Melvin as chair of the seventh Historical Commission. Sylvester Stevens replaced Cadzow as executive director and he consolidated the divisions, thus eliminating the Folklore Division. Despite attempts to bring folklorists to the commission within the History Division during the 1950s, Stevens failed to restore the state folklorist position until 1966, when MacEdward Leach of the University of Pennsylvania, who worked with Shoemaker, helped secure funding for an “Ethnic Culture Survey” within the commission by an act of the legislature. Stevens intended the job for the elderly Leach, but the revered ballad scholar took ill before the position could be filled. Henry Glassie, a graduate student still in his twenties in the Folklore and Folklife program at the University of Pennsylvania, took the job and Leach died shortly after.

Meanwhile during the 1960s, Richard Dorson, then director of Indiana University’s Folklore Institute, kept up his campaign to evict “popularizers” and “amateurs” from folklore’s disciplinary home (Dorson 1971a, 1976c). He claimed the scholarly goals of Indiana University’s Ph.D. program should be the model for future development of the growing discipline rather than the applied and even popularizing tendencies of folklore studies at the University of Pennsylvania (Dorson 1971a, 11–13; Abrahams 1992a). Dorson strongly denounced two of Shoemaker’s favorites in New York—Benjamin Botkin and Moritz Jagendorf. He belittled Shoemaker as a “regional collector” type who turns into a “parochial folklorist, ploughing the same field endlessly, collecting simply to collect” (Dorson 1971a, 23–24). He thought that Henry Glassie, who received his Ph.D. in 1969, might suffer the same fate as state folklorist, and plucked him away from his position at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission shortly after he assumed the post to come to Indiana University as an academic type.

In his first report as state folklorist for the commission, Glassie wrote of his activities, including setting up archives, holding conferences, and issuing publications, much as the previous state folklorist had done. He recognized the precedent of Henry Shoemaker but he sought to establish a professional reputation for the position and establish folklife principles. His successor was David Hufford, also a
young Ph.D. candidate from the Folklore and Folklife program at the University of Pennsylvania. Although the Ethnic Culture Survey was only three years old in 1969, Hufford offered its history as the “first state program in the country devoted to the collection, study and preservation of America’s traditional cultures.” Hufford knew of Shoemaker’s precedent but stressed the groundbreaking role of the Ethnic Culture Survey as a systematic ethnological instrument. Glassie, who had not written on the program beyond his reports, and who had not been well received by fellow commission members, received treatment in Hufford’s piece as a young pioneer hero combining material with verbal traditions. Hufford’s history did not discuss the circumstances leading to the passage of the legislation in 1966 or the background of state folklore efforts in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Beyond the one paragraph given to the formation of the survey, the rest of the article discussed current activities.

Yet it is Hufford’s account from which other chronicles have borrowed. The impression was that from Henry Glassie, a progressive line of professional folklore could be traced. Glassie was young as was the idea of public folklore at the state level. The image could be conveyed of continuous professional growth from this propitious beginning. The source of public folklore could be placed in academe and the direction could be mapped away from the “amateurs” and public interest in folklore. It had a founding hero, a miraculous birth, and an unbridled, almost magical development. Professional folklorists, if they were to accept public folklore, needed this narrative to affirm, in the words of Roger Abrahams in 1992, that “the work of public folklorists, then, is not less objective or scientific than that of academic folklorists” (Abrahams 1992a, 25).

In addition to seeming objective, the work of folklorists for the state in the 1990s also could appear increasingly socially therapeutic. Folklorists advocated for underrepresented, culturally neglected groups in need of attachment to state services. Roger Abrahams’s historical commentary in 1992 viewed state folklorists in relation to the cultural politics of the 1990s. What he called the “intercessory role” of public folklorists taking up the cause of the “disempowered” through government projects from the New Deal to the Great Society echoed through retrospectives beginning with Cultural Conservation by Ormond Loomis (1983) and The Conservation of Culture edited by Burt Feintuch (1988) to Public Folklore edited by Robert Baron and Nicholas Spitzer (1992) and Conserving Culture edited by Mary Hufford (1994). Abrahams’s view was that “since the 1960s it has become the accepted position that all scholarship arises from the investigator’s sociopolitical concerns,” and he affirmed the liberal stance that “the primary despoilers of folk culture still are the power brokers who too often forget about life-quality considerations in working out their engineering plans, their business mergers, their multinational takeovers” (Abrahams 1992a, 26). Yet one piece left out of chronicles of public folklore is that a prime mover for a controlling governmental role in cultural conservation and folklore was Shoemaker, a power broker from the wealthy elite.
What, then, prompted the creation of the first state folklorist position? My reading is that it owed to the background of Progressivism in Pennsylvania, influence-peddling of a prominent public figure caught in a bureaucratic reorganization, Republican nationalism after World War II—and a good bit of happenstance. Its link to the Ethnic Culture Survey, usually touted as the first state folklore program, is the precedent it offered for an office within the statewide historical commission. To be sure, the goals of the survey were decidedly different, although many of its activities were dictated by the previous operation.

And why did a peculiar chronology arise and why was Shoemaker neglected? Some may claim that Hufford’s published account of 1969 with its misleading historical claim provided a baseline picked up by future chroniclers. But then why did chroniclers not go beyond this document to examine other widely available folkloristic references such as the *Journal of American Folklore* or *New York Folklore Quarterly*, which carried news of Shoemaker’s new position? It is conceivable that Shoemaker’s amateur or romanticist image and conservative ideology did not fit with the prevailing views of professional folklore scholarship as it took shape in the 1960s and later became recast in the 1980s.

It is also true that beginning with Shoemaker would not have produced as neat or inspiring a narrative as starting with Glassie. The latter especially offers miraculous birth, virtuous father figure (MacEdward Leach) and revered roots (University of Pennsylvania), and a rapid, continuous growth from trained youth to professional maturity. Michael Owen Jones in *Putting Folklore to Use* (1994) quietly acknowledged Shoemaker’s precedent as state folklorist but loudly hailed Glassie as the first to take the role “in the modern sense of ‘folk-arts coordinator’” (16). After publication of the book, he wrote me to explain that he “liked the modern, professionalism of associating its [public folklore] start with Hank [Henry Glassie] and Dave [David Hufford].” Elsewhere in the letter he commented that “claiming public folklore began during the 60s with Penn academics fits well with a desire to claim professionalism … and it fits well with the spirit of young college folks at the time (anti-establishment, anti-war, etc.) and with the populism on which folklore study is rooted or at least attracts so many folklorists. To claim Shoemaker as a hero/founder/leader of public folklore just doesn’t seem to have the same excitement, rightness, fit.”

Perhaps another reason that a mistaken chronology for public folklore arose is the peculiarity of the term “public folklore.” Its dichotomy with “private” or academic folklore, which “public” suggests in practice, needed to be established in the 1960s, but seemed less convincing as roles crossed between scholars in academe and public agencies during the 1980s. College professors with administrative encouragement managed public festivals and ran outreach centers, and state folklorists offered courses and participated in academic programs. Moreover, whether “public” refers to the constituency or the source of support in the form of government can be irritatingly ambiguous (a problem shared in the parallel
use of “public history”) (Jones 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988). Michael Owen Jones tried to revise public folklore by demonstrating that folklorists in “public service” (i.e., employed in government agencies providing educational, arts, or cultural programming) represent one kind of applied folkloristics (Jones 1994). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also supported use of “applied folklore,” but worried that its rhetorical position opposite academe made it seem unscholarly, she sought an alternative base concept for its practitioners. She came up with “cultural objectification” as the common bond of public folklore with academic work (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988).

The critiques by Jones and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett beheld a new era in which the university was no longer dominant in the production of scholarship. The search for, and canonization of, the first state folklorist undertaken by many writers symbolized the need for analyzing alternative organizational contexts in which folkloristic labor, or “cultural objectification,” if one prefers, occurs. A problem arose in conceptualizing this practice because the labor was placed within broad cultural spheres rather than behavioral organizations. What has unfortunately transpired in several chronicles I have mentioned is that outlining historical events in the absence of organizational clarity helped to reify public folklore as a legitimate sphere and spreading social philosophy.

**Revision of the Historical Narrative**

In 1982, Governor Dick Thornburgh authorized a new state folklorist position for Pennsylvania after a lapse of a decade. Instead of being located at the Historical and Museum Commission, the position was put in an Office of State Folklife Programs in the Governor’s Ethnic Affairs Commission (later the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission). Its rhetoric changed from that of a Folklore Division calling for state patriotism to a folklife program with a pluralistic agenda. Its overall purpose was “to advocate and encourage the presentation of folk artists and the interpretation of folk cultural traditions in the public forum.” Although this sounded close to Shoemaker’s precedent, and indeed it loudly sang out the cant of cultural conservation, the new office was assuredly focused more on ethnological objectives than the historical and naturalistic goals set by the original state folklorist position. Ignoring Henry Shoemaker’s position in history, the Office of State Folklife Programs invoked the precedent of Henry Glassie’s Ethnic Culture Survey, appropriately, as the first state folklorist project. It sounded concerns for the “diversity” rather than the former “unity” of Pennsylvania. Its structure included forty-nine “ethnic commissioners” representing separate communities such as Assyrian and Bangladeshi as well as African American and Native American. More than half of the commissioners came from the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh area. The Heritage Affairs Commission brandished keywords of “multicultural,” “inter-ethnic,” and “cultural heritage.” It brought to
the fore contemporary industrial and urban folk arts of recent immigrants and
migrants much more than the poetic rural roots of Pennsylvania's frontiersmen.
These folk arts happened to be in Pennsylvania rather than being Pennsylvanian.
They belonged to artists rather than the romantic "soil" or regional "soul."

At the new Office of State Folklife Programs, the dynamic array of social move­
ment and event in the modern city epitomized rather than antithesize the charac­
ter of folkways. The public heard a lot more about Philadelphia and Pittsburgh
from the Heritage Affairs Commission than it ever did in Shoemaker's state folk­
lorist days, and it came in a way that verified, if not celebrated, the opportunities
and excitement of the varied, fast-paced city. This pattern fit into a wider scholar­
ly trend at the time emphasizing the essential role of folklore in media, industry,
and urban life as many contemporary folklorists viewed their subject embracing
modernity rather than opposing it. Giving validity to the mobility of community
traditions in a diverse, teeming metropolis offered a strong political imagery for a
changing society based on an unmeltable "cultural diversity."

That a new model—more social science than humanistic history, more indus­
trial than natural—largely pushed aside the unified mythologizing of the
American countryside did not mean that a romantic narrative did not still persist
or contestation within agencies for producing the narrative did not occur. The new
social sensitivity of the urban folk arts model offered a vision, described by Bess
Lomax Hawes, former director of the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts
Program: "It is a vision of a confident and open-hearted nation, where differences
can be seen as exciting instead of fear-laden, where men of good will, across all
manner of racial, linguistic, and historical barriers, can find common ground in
understanding solid craftsmanship, virtuoso techniques, and deeply felt expres­
sions" (Hawes 1992, 21). As the Progressives fashioned a response to rapid immi­
gration and industrialization in a popular version of American tradition, so this
new model offers an answer to new immigration (much of it from Latin America
and Asia) and to mass incorporation. The wilderness is gone from the rhetoric but
the need for a mystique that supports a sense of destiny and identity remains. Its
mythology before the public may be less narrated and more "imaged" in art and
performance, but it is no less imagined.

The dramatic shift of public folklore presentation between the Progressive era
and the 1990s matches the chronology historian Michael Kammen has projected
for the role of tradition in American culture (Kammen 1991). Since 1870, he has
pointed out, the most significant role involved the deliberate Americanization of
folk heritage through collected and presented narrative, speech, and song. Broadly
speaking, what followed was an imperfect democratization in regions and occupa­
tions, and later pluralization in groupings of ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexuality,
appearance, and class, to name some in the ever-growing list. Kammen also noted
the influence of tourism on later uses of tradition, and Pennsylvania, with its
whopping fifty-one separate tourist agencies, certainly attests to that trend in the
state. Even more than attracting tourism, heritage-writing—indeed, a whole heritage industry—is being called on for purposes of “economic development,” to promote community pride and image. Judging from the meteoric increase in museums, magazines, and films on heritage during the 1980s and 1990s, and the leveling off of American studies programs in universities, the production of heritage knowledge came increasingly from media and public agencies. If the 1980s reports on higher education are to be believed, the role for public agencies was heightened by the diminishing cultural authority of the academy. At the same time, American cultural education by many public agencies in the 1990s was a frequent target of conservative criticism in an effort to scale back or redevise governmental programs.

Pennsylvania’s state folklorist position was a victim of that effort in 1995. Almost fifty years after Henry Shoemaker realized his Progressive vision of state government taking responsibility for cultural conservation for the sake of the “public good,” a new administration dismantled a key agency created to carry out this state function. After Thomas Ridge became governor in 1995, his administration proposed eliminating the Department of Community Affairs, in which the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs commission resided. The state administration relocated many agencies from Community Affairs into other departments, and it announced plans to abolish the commission and its Office of State Folklife Programs by June 30, 1996, and to seek repeal of the Heritage Affairs Act of 1992, which authorized the commission to offer cultural conservation activities. The Ridge administration called for “privatizing” such state services, but failed to create a mechanism for privatization. The director of the commission, Shalom Staub, resigned in October 1995, and indeed established a private, nonprofit organization called the Institute for Cultural Partnerships.

Shoemaker’s Progressive guidelines of managing culture in a modernizing state, as well as promoting its tradition, took a dramatic turn in the reorganization and privatization of public heritage programs, and Pennsylvania—indeed, the nation—appeared to be controversially entering a new era of cultural and historical programming for the “public good.” A change was also apparent from the pluralist mission of the period of state folklife and folk arts programs. Although the goals of cultural “diversity” and “conservation” were still apparent, the role of the state as the manager of cultural resources altered. New trajectories for organizations and communities charitably promoting tradition became manifest. The narrative of public folklore had to be changed accordingly to bring out the organizational or grass-roots precedent for folklore working on behalf of “the common citizen and the public good,” to borrow Shoemaker’s old phrase.

The proclamation of the new narrative became evident in a widely distributed report produced by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1996. Entitled, appropriately enough, *The Changing Faces of Tradition*, prepared by Elizabeth Peterson, it had the stamp of an official report on public folk arts activities across the United
States. Trained as a folklorist, Peterson had been director of a traditional arts pro-
gram for a regional private, nonprofit arts organization. The news of her report
was that the state did not carry the burden of cultural conservation, and what it
did support was a seed from which communities could flower traditions.
Responding to legislative pressure that cultural programming was a drain on fiscal
resources, it gave a wealth of statistics to show that cultural conservation was a
sound “investment” in the future of tradition, and a small one at that. The tone
emphasized “folk arts” rather than “folklore” or “folklife” to underscore the cre-
ative, renewable sense of culture. Tradition constituted “rich artistic and commu-
nity resources” to be shaped and renewed (Peterson 1996a, 90). It ushered “a vision
for a future where communities are guided by local culture” (Alexander 1996).

The report broadcast the finding that most folk arts projects occurred outside
institutional settings and they found much of their nurturance from private fund-
ing. It highlighted the work of private, nonprofit organizations devoted to folklore
for the public good. The list ranged “from ethnic organizations, museums,
libraries, schools, historical societies and local arts agencies to folk arts organiza-
tions” (Peterson 1996a, 9). Instead of grousing for the preservation of the endan-
gered past, it beamed a creative future enriched by the organizational promotion
of diverse traditions centered in family and home. It splashed the future-oriented
headlines of public folklore for “Creating, Changing, Renewing” (Peterson 1996a,
32). It envisioned the imperative of “Organizing” for a changeful future restoring
community within a mass culture (Peterson 1996a, 68). Avoiding reference to the
intervention of state and government, the chair of the Endowment sung a populist
keynote that “the folk arts are part of what make our homes and communities
ours.” She spread the message that they are therefore “our” responsibility. It is the
collective “us,” she carefully noted, that would “continue to support and sustain the
traditional arts” (Alexander 1996). That responsibility seemed to translate to orga-
nizations outside of state authority (Peterson 1996a, 91).

While Henry Shoemaker’s state folklorist position predictably was absent from
the historical narrative of the NEA’s reinterpretation of national cultural pro-
gramming, so was Henry Glassie’s Ethnic Culture Survey. The oldest organization
providing impetus to the growing trajectory of the 1990s was the private, non-
profit National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA). “Founded in 1933,” the
summary read, the group is “the granddaddy of folk arts organizations.” The
same blurb used rhetoric of the 1990s to describe its work. “It is the nation’s old-
est *multicultural producing and presenting organization* dedicated solely to the
presentation and documentation of folk and traditional arts in the United States”
(emphasis added). It gave its flagship program as the production of the National
Folk Festival, “the oldest multi-cultural folk festival in the country” (Peterson
1996a, 64). Other organizations linked to this precedent do not have to produce
festivals, but they may engage in “multicultural producing and presenting” that
includes museum exhibition, multimedia and publication projects, technical
assistance and advocacy for artists and communities, and educational programs for schoolchildren and their teachers. Profiled in the report were City Lore (founded in 1986, New York City), Texas Folklife Resources (founded in 1985), and Vermont Folklife Center (founded in 1982).

If the NCTA is the granddaddy, then a daddy in this revised historical narrative is the National Endowment for the Arts pilot project of apprenticeship programs in 1983. Although involving the state, the programs bring out the decentered nature of state involvement. Their rhetoric minimizes the authority of the state and emphasizes individual artists in their communities. The report found that most "coordinators" (a less authoritarian term than "state folklorist" or "office director") called apprenticeships "the foundation of their folk arts program or among their three most important projects" (Auerbach 1996b, 24). The program spread from three projects in 1983 to thirty-eight in 1995. As if to emphasize the historical significance of apprenticeships, the NEA produced a separate report in the same year as Changing Faces of Tradition called In Good Hands, prepared by Susan Auerbach. Its subtitle gave the historical baseline of a new period of folk arts organization as the beginning of the apprenticeship programs in 1983. Auerbach explained that the ascendancy of the "model program" of apprenticeships owed to its decentered local emphasis. They "are responsive to local needs and conditions at hand," she wrote. "Policy makers appreciate the diversity built into the cost-effective programs," and "the concept of intergenerational teaching and learning has strong appeal to the public as well as artists and ethnic communities." The direction of program control, she predicted, would move to those communities. She offered precedents in Texas, New Hampshire, and Hawaii for private organizational administration and community management. Attention turns to the programs in this historical narrative because they are "Investing in the Future of Tradition," as the headline of her essay in Changing Faces blared.

The public folklorist from State Folklorist Henry Shoemaker to the folk arts coordinator at present has kept watch on tradition for the public good. Although working from different historical narratives, they equally hoped to shape the future in their attention to the past. Shoemaker's saga was one that took in conservation of nature, to preservation of the legacy of the nation's founding, to installment of a Progressive vision of state authority over resources—cultural, historical, and natural. In support of assimilation and "Americanization," it defined folk traditions for the purpose of nation-building and conceived a state role of promoting local patriotism. One might now forecast a period in which American folk tradition is geared toward emotional community-building in order to deal with the uncertain identities of individuals in a global mass culture, where electronic communication and constant mobility create a need for organizing belonging. The state and the folklorist equally seem to be giving up authority for tradition. They may urge, guide, and coordinate, but avoid giving the impression of running the show.
Judging from the aftermath of Pennsylvania's state folklorist position and folk arts reports of the 1990s, public folklorists may even be put in the troubling position of being cultural accountants worried about investments for the future of tradition. In this trend, the historical narratives for locating work for the public good have been decentered as much as the cultural conservation project has become increasingly privatized and diversified. At times, they compete for ordering the priority of work in the name of tradition, both public and private. To be sure, the expansion of traditions of concern in the public sector has opened a wide range of possibilities and provoked useful academic response from corners of history, anthropology, and sociology in addition to folklore. In the challenge to the ways that arts and humanities are public responsibilities, folklorists are noticeable among public agents for tradition as they assess the dizzying array of communities and organizations, identities and symbols representing the American memory of the past, its perception of the present, and its vision of the future.