



AFC Board Newsletter

Board Newsletter of the American Folklife Center
Betsy Peterson, Director

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Exploring American History through Songs



Items from the Song of American project are currently on display in the Great Hall, Thomas Jefferson building.
Photo Credit: Michelle Krowl

The Library of Congress announced the launch of a new Web site, *The Library of Congress Celebrates the Songs of America*. The site is a collaborative project of the Music Division, with the American Folklife Center, and the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division of the Library, and features items from our collections.

[*Songs of America*](#) allows the user to experience American history as documented in the work of some of America's greatest composers, poets, scholars, performers, and traditional artists. From popular and

traditional songs to poetic art songs and sacred music, the relationship of song to historical events from the nation's founding to the present is highlighted through more than 88,000 online items. The user can listen to digitized recordings, watch performances of artists interpreting and commenting on American songs, and view sheet music, manuscripts, and historic copyright submissions online. The site also contains curator talks, essays, and teaching resources connecting music to history and social studies themes. Keyword searches allow the user to explore material by subject, historical period, format, and by state.

The *Songs of America* website, launched at Dr. Billington's request, is the culmination of over two years of work. AFC staff members Peter Bartis and Stephanie Hall were active members of an interdivisional working group who developed the thematic framework for the site and researched, compiled links and prepared essays. Other Center staff members also appear in video "curator talks" lecturing on various subjects related to folksong. We offer our congratulations and thanks for their efforts.

VHP Remembers the "Lost Campaign" of the Aleutian Islands



"Kiska Patrol" - Kiska, Aleutian Islands, Alaska - Edward Perry Kysar Collection - AFC/VHP (AFC/2001/001/1606)

VHP's newest [Experiencing War](#) web feature explores an often-forgotten part of World War II, the Aleutian Island Campaign, during which thousands of American soldiers fought against Japanese forces that had invaded islands off the coast of Alaska. The feature includes the stories of Dean Galles, who sustained bayonet injuries during hand-to-hand combat with the Japanese, and Clifton Davis, who describes the unique blizzards known as "willowaws" that were common in the Aleutians. Also featured are the stories of Seabee Earl Long, who discovered a love of reading while on the long journey to the Aleutians, and Howard Bernstein, a pilot who flew bombing missions out of Attu Island. Currently, VHP has preserved nearly 600 narratives from veterans of the Aleutian Campaign, and we hope this feature will encourage others to come forward. In addition to the collections featured in *Experiencing War*, over 100 more are accessible online.

AFC Enters the Blogosphere with Folklife Today

There's a new folklore blog in town, one which presents articles on a wide range of folklife topics grounded in the collections of the Library of Congress. It's called *Folklife Today*, and it's produced by the staff of the American Folklife Center. The blog has been up and running since Halloween, but if you haven't had the opportunity to read it, please surf on over to [Folklife Today](#) to have a look.

The topics covered range widely, highlighting aspects of the collections or topics of relevance to folklore, ethnomusicology, oral history, and other fields. Some are analyses of individual songs, such as Steve Winick's essay on "The Fox." Others are investigations of large collections and project initiatives, such as Todd Harvey's guest post on Lomax's 1938 Michigan trip. Stephanie Hall's article examines the canning of foods across a number of collections and cultures. Nicki Saylor's piece on computing culture discusses archival practice and innovation. Oral history is well represented too, with several posts each by Kate Stewart on the Civil Rights History Project, and Megan Harris on the Veterans History Project.

We're always looking for story ideas. If you can think of any AFC collections or activities that you'd like to see highlighted on the blog, please let us know. In the meantime, please read and enjoy *Folklife Today*.

News from the Archives

AFC staff members Bertram Lyons and Nicole Saylor recently traveled to Indiana University to participate in meetings about the future of the National Folklore Archives Initiative (NFAI), an effort to document and provide access to archival collections held by folklore programs at academic institutions, community-based cultural and ethnic organizations, non-profit organizations, and state government-based arts and cultural agencies in the United States.

NFAI is sponsored by the American Folklore Society and led by AFS President Timothy Lloyd, along with co-principal investigators Andy Kolovos and Steve Green, folklorist-archivists at major non-profit folklife centers in the United States. Lyons serves as the technical lead for the project. The group met

with a team of librarians from [Open Folklore](#), a scholarly resource devoted to increasing the number and variety of useful resources, published and unpublished, available for the field of folklore studies and the communities with which folklore scholars partner. The aim is for the two initiatives to build an alliance that will add to the offerings of *Open Folklore* and also help bolster NFAI's efforts to create a field-wide sustainable infrastructure to make archival collections more widely discoverable and accessible.

The NFAI team is currently at work applying for a second round of grant funding to further develop the [Folklore Collections Database](#), an open-access online resource providing searchable information about folklore archival collections. It also contains general information from a national survey of folklore archival repositories and collections. The next funding phase, if successful, would support developing a repository for the preservation of digital archival assets from participating NFAI institutions that do not have local access to such a repository and expanding the capabilities of the platform to provide content hosting for participating repositories.



Looking forward to seeing you at the AFC Board Meeting on April 24-25!

If you haven't already, please send in your itineraries and hotel plans to Brock Thompson at wbth@loc.gov.

Upcoming Events at the AFC.

March 31 – *Open Mic: David Bromberg* – Interview discussion with David Bromberg. Co-sponsored with the Music Division. 12:00 p.m. Whittall Pavillion, Jefferson Building

April 11 – Forum: *Coffeehouses: Folk Music, Culture, and Counterculture*, 12:00 p.m. Montpeller, Madison Building

April 23 – Kluge Lomax Lecture – Joshua Caffery, Alan Lomax Fellow in Folklife Studies. *Joe Féralle: Louisiana's Ogun and the Casey Jones of the North Caribbean*. Co-sponsored with the Kluge Center.

LJ-113, First floor, Jefferson Building