BIBLIOGRAPHY OF
AMERICAN FOLK AND VERNACULAR ART

Simon J. Bronner

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CONTENTS

Preface....................1

Introduction...............2

Bibliography...............6

Index.......................81
The first edition of my bibliography of American folk art attempted to cover a broad range of materials which, judging from the demand for the publication, proved to be of great interest to folklorists, art historians, museum professionals, anthropologists, and cultural geographers. I am encouraged by the recognition of the bibliography by researchers in the various fields concerned with folk art—especially as part of folklorists' growing acceptance of folk art and material culture as a vital force in their study.

I must admit that I am a reluctant bibliographer. The effort that spawned the first edition was based on my need for a bibliographical tool for research rather than a love for bibliographical work. Indeed, the task of compiling sources is extremely time-consuming, usually frustrating, and often dull. Still, the more I used the bibliography of folk art, the more I saw its potential as a research aid, and the more I saw room for expansion and improvement. Those factors along with the support of the Folklore Publications Group's editors were the motivations for preparing a new edition of the bibliography.

A basic change found in the new bibliography is the elimination of the previous headings. As the number of entries quickly multiplied in my files, arranging them consecutively by author and locating subjects by an expanded index appeared to be more successful than the organization in the first edition. In addition, the number of entries has been greatly increased. Not only have new publications been released between the two editions of the bibliography, but many more references from past sources were also uncovered and included in the new edition.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge individuals who helped me to complete the bibliography. Space limitations do not allow me to list them all, but certainly special thanks are due Warren Roberts, Michelle Janette, Marsha McDowell, Michael Owen Jones, William Ferris, Elizabeth Mankin-Kornhauser, Elizabeth Mosby Adler, Roger Beatty, and Carl Lindahl for bringing references to my attention. In addition, Elissa Henken and Dana Everts of the Folklore Publications Group were exceptionally supportive of the project. I also wish to single out Louis C. Jones and Agnes Halsey Jones who, despite our academic disagreements, provided encouragement, guidance, and friendship that first inspired my work on folk art. To them I dedicate this work.

30 June 1979
Bloomington, Indiana
The term, "folk art," has suffered numerous abuses since its inception in the first half of the twentieth century. The ambiguity of its meaning has precipitated a multitude of disagreements concerning folk art's definition, scope, and value. Published studies on folk art exist in scattered sources and range from picture books to complex theoretical treatises. This literature represents several disciplines that include folk art in its purview and apply their own methods for its study. At a large academic institution such as Indiana University, for example, an interested student may find himself scurrying between the art library, the museum, and the history, anthropology, and folklore collections just to locate the basic texts on folk art. Yet, such excursions are symbolic of possible multidisciplinary communication between disparate folk art studies which can result in a valuable synthesis of differing research approaches to the study of folk art.

In a recent presentation I defined folk art as art in traditional society and traditional art in contemporary society.¹ "Tradition" refers to behavior, skills, or information transmitted by oral or mimetic means through space or time. The concept of society is included in the definition to indicate the appropriate social, historical, or geographical context for the artifact. My purpose for stressing the concepts of tradition and context was to counter the notions of folk art as naive, untrained, untutored, primitive, and other similar descriptions which pervaded museum and art history publications. My position was that if "folk" in folk art is to be properly used, tradition and context had to be the identifying criteria. In such a view, knowledge of the creator's background is usually required for a typical folk art study in order to ascertain sources of the artist's folk tradition. Second, the community served by the artist and the community of the artist's origin provides contextual evidence to determine local traditional customs that influence the artist. Admittedly, historic artifacts often preclude both tests; then the work of art must be examined for internal evidence of tradition. Such evidence includes the medium of expression used, the technique employed, the depiction shown, and the design or style displayed. Fortunately, the literature on folk art offers comparative materials to establish a basis for corroborative purposes.²

The antithesis of my approach is the intuitive method which often equates "primitive" productions with folk culture. This method applies vague, subjective criteria with inadequate, if any, tests of tradition. Aesthetic judgment, that is to say, assigning "crude" works to folk art, too often provides the basis for classification. In addition, the intuitive method understands the folk process to mean self-taught rather than traditional. Regardless of art's adjectives, the perplexing questions evoked by the existence of idiosyncratic, non-traditional expressions remain. Some writers realize the problem and use non-academic, popular, or vernacular to
describe art that encompasses both mass-produced and folk art. The term art also needs explanation; many writers use it to indicate elevated status, but that is not the intention here. I characterize art as a material expression of adornment or embellishment. The distinction needs to be made, however, between traditional and non-traditional art forms, and thus I use popular to refer to media-transmitted or mass produced works such as prints, handbills, and in some cases, cigar store and carousel figures. Vernacular is often a useful term, especially in architecture, to describe works designed for personal requirements completed by "unschooled" artists. Here is where the "naive" artists fall. To be sure, such categories are cumbersome, but they remain necessary if studies of folk art plan to bridge multidisciplinary confusion. Ultimately, folklorists need to educate other disciplines on the concept of folk in folk art, and at the same time they need to be aware of other disciplinary researches on folk art.

A need for a comprehensive bibliography of American folk art has been strongly felt in recent years. Not only would such a bibliography reveal the available literature on folk art in a variety of academic fields, but it would also define the genre's present scope. Toward this end, I have not only included folkloristic studies of folk art but also non-academic examinations, even when the use of folk seems questionable. When a description of an object does not use folk, but refers to the study of folk art, I have also included the publication. My bibliography is meant as a research aid which will help locate sources for future folk art studies and thus, will simultaneously strengthen the field of folk art.

In order to make the bibliography manageable I have employed several restrictions on the entries. First, "American" means the continental United States; native American Indian art is included when the study touches on post-contact culture. Another restriction involves the elimination of most craft-oriented publications which contain cursory or nonexistent treatment of artistic considerations. Folk art to some observers refers to a general term for art and craft, but I allude to craft as a utilitarian endeavor separate from art. I use Henry Glassie's measure of art as possessing a pleasure-giving function whereas craft contains a practical function. Of course, many utilitarian objects contain numerous decorative elements, and often, as in painted screens or trade signs, the artistic element serves a primary operational function. For the purposes of this bibliography, however, craft literature is included only when it contains discussions of decorative or aesthetic considerations. As a result, the majority of works on folk art listed concern painting and sculpture, but I caution that these genres reflect the emphasis of the literature, and not necessarily the historic elements of folk art.
In addition to the present bibliography, specific listings of publications are available for the study of quilts, gravestones, and fracturs. Although I included works not found in these references and repeated important citations, the specific generic bibliographies should be used for supplementary research in these areas. Indeed, it is hoped that my general bibliography will encourage work on comprehensive listings of sources for particular subjects in folk art.

The entries in my bibliography are arranged alphabetically by author or title, when no author is designated, and numbered sequentially. More detailed subject references which are keyed to entry numbers can be located in the index appended to the bibliography.

Like any published bibliography, this one suffers from omissions because of publication deadlines and inaccessible sources, although I have attempted to keep such circumstances to a minimum. The present compilation represents the necessary building block to future researches in the field of folk art. My frustration when I listen to art history presentations on folk art shamefully ignorant of major folkloristic works or vice versa may be thus reduced in the future. Other benefits from such a bibliography include the identification of prolific scholars on the subject of folk art, and the recognition of research gaps. My comments on scattered individual entries are designed as guides to the apparent quality of research and the disciplinary approach employed.

One observation I would like to mention is folk art's circulatory problem. In the process of compiling the entries it became apparent that the bookshelves of museum catalogs and other museum literature were integral elements of the field's resources, but they circulated poorly and were often only made available through the individual museums. Still, they should be recognized as invaluable resource materials and I suggest an effort to obtain the better ones by folk art researchers. I also urge an effort by museums to make these publications more widely available and known.

Through the cooperation of museums, collectors, and academics, folk art studies can produce valuable knowledge on the nature of art and society. Examples of crucial questions to be answered by folk art researchers include: What is the nature of creativity in folk art? How does folk art indicate regionality, ethnicity, or periodicity? What does folk art say about the American experience? What does folk art say about individual behavior? Is there a folk aesthetic? What are particularly folk designs? How do we evaluate originality and innovation in traditional arts? What distinguishes art from craft? What defines folk art? What is folk art's role in contemporary society? How should we assess methods of disseminating information on folk art in the museum, the festival, and the classroom? What are the origins of various folk art forms? What are folk art researchers' obligations to the artists
and communities they collect from? Such questions will lead
to an articulation of methods, concepts, and theories used in
folk art study. With this bibliography, then, students and
scholars possess a research tool to begin answering the pressing
questions facing the young field of folk art.

NOTES

1 Simon J. Bronner, "Folk Art and Community Context: The
Case of a Mennonite Genre Painter," American Folklore Society
meeting, Salt Lake City, October 1978. This paper was revised
and published as "We Live What I Paint and I Paint What I See: A

2 This method is not unique to folk art. Comparable criteria
are outlined for folklore study in Richard M. Dorson, American
Folklore and the Historian (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1971), pp. 186-203; Alan Dundes, "What is Folklore?" in
The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, New
Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 1-3 (Dundes uses the example
of the folk artist on p. 2); Francis Lee Utley, "Folk Literature:
An Operational Definition," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan
Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 7-24,
especially pp. 13-19; Jan Harold Brunvand, The Study of American
1-8. See also the interpretations of folk art as traditional
art by E. P. Richardson, Louis C. Jones and Janet MacFarlane
in "What is American Folk Art? A Symposium," Antiques, May

3 Henry Glassie, "Folk Art," in Folklore and Folklife: An
Introduction, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of
by Michael Owen Jones. See his The Hand Made Object and Its
Maker (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press,
1975).

4 See Susan Roach and Lorre M. Weidlich, "Quilt Making in
America: A Selected Bibliography," Folklore Feminists Communication
3 (Spring 1974), 17-28; Thomas A. Zaniello, "American
Gravestones: An Annotated Bibliography," Folklore Forum
9 (December 1976), 115-37; Wendy Leeds, "Fraktur: An Annotated


7. Adler, Elizabeth Mosby. "'It Takes A Smart Guy to...Take a Look at a Rock and Do Things Like That': George 'Baby' Scott (1865-1945), A Carver and His Repertoire." Mid-South Folklore 3 (1975): 47-60. Discusses black stonecarver.


23. **American Folk Art from the Ozarks to the Rockies.** Tulsa, Oklahoma: Philbrook Art Center, 1975.


27. **American Folk Art, Painting and Sculpture.** Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, 1932.


34. "American Folk Painting: Selections from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. William E. Wiltshire, III." Clarion, Winter 1978, pp. 81-83.


47. Anderson, Marna Brill. Selected Masterpieces of New York State Folk Painting. New York: Museum of American Folk Art, 1977. Whenever "Masterpieces," "Treasures" or "Finest" precedes a title of a catalog of folk art, it is usually an indication that the curator or collector has made an aesthetic judgment that has nothing to do with the artists or the communities from which the art came. Such exhibits tend to distort the concept of tradition in folk art, although they reveal much of the collector's aesthetics. This catalog is no different. The catalog is important for its further information on folk art in the New York State region, although there is no indication of any significant field work involved.


56. Asahi Newspapers. American Folk Art from the Herbert W. Hemphill Collection. Tokyo, Japan: Asahi Newspapers, 1976. Yet another collector-oriented exhibit catalog. I have heard the comment, however, that without collectors compiling the artifacts and often paying the bills, there would be no exhibits. Sure, but can't they also be interested in thematic considerations? Can't they hire professional field researchers? Can't they be sensitive to other aspects of art besides aesthetic ones?


89. -------. *The All American Dog: Man's Best Friend in Folk Art.* New York: Avon Books, 1977. This exhibit was a sequel to the cat show at the Museum of American Folk Art. The concept of tracing common themes in folk art has great potential for meaningful studies. This one, however, appears too cute to be serious, and in addition, contains questionable "folk" artifacts.


111. Black, Patricia, ed. *Made By Hand: Mississippi Folk Art*. Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, in press. This volume will include a photo essay by Roland Freeman, and essays by John Vlach and William Wiggins.


158. -----, The Pueblo Potter: A Study of Creative Imagination in Primitive Art. New York: Dover, 1972 rpt; 1929. An important early theoretical work which is heavily influenced by Franz Boas' ideas.


162. Burrison, John A. "Prolegomenon to a Study of Afro-American Folk Pottery in the South." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 42 (1978), in press. A historical reconstruction of black pottery in the South. "Dave," an early 19th century potter from west-central South Carolina is particularly discussed. A separate section concerns the Afro-American "face vessel" also known as "monkey jug" and "face jug." Burrison argues that the face vessel tradition, however, is a "uniquely American and biracial folk expression." This is a provocative essay.


172. "American Folk Art." *American Mercury* 24 (1931): 39-46. Many folk art specialists date the beginning of the study of folk art with Holger Cahill's exhibits. As a pioneer in the field he needs to be examined carefully even if some of his statements reveal the lack of knowledge and experience at the time concerning folk art and folk tradition. Still, his essays are bold statements defending the intrinsic value of works of "art" created by the common citizen.


204. *---------*. "Pennsylvania German Folk Arts." *Art in America*, Fall 1957, pp. 47-50, 70-71.


224. Colonial Williamsburg, **American Folk Art.** Williamsburg, 1940.


244. Davidson, Mary M. *Plimoth Colony Samplers*. Marion, Mass.: The Channings, 1974.


292. Drepperd, Carl W. "What is Primitive and What is Not?" Antiques, May 1942, p. 308.


308. ------. "In Search of a Unique American Folk Art; The Hunt for the Decoy." Clarion, Fall 1975. 6 page article, unpaginated.


315. Eberlein, Harold Donaldson. "Pen and Brush Illuminations of the Pennsylvania Germans: Illustrated by Examples Taken From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society." Arts and Decoration 4 (June 1914), pp. 315-17, 327. Uses the descriptive term "crude" to describe fractur.


325. --------. "'A Whole Lot to It, Buddy, A Whole Lot More Than Meets The Eye.'" Goldenseal 5 (1979): 5-10. Biographical sketches of H. R. Baker, canvas painter, Dave Tarplin, canvas painter, Omehaw Kessinger, environmental artist. All artists are from West Virginia. Eff calls them "traditional visual artists."

326. --------. "Folk Art: The Heart of America." Clarion, Summer 1978, pp. 17-35. Offers numerous examples of the heart motif used in folk art.


360. -------. "Vision in Afro-American Folk Art: The Sculpture of James Thomas." Journal of American Folklore 88 (1975): 115-31. Ferris describes the work of Thomas from Leland, Mississippi. Thomas sculpts animals, human figures, and human skulls. Ferris counters Melville Herskovits' position that Afro-American folk culture was preserved by a linear transmission from older black artists to younger generations. Thomas' sculpture is not influenced by direct, "linear" training, but by individual projections of personality and inspiration from dreams. Ferris argues that such creativity is not a negation of tradition but a "major affirmation of Afro-American culture." Ferris also outlines relationships between Thomas' verbal repertoire and his material expressions. Required reading.


362. -------. "Black Folk Art and Crafts: A Mississippi Sample." Southern Folklore Quarterly 42 (1978), in press. Ferris argues that the artist "imposes a proper form on raw materials of wood, cloth, and clay through an inner sense of the object," by presenting the examples of 6 Mississippi artists.

363. -------. "Region in Folk Art." In Made By Hand: Mississippi Folk Art, ed Patty Black. Jackson: Department of Archives and History, in press. Examples of folk artists including James Thomas.


376. -------. "The Cult of the Primitives." *American Heritage*, 6 (February 1955), pp. 38-47. Flexner considers interest in folk art simply a passing fad, and what’s more he thinks of folk art as "bad" art. Time has proven him wrong on the first count, and good scholarship has proven him wrong on the second.


390. -----. "What is American Folk Art?" Studio 141 (March 1951): 88-95.


426. ________. "Structure and Function, Folklore and the Artifact." *Semiotica*, 7 (1973), pp. 313-351. Glassie's review essay focuses mainly on theories (especially those of Petr Bogatyrev) pertaining to objects in general, but he does touch on painting and other forms of art. His article is an important theoretical statement in the study of material aspects of culture.


Short biographical sketches on numerous "discovered" folk artists, most of whom fall into the category of "self-taught" rather than traditional.


546. Johnson, Rhonda S. "Harmon Young: Georgia Wood Sculptor." Southern Folklore Quarterly 42 (1978), in press. She documents a maker of human statues from wood who gets his ideas from dreams and visions. She also discusses his and his neighbors' aesthetic attitudes toward his art.


556. "Symbols of American Patriotism." Yorker 34 (December 1975), pp. 4-10. Discusses the exhibit he helped compile on material symbols of patriotism.


564. ---------, *Queena Stovall, Artist of the Blue Ridge Piedmont*. Cooperstown, New York: New York State Historical Association, 1974. Catalog of the exhibit at Cooperstown and at Williamsburg. She is a genre painter from Lynchburg, Virginia.

565. Jones, Michael Owen. "Two Directions for Folkloristics in the Study of American Art." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 32 (1968): 249-59. Jones' prolific writings provide insightful and profound views of folk art. His articles and book are required reading. In this important article, he suggests that art is both a document of folklife and a subject of traditional usage.


567. ---------, *The Hand Made Object and Its Maker*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975. Offers a departure from previous material studies by examining one chairmaker in detail to find explanations of expressive behavior, an expanded view of folklife. Perhaps the most important recent book on folk art.

569. --------. "The Concept of 'Aesthetic' in the Traditional Arts." *Western Folklore* 30 (1971): 77-104. A brilliant essay which again wrestles with the difficult questions facing the field of folk art and presents sound concepts to consider.

570. --------. "'If You Make a Simple Thing, You Gotta Sell It At A Simple Price': Folk Art Production as a Business." *Kentucky Folklore Record* 17 (1971): 73-77; 18 (1972): 5-12, 31-40.


572. --------. "'For Myself I Like a Decent, Plain-made Chair': The Concept of Taste and the Traditional Arts in America." *Western Folklore* 31 (1972): 27-52.

573. --------. "'There's Gotta Be New Designs Once in Awhile': Culture Change and the 'Folk' Arts." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 36 (1972): 43-60.


579. --------. "'They Made Them for the Lasting Part': A 'Folk' Typology of Traditional Furniture Makers." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 35 (1971): 44-61. Before the field of folk art and all its components can have probing interpretive studies, it needs further discussions of methods of identification and classification. Jones competently pursues such methods in the consideration of furniture.


631. La Farge, Oliver. Introduction to American Indian Art. Glorieta, New Mexico: Rio Grande Press, 1970. First published in 1931. Includes sections on basketry, weaving, beadwork, pottery, jewelry, sculpture. There are also essays by Herbert J. Spinder on Indian symbolism, Alice Corbin Henderson on modern Indian painting, Neil M. Judd on sculpture and carving, E. W. Gifford on basketry, and an extensive bibliography by Ruth Gaines.


667. --------. "William Mathew Prior, the Traveling Artist, and His In-laws, the Painting Hamblens." *Antiques* 53 (1948): 44-48.


678. --------. *The Flowering of American Folk Art*. New York: Viking Press and the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1974. This museum catalog is partly responsible for the spread of interest in folk art recently. The brief essay supports an organic view of folk art, that is that it had a birth, growth, "flowering" and decline. The flowering period is, according to the authors, between 1776 and 1876, and that is the period covered in the book. The book is heavy on photographs, light on text.


686. --------. "Doctor Rufus Hathaway, Physician and Painter of Duxbury, Massachusetts, 1770-1822." *Art in America*, 41 (Summer 1953), pp. 95-139.


710. MacDowell, Marsha. "Home Was Where Their Art Was." American Art Review, 1979, in press. For more titles of this author, see C. Kurt Dewhurst.


724. -------. "Fresh Light on Folk Sculpture; the Brooklyn Museum's Exhibition." ARTnews 75 (Summer 1976), pp. 138-31.


783. New York Crafts 1700-1875: An Historical Survey. Ithaca College Museum of Art, 1967. Preface by Gretel Leed. Includes many items from the folk art collection at Cooperstown such as rugs, quilts, pottery, weathervanes, tinware, and carvings.


"Painted Tin or 'Tôle.'" *Pennsylvania Dutchman*, 6 (Spring 1955), pp. 2-7.


"Floral Motifs in Dutchland's Art." *Pennsylvania Folklife*, 17 (Summer 1968), pp. 2-7.


952. ---------. "Notes on Frederick Krebs the Noted Fraktur Artist." *Pennsylvania Dutchman*, 3 (1 November 1951), p. 3.


993. ---------. "The Meaning of Pennsylvania German Art." The Historical Review of Berks County, 3 (October 1937), pp. 3-8.


1010. Tangerman, E. J. Design and Figure Carving. New York: Dover, 1964 rept.; 1940. Includes examples of traditional carving.


1029. Treasures of American Folk Art. New York: Museum of American Folk Art and Harry N. Abrams, 1979. Contains 42 full-page color illustrations that can be removed and framed. Its only value is that of a gift; it has no scholarly use at all.


1036. --------- "Harvesting and Heritage: A Comparison of Afro-American and African Basketry." Southern Folklore Quarterly 42 (1978), in press. She provides a history of the basketry traditions at Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. She traces the coiled basketry techniques to West Africa.


1044. --------. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts.* Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978. This book is much more than a museum catalog; it is one of the best works on folk art in recent years. Good discussions of a variety of art forms from boat building to quilting. Photos and illustrations. Bibliography.


1065. Webster, Marie D. Quilts, Their Story and How to Make Them. Marion, Indiana: Marie D. Webster, 1929.


1104. ---------. "Maxim Karolik and His Collections." Art in America, 45 (June 1957), pp. 34-41.


Aaron, Jesse, 1038
Adam and Eve, 487, 883
Adcock, Don, 528
Aesthetics, 334, 546, 569, 580, 686, 447, 783, 897
Afro-American, 4, 112, 121, 146, 162, 183, 198, 207, 247, 285
297, 337, 338, 359, 360, 362, 364, 366, 395, 396, 405,
406, 412, 414, 415, 453, 455, 483, 529, 546, 581, 585,
609, 617, 621, 629, 630, 699, 700, 719, 756, 786, 801,
812, 827, 832, 833, 834, 835, 892, 909, 914, 1018,
1020, 1026, 1032, 1035, 1036, 1040, 1041, 1042, 1043,
1044, 1048, 1094, 1095, 1096
Alexander, James, 802
Alten, Fred, 263, 268
Alwood, John, 909
Amana Society, 970
Amish, 92, 462, 911, 1110
Anderson, Etta, 370
Anonymity, 571
Antique, 78, 476, 762, 851, 875, 1106
Appalachia, 566, 567, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 579
Archuleta, Felipe, 734
Arizona, 242, 514
Arkansas, 347, 503, 770, 830, 846, 856, 1037
Arnold, John, 856
Art: chainsaw, 167, 499; environmental, 115, 189, 325, 773,
1049; ethnological, 485; feminist, 264, 267, 771, 1027
(see also, memorial picture, quilts); folk, general,
9, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 43, 44, 50,
56, 61, 142, 145, 152, 154, 155, 172, 173, 174, 175,
176, 177, 178, 203, 205, 224, 225, 226, 235, 245,
246, 257, 253, 264, 270, 274, 275, 277, 283, 285, 291,
302, 303, 306, 312, 326, 327, 332, 349, 353, 367, 374,
387, 390, 423, 425, 427, 432, 433, 434, 441, 451, 458,
477, 478, 481, 482, 486, 491, 494, 501, 515, 518, 523,
524, 527, 530, 544, 550, 551, 552, 555, 559, 560,
561, 562, 563, 566, 567, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575,
579, 598, 599, 600, 611, 612, 620, 646, 649, 656, 657,
678, 679, 698, 701, 702, 712, 713, 730, 731, 753, 762,
784, 805, 820, 830, 840, 858, 859, 862, 902, 905, 910,
918, 924, 929, 949, 958, 964, 965, 966, 985, 1008,
10021, 1029, 1062, 1067, 1077, 1080, 1084, 1085, 1105,
1135, 1137; folk, education, 11, 741; folk, funerary,
757 (see also, death); folk, industrial, 787; folk,
study, 8, 380, 567, 672, 868, 1127; mourning, 925,
926, 927; naive, 467, 598, 599, 600, 858; pioneer, 295,
459, 603, 770, 778, 785, 807, 824; popular, 73, 127,
128, 148, 202, 447, 486, 789, 790, 924, 966; primitive,
(see primitives); tramp, 356, 476

*Index listings were generated by scanning titles and
annotations of bibliographic entries for key words. My
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preparation of the index.
Christmas, 866, 1125
Church, Henry, 806
Cigar store Indian, 136, 261, 398, 399, 400, 401, 463,
532, 761, 810, 939, 1078
Circus, 519, 1090 (see also, carousel carving)
City, 991, 1051, 1059
Clark, Stephen C., 30, 551
Collecting, 3, 6, 77, 78, 531, 740, 861, 1081, 1104
Collection: Allen, Helen Louise, 331; Allis, Mary, 226;
Bartlett, 530; Borneman, Henry S., 323; Brainard,
Morgan, 759; Braman, 713; De Blois, 195; Garbisch,
Edgar and Bernice, 36, 38, 39, 184, 185, 408, 793,
794, 945; Geesey, 811, 820; Girard Foundation, 421,
Gregory, Stewart E., 44, 657; Gunn, 563; Haffenreffer,
463; Halladay and Thomas, 40; Halpert, Edith, 19, 22;
Hemphill, Herbert, 56, 227, 612, 965; High, Harry S.,
1135; Himmelreich, 595; Hostetler, 650; Kaplan, 1077;
Kapnek, 625; Karolik, 709, 1104; Lipman, 836; McGraw,
753; Nadelman, 443, 772; Rockefeller, Abby
Alabama, 750, 906, 908, 225, 694 (see also, Williamsburg, Virginia);
Tillou, Peter, 899, 1081; Trump, 1136; Warhol,
Andy, 135, 149, 1076; Wiltshire, William, 34, 94, 95,
373, 861, 1114
Colorado, 514
Concrete, 74, 520
Connecticut, 407, 428, 457, 597, 632, 661, 687, 705, 739,
855, 975, 1030, 1054
Coopersmith, 715
Cornell, Floyd, 803
Corwin, Salmon, 126
Coverlets, 46, 71, 161, 196, 248, 249, 256, 259, 331, 344,
438, 464, 489, 754, 808, 814, 819, 837, 842, 844, 854,
912, 940, 990, 1088
Craft, 55, 154, 198, 205, 233, 62, 69, 234, 241, 243, 247,
289, 290, 313, 314, 320, 353, 362, 364, 365, 427, 442,
459, 516, 527, 583, 701, 718, 770, 783, 788, 830, 849,
896, 970, 992
Creole, 849
Crowell, A. E., 166
Czech, 437

Danitz, Ernst, 948
"Dave;" 162
Davis, Horace W., 33
Davis, J. A., 916
Davis, Joseph H., 690, 977, 978
Davis, Ulysses, 609
Davis, Vestie, 991
Death, 907
Denim, 72, 534
DeVault, Bessie, 983
Dilbert, Arthur, 337
Dog, 88, 89
Doll, 542, 547
Drawing, 10, 141, 143, 391, 634, 635, 709, 763, 920, 987
Earl, Arester, 183
Earl, Ralph, 439
Edmundson, William, 406
Eisenbrown, John Daniel, 342
Eggs, easter 209, 704, 930, 931, 954
Ellsworth, James Sanford, 751, 947
Embroidery, 287, 534, 742, 1138
Ephemeral figures, 774, 775, 776
Evans, J., 915
Face vessel, 162, 1001
Fasanella, Ralph, 822, 1059
Field, Erastus Salisbury, 100, 102, 103, 105, 279, 890
Fieldwork, 143, 404, 886
Figureheads, 409, 443, 823, 950, 982, 1058, 1129 (see also, shipcarving)
Fish lures, 587
Fisher, Jonathan, 1103, 1107
Fisherman, 90
Fletcher, Aaron, 159, 160
Fletcher, Thermond L., 972
Floor coverings, 684, 899
Florida, 1038
Folk art, see art, folk
Folklife, 155, 367, 396, 425, 565, 581, 733, 886, 1050, 1100, 1124, 1127
Fraktur, 1, 2, 123, 124, 184, 253, 298, 300, 315, 316, 318, 319, 320, 323, 339, 341, 343, 435, 476, 509, 510, 512, 616, 622, 640, 726, 744, 867, 869, 871, 874, 881, 934, 935, 936, 943, 944, 945, 946, 951, 952, 953, 1052, 1066, 1069, 1070, 1071, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1125, 1126, 1130 (see also, German; Pennsylvania)
Frost, J. O. J., 37, 105, 592
Fuller, Augustus, 891
Furniture, 16, 342, 346, 394, 454, 496, 511, 566, 567, 578, 579, 1053, 1072 (see also, chairmaking)
Gallery: Dintenfass, 22; Downtown, 20; Knoedler, 26
Georgia, 164, 370, 405, 414, 546, 609, 801, 1019, 1047
Georgia Sea Islands, 801, 1035, 1108
Goldsmith, Deborah, 663, 937
Graves, 121, 211, 219, 529, 801, 1026, 1040
Gravestones, 13, 63, 75, 255, 348, 386, 528, 886, 887, 1079 (see also, stonecarving; graves)
Greenleaf, Benjamin, 666
Guy, Francis, 828
Hamblett, Theora, 194, 473, 474, 475, 963, 1016
Hampton, James, 483
Hanging, bed, 236
Hansel, Frank, 803
Hathaway, Rufus, 686
Heyde, Charley Louis, 472
Hicks, Edward, 57, 105, 168, 259, 388, 389, 535, 735, 804, 1022
Hirschfield, Morris, 105, 535, 760
Hodgson, Telfair, 1026
Hofman, Charles, 53, 54
Hollis, Ed, 222
Hop, 1116
Howard, Jesse, 115
Huge, Jurgan Frederik, 654
Humphrey, Reuben, 855
Hunsicker, Isaac Ziegler, 435
Hunter, Clementine, 748

Illinois: 533, 718, 800; Bishop Hill, 533
Indiana, 144, 222, 754, 807, 844, 886, 887
Iowa, 779, 970
Ironwork, 17, 207, 250, 629, 630, 719, 750, 973, 1043
Italian, 532

Japanese, 73
Johnson, Bruce, 964
Johnston (Johnson), Joshua, 453, 621, 827
Jones, Louis C., 29, 50, 116, 440, 551, 697, 885
Josephs, Joe, 498
Jewish, 357, 613, 636, 1073, 1074 (see also, Judaica)
Judaica, 357 (see also, Jewish)

Kansas, 402, 403, 404
Kentucky, 167, 213, 499, 566, 567, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 579, 1015, 1050
Krans, Olaf, 533
Krawczuk, Zenobia, 930, 931
Krebs, Frederick, 952
Kym, Emil, 402, 403, 404

Landry, Pierre Joseph, 138
Landscaping, 45
Lapp, Henry and Elizabeth, 1110
Lehn, Joseph, 293
Lieberman, Harry, 217, 1073
Limner: 93, 165, 502, 504, 652, 666, 739, 921; Beardsley, 921; Border, 83, 84; Gale family, 126
Lipman, Jean, 31, 836
Lithography, 637
Lothrop, George, 37
Louisiana: 138, 207, 392, 629, 630, 702, 703, 849; New Orleans, 629, 630

McClure, William, 167
McNew, William Benton, 884
Maentel, Jacob, 105
Martin, Sherwood, 825
Martinez, Maria, 815, 980
Martinson, Joseph, 105
Maryland: 324, 453, 513, 621, 827; Baltimore, 324, 453, 827
Massachusetts: 37, 75, 234, 348, 686, 765, 1006, 1007, 1057; Boston, 1006, 1134; Marblehead, 37, 105, 592; Martha's Vineyard, 765; Newburyport, 1007; Plymouth County, 75; Roxbury, 37
Mayne, Ned, 813
Memorial Picture, 771, 903 (see also, feminist art, mourning art)
Mennonite, 1, 144, 402, 1126
Mermen, 675
Metalware, 49, 671, 750
Mexican, 583 (see also, Spanish; Chicano)
Michigan, 265, 266, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 745
Miller, Lewis, 82, 582, 644, 1033
Minnesota, 778
Missouri, 850, 884
Mohammed, Ethel, 194, 752
Moran, Frank, 852
Morgan, Sister Gertrude, 10
Moses, Grandma, 584
Mountz, Aaron, 377, 378
Museum: 214, 282; of American Folk Art, 81, 87, 98, 99, 105, 170, 193, 311, 768, 782, 839, 964, 1075; Brandywine River Museum, 43; Brooklyn Museum, 411, 724; Cleveland Museum of Art, 1044, 1067; Fenimore House, 30, 551, 557, 712, 836, 848; of International Folk Art, 733, 769; Mystic Seaport, 981, 982; Newark Museum, 131, 239, 842, 1088; Norwegian-American Museum, 779; Royal Academy of Arts, 35; Shelburne Museum, 24, 191, 763, 1062, 1063; Sturbridge Village, 787, 979; Tobacco Museum, 136; Whitney Museum, 221, 246, 383, 393, 522, 1128; Winterthur, 327, 339, 554, 1008 (see also, Rockefeller, Abby Aldrich Collection; Cooperstown; Williamsburg)

Nader, Louis, 53, 54
Navajo, 540, 736, 737
Nebraska, 941
"Ned;" 909
Needlework, 252, 314, 650, 837, 1138 (see also, textiles)
Negus, Joseph and Nathan, 278
Nelson, Cyril, 1075
New Jersey, 231, 232, 1089
New Mexico, 127, 128, 129, 257, 276, 514, 627, 733, 938, 1099
New Hampshire, 977, 978
New York: 25, 26, 47, 49, 55, 68, 74, 82, 116, 117, 118, 139, 140, 150, 229, 230, 237, 238, 245, 306, 416, 456, 457, 490, 497, 538, 548, 590, 604, 605, 634, 635, 651, 663, 803, 808, 817, 920, 937, 1017, 1051, 1109, 1129, 1132; Albany, 456, 457; Binghamton, 497; Champlain Valley, 159; Chatauqua County, 25; Chenango Valley, 55, 69; Cooperstown, 29, 30, 214, 440, 551, 553, 557, 712, 783, 836, 839, 848, 1017; Schenectady, 238; Susquehanna Valley, 55, 69

Nixon, John, 725
North Carolina, 296, 436, 438
North, Noah, 764
Norwegian, 419, 778, 779

Ohio: 46, 114, 284, 329, 729, 755, 958, 983, 990, 1130; Cleveland, 241
Origami, 73
Overmantel, 416, 681
Owen, Pop', 230
Ozarks, 23, 215, 234, 503


Paddlebox decoration, 151
Paper, 590, 745, 869 (see also, fraktur; penmanship, calligraphy)
Pasanen, Robert, 1112
Pastel, 232, 794, 1054
Peaceable Kingdom, 588, 1023
Peck, Sheldon, 60, 942
Penmanship, 611 (see also, calligraphy)
Photography, 113
Pictorial Jokes, 141
Pierce, Elijah, 329, 729, 755
Pillowcases, 334
Pinney, Eunice, 661
Pippin, Horace, 892
Porter, Rufus, 655, 675
Portraits: 108, 147, 159, 160, 199, 200, 238, 504, 505, 602, 659, 663, 665, 670, 728, 792, 855, 891, 932; ship, 41, 539, 662, 809, 968, 969; wax, 119
Postcards, 711
Pottery, 66, 114, 158, 162, 163, 164, 255, 269, 273, 314, 350, 413, 420, 436, 460, 476, 581, 604, 605, 641, 650, 738, 746, 815, 860, 961, 967, 980, 1042, 1055, 1056, 1089, 1101 (see also, redware; stoneware, face vessel)
Powder horns, 461, 919
Powell, Eugene, 141, 143
Powers, Asahel, 159, 692
Powers, Harriet, 4, 405
Primitives, 122, 158, 171, 180, 200, 205, 210, 292, 354, 376, 476, 481, 598, 600, 607, 653, 658, 659, 660, 673, 708, 748, 932, 1000, 1009
Prior, William Mathew, 667, 707
Puckett, Newbell Niles, 1095
Pueblo, 158, 480, 641, 738, 742

Quaker, 735
Rasmussen, John, 53, 54
Redware, 605
Religious, 6, 10, 48, 417, 418, 627, 636, 778, 784, 1094, 1099 (see also, Amish; Shaker; Quaker)
Renniger, Abraham, 1133
Rexrode, James, 216, 960
Rodia, Simon, 115, 189
Romanian, 117
Rucker, Leon, 700
Rugs: 125, 476, 503, 618, 619, 737; hooked, 64, 601, 618, 619, 847, 857

Sailor, 62, 479
Saint Clair, Leonard, 446
Samplers, 120, 220, 476, 625, 799
Santos, 129, 336, 606, 627, 749, 938, 988, 1002, 1099
Scarecrows, 774, 775, 776
Schimmel, Wilhelm, 377, 379, 714
Schmidt, Clarence, 115, 189
Schoenheider, Charley, 429
Schoolgirl art, 781, 791
Schuller, Johann Valentin, 951
Scott, George, 7
Scrimshaw, 65, 195, 240, 301, 369, 407, 981, 1025, 1086, 1111
Sculpture, 27, 28, 52, 74, 86, 97, 116, 134, 139, 140, 169, 181, 304, 305, 310, 335, 338, 359, 360, 362, 397, 411, 413, 422, 466, 471, 492, 495, 520, 546, 585, 609, 615, 633, 671, 723, 724, 756, 787, 1037, 1057, 1093 (see also, woodcarving; circus; carousel; cigar store indian)
Shade cutters, 1028
Shaker, 48, 417, 418, 901
Sheffield, Isaac, 739
Ship carving, 137, 982, 1007
Signs: 59, 187, 208, 258, 463, 498, 521, 986; tavern, 132, 1014, 650, 759
Silhouettes, 119, 1028
Silver, 229, 736, 1116
Simmons, Phillip, 1043
Smith, Fred, 520
Smith, John Guerrant, 587
Snowmen, 774
South Carolina: 70, 121, 162, 247, 250, 581, 812, 909, 1018, 1035, 1043; Charleston, 70, 250, 1043
Spanish, 3, 127, 430, 549, 585, 617, 733, 989, 1003, 1118
(see also, Mexican; Santos; Chicano)
Speir, Jim, 182
Spelice, Fannie Lou, 826
Stauffer, Peter, 893
Stencils, 25, 766, 825, 971, 1005, 1053
Stephenson, Daniel, 161
Stock, Joseph Whiting, 212, 900, 1024
Stenciling, 7, 75, 406, 525, 528, 671, 706, 1013, 1079, 1122 (see also, gravestones; sculpture)
Stoneware, 163, 605, 746, 1064
Stovall, Queena, 559, 563
Strickler, Jacob, 1052
Style, folk, 51, 299, 552, 758, 566, 567, 569, 572, 573, 574, 576, 1123
Sweet, Frank H., 651
Symbols, 372, 454, 495, 517, 555, 556, 558, 706, 798, 995, 1023

Tattoos, 446
Tennessee, 71, 406, 914, 1060, 1096
Tevrillion, Veronica, 74
Texas, 211, 957, 998
Textiles, 490, 581, 613, 636, 736, 802, 808, 893, 923, 1089 (see also, quilts; coverlets; whitework; bed hanging)
Thiesse, Ron, 787
Thomas, James, 194, 359, 360, 363, 364
Tinsel, 623
Tinware, 445, 476, 593, 865, 882
Toleware, see tinware
Toys, 421, 750, 866, 878, 922, 928
Tyler, Brice, 218

Ukrainian, 704, 931, 932 (see also, eggs, easter)
Utah, 603

Valentines, 796, 943
Van Bergen, 416
Vermont, 24, 472, 692
Vernacular, 620, 717
Virginia: 7, 219, 225, 564, 582, 756, 757, 860, 1101, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1052; Williamsburg, 225, 582, 694, 908
Vivolo, John, 632
Vogt, Fritz G., 634, 635, 920
Walker, J. B., 745
Walton, Henry, 493, 853
Ward, Lemuel and Stephen, 76
Ward, Velox, 1045
Warner, Pecolia, 194, 366
Wasatch Mountains, 156
Washington, D. C., 525
Watercolors, 101, 186, 391, 661, 664, 709, 794, 903, 987
Waters, Susan, 497
Weathervanes, 330, 340, 368, 469, 476, 596, 614, 624, 715, 933, 1061, 1087
Weavers, see textiles
West Virginia, 216, 325, 547, 587, 972
Whimmydiddle, 547
Whirligigs, 368
Whitework, 352
Whittlers, 652, 414, 880, 1011, 1012
Wiener, Pop, 116, 117, 118
Williams, Micha, 231, 232
Williamson, Clara, 1046
Willis, Lester, 194
Wilson, Mary Ann, 589, 664
Window Shades, 538
Wisconsin, 385, 450, 520
Wood, 97, 134, 139, 140, 293, 305, 465, 496, 546, 633, 671, 743 (see also, woodcarving)
Woodcarving, 25, 138, 156, 182, 201, 218, 263, 268, 313, 314, 337, 377, 378, 379, 516, 519, 615, 632, 700, 714, 716, 729, 743, 803, 821, 823, 852, 856, 909, 913, 1006, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1098, 1112, 1113

Young, Harmon, 546
Young, Henry, 2

Zeldis, Malcah, 1074