Penobscot Language Dictionary

The Maine Folklife Center has received a three year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to work with the Penobscot Indian Nation to complete and publish the Penobscot Language Dictionary.

In its current form, the Penobscot Dictionary is based on Frank T. Siebert’s nearly sixty years (1935-1993) of field work with native speakers.

Siebert was assisted by Paulleena MacDougall from 1979-1988, and Penobscot tribal members Carol Dana, Mary Lolar, Paul Francis Jr., Ssipisi and Peter O’Meara. The first manuscript dictionary was created from index cards; in the mid-1980s, it was then re-entered into a digital text file format on 5.25” floppy disks. This digital text and its 1988 printout (including Siebert’s later handwritten amendments) is the version of the dictionary that forms the basis for the present project.

Much Penobscot language material is housed in the American Philosophical Society. Additional work with Siebert’s materials and other Penobscot documentation has been carried out by linguist Conor Quinn, who made Penobscot the focus of his graduate research, culminating in his 2006 Ph.D. dissertation in linguistics from Harvard University. He has since published other scholarly works on the language.

Recently, Dr. Timothy Powell, Director of Native American Projects at the American Philosophical Society (APS) and a member of the project’s advisory board, has overseen work on the Frank G. Speck and Frank Siebert collections at the APS in preparation for the Penobscot dictionary project. In the spring of 2011, Dr. Powell secured money from the Phillips Fund at the APS in order to pay for the conversion of Siebert’s dictionary manuscript from obsolete floppy drives.

Powell, Quinn and MacDougall will work as a team on this project together with Penobscot Nation Language Program personnel. Quinn will serve as the linguist for the dictionary project and together with MacDougall will finish the editing of the Dictionary. Quinn will use Siebert’s field notebooks, to locate Penobscot words not included in the current manuscript of the Penobscot dictionary. These digitized text files will make field notes more accessible to the dictionary project; the digitized dictionary files will be the primary source for the Penobscot/English dictionary. It will be published in a hardcover edition by the University of Maine Press, which recently published Peskotomuhkati Wolastoqewi Latuwewakon A Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Dictionary (Francis and Leavitt, 2008).

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Saying goodbye to Josh Parda

Josh, who lives with his wife Gretchen in Eddington has been working on his Master’s degree in history here at the University of Maine. He came to work for the Folklife center first on the NEA sponsored project the Maine Song and Story Sampler in September, 2010. The work he took part in included going through the archives to find good examples of songs and stories from a wide range of towns in the state (and the Maritime Provinces) and preparing notes about them as well as building biographical sketches where possible about the singers, storytellers and collectors represented in the collection. The project resulted in a web page, four CDs, our soon to be published next issue of Northeast Folklore, and, thanks to Archives Manager Katrina Wynn, a significant Digital Commons presence as well.

After the project was completed, Josh began working on the digitization project funded by the Library of Congress. This was a significantly complicated process of identifying original recorded materials, checking to make sure they were copied, preparing the metadata for the audio lab in Philadelphia and shipping the tapes out in batches of 100. We are just a few hundred short of completing the digitization of all of our audio tapes which we never could have done without Josh’s very able meticulous work on the project.

Josh has taken another job in the area and although he is no longer employed by the University, he is continuing to come in on a volunteer basis in order to see the project to completion. We will all miss Josh. I will miss him especially because he has acquired substantial knowledge of the collection and because I have been able to rely on him getting work completed completely and accurately.

Thank you, Josh and good luck in your new employment.
-Pauleena

Northeast Folklore News

Northeast Folklore Volume XLV 2013

By now members have received Northeast Folklore Volume XLV 2013 A Sampler of Songs and Stories from the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, compiled and edited by Joshua Parda and Pauleena MacDougall. This volume is an expansion of the seventh volume of Northeast Folklore, Folksongs from Maine. Readers will notice that we have included a handful of songs from Folksongs from Maine in the Sampler, but we have also included much more. The Sampler includes not just songs but also stories. The Sampler also expanded the range of materials beyond the borders of Maine into New Hampshire and Maritime Canada. Maine and its neighbors are connected by a shared culture, ecology, economy, and history within the region we refer to as the Northeast. The Sampler is in part a reflection of those regional ties.

ISBN: 978-0-943197-40-1
225 pages
$25.00

Northeast Folklore Volume XLVI

Our next volume is a study of an occupational culture in Maine: crab picking. This interdisciplinary work combines aspects of history, sociology, and cultural anthropology and relies heavily on oral history as a means of viewing the current state of the little known and little studied crab picking industry in Maine. The author, Blossom Kravitz will discuss the changes that occurred as crab picking moved from an unregulated cottage-industry to one that is heavily regulated. Kravitz presents the current issue of sustainability of crab in regard to both fishing crab and the cottage industry of crab picking—preparing crab for market. Using the oral history method Kravitz recorded the unique voices and stories of Maine crab pickers, who have much to say about their cottage industry today.

Expected publication: December 2014
Ballad Swap and Workshop

This spring the Maine Folklife Center held three ballad swaps and workshops at libraries in Belfast, Orono, and Portland. We were pleased with the turn-out and even more pleased with the discussions that took place concerning the history, movement, variations, and meanings of the different ballads highlighted. We even had participants sing favorite ballads of their own at each of the three events. As a special treat, we got to hear the brand new ballad about the North Pond Hermit from creator Troy R. Bennett.
Folk and Traditional Arts Programming provided by the Maine Folklife Center, Hudson Museum and Page Farm and Home Museum at the University of Maine

Bangor: Gateway to the North Woods

Numerous traditional arts have arisen out of Maine’s forest heritage including creation of baskets, snowshoes, canoes, wooden furniture, wood carved animals and figures, woods songs and story telling. Reflecting the Maine woods and Maine woods occupations, the culture of woodsmen was highlighted at this year’s festival, with demonstrations of wood carving and carving tools, woods songs, with exhibits by the Hudson Museum, Page Farm and Home Museum and the Bangor Historical Society of both the arts and occupational lore of the woods. Maine boasts a number of traditional artists who work in wood partly as a result of their primary occupations of woodsmen.

Many of the songs and stories told by men and women working in the lumber camps were about the food the cookees made for them. One well-known lumbering song maker, Larry Gorman, composed a song called “Henry’s Concern” in which he wrote:

The meat and fish is poorly cooked, the bread is sour and cold,
The beans are dry and dusty and the doughnuts hard and old;
If you were to eat one it would give you jaws great pain
The grub we oft times have’s a change in the good old State of Maine.

And

Pork and beans
And beans and pork
And pork and beans again.

Demonstrations:

Woodcarving Rodney “Butch” Richards, Jr., Pownal

Born in 1955 to Rodney C Richard, Sr., and Lueille Hailey Richard of Rangeley, Maine, Rodney Jr., followed early in the carving and logging traditions of his father and grandfather. When he was about seven years old, Rodney Jr., began shoveling snow away from tree trunks so his father could cut spruce and fir in the timber woods near their home. Like his two younger brothers, Rodney, Jr., continued to work throughout high school with his father, learning to do selective cutting and to handle a chain saw with skill. He also watched his grandfather and father as they carved. His grandfather William, born to Acadian parents in Village Ste. Pierre, New Brunswick, in 1900, carved delicate double-fan towers as well as miniature tools with his jackknife. Rodney, Sr., carves a wide array of objects with jackknife and chain saw. He is especially revered for his Maine black bears in all shapes and sizes, his exacting miniatures of loggers holding hand tools once used in woods work, and his tiny bunnies that he gives to children he meets. Now an experienced carver in his own right, Rodney, Jr., is sought out for his chains and balls-in-cages; his carefully painted miniatures of Maine animals and birds; and his chain saw sculptures made from one log that feature loon mothers and chicks among grasses, Maine black bears, totem poles of animals, and more. A graduate of the University of Maine, Orono, Rodney Richard, Jr., teaches in Biddeford and lives with his wife, Lenita, in Pownal.

Crooked Knives Duane Hanson, Jackman

Duane is a life-long woodsman who began making baskets and tools that he and his wife Sally Kwan later turned that into a business called Moose River Handcrafts. He will be demonstrating how crooked knives are made. The crooked knife is the traditional woodworking tool of the northern Indians. The tool is used for creating canoes, kayaks, snowshoes, toboggans, sleds, paddles, and the many other wooden items used in their subsistence economy. It can be used by holding it in one hand so the opposite hand can firmly hold the work. It is therefore more versatile than the European drawknife or spoke shave. It was adopted by many Maine wood carvers, particularly those working in logging camps or other forest related work.
Blacksmithing Gary Kenney, Emden
Blacksmithing is a traditional occupation with many used in logging camps and farms. Gary is a blacksmith who runs a business Millstream Ironworks in Emden. He works with Duane Hansom in forging the steel blades for knives that Duane creates. He will bring a portable forge and demonstrate the forging process.

Birch bark canoe making Steve Cayard, Wellington
The “birch,” as they are often called, is Maine’s prototypical canoe and original creation of the Wabanaki people of Maine. Woodsmen altered the materials by creating a wooden frame similar to the birch but covering it with canvas and later wood. Today other materials are used, but the basic form remains. The ancient art form of building a birch bark canoe was threatened when the large birch trees were cut down by lumbermen. However, Steve Cayard has revived the art in Maine. Steve builds birch bark canoes in the traditional style of the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet builders of Maine and New Brunswick from the early- to mid-1800’s. He has learned his craft through research on old canoes in museums, old photos, and written accounts. His building experience has given him an understanding of the construction details of the old canoes, which he then incorporates into his canoes. It has been his goal to contribute all that he can to the revival of the traditional canoe style of this area, in which there have been few if any birch bark canoe builders since the 1920’s, that is, until recently. He has presented birch bark canoe workshops to Penobscots, Passamaquoddis and Maliseets and has been involved in restoration of older birch bark canoes in museums.

On the Maine Folklife Center Narrative Stage
Music and stories from Maine Woodsmen
Harold Jackson and Martin Morris, Fort Kent
Harold and Martin are both experienced woodsmen who also play music together. Harold plays the guitar and is especially known for his song “Poor, poor woodsman.” Martin plays fiddle tunes from the Acadian tradition of northern Maine. They will perform music and talk about their experiences as woodsmen from the St. John Valley on Saturday.

Doughnuts! Patricia Henner Orono
Patty is the Director of the Page Farm and Home Museum at the University of Maine, which is a repository for Maine history relating to farms and farming communities between 1865 and 1940. She has been at the Page Museum since 1997 and has been the Director since 2001. Her research interests include log transportation, material culture and domestic economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Museum holds a large collection of recipes from fabled Maine food writer and home economist Mildred Brown, “Brownie” Schrumpf. Patty made Brownie’s recipe for lumber camp molasses donuts.

Songs from the Maine Woods
Julia Lane, Fred Gesbee, Sarah Harlan-Haughey and Pauleena MacDougall performed and talked about songs collected from the Maine Woods. Many of these songs are older ballads that came from the British Isles and Ireland, others are homegrown. Audience participation is encouraged. Pauleena MacDougall, Director, Maine Folklife Center, University of Maine
Sarah Harlan-Haughey, Honors preceptor and Instructor of English, University of Maine
Julia Lane, folksinger and ballad collector, member of Castlebay with her husband, Fred Gosbee.

Hudson Museum The University of Maine Orono
Among the collections of the Hudson Museum are Maine Indian holdings that were essential to the forest lifeways of the Northeast. These include crooked knives, birchbark canoes and paddles, fishing creels, and pack baskets. These objects were known for their durability, utility, and beauty and were coveted by those who frequent the Maine woods. All of these Maine Indian artistic and cultural traditions extend back in time thousands of years and connect all of us with these ancestral artforms of the forest. www.umaine.edu/hudsonmuseum.

Page Farm and Home Museum University of Maine, Orono
The state of Maine once led the world in lumber production. With Bangor at its center, Maine was the first great lumber-producing region. Logging crews penetrated deep into the Maine woods in search of pine and spruce and floated it down to sawmills gathered at waterfalls. Maine’s lumber industry’s need for transportation became so great; it spurred other important large industries, such as shipbuilding and railroads. The exhibit illustrated the history of the Maine lumber industry, early log transportation and life in the lumber camps. www.umaine.edu/pagefarm.
The Metadata Challenge

Our digitization project has led us to learn all sorts of new things both about our collection and about digital curating. One of those things was metadata, so I thought I would take this opportunity to short-run down on metadata for those of you who are also working on digitization projects or would like to be.

What is it and why do you need it?

Metadata is a tricky concept and so it is hard to find a single all-encompassing definition for it. The most common definition given is “data about data”. A more encompassing definition is “Metadata is data about data, structured to meet the needs of information holders, managers, and users. It helps users to discover, locate, understand, and evaluate data, and helps data administrators to manage data and control access and use. For example, metadata may describe how, when, why, and by whom a particular data object or set of data was collected or created, what its content is, how it is formatted, and the conditions for its use” (Association for Library Collections and Technical Services Task Force on Metadata).

So that covers the what of metadata, but what about the why? Metadata is vital for digital files, especially for their preservation in a time of rapidly changing technology. For example, while you can place a physical book on a shelf and, barring complications, find it readable and structurally sound 20 years later, if you have a digital scan of that same book and simply “shelve it”, you are very unlikely to be able to access it in 20 years. Not only will be hardware and software be so outdated as to be completely inaccessible, but the digital file itself may have become corrupted. Detailed metadata can help you keep track of which files are in what format and when they need to be migrated to ensure the information isn’t lost.

On last piece of information: Though it is by no means the only one, the most commonly used basic metadata standard is probably Dublin Core. The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative has a core of 15 elements. This has been expanded and altered by both Dublin Core and others since then, but it is still a foundation which many standards use.

Choosing a Schema

There is a lot to think about when looking at possible metadata schemas. The best advice I have heard for picking a metadata structure was to think about what your goals are and what the goals of your audience are. That will help you pick and execute a schema appropriate for your organization.

After choosing a schema, it may be necessary to modify it. This is common due to trying to balance local needs with broader compatibility. Two possible solutions to consider are creating ways of easily making your local schema fit a standard schema model (i.e. creating crosswalks) and using a combination of local and standard vocabularies.

Our Experience

At the beginning of our digitization project, we were given a basic metadata schema by the American Folklife Center. The metadata inputting wasn’t done from the start of the scanning process; I hired a summer student worker for that specifically after the bulk of the scanning had been completed. At that point, I took another look at the schema and realized I had questions about how it would be filled in. So together Bert Lyons, of the American Folklife Center, and I worked to create a style guide for the schema. We also had a number of phone and email conversations about what elements were needed and what weren’t. Our schema ended up with 27 elements. Those elements range from source_id to holding_description to digital_specifications. Some of the 27 elements aren’t needed by the America Folklife Center because they are interested only in metadata that addresses the digitization process itself. However, I added elements (such as our unique accession number) because I knew it would be easier to add it while everything else was being done than later.

What we learned

Besides gaining general knowledge about how to better extract and input data, we learned one crucial thing: that a more robust and detailed style sheet was needed. Our style sheet was pretty bare and if it hadn’t been for on the job training, it would have been hard for our student workers to complete correctly. A good style guide lays out clear, comprehensive, and addresses semantics, syntax, and structure.

We hope that our experiences with metadata will be able to aid you as you move forward with your own digitization projects. Please feel free to contact us if you are interested in a more in-depth look at metadata. (A longer version of this paper was presented at the 2013 American Folklore Society Meeting).

- Katrina Wynn
Highlighting our Volunteers

Student Ballad Research

When we began developing the Maine Song and Story Sampler, our graduate assistant, Josh Parda, worked on the project as his primary task at the Folklife Center. Folks who follow us on Facebook or check our website frequently have seen the occasional posts of a song here or a story there that is relevant to some holiday or other event(s) going on in the wider world. And, thanks to our Archives Manager, Katrina Wynn, the full Sampler is available through Digital Commons. However, we went a full year without actually adding material to the Sampler.

Fortunately for us, Hilary Warner-Evans, an Anthropology major in the class of 2016, approached Pauleena with an interest in researching more ballads. Short-story shorter, Hilary has been volunteering at the Folklife Center since October 2012 doing research on ballads in our collection. Some of these have been used for temporary, topical posts (for example, a post on St. Patrick’s Day about “Skibbereen”) and several more have been added to the Sampler (“Lost Jimmy Whalen,” “The Schooner EA Horton,” and more).

What led Hilary to South Stevens Hall? Simple, really: a childhood interest in the Middle Ages. When she was about ten years old, she began reading about and singing old ballads. In her words, they represent “a natural crossing between my interests in history, literature, and music.” Her favorite is one of the many British ballads chronicled by Francis James Child in the late nineteenth century, “The Outlandish Knight” (Child 4). She was researching the ballads on her own, but enjoys the work much more at the Folklife Center because we present more resources at her disposal. More importantly, “it is gratifying for me that something which used to be just a hobby is actually of use.”

This summer she interviewed two song writers who recently wrote songs about the infamous North Pond Hermit.

Thanks Hilary!

Archives

The Maine Folklife Center said goodbye to a valued volunteer. Barbara Stephens had been vital to the Maine Folklife Center over these past few years as she worked in the archives adding backlogged materials and organizing the database. It was a time when university cuts had left us without an Archives Manager, so having someone come in twice a week to work in the archives was an immeasurable help to the Maine Folklife Center. I personally was very lucky because Barbara stayed on for the first six months of my job as the new Archive Manager to train me, which I would have been adrift without. So a warm thank you to Barbara from everyone at the Maine Folklife Center, and we wish her luck in pursuing her many interests in the future.

-Katrina

Notes from the archives

One person has been visiting the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History a lot this past year: Ian Jesse. That’s because Ian used the Sandy Ives’s research to write his history thesis for his MA, “Manhood in Verse: Revisiting the Folksongs of Joe Scott and Larry Gorman.” In his thesis, Ian examined definitions of working class manhood and how these definitions were communicated in folksongs, particularly those of Joe Scott and Larry Gorman. He found that a positive masculine identity involved such traits as physical strength, bravery, skill in the workplace, and the enduring of a harsh environment. A negative masculine identity involved being dishonest, a cheat, and someone who defined himself in terms of the possessions he owned. Interestingly, Larry Gorman himself wasn’t a masculine or ideal man, and instead he asserted his masculine identity by critiquing other men, especially those in positions of authority over him. Ian believes his thesis to be an extension of Ives’s work because he is providing a masculine analysis of the songs Ives used in his books, which is an angle that Ives did not pursue.
PLEASE JOIN US!

Membership dues and contributions enable the Maine Folklife Center to function as a self-supporting unit of the University of Maine. By pledging membership, individuals and institutions play a vital role in encouraging the study, documentation and presentation of Maine’s traditional cultural heritage.

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