THE OLD TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

THE OLD TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE
Essays In Honor of Warren E. Roberts

Edited by

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and
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Preface

In his Afterword to *Viewpoints on Folklife: Looking at the Overlooked*, Warren Roberts noted that he felt his greatest contribution to folklife studies, and his "proudest boast," was his effect on the many graduate students in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University who had gone on to specialize in folklife research. Indeed, any quick glance at the field will immediately confirm his considerable impact on the landscape of folklife scholarship—as a teacher, researcher, and friend.

And Prof. Roberts continues to influence the careers of young folklorists, whether through formal instruction in the classroom, or informal discussions in the warmth of his home, or on a field trip somewhere in southern Indiana. What student can fail to remember the detailed demonstrations in his workshop of tool use common in the everyday world of "the old traditional way of life," complemented by the generous portions of cake and persimmon pudding provided by the always gracious Mrs. Barbara Roberts.

It is in appreciation of his 40 years of teaching at Indiana University, his scholarly contribution to the study of folklore in general, and in honor of his 65th birthday that we present to Prof. Roberts this festschrift.

This was essentially a student production, fueled by the energies of graduate students in the Folklore Institute. We truly appreciate the contributions, advice, and assistance of the scholars and students who helped bring this tribute to Professor Roberts' career to fruition. We are especially grateful to Profs. Henry Glassie and Edson Richmond who provided much needed counsel and encouragement throughout the

entire process. We also greatly appreciate the generous financial support provided by Dean Roger Farr and the Office of Research and Graduate Development at Indiana University. Mrs. Barbara Roberts has been most helpful through the final stages of production, providing information, photographs, and encouragement for our "secret" endeavor. The cover and frontispiece photographs are reproduced from the Hohenberger Collection with the kind permission of the Lilly Library and the Indiana University Foundation.

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Introduction

W. EDSON RICHMOND

In the preface to his recently published book, *Viewpoints on Folklife: Looking at the Overlooked*, Warren E. Roberts says:

> I view my research which has been carried out over the years as an attempt—or a series of attempts—to throw light on a broad subject. This broad subject is folklife, a term I and others have used to refer to the way of life of the mass of humanity in Western Europe and the United States prior to the Industrial Revolution which instituted such drastic changes, as well as the ways in which that earlier way of life persisted in fragmented form after the Industrial Revolution.

In this same essay, he goes on to point out that the great mass of humanity is overlooked when most people write or talk about the past and that we know much about the urban elite and virtually nothing about the rural majority in any culture. Warren Roberts' academic, and much of his personal, life has been devoted to correcting this deficiency, and he has done so effectively, even brilliantly, for he has looked at the masses and their products from many different points of view.

First of all, he felt that he viewed mass culture as an insider, as one of its products. He was born in Norway, Maine, in 1924, certainly a rural area. His father was a saw-filer, employed in the lumber industry; obviously, therefore, Warren was not a member of the urban elite. In his middle youth, his family moved across the continent to the environs of Portland, Oregon, where his father continued his trade. Warren thus had an inborn, natural understanding of the way non-urban people thought and acted.

Secondly, he had a varied training: an undergraduate college degree from Reed College which, since he wrote his bachelor's thesis about traditional ballads, introduced him to folklore and to basic linguistics. At the same time, moreover, he became involved with music and his very fine voice led him to participate in many productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. And finally, he was lured to Indiana University to study folklore by Stith Thompson whose reputation as a literary and folkloristic scholar was already giving Indiana University an international reputation. Under Thompson's direction, Warren Roberts wrote a dissertation that was a model historic-geographic folktale study and received the first Doctor of Philosophy degree in folklore ever granted in the United States.

Immediately upon receiving his degree, Warren was hired as a teacher of English literature, composition, and folklore by Indiana University. He remained as an employee of the Department of English until the Folklore Department was established, at which time he transferred into the new department. Upon the retirement of Professor Thompson a few years later, Warren took over Thompson's popular two-semester graduate seminar in the folktale and appeared to be on his way to following in his mentor's footsteps as the leading folktale scholar in the United States.

At this time, however, an avocational interest of Professor Roberts' asserted itself. He had always been interested in carpentry, and as a result he had developed sufficient skill to be truly called a first-class cabinetmaker. This skill was combined with a Fulbright grant to Oslo, Norway, in the academic year 1959-1960. In Norway he not only met the principal Scandinavian folklore scholars but also became acquainted with scholars involved in the study of material culture. He thus found a way to combine both his vocation and his avocation. When he returned to Indiana after his year in Norway, he was able to introduce into the curriculum of the Folklore Department a course entitled "Folk Art, Craft, and Architecture." Gradually, as he studied the artifacts themselves, he found it necessary to investigate both the people who produced them and the tools—many of which these people also made—employed in their creation. This led in turn to an investigation of the relationship of the artifacts to their producers, and to a realization that all of the folk were not necessarily the unlearned; instead, many could now be seen as a group of highly skilled artisans who existed outside of the mainstream studied by both conventional historians and folklorists, especially European folklorists who tended to look primarily at the unskilled peasantry. Thus it was that Warren

Roberts was to introduce into the folklore curriculum an interest in and a realization of the value of the study of material culture.

In addition to teaching courses in introductory folklore, the folktale, and material culture, immediately after his return from Norway Warren Roberts was to apply some of the information gained in Scandinavia to a very practical project which depended in large part upon his knowledge of verbal lore, architectural traditions, and crafts. He persuaded the administration of Indiana University to allow him to work on the development of an outdoor museum modelled in part upon those found in Norway and Sweden. For the next two decades, Warren was to wander the highways and byways of Indiana in search of early 19th-century buildings which reflected the folk culture of the day. Whenever possible, a number of these were purchased by the University, carefully taken down under the direction of Professor Roberts—who often participated in the actual dismantling himself—and moved to a storage spot on university property. All of this was done with an eye toward their reconstruction and the establishment of a living museum which would reflect Indiana's 19th-century heritage. Unfortunately, and despite the fact that he devoted most of his available research time to this project during the 1960s and 1970s, a change in the university administration and a restricted university budget left this project incomplete and the buildings await reconstruction still. But the project added greatly to Professor Roberts' understanding of the culture which produced these buildings and of the materials employed in their construction, and thus to the kind of information he has been able to pass on to his students.

In one of Warren's favorite operettas, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, there are some lines which possibly he has sung and he certainly would have sung had he followed a possible choice of careers when he left Reed to enter graduate school instead of joining a professional Gilbert and Sullivan company which he had been invited to do. These lines are sung by Jack Point, a strolling jester and a protagonist in the play:

I've wisdom from the East and from the West
That's subject to no academic rule;
You may find it in the jeering of a jest,
Or distil it from the folly of a fool.
I can teach you with a quip, if I've a mind;
I can trick you into learning with a laugh;
Oh, winnow all my folly and you'll find
A grain or two of truth among the chaff.

I can set a braggart quailing with a quip,
The upstart I can wither with a whim;
He may wear a merry laugh upon his lip,
But his laughter has an echo that is grim!
When they're offered to the world in merry guise,
Unpleasant truths are swallowed with a will–
For he who'd make his fellow creatures wise
Should always gild the philosophic pill.

Warren's teaching has become a part of his life, and like Jack Point's it's been subject to no academic rules except those he established himself. For a number of years it included leading field trips to investigate customs and material culture in southern Indiana, an unusual activity for one engaged in teaching the humanities. Even more unusual has been his involvement with the aforementioned outdoor museum and his direction of and participation in restoration work for houses in Bloomington. The result has been seminal for scholarship and it has developed a myriad of disciples ranging from townspeople whose enrolling in one of his undergraduate classes or attendance at one of his lectures has led them also to participate in restoration projects, to graduate students devoted to following in his footsteps. Some of the latter are now teaching at major universities; others work in the public sector on folk-arts' commissions and the like. Thus Professor Roberts' influence has spread far beyond academia and it continues to do so.

As evidence of Warren's popularity and influence as a teacher there is, among many other things, as well as his own writings, the present volume. It was conceived by a group of students and consists in large part of essays by one-time students, though colleagues contributed a number of items as well. Its organization into four principal parts ([1] *Folk Art, Craft, and Custom*; [2] *Folk Architecture*; [3] *History of Folklore Scholarship*; and [4] *Folk Narrative*) reflects the areas of research on which Professor Roberts has had a profound influence. Were this festschrift compiled for anyone else, one would, in fact, expect to find an essay by Warren Roberts in any one of the categories, each of which he has written about superlatively. It is safe to say, moreover, that were it not for his teaching, none of these essays would take the form it has taken. In fact, Warren is not only the kind of teacher who can "teach you with a quip if he's a mind," but also one who can say not only "do as I say" but also "do as I do!" By doing as he does and by learning from all that he has done, his students and colleagues have been able to produce this tribute for him.

The section devoted to "Folk Art, Craft, and Custom" begins with an essay about carved wooden figures found in rural districts in

Norway, written by a Norwegian friend and colleague, Professor Olav Bø, recently retired Professor of Folklore and Director of the Institute for Folklore Research at Oslo University in Norway. The article discusses the nature, origin, and significance of wooden images found in farmhouses in Setesdal and Telemark in the 19th century, images sometimes treated as idols or household gods by some farmers immediately after the reformation. "Fakses and the Remains of Churches" illustrates, as Warren Roberts has done in many of his writings, the importance of a painstaking investigation of both written records and oral traditions about material artifacts, as well as the appearance of the artifacts themselves, before drawing conclusions about them.

Closely related in theme to Professor Bø's article is that written by Lynwood Montell, Professor of Folk Studies at Western Kentucky University. Professor Montell has been both a student and colleague of Professor Roberts, and his paper reflects an interest that Warren has shown in gravestones as reflections of a culture. "Cemetery Decoration Customs in the American South," however, goes beyond the discussion of cemetery monuments and their decorations to discuss the importance of cemeteries and the formal and informal rituals related to them in the rural South. Like Professor Bø's article, it stresses the need for close investigation of the folk rationale for doing things if we are to understand the significance of artifacts and customs in a given culture.

John Michael Vlach, Director of the Folklore and Folklife Program at George Washington University, once a student of Warren Roberts, illustrates in his "Morality as a Folk Aesthetic" the fact that it is impossible to separate religion from any aspect of life in a truly religious culture. Thus even the artifacts which such people produce reflect their religious and moral aesthetic. A key to the whole article can be found in Professor Vlach's statement that "Any artifact if rendered with skill and care can convey both the enrichment of art and the enrichment of religion." It is this sort of insight which Warren Roberts has sought to instill in his students.

Four essays in this first section, all written by former students of Warren Roberts—"Spindles and Spoon Racks: Local Style in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Furniture," by Tom Carter; "'We Made 'Em to Fit Our Purpose': The Northern Lake Michigan Fishing Skiff Tradition," by Janet C. Gilmore; "The Reelfoot Stumpjumper: Traditional Boat Building in Tennessee," by Harry Gammerdinger; and "The Tradition of Geode Construction in Southern Indiana," by Alice Morrison Mordoh—all concentrate upon the relationship of form to

function and to the ability of artisans to make the best use of their materials insofar as their culture allows them to do so. It is interesting to note that each of these papers is documented either by reference to a particular work by Professor Roberts or by reference to work done by one of his students.

Professor William H. Wiggins, Jr.—one of Warren Roberts' present colleagues and also a former student—describes a traditional festival in his paper "'Juneteenth': Afro-American Customs of the Emancipation." This informal festival, the Juneteenth Festival, celebrates the emancipation of slaves on June 19th, 1865, in east Texas and in portions of surrounding states. The festival activities are described along with an analysis of their evolution and the significance of these events.

The next paper in this initial section is, like the first, the product of Professor Roberts' colleagues, in this instance Beverly J. Stoeltje and Richard Bauman. "Community Festival and the Enactment of Modernity" indicates how widespread and enveloping the concept of folk has become by pointing out that a traditional festival, the Watermelon Thump of Luling, Texas, is supported by such professional groups as the Kiwanis and the Chamber of Commerce. Just as Professor Roberts has shown in other contexts, traditional activities are not limited to the unskilled and unlettered, and they can serve to draw communities together and to reflect their attitudes.

Though J. Sanford Rikoon's paper, "Grain Stacking in the Midwest, 1850-1920," does not refer in its documentation to anything written by Warren Roberts, it should be noted that it is closely related to the author's 1986 dissertation, "From Flail to Combine," which he directed. The essay draws attention to the process of change in the context of developing industrialization, and points out that "...traditional cultural practices continued through an ability to modify the use of new technologies within culturally familiar patterns."

The second section of this volume is devoted to "Folk Architecture," and all of the papers with the exception of one were written by former students of Professor Roberts: Jan Harold Brunvand, Howard Wight Marshall, Christopher Bobbitt, Jens Lund, and Phyllis Harrison.

In a note to his paper "Casă Frumoasă: An Introduction to the House Beautiful in Rural Romania," Professor Brunvand says "I studied the folktale at Indiana University with Professor Roberts in the pre-folklife days, but my subsequent work in material culture has been strongly influenced by Roberts' writings and talks on the subject." In accordance with this fact, Professor Brunvand's paper describes the style, construction methods, architectural peculiarities and ornamenta-

tion of village peasant homes in Romania in the context of their evolution and modern modifications.

Similarly, Howard Wight Marshall introduces his essay "The Sisters Leave Their Mark: Folk Architecture and Family History" with the comment "This paper offers in the spirit of Warren Roberts' way of closely studying cultural phenomena and traditional architecture in context through field research, a consideration of the story of the Cornetts and their Midwestern farm home." In accordance with these precepts, Professor Marshall examines an historic farm now in the care of the University of Missouri, with an eye to the relationship of its developers to its construction, evolution, and maintenance, pointing out how these things suited motivations, community social conditions, economic circumstances, and individual design sensitivities.

Christopher Bobbitt pays tribute to Professor Roberts by contributing an essay about the "Summer Kitchens of Harrison County, Indiana." After carefully describing the physical attributes of such kitchens, Mr. Bobbitt discusses their various reasons for being, their functions, and their demise.

In "Nomadic Architecture: The River Houseboat in the Ohio Valley," Jens Lund expands upon a section of the Ph.D. dissertation "Fishing as a Folk Occupation in the Lower Ohio Valley" which he wrote under the tutelage and direction of Warren Roberts. Here he describes in detail not only the architecture of the river houseboat and the manner in which it was built but also its effect upon a way of life and the relationship of that way of life to a land-bound culture.

Drawing upon the classes she once took from Warren Roberts, Phyllis Harrison describes the architecture and function of hop kilns in the Puyallup Valley of the State of Washington. She pays particular attention to the evolution of hop growing and curing and its effect upon the nature and structure of the kilns themselves. In addition, Dr. Harrison's paper points out the strong relationship between agricultural activities and social events, and how changes in agricultural production serve to change the nature of a culture.

In "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow," Allen G. Noble and Deborah Phillips King examine the disappearance rate of agricultural structures in Pike County, Ohio. The authors point out that obsolete but once essential structures for agricultural industry are also essential to our understanding of the culture which built them; however, they are rapidly disappearing. This paper demonstrates the necessity for examining such structures while they are still available for study, and gives factual evidence for the rate at which they are being destroyed.

The two essays in the section of this volume devoted to "The History of Folklore Scholarship" were contributed by Simon Bronner, presently Professor of Folklore and American Studies at the Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg, and by W.K. McNeil, presently Folklorist at the Ozark Folk Center, Mountain View, Arkansas, both of whom are former students of Warren Roberts. In "Folklife Starts Here: The Background of Material Culture Scholarship in Pennsylvania," Simon Bronner points out the tremendous influence folklife scholarship in Pennsylvania had upon the development of Warren Roberts as a scholar. It points out the way in which the folklife approach in Pennsylvania differed from that of the British-inspired approach—the verbal lore approach—prevalent in the American Folklore Society until very recently, and concludes by noting that the activity in Pennsylvania supports Warren Roberts' own wish that the appreciation of America's craftsmen provides "an intellectual basis for democracy." W.K. McNeil's essay, "Charles Fletcher Lummis: The Man Who Lived the Life," on the other hand, is devoted to a scholarly biography of a Harvard drop-out who achieved renown as an expert on the American Southwest. Here is a man who, like Warren Roberts, could "teach you with a quip" if he'd a mind and who, also like Warren, could "always gild the philosophic pill!" Without formal training as a folklorist, Mr. Lummis became a forerunner of American folklife scholars, and his books are models for modern scholarship.

The final section of this festschrift is entitled "Folk Narrative," and is devoted to Warren Roberts' first love. Two of the articles in this section were contributed by Professor Roberts' one-time students, Robert A. Georges and Christine Goldberg, while the others are by his present colleagues at Indiana University, Linda Dégh, Mary Ellen Brown, John Wm. Johnson, and Sandra Dolby Stahl, the latter two who were also once students of Warren's.

The fascination with the works of Vladimir Propp did not prevail until Warren Roberts had shifted his sights to material folklore. In his analysis of folktales, Warren employed the historic-geographic method, and his works achieved international acclaim as models of this approach. As is apparent in Professor Robert A. Georges' essay entitled "Some Overlooked Aspects of Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*: A Characterization and a Critique," scholars have been insufficiently critical of Propp's techniques and conclusions, and also insufficiently aware of his dependence upon the fruits of the labors of scholars such as Kaarle Krohn and Antti Aarne. In his article, Professor Georges points out a number of Propp's deficiencies and concludes that his major contributions to the study of the folktale

could not have been made without the work of historic-geographic scholars.

It is with one of the principal students of the historic-geographic method that Christine Goldberg's contribution treats. Entitled "Antti Aarne's Tales with Magic Objects," this paper points out, after summarizing and analyzing his discussion of tales with magic objects and the conclusions which he drew, that Aarne's tale studies demonstrate that each tale is unique and that to say that tales follow laws or principles of composition or dissemination is simply a figure of speech indicating only that there are some regularities in the masses of data which have been compiled. Aarne's work is, however, as Warren Roberts illustrates in his *The Tale of the Kind and the Unkind Girls*, a part of a scholarly tradition that respects the vicissitudes and fluctuations of folktales and has made a permanent contribution to folktale studies, giving a comprehensive view of the whole tradition.

A prime example of what can be done by the application of the historic-geographic method to the study of a particular folktale type is seen in Professor Linda Dégh's article "The Ethnography of a Folktale," an article which examines AT570 (The Rabbit Herd) in the light of the aforementioned historic-geographic, or comparative, method. However, Professor Dégh's article also places the tale type in a Proppian and psychoanalytic context. Seen from these varying points of view, AT570 reveals much about the culture which produced it, and shows how the study of folktales is far more significant than simply the reconstruction of texts.

Just as Professor Dégh's article builds upon an extension of the historic-geographic analytic method of folk-narrative study, so does Professor John Wm. Johnson's contribution "Historicity and the Oral Epic: The Case of Sun-Jata Keita." This article analyzes an African oral-epic with a view toward understanding its relationship to history. Professor Johnson points out that factual history gives way to literary demands in the construction of the epic, and that ". . . events from the real life narrative of Sun-Jata as a person are not necessarily incorporated into the stereotyped plot of the contemporary epic."

An entirely different kind of tale and approach to it is discussed in Sandra Dolby Stahl's article "Family Settlement Stories and Personal Values." Here Professor Stahl examines the apparently unstructured but consistently traditional narrative usually passed on in a particular family, the sort of thing which often recurs in the same or very similar form under similar circumstances. Such stories, often inaccurate historically, are told as the truth, and the history is skewed to serve particular concerns and ideas; they are, in effect, parables more

important for their moral than for their passing on of specific information. Professor Stahl concludes, as she begins, with the assertion that like the material culture so effectively described by Warren Roberts, stories change over time, but the change reflects not simply a change in collective culture but the assertion of individual values as well.

The final paper in this concluding section of the volume is entitled "Jamie Tamson's Legacy," and was contributed by Professor Mary Ellen Brown. Using as a springboard a Scottish poem composed by one James Thompson, "Willy Weir's Legacy," Professor Brown discusses the significance, function, and value of poems written by "local poets." The poem she focuses on is an inventory of the possessions left to his heirs by a typical Scottish farmer of the nineteenth century. This rhymed list of objects common to farmhouses is, of course, the sort of thing of especial interest to students of material culture. Professor Brown concludes by noting that few remember the poetry of James Thompson and his ilk because it was so tied to time and place, but she also goes on to emphasize the fact that these are qualities which make the work of Thompson and other local poets ideal sources for folklife specialists.

When Warren Roberts began his studies in folklore, such a diversity in the kinds of topics included in a festschrift for a folklorist would have been inconceivable. When Professor Roberts began his studies, he and his mentors centered their attention on the verbal arts—folktales, ballads and folksongs, proverbs, riddles, and the like—and they were concerned with the products for their own sake. In essence, Warren's teachers were interested in the lore in folklore; the producers of the lore were important solely as conduits. That the present generation of folklorists, many of whom were students of Warren's, focus their attention on the folk as they appear through their products is largely due to his efforts. This volume is evidence of how one man can help to shape the evolution of a discipline.

Skill

HENRY GLASSIE

In the fluid Introduction W. Edson Richmond provides to this volume, which we offer in affection to our teacher and colleague, our friend Warren Roberts, the word "skill" appears often enough to establish a theme for the whole. Skill unifies personal experience with collective wisdom. When skill is brought to bear upon a particular project, the artisan fuses completely a lifetime of practice with a technological tradition in which the tricks and techniques of uncountable others have been summarized. Neither idiosyncratic nor traditional, but both, the accomplished work, the old house in decay, the sturdy rocker, stands to draw the scholar in different directions: into the biographical or into the technological—in each realm to discover a massing of detail that conditioned the thing that we can see and touch, the thing we breathe back into life through explanations that require both a compassionate engagement with a particular artisan and a firm grip upon the fullness of a technical system. Warren Roberts has explored both of these directions in his scholarship. Writing wisely about technology in *Log Buildings of Southern Indiana*, he has illustrated the need for an exacting comprehension of technical detail; his consideration of tools and their uses in that book comprises the most significant breakthrough in the recent scholarship on the overvexed topic of the American log cabin. In his papers on Hoosier furniture makers he handles the biographical facts gracefully, and in his paper on the Turpin family in particular he brings the technological and biographical together, letting them reconnect in the crucial central concept of skill.

For the medieval doctors art meant skill, a merging of individual talent and traditional wisdom. As the word and idea of art became appropriated by the entrepreneurs of individualism, as art separated from craft, just as written literature separated from spoken, and class prejudice became frozen in academic formulations, the ideal of folklore was born. Delight though they will in new twists of diction, folklorists confronting the responsibility of definition will always present folklore as a version of a fundamental reality of human existence. All of us are individuals, alone, and all of us are members of social groups, families, teams, professions, clubs, clans, communities, nations, and folklore is the expression of that duality—a simultaneous unfolding of ourselves and our memberships, an expression of the individual and the collective, the personal and the traditional.

Our first doctor of folklore, the complete folklorist, Warren Roberts embodied our tradition so completely that when he shifted his focus from folktales to material culture, his motion was easy, natural, and he was able to argue smoothly that material as well as oral expressivity belonged to our field. Before him, Stith Thompson, his great teacher, had called for American folklorists to bring architecture, art and craft, into their discipline, but it was Warren Roberts who first answered the call and provided us with models and arguments for study. In the first session devoted to material culture at an annual meeting of the American Folklore Society, he compared a house type and a tale type to settle the matter. From that time to this, through his work and that of his students and colleagues, among whom Don Yoder deserves special mention, material culture has been an integral and expanding part of folklore scholarship. Houses like stories incarnate the personal and the collective; they rise out of the intense merger of individual experience with general—traditional—wisdom.

Within material culture, skill particularizes our old folkloristic philosophy. In opposition to those who would steal from art its traditional dimensions in order to isolate a tiny aristocracy of genius, and against those who would steal individuality from people by lumping then into masses for the benefit of historians or politicians, folklore preserves the power of both the individual and the tradition, the powers the artisan melds in the heat of skilled work. Warren Roberts was able to locate the center of material culture studies and hold himself there, creating a grand corpus of scholarship, because he is a fine folklorist, one in a long train of individuals committed to comprehending the world realistically, and because he is a fine craftsman. Turning lumps of truculent wood into gleaming works of art with flowing liquid lines, he has learned from his own endeavor.

The repetitive solution of concrete problems teaches both confidence in the self and an awareness of reliance upon the missing others who provided forms and tools, whose answers to enduring problems are bound within traditional technologies.

Through actions that test our skills, we find ourselves and position ourselves gratefully among our fellows. Splitting wood, blackening pages, rearranging nature, we put ourselves into things, become part of the world.

Others may wonder, Warren, at our fascination with the intricacies of the performance of a story or the making of a chair, at our concern with the little details of biography, context, and technology; but by centering our thought upon the skillful action of the singer and the potter, we have come near the heart of human experience. Old Walt will not mind the parody: with you, Warren, I have learned that there is wonder enough in a well-turned chair to stagger an army of academicians.

Fakses and the Remains of Churches

OLAV BØ

It is often convenient to make use of imprecise formulations when we come across something so ancient and unknown that we can neither decide upon its age nor compare it to familiar items or phenomena. In such cases, we often find the word "heathen" used, even in scientific works. The 17th and 18th centuries were a time rich in scientific speculations. To a great extent, religious conceptions dominated world view, and clergymen had positions which gave them an authority far beyond their real competence. It was a time of pietism. The century of the reformation was followed by an era of religious ardor, a reaction in favor of individual conversion and against institutionalized Christendom.

In the rural communities of Norway, many old traditions had survived the half-millennium of Catholicism and the later centuries of Lutheranism. Traditions are very often closely connected with specific customs and for that reason difficult to change. For a long time after the Reformation in 1536, clergymen were either met with direct opposition or what was said from the pulpit was ignored. Reliable historical sources even tell of ministers being murdered in the first decades of the Post-Reformation period. The situations changed slowly as time went on, and in the period of Pietism clergymen used every opportunity of accusing people of pageantry and secret idolatry. There may well be a connection with the numerous accusations of witchcraft in the same period. In communities, no one wanted to be known for keeping idols or "house gods," an expression commonly used in later descriptions.

The so-called "house gods" that I am going to discuss may be defined as wooden images. They were mostly discovered in remote districts in Telemark and Setesdal. These districts are known to folklorists as the best areas to document a wide variety of folk traditions. It is no mere coincidence that these districts also had taken care of different kinds of church remains.

One of the most zealous clergymen in 18th-century Denmark Norway was Erik Pontoppidan. Even before he was appointed bishop of Bergen he had published a book which aroused great interest: *Everriculum veteris fermenti* (1737). The title may be understood in these words: Broom to brush away old superstitions. Nothing less was his intention. In a chapter about "horrifying idolatry," Pontoppidan renders information given to him by an ex-minister of Western Telemark. The vicar had been dismissed from his position for neglecting his duties, so what he reported from his vicarage in Telemark was mainly a defense of his own behavior and his eagerness for service. Although very doubtful, his **narrationes** were accepted by Pontoppidan.

The ex-minister reported that on a farm in the parish of Vrådal there lived a man called Anund who had a wooden image, a roughly carved statue, in his possession. When the minister happened to see the figure, the farmer had to admit that it was a piece of heritage belonging to the farm. He himself had only taken care of the image, not sacrificed food or beer to it or venerated it in any way. The image was described as such: It was about two **alner** (i.e., 1.30 meter) high, roughly hewn and worm-eaten with age, and possessing a human face. The image was called Gudmund. The minister further explained that he himself had gripped an axe, split the image to pieces and thrown it into the fire. The description is very colorful, but most of it must, I think, be corrected. To do so, we can contrast this description with what other clergymen report later in the same century when the image was called Torbjørn and its appearance was described as such: It was big and broad at the bottom, had neither arms nor legs but a head like an ordinary human being. The eyes were filled with molten pewter. On top of the head was a kind of flat crown just large enough to hold a beer bowl. No idolatry was known about the image, and it was used as a stand for the wassail bowl on festive occasions, especially Christmas time. The image remained at the farm until the house burned down. A third minister, the well-known writer H.J. Wille, describes Torbjørn with almost the same words, but adds that every Saturday night the image was washed and placed in the owner's seat (høgsætet) like a holy thing. The most interesting point of

Wille's description is perhaps the mentioning of another image at the same place, which in his opinion was an image of a saint, the Icelander St. Gudmund.

Among the clergymen who have written about the image called Torbjørn is the first editor of Norwegian ballads (as well as other folk traditions from Telemark) M.B. Landstad. In his words, every guest took the wassail bowl from Torbjørn's head, drank, thanked him for the drink and replaced the bowl on his head. These descriptions may give reason to believe that there were two images on the same farm, but this assumption cannot be correct. Torbjørn was and still is a fairly common Norwegian Christian name, while Gudmund or St. Gudmund reminds us of Gudmund, bishop of Holar in Iceland from 1201 to 1237. His remembrance-day was the 16th of March, a day that was both an ecclesiastical and a popular day for rejoicing or feasting. Gudmund was, however, not the object of much veneration in Norway, although reliable historical sources report that in Romerike (not far from Oslo) a chapel was dedicated to him. There may well have been pictures of the saint in other churches too. Everything seems to indicate that the name Gudmund is the original name and Torbjørn a name that was adopted by tradition much later.

From the communities in the far western reaches of Telemark the distance is short to the valley of Setesdal. Throughout the centuries there was a lot of communication across the mountains. As might be expected, we find in Setesdal the richest and most characteristic tradition about images of a special kind, images that were called **faksar** (fakses).

In a vocabulary from the 1740's, a **fakse** is described in the following way: In the dialect of the Setesdal Valley in the bishopric of Kristiansand it is a carved image in the old farmhouses. They were called **røykstuer** because of the smoke from the open fireplace in the middle of the room rising up to an opening in the roof. The source of this piece of information was probably a former minister in Setesdal who, according to tradition, tried very hard to do away with all the old beliefs in the valley. The internationally-known sociologist Eilert Sundt visited Setesdal in the 1850's and during his stay in the valley he was told that peasants in the old days would place a wooden image in the high seat. They called the image Fakse and daubed it with butter. At about the same time, many artists, especially painters, discovered the valley of the Setesdal with its strong and old-fashioned traits and habits. Some of these pioneer painters heard about the fakses, and they have given vivid and colorful descriptions of the images, although it seems without ever actually having seen them.

Due to their various fantasies, great differences exist in the artistic reproductions of the tradition.

Not until Johannes Skar, the excellent collector of all kinds of folk tradition in Setesdal, published his books did folklorists procure reliable material. Skar was the last to describe the images and their context, but he was a very conscientious collector and had several reliable informants. According to his description, there were two images which bore the name of Fakse, named after the farms on which they were placed: Fakse Rygnestad and Fakse Brokke. Rygnestad is a farm with very old houses that today are the main part of the local folk museum. Among the houses is a large and very well-built **loft** (annex) from the last part of the 16th-century; it is said to have been built by a bailiff who in his younger days took part in the liberation war in the Netherlands.

Skar writes that Fakse Rygnestad looked like a human being. His head was flat on top. Through the lower part of the image there were three holes to fasten him to a wall. Most of the time he was kept in a small room beside the living room, but on Christmas Eve he was placed in the high seat, to the left of the farmer himself (the **husbond**). At the first drink of the Christmas beer, the farmer drank to Fakse before sending the wassail around. Skar received this information from an old woman on the farm. She added that the word about Fakse being an idol was not in any way reliable, and she appeared quite angry when mentioning this. When they rebuilt the house some years later, Fakse was removed from his usual place. A woman expressed deep regret over this action and said that luck would certainly leave the place. For many years Fakse was lying in the woodshed—until he was cut up for firewood.

Fakse Brokke was a timber log, carved into the likeness of a man, according to tradition. He was said to wear a hat and riding trousers. Through his head there was a hole. This Fakse had "sacrifices" made to him, of the same kind as were made to the **tussar**, i.e., guardian spirits belonging to the hidden people. The offerings were given to Fakse in order to receive good fortune with cattle and crop, and consisted mainly of butter and beer when brewing, but otherwise food in the cupboard on which he was standing. There was never peace and quiet in that cupboard, they said—and we can easily understand the reason for that. But when the neighbors began to call the mother's son Fakse, the image was removed from the house. In the end, he was lying by the wall on the backside of the house, until he was cut up for firewood. This is said to have happened a little before or around 1800. Several of the stories about the images from this late

period appear rather journalistic and it is hard to decide what may have been true and what was added. More than once the descriptions border on the edge of sensationalism, and were introduced as a cultural sensation by, among others, a couple of professors at the University of Oslo. We shall leave their conceptions without any comment.

From Valle in Setesdal, the parish where the fakses were found, there are additional traditions about two other images. One of them is called "Ramnen" or "the raven of Tveitebø"; the other one "Hernos." The second name is translated as a "likeness of a man," and it is told that an officer was allowed to take it with him from the farmhouse where it had had its place for a long, long time. "Ramnen" was standing in an annex (a loft) of unique construction, built in three stories, with a small room on the top floor. "Sacrifices" were made to the "raven."

From Romerike, only a short distance away from Oslo, there is a tradition about an old house where two wooden images had their place. The Old Norse name of this farm is "Skeiðihof," a name indicating an ancient cultplace, and during the Middle Ages there was a parish church on the farm. In all probability, the images came from this old and condemned church. From Valdres, in the central part of Norway, there is a tradition about an "idol" called St. Andreas which was placed on a nearby hill. This seems to have been an ordinary, much deteriorated image of a saint. The image of St. Nicolas from the parish of Eidsborg in Telemark is the artifact most naturally compared to the image of St. Andreas, as to some others; it can be seen in the collection of antiquities at the University of Oslo. There is much tradition associated with this image, particularly regarding medical practice on Midsummer-night. The image, however, most certainly came from a local stave-church in Eidsborg. It must have been removed from the church at the time of the Reformation, but was taken care of by the members of the community.

At this point, we can begin to appraise carefully the different sources in order to discern reliable information that can lead to plausible interpretations of such an unusual artifact. At the beginning, it seems obvious that tradition has preserved information about the images of saints coming adrift at the time of the Reformation. Names such as St. Andreas, St. Nicolas, and perhaps also St. Gudmund point clearly in this direction. But we still have to explain the reports about the images that obviously cannot be described as saints, and consequently must be judged from other points of view. To this group belong the "fakses" from Setesdal, the other images from the same

district, and perhaps the image first mentioned, Gudmund or Torbjørn from Telemark. These specifically seem to have a background apart from the images of saints.

It is highly probable that the names in question are expressing a characteristic of the image itself, or of the place where it originally stood. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure whether or not the names are old in use, or whether or not they indicate medieval beliefs and denominations. The name Fakse must be a derivation of the Old Norse word **faks** (i.e. long hair), and therefore means "he with the long hair" or something along that line. In more recent tradition, we know of several persons who where called Fakse because of their long and stiff hair. This fact corresponds with a similar use of names known from the Old Norse literature. A **berserk** had been named Barek, but was called **Brenneyarfaxi** because of his long black hair. Likewise, horses might bear the name Fakse, **Freysfaxi** being the best known. Place names could in the same way have Fakse as the first part of the name, in order to explain certain traits of a particular place. In Norway, we have place names such as Faksefjell and Fakstind. Fakse in place names very often means a mountain with a glacier or eternal snow on top of it. Thus we can say with some certainty that there is a connection between hair and the shape of the head and the name of Fakse.

Obviously the name Ramnen has nothing to do with the bird name raven, but Skars' information about the upper part of the house being called **loftet** leads us in the right direction. It is defined as the upper room, under the ceiling, close to the short wall—and such rooms are sometimes called **ramloft** or **ramen**. During the repair of stave-churches, they often put up a new ceiling where the capitéls (the top of the wooden pillars) went through the floor of the new ceiling and into a dark loft. In a church that is being repaired or restored it is possible to stand in the loft and look at the images on top of the pillars or staves. In my opinion, this is a very plausible explanation for the image called Ramnen.

The word **Herrnos** is more difficult to explain. My interpretation is that it refers to the shape of the image's nose. The first part of the word (**Herr-**) might refer to a man of high rank, an official or an officer. Popular language has several expressions to point out the nose of men of rank, thought to be a rather large and often curved nose. It is possible that this image had a nose like that, as often is the case with carved figures, and the name herrnos could then be interpreted on the basis of a distinctive feature of the image, similar to the explanation offered for the name Fakse.

Outward appearances undoubtedly have influenced the naming of the images. Most important seem to be the shape of the head and of the body. Tradition varies concerning the height, with a range of 30 to 120 cm. (approximately one to four feet). All records but one report that the images were very simple. Most of the records tell about a beer bowl being placed on top of the figure, and all evidence points to a shape of the head where the outer frame, which evidently looked like hair, was standing upright, reminiscent of horse **faks**. We know of no other meaning of the word **faks**.

With this in mind, it seems logical to think about the pillar-heads of the inner staves in a stave-church: for example, those to be seen in the Gol stave-church at the Norsk Folkemuseum. There seems to be a very good correspondence between the images or masks on top of the staves and the information about the fakses and other similar images. The cross-piece or stave-beam had to rest on the pillar-head, and to this end the top was made flat. The upper part of the staves were, of course, not the same in all churches, because the wood-carver—we may well call him an artist—often wanted to vary his technique, as in other carvings.

This urge to vary and to compose something fantastic and grotesque is clearly shown in the shape of the faces. It is a remarkable fact that it is not the shape of the face but the eyes that have attracted the most attention. A couple of the images are said to have had eyes of lead or pewter and a fierce stare. People have wondered about this: What might be the basis of this impression?

It is unlikely that lead or pewter could have been cast into the face, but the paint, either gray or blue, may have led people to think of lead or tin. Probably, however, there is a better explanation. On the many medieval images for which we have information, whether church art or other types of wood carving, the eyes are unusually conspicuous. Frequently the artist has carved deeply around the edges so that the eyelids nearly vanish. Remaining, then, is the large round apple of the eye and the deep trenches around them, reflecting light and shadow. Thus, in their cruder versions, these images may portray a wild and fierce expression. Of course, we should keep in mind that the figures in question were not the best works artistically. They were carved to be seen from underneath, at a fair distance (six to eight meters), and in the dim daylight of the old stave-churches. The heads of the staves and similar carvings were usually simple and plain, although each artist was free to carry out his assignment as he wished. Descriptions such as "staring" and "frightening" remind us that the eyes can be such an effective means of characterization, especially when

informed by popular belief where, as in wood carving, common concepts are the basis and inspiration.

From the information we have on Fakse Rygnestad we know that the image was triangular with three holes through it, so that it could be fastened to the wall with three nails. This never happened at Rygnestad, where the figure on certain occasions was placed beside the seat of honor (høgsætet). The holes, therefore, must have been made for some other purpose, and the staves of the church may again provide leads to a safer conclusion. In the Gol stave-church at Norsk Folkemuseum there are holes through the staves. According to architects, these holes might have several different functions in the construction of the church. Tradition tells us that the Herrnos image could be placed on top of a stake, such as a processional stick or pole (although this was not possible in the case of the large and heavy fakses). These poles were commonly carried in the Middle Ages on Procession days while walking around the fields in order to ensure a good harvest. The tradition has ancient roots and was accepted by the Catholic church, but only a few procession stakes remain today. In the old churches there were various kinds of fittings, and in the Norwegian stave-churches it is possible to divide these fittings into the permanent and the mobile parts of their interiors. The wooden images could have been either the actual images of saints or the upper part of the staves.

It does not seem unreasonable to assume that many sculptures of saints had gone adrift in the times following the Reformation in 1536. The Reformation was introduced to Norway on the command of the King and the administration, not on the people's desire. The reformists of the church saw it as their primary task to clear the churches of all reminders of Catholicism. They used the word "papistry" almost as an equivalent for paganism and the worshipping of idols. Contemporary clerical writings contain a wealth of information on the so-called "purification" of the churches, and the information is probably correct. People were suspicious of the new "religion," as they said, and reacted through indifference and even protest. All of the old furnishings had been precious to them, as to their forefathers, and therefore they felt obliged to care for whatever old equipment they might get hold of. Those who lived close to the churches which had been abandoned because of the Reformation were particularly keen on preserving the remains of the churches.

By the late Middle Ages some of the old stave-churches had been lost already, largely due to decay. At one time, there were an estimated number of 700-800 stave-churches in Norway. To give this

some perspective, today only about 30 remain, most of which have been extensively restored. At the time of the Reformation, the state (i.e., the King) acquired all properties of the Catholic church, including churches which the state did not have sufficient means to maintain. In the 16th, 17th, 18th, and even the last century many churches were neglected to such an extent that they were either torn down or they simply collapsed. During the 18th-century, the Danish-Norwegian king was in particular need of money for warfare, and in this situation the selling of church buildings seemed necessary. In some cases local communities bought the churches, but usually wealthy individuals purchased them with the intent of leasing them to the congregation. These new owners had both a legal and a moral obligation to keep the buildings in order, but more than once neglected what had been prescribed. The maintenance of the churches did not improve until they were taken over by the local communities; by then, however, it was often too late.

It seems certain that all the churches in Setesdal but one were stave-churches, eight in number. One church was demolished at the time of the Reformation and six others were torn down in the 19th-century. Only the poor parish of Bykle in the northern part of the valley could not afford to build a new church, and had to be content with renovating the old church through rose-painting. Today, this is the only church in Setesdal of any particular interest. When a stave-church was torn down and a new church had to be built, materials that could not be used in the construction of the new church were usually distributed equally among the peasants of the parish. This served as a kind of compensation for the timber they had to contribute towards the construction of the church. In this fashion many pieces of ancient church furnishings went adrift.

Some of the finest examples of wood carving from medieval churches come from Setesdal, especially some unique church portals. On these portals are carved scenes from the myths of Sigurd Fåvnes-bane, a part of the cycle of myths in the Old German Niebelungen literature. Finding such motifs in a place of worship might seem amazing to us, though obviously not to people in the Middle Ages. To them it was no problem to unite tradition and folk belief on the one hand with church and worship on the other. Perhaps more astounding is the fact that the Catholic priests were so liberal as to accept the carvings with mythical motifs. When the stave-churches were torn down, the portals were lost until at last they were found by members of a newly established society for the preservation of antiquities. Legends tell of how images of saints were saved—until

they were destroyed much later on the command of zealous clergymen. In Telemark and Setesdal the first Lutheran bishops had great difficulties persuading people to accept the new system, and it seems to be more than a coincidence that it is precisely in these districts that a large portion of the precious church furnishings has been preserved.

What then might we say about the remains of staves from the old churches? First, we must take into account the respect shown and the veneration offered to the images at certain times according to tradition. We know that there was a church in Valle (in tradition called the church of the Monks) that was deserted at the time of the Reformation. Remains from this church may well have been brought to one of the largest farms, Rygnestad, where a fakse found his dwelling, as we have discussed.

But why then venerate these images especially at Christmas time, a veneration reported to have included sacrifices of beer and butter? The information given in the body of tradition that tells us such images were placed in the high seat on Christmas Eve is so substantial that we must consider it reliable. Every part of that tradition indicates that at Christmas ancient customs were predominant. More recent elements gradually became stronger, but at the time in question the old customs and beliefs were still vivid. Characteristic of the beliefs is that Christmas was seen as the midwinter celebration, the midwinter solstice to which many ancient concepts and beliefs were attached, fertility ideas as well. It seems likely that a kind of sacrifice was included, though not directed to an idol. More likely, the sacrifices were offered to the spirits depicted in folk belief. A striking parallel to this can be found in the tradition of offering Christmas porridge to the old **jultomte** (not to be compared with Santa Claus in more recent customs).

This **tomte**, explained to be a spirit of the first settler on the farm, paid particular attention to the domestic animals and therefore, like all living creatures, was entitled to share in the material benefits of the Christmas celebration. The question remains of how long people have really believed in the tomte. It is quite possible that the strength of tradition itself has kept alive the old customs and behavior without being proof of a folk belief still in existence. This makes sense when we consider that later generations not familiar with the background of the old images, quite unaware that they were originally church equipment, showed religious veneration in the respect they still paid to these images. Again, we may compare this with the figures of St. Andreas and St. Nicolas, to which customs clearly derived from folk belief were attached.

We can now draw the conclusion that these images represent a tradition, and that originally they were old church relics from one of the many churches that were torn down in the course of time. People knew of this background for quite a while, but during a period of two centuries or more the function of the images changed into a protective one, related to but in many ways differing from supernatural beings. The supernatural beings were a kind of common property, whereas the wooden images were seldom found. On the few farms that were in possession of such images, the situation was as follows: The old images were inherited relics revered by their ancestors. Since these relics were not associated with the images of saints and other church furnishings, it became natural for people to venerate them in the same way as they had venerated the supernatural beings from ancient times. The images were thus integrated into the complex of folk belief, where there were many common characteristics as well as many distinguishing features. On certain occasions, sacrifices were offered to these images in accordance with other well-known sacrificial rituals.

This discussion is based on an analysis of various written sources and on folk tradition collected in the last century. The striking similarity with the upper part of the staves in the old stave-churches leads to a supposition that the wooden images were in all likelihood the remains of churches. But is it possible to find other evidence?

The former chief architect at Norsk Folkemuseum, Mr. Arne Berg, some years ago led an examination of the old farm buildings at Rygnestad. In the three-story annex building, he found that the round column at the corner of the gallery had in all probability come from a demolished church. This church could well be the one from the end of the Middle Ages that we previously mentioned. His conclusion ends with this statement: "It is most likely that the top of the column once had a covered hat. The basis for this assumption lies not only in the length and shape of the column, and in the fact that such columns were not ever (as far as we know) a feature of secular architecture, but also in the fact that many other features of the ground floor and first floor of the annex building have originally come from a stave-church." Mr. Berg further states that both the farmhouse and the annex in question most likely were built at the same time, i.e., in the 1590's. The statement from the architect corresponds very well, as it seems to me, with my folkloristic analysis of the written sources and the folk tradition from the 19th-century.[1]

NOTES

1 For further information see: Olav Bø/ Arne Berg: Faksar og ktrkjerestar, serleg på Rygnestad, Oslo 1959.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Carved images at the top of staves in the Gol stave-church at Norsk Folkemuseum, Oslo. The church was removed from the parish Gol in Hallingdal to the king's farm near to the museum in the last part of the 19th century and later presented to the national folk museum by King Oscar II.

Figure 2. Carved head from the Hegge stave-church in Valdres. The irregular shape of the right eye has led to the idea that the woodcarver might have had the chief god Odin in mind.

Figures 3 & 4. These carved heads are all from the Ål stave-church in Hallingdal. The woodcarver has varied his technique and composed different shapes for the faces.

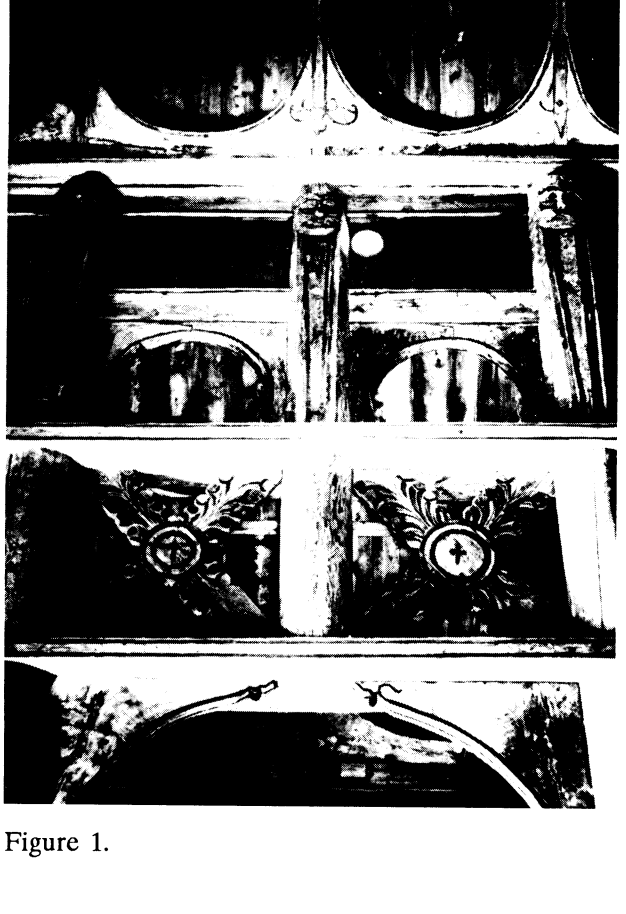

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

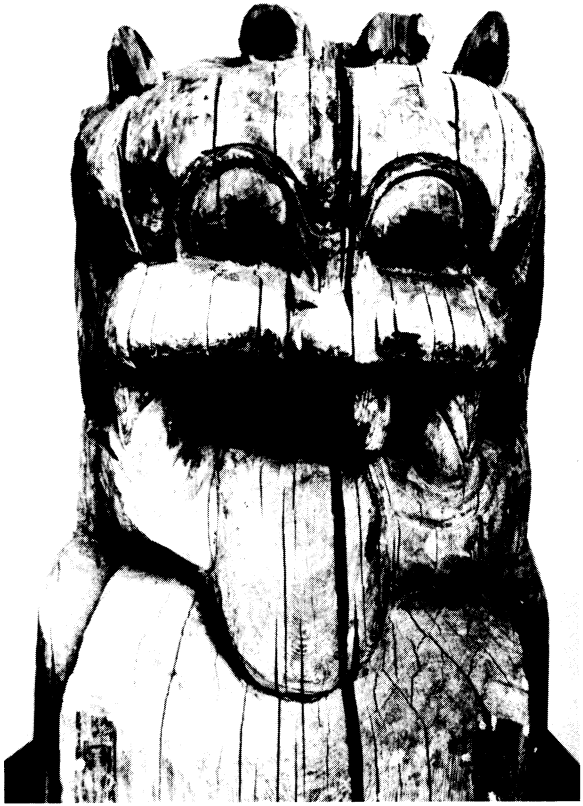

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Morality as Folk Aesthetic

JOHN MICHAEL VLACH

It is difficult to say where religion begins and ends in the life of any society. A religious person does not parcel out his or her devotion to use it on one occasion and hold it in reserve on another. To do so is in fact not to be religious but only to be seemingly religious. To behave in a sacred, moral manner only when it is advantageous is to be a religious opportunist and something of a hypocrite. Religious ideals, if they are indeed religious, are always in force, ever present, and constantly acted upon. This constancy allows us then to forge a link in our study of art and culture between social codes and moral codes, between art and religion. What we may perceive as distinct spheres of behavior are for many people combined into a single unified experience. This is why anthropologist and philosopher Robert Redfield (1947) characterized the little communities that he called folk societies as "sacred societies."[1] Following the lead of William Graham Sumner, Redfield noted that folkways were also mores, that is, ways of doing or thinking to which moral consequence was attached. Consequently, even the most menial task performed in a folk society might be freighted with sacred or religious implications. An act like plowing a field or cooking a meal which we might take to have nothing other than economic or nutritional significance might, in some societies, convey powerful religious or moral symbolism to its members. To understand the meaning of religion, then, in such societies we must be prepared to study not only their religious institutions and doctrines but all the contexts in which religious values might be displayed. On some occasions the influence of the moral code will be plainly or overtly manifest, but more often the code will be silent and hidden, although it is clearly understood and followed by its adherents. To consider only religion's manifest

expressions is to miss much of the daily response to religion which remains latent.[2]

What all this means for the study of religious folk art should be clear. We cannot be content to collect and analyze only those works that overtly display religiosity. To do so is to overlook most of the experience of folk culture. Just as religion has both its manifest and latent expressions so too does art overtly and covertly serve religious functions. The manifest statement of religious doctrine found in a work like a saint's image or the cherub etched into a slate tombstone is a physical call to accept certain tenets of religious belief. Formed in part out of an artist's understanding of sacred teachings, these works provide symbols that encourage and inspire faith within the artist's community. While we may safely assume that at least the artist has thoughtfully pondered the religious values behind these symbols, we do not know how deeply the other faithful subscribe to those sacred ideals unless we can observe their responses. But then those responses are both a reaction to the talent of the artist as well as to the form and content of the image. Mere ownership of a religious object or attendance at the procession of a holy image is not a patent sign of devotion since participation can be motivated by social, political, and other factors. A greater proof of the fervor of a group, it seems to me, is to be found in the secular objects they make once they have been filled with the spirit of faith. More important than the question "How do the faithful use religious art?" is the question "How do the faithful perpetuate their religion day in and day out?" To answer this question we have to focus our attention on secular activities and objects used in nonreligious contexts. In this way we may learn how people internalize and personalize abstract religious concepts and convert their beliefs into a record of sacred actions and achievements. And furthermore, we may learn how the aesthetically appropriate is also the morally appropriate.

The Puritans of New England are one group whose history has been extensively studied. We know much about them as a people and much about certain persons among them. Their misssion in North America was to establish a new nation where they might freely practice their religion, and the "Bible Commonwealth" that resulted from their efforts is well-known.[3] Their church was a pervasive institution; there were few aspects of colonial life into which it did not intrude. Moreover, given their brand of Calvinist Protestantism, every act—human or natural—was interpreted as either a sign of God's grace or His wrath. While Puritans are generally thought of as an art-denying group, Alan Ludwig (1960) has shown that their gravestones carried

a rich iconography. These graven images are, however, only a surface manifestation of the Puritan faith. In a society so given to religious feeling and a concurrent feeling for form, the passion for the sacred and the aesthetic could not be confined solely to markers for the deceased.

For the seventeenth-century English yeoman doing God's bidding and earning His grace meant that he commit himself completely to caring for and civilizing the "wastes" of New England. He used the terms "unbroken" and "broken" to identify progressive stages of development, hoping eventually to certify it "improved." Robert Blair St.George (1982:161) has written recently of the Puritan encounter with nature:

> The Puritans legitimized their mission as they symbolically broke open their landscape. As a result the yeoman would improve his lands, build miles upon miles of stone walls, and turn trees into towns, while still heeding the words of his minister as he urged the detailed study of nature.

Houses and towns, fields and fences are then to be regarded as important religious expressions. They were devices used to create a human order consistent with and parallel to God's plan for the order of the Universe. Their deliberate clearing of fields, hewing of timbers, laying out of gridded streets, and attentive husbanding of crops and beasts combined to form what one Puritan called "a little model of the Kingdom of Christ upon Earth" (160).

Although houses might be considered works of architecture rather than works of art, it is important to recognize that in design the winged skull or cherub on a tombstone and the facade of almost any saltbox or Cape Cod house are identical. Both house fronts and gravestone icons have symmetrical central sections flanked by symmetrically mirrored elements (Glassie 1972:269, 272-79). The sharing of this complex formula which simultaneously divides an object into two and three parts is not an accident but results from the fact that houses, gravestones, and many other Puritan artifacts share a single cultural underpinning: the desire for predictable, balanced order. A death's head overtly declares order; a house or a barn or a town plan covertly imposes the same tripartite order (Figure 1). If the functions —aesthetic and pragmatic—of both sets of objects are similar, there is little advantage to be gained in separating them. Art and architecture both demonstrate how seriously the Puritans considered the commands of their religion. Studying elements of the cultural landscape apart from art would only stunt our understanding of Puritan aesthetics by hiding the fact that designs for art are both literally and metaphorically

also designs for living. Because the Puritans lived their religion unceasingly, its moral prescriptions were never at rest. Consequently, we are compelled to pursue all the forms and contexts in which their religious-formed aesthetic was displayed if we are truly interested in Puritan art.

While one can safely identify the latent dimensions of religious impulses in an overtly religious group like the Puritans or the Shakers, how does one determine whether a commonplace basket or quilt found in a more secularly-oriented society has any moral implications? The answer lies in the object's maker. If an artist is a religious person, every thoughtful, conscious act will bear some measure of religious significance. Consider Vince, a chairmaker from Eastern Kentucky. Described by Michael Owen Jones (1975) as a stern, tight-lipped man, he is an adult convert to a fundamentalist version of Christianity.[4] His church, among other prohibitions, apparently considers secular music frivolous and as a consequence Vince gave up playing the banjo. Its aesthetic doctrine, which requires a denial of worldly pleasure in order to insure one's heavenly reward, has also had a marked influence on the chairs he makes. Vince rejects the usual bands of lathe turnings or back posts with finials as "ugly;" he prefers "a decent, plain-made chair." The term "decent" here reveals that his chairs are not only sturdy pieces of sitting furniture but that they make a moral statement as well. They extend the command to avoid wordly pleasure from the pulpit all the way to the front porch. Vince has approached both his musical talent and his craft ability with the same moral map. Just as the fun-loving, quick tempo banjo tunes gave way to solid, respectable church hymns, so too was even the most modest of decorations replaced by plain round posts. In this way both his chairs and his songs took on the basic contours of his religion. We might also posit that other aspects of his life likewise assumed a similar profile, becoming plainer, more introverted, less ostentatious, more concerned with the repetition of correct form and less concerned with the possibility for variation.

The goodness of Vince's chairs, however, was not totally bound to their implicit morality. Vince says that they are "good looking" because he tapers the arms of his chairs from the front end to the point where they enter the back posts. A chair with straight arms and "nubs" he considers "ugly." He avoids surface decoration or any embellishment that is superfluous to the function of the chair. Thus a moral purpose dominates his rationale for production. This point is underscored by his own evaluation: "people around here say I make the best chair of any one fella that's made 'em around here. They

don't say I make the *best-lookin'* chair—just the best one." The evident virtue of plainness is not lost on Vince's community. They register his chairs as: solid, decent, best, good. These are all adjectives rich with ambiguity since these terms refer equally to their moral code as much as to the aesthetics of chairmaking. Moral church-goers might be described with many of the same words.

If we might not expect to find religion in front porch chairs, perhaps we would be even less inclined to regard a field of corn as a sacred statement. This would be a serious mistake, however, for most agrarian peoples have rituals, some more magical than religious, which aid them in raising their crops. The German Catholics of Dubois County in Southern Indiana, for example, every Spring have their parish priest carry the Sacred Host, which they believe to be the body of Christ, through their fields in order to bless their efforts and to ensure the fertility of their plants.[5] The resulting stands of wheat, corn, and soybeans cannot be seen then as other than God's gift, and the fields become a holy landscape. They display the results of prayer and sacred devotion no matter what prices are guaranteed by the futures market. These farming people pray on Sunday when they attend Mass and they pray the rest of the week when they offer their work to their God, a God who has personally visited their fields.

A similar circumstance was reported among the Navajo by anthropologist W.W. Hill (1938:53). One of his informants explained to him that corn itself was sacred:

> My granduncle used to say to me "If you are walking along a trail and see a kernel of corn, pick it up. It is like a child lost and starving." According to the legends corn is just the same as a human being, only it is holier . . . When a man goes into a cornfield he feels he is in a holy place, that he is walking among Holy People . . . Agriculture is a holy occupation. Even before you plant you sing songs. You continue this during the whole time your crops are growing. You cannot help but feel you are in a holy place when you go through your fields and they are doing well.

Again we find no dividing line between worship and work. The Navajo Indian, like the German from Indiana, merges subsistence needs with spiritual needs so that a good harvest is simultaneously a sign of industry and of positive divine intervention. While we all might acknowledge that farming is a cultural act, some might question whether it is art. But if an artwork consists of natural material modified by man in order to give pleasure then surely a well-tilled field sprouting with endless furrows full of green plants must qualify (Glassie 1977:32-33). While the satisfactions provided to its maker might be tallied as economic, moral, and aesthetic, one category of

response does not detract from the others. Rather the total impact is enhanced by the simultaneous service of different needs. Indeed, the interrelatedness of these needs serves to indicate how important the act of planting a field is, and further it demonstrates how a farmer is rewarded with a profound sense of accomplishment and well-being, for he has made money, created a pleasant scene, and served his God all at the same time.

Raising the possibility that entire folk societies may see themselves as built on hallowed ground captures all of their actions into the domain of religion. All behavior in such a society, and consequently all of its artistic statements, become then religious statements to some degree. But in order to avoid an oversimplified view of members of folk societies as people who blindly follow the dictates of faith, we must again closely study the behavior of individual artists. We must introduce into our analysis of art and religion some measure of will, the power of choice. People who do not choose to worship are not really believers, just as people who do not choose to create are only imitators. On this matter of personal will, Redfield (1947:300) has written:

> It must not be supposed that primitive man is a sort of automaton in which custom is the mainspring. . . . Within the limits set by custom there is an invitation to excel in performance. There is a lively competition, a sense of opportunity, and a feeling that what the culture moves one to do is well worth doing.

Applying this assessment to the members of folk groups, we should be prepared to allow folk artists to maintain their sense of ego even as they subscribe to the culturally-informed dictates of a moral agenda.

Philip Simmons, a blacksmith and ornamental ironworker from Charleston, South Carolina, who began his career in 1925 has since the late 1930s served the decorative needs of that city (Vlach 1983).[6] Many of the homes in the famous Battery District as well as those in the working class sections are graced with his gates and fences (Figure 2). The designs that he uses derive mainly from the early works done by English and German blacksmiths that can be found throughout the city, and yet for Simmons what is most important is that all his work should be "good" work. Even while he acknowledges the importance of observing local artistic patterns, he asserts a higher set of standards derived from his religious beliefs:

> All work by man is the hand of God. Edison made the light but everything he used was made by God. Same for my work, I look at nature a lot. The greatest history is "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Nothing before that; all comes from that, isn't it?

Thus the fanciest palmette or animal sculpture which he might place in the screen section of a gate or in a window grill is but a weak echo of God's initial creation. With each work that Simmons makes, he is sure to reinforce his personal feeling of humility for God's work which is not only prior to his but also perfect unlike his own approximations of nature. Yet humility does not eliminate or override his sense of self for he notes "I take a lot of pride in my work. I do a good job." One feels good, asserts Simmons, when one observes certain standards of excellence, standards that derive from what is morally correct as well as what is demanded by the customary codes of the local iron working traditions. Speaking directly about these two sets of rules he notes:

> I know how long wrought iron supposed to last. I build a gate, I build it to last two hundred years. If it looks good, you feel good. I build a gate and I just be thinking about two hundred years. If you don't, you're not an honest craftsman.

His traditional apprenticeship and his membership in the Reformed Episcopal Church have taught him how to work. His blacksmith teacher and his ministers both instilled in him the same sense of ethics—work well and you will be honest, be honest and you will work well.

What is important here is that the moral virtue of honesty is not simply bestowed but earned. The gate is honest, the craftsman is honest, only if the work is done in compliance with tough local standards for durability and beauty. In Simmons's mind the success of his creativity is to be measured in pragmatic, aesthetic, *and* moral terms. Ironically, his success is in part attained by overcoming the challenge posed by one of the requirements of good work—pride. As a master of his art, Simmons is often called upon to design unique works, works in which he is expected to show off. He is quite frank about the pleasure he derives from such requests saying: "I enjoy doing the work . . . but I enjoy the one when they come and say 'I don't know what I want.'" In such circumstances he is free to let his imagination roam the entire span of his creative potential. When he is free to explore his options in an open-ended manner the level of ego in the design process is significantly raised. This is certainly evident in the following statement:

> Sometime I draw the whole thing and don't like it myself, not the customer. What that comes from (is) you think you like it to start, (but) it isn't always you like something you can visualize. But one thing, you can visualize, it give you a background like this drawing here. I may not like these scroll when I start, but still I see it that way after puttin' it in and I see where I can improve it.

Personal initiative is definitely required to become a successful artist. In contemporary mainstream American society, when a person solves his or her problems on their own, they are usually praised and rewarded for their ingenuity. In a folk society, however, one has to be careful not to seek such acclaim too aggressively or too directly.[7] Drawing excessive attention to one's self is generally regarded as immodest and is bad form if not immoral. Thus we find that Simmons often deflects attention away from himself and assigns the bulk of the credit for his work to his community, saying "I owe all my career to the people of Charleston. Without they giving me a chance, I couldn't have anything." By so doing, he is able to sidestep the dangers of being too full of pride.

Honors come to him as his clients express their thanks and grant him esteem for his modesty. Simmons thus does not have to demand prestige or fame, it is bestowed upon him. He attains greatness while honoring the moral charge to remain humble. Hence, we see that the moral or ethical standards that intertwine with the aesthetic requirements for folk art can make life very complicated. The artist must learn to balance carefully between what is possible and what is allowable, between what looks good and what is good. If he wants to be successful, he must find a way to place his own vision within the limits of the vision of the community in which he lives. Their aesthetic becomes his, their morality becomes his. His prime challenge then is to blend these two sometimes-conflicting sets of standards not only with each other but with his own personal desires. In Simmon's case, pride in one's craft is matched against the communal dues of required honesty and modesty, while he simultaneously tries to enjoy his work. Thus, if he is a good man, it is because he works hard to maintain a balance among these requirements so that he might be judged as honest, moral, and good. The command to work in this manner comes from two sources: it is imposed from outside of the artistic process by his religion and it emerges from within the artistic process itself.[8] Consequently, the moral issue can never be effectively escaped or avoided.

In this paper I have attempted to make only two points: that folk art is often also religious art and, conversely, that moral tenets are often the rules for folk art. These are not unique or novel hypotheses; Robert Redfield said as much over forty years ago. While it may be convenient for us to discuss different social domains like kinship, law, politics, art, economics, technology, religion, and so forth as if they were bounded by precise limits, it is crucial for us to recognize that

life does not admit to such a neat scheme of verbal pigeonholes. Consider how quick we are to draw the chaos of reality's swirling experiences into order by assigning and compounding labels. Note how we attempt to reduce our confusions regarding the domain of things by separating things that are art from things that are craft, and then art that is folk from art that is fine, and then folk art that is religious from folk art that is secular. I hope that I have been able to demonstrate some of the shortcomings of such a strategy. All craft is partly art, a lot of fine art is influenced by folk art, and much that is secular is also religious. The actual experiences of the numerous faithful will not permit us to remake their view of the world for the convenience of our categories. We have to recognize that not only are images of saints, grave crosses, fraktur certificates, and Bible pictures religious folk art but so are chairs, quilts, baskets, houses, fields, gardens, and countless other utilitarian objects when the spirit of belief fills their makers. Any artifact, if rendered with skill and care, can convey both the enrichment of art and the enrichment of religion. We should then be wary of the simplicity of generic conventions regarding religious folk art and look instead beyond them into the realm of folk values as lived. Should we begin our inquiry with a group's thoughts and feelings about religion, we are more likely to end up understanding their expressions of faith in their terms and through their chosen forms. Viewing the art and culture of folk society from the inside looking out is certainly much more desirable than considering it from the outside looking in.

NOTES

1 See Redfield (1947:293, n.2; 303-04). A similar interpretation of a folk community was suggested by Henry Glassie in his *Passing the Time in Ballymenone.* See especially p.758, note 13, where he identifies rural Ireland as a "culture founded upon religion."

2 See Robert K. Merton's essay "Manifest and Latent Functions," in *On Theoretical Sociology* (1967:114-15).

3 There is a copious bibliography on colonial New England. Particularly significant to the shaping of the viewpoint presented here, however, is the work of John Demos (1970).

4 All quotations from Vince are taken from Michael Owen Jones' *The Handmade Object and Its Maker* (1975, Chapter 6). See also Jones (1972).

5 This information is derived from a field study done by Michael Simmons of Indiana University in 1972 and conveyed to the author in a personal communication.

6 All quotations from Philip Simmons are taken from Vlach (1983).

7 See, for example, George M. Foster (1965).

8 See also James Fernandez (1973).

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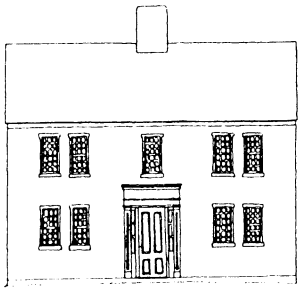
A.



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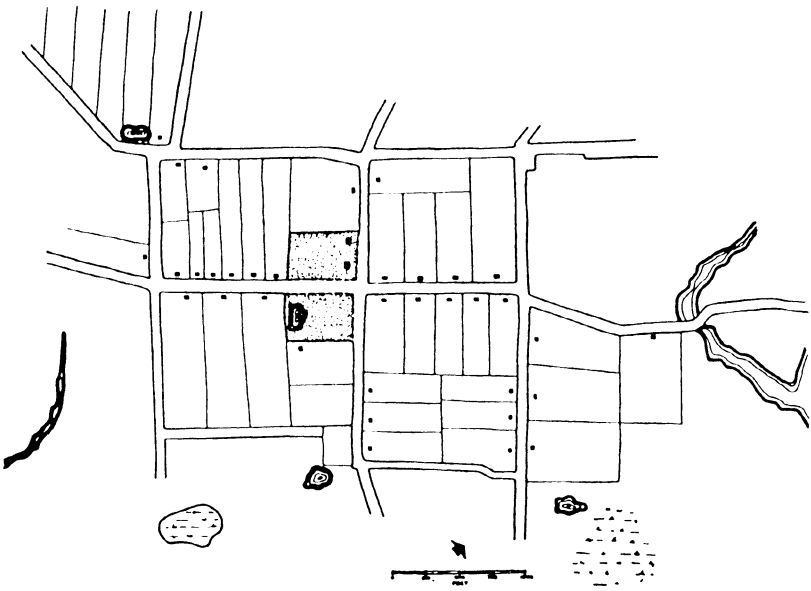

C.

Figure 1. Three examples of the Puritan Order in New England: A. Gravestone of Rebeckah James of Newport, Rhode Island, who died in 1730. B. Facade of a saltbox house from Hampden, Massachusetts. C. Symmetrical gridiron plan of Fairfield, Connecticut. (Artwork for A and B by Henry Glassie (1972), reproduced with permission of Henry Glassie. Town plan by John Reps from his book *Town Planning in Frontier America* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969], reproduced with the permission of John Reps.)

Figure 2. Detail of a wrought iron gate insert by Philip Simmons. Made and installed in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1972. (Photo by John Michael Vlach)

Spindles and Spoon Racks: Local Style in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Furniture

THOMAS CARTER

In contrast to the substantial research accomplished on Utah and Mormon folklife generally, furniture produced in the West by Mormon cabinetmakers has received only passing attention. It has been treated in several regional catalogs (Morningstar 1976; Richards 1980) and briefly in the vernacular sections of American furniture surveys (Fairbanks 1975:179-84; Bates and Fairbanks 1981:438-42), but thorough investigation of the topic remains negligible. One reason for such disregard may lie in the historical community's abiding distrust of the artifact as reliable evidence (Berkhofer 1969:17). Another may be the elusive nature of the objects themselves. Pieces of furniture—like old chairs, for example—have often been moved many times and as a result it is often difficult to know when and where and by whom they were made, and who used them and how. Stripped of what archaeologist James Deetz calls a "behavioral context," furniture lacks connection with "the larger material culture system" that makes analysis practical (Deetz 1976:121). Folklorists therefore have generally backed away from furniture studies in the West, and the extensive fieldwork characteristic of most material culture research in the region has not yet been accomplished or even attempted.[1]

This essay has the objective of beginning such an effort by reporting on a small group of pine cupboards discovered during the course of a larger architectural study of Utah's Sanpete Valley (Carter 1984).[2] In doing so it modestly continues the tradition of intensely

local folklife investigation established by Warren Roberts at Indiana University (Roberts 1981, 1988). The cupboards were produced between 1860 and 1880 and are distinguished by their decorative applied turnings, mostly split spindles, and by the presence in the upper case of a notched spoon rack for the display of silver flatware (Fig. 1). Fieldwork was initially directed toward finding out what furnishings people in the area—the people who built and lived in the old houses under investigation—had in the past. But as more cupboards surfaced, so did the questions. Who was responsible for these appealing objects? Where did the cupboard designs come from? Most importantly, what did they mean? During the winter and spring of 1979-80, I did further fieldwork, recording in all over 150 pieces of early Sanpete Valley furniture, of which 26 were cupboards. All were photographed and measured, approximate dates were assigned on the basis of paint color—red mahogany typified the 1850s and 60s, while golden oak and dark brown walnut predominated in the 1870s and 80s—and a basic provenance was established through a series of oral interviews. Taken as a whole, the 26 cupboards provided a small but tightly controlled body of artifactual data.

Central to the study's main purpose was an understanding of the importance of *style* in folk furniture. And by suggesting that folk objects have style I do not mean that they necessarily aspire to high art ideals—though they often do exactly that—but simply that they may be studied for their own intrinsic artistic value, for their own style (Kubler 1962:1-2). Style itself is not an easy concept to pin down, but generally it refers to a set of shared aesthetic conventions that unite a particular group of objects (Shapiro 1953). More specifically, art historian Jules Prown contends that the unstated cultural principles and values of a society are "most clearly perceivable, not in what a society says it is doing in its histories, literature, or public and private documents, but rather in the way it does things." He concludes that "the way in which something is done, produced, or expressed is its style." (Prown 1980:198). Implicit in Prown's definition is the idea that the behavioral consistency within a certain context that we call style results from a system of common assumptions, an underlying "aesthetic philosophy," to quote Henry Glassie, "that governs the selection, production, treatment, and use of forms" (Glassie 1972:253-54). The historian of things must therefore look at an object for signs of the "internal logic" (Trent 1977:10) or "psychological reality" (St. George 1979a:29) that led to its creation. Composition, decoration, materials, techniques—in essence, style—these are the things explanation is built upon.

A logical extension of this thinking was the idea that there should be a *Mormon style* in material culture. If, as historian Mary Lynn Ray asserts, the furniture of the Shakers can be viewed as an "abstraction of their convictions" (Ray 1977:108), it seemed right to assume that the utopian vision and communitarian spirit of early Mormonism would have found expression in the decorative arts as well. Was there a distinctive Mormon furniture style in the West, one built upon such Saintly virtues as simplicity and practicality? Surprisingly, no study has developed such a thesis because Mormon furniture has been discussed only in relation to contemporary Eastern styles rather than scrutinized for its own stylistic qualities (Richards 1980:72). Furthermore, the Sanpete cupboards—highly embellished objects designed to display worldly possessions—tend to undermine the rather simplistic notion of a highly functional Mormon style, yet the fundamental question of what constitutes Mormon style in material culture remains and becomes the principal focus of this essay.

The Sanpete Valley was settled during the fall of 1849 by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, as part of their larger occupation of the Great Basin during the second half of the nineteenth century (Arrington 1966; Antrei and Scow 1984). Located about 120 miles south of Salt Lake City, the Sanpete colony was intended as a bulwark against non-Mormon intrusion as well as an agricultural colony for the increasing number of converts flowing into the parent community. The valley's population was diverse from the beginning, with sizeable contingents of Scandinavian and British converts joining settlers from the eastern and midwestern United States (Carter 1984:78-80, May 1985). By 1860, eleven towns had been established, of which Manti, Ephraim, and Mount Pleasant were the largest. The valley grew steadily and by 1880 had a population of about 12,000.

Most Mormon immigrants made the western journey with only a few prized possessions and arrived in the West needing tools, implements, and furnishings almost immediately. It is not surprising, therefore, that furniture production commenced in all Sanpete Valley communities soon after the initial settlement, replacing the homemade, the makeshift, and the temporary, as described in the reminiscences of Oluf Larsen, a Norwegian convert: "We commenced with two tin cups, two tin plates, a coffeepot, a three quart pan, a kettle we had used across the plains and a baking skillet which a friend lent us. Our furniture consisted of two slab benches and a table made by knocking two sticks into the wall and putting a couple of narrow boards on them" (Larsen 1898:38).

The skilled cabinetmakers among the convert population quickly responded to the strong local market for superior furniture. One writer noted that "Edwin Whiting's shelter must have been crowded for besides his family of three wives and eight children, he set up a foot lathe and went to work making chairs" (Christensen 1979:201). Another craftsman was Samuel Gifford, a chairmaker from Barnstable, Massachusetts, who had earlier plied his trade in the Mormon settlement of Nauvoo, Illinois. Gifford came to Manti in the first wave of settlement and in addition to making chairs for local use had enough left over for export, noting in an 1853 diary entry that he "took about 150 chairs to Salt Lake City and sold some of them for the money" (Gifford n.d.:9).

Census documents bear out the importance of the Sanpete Valley furniture industry: between 1860 and 1880 over sixty-one different cabinetmakers were working in the area. These craftsmen reflected the healthy ethnic mixture of the Latter-day Saint population as a whole. Of the total number, forty-two, or about sixty-nine percent, were of Scandinavian origin: twenty-six Danes, three Norwegians, and eight Swedes. The next largest group, numbering seven, had emigrated from England; the rest were from all over the United States, including several from Massachusetts and New York, two were from Ohio, and one each from Kentucky and North Carolina.

Even though many of the cabinetmakers can be identified by name and country of origin, little is known of their actual operations. No account books or journals have surfaced that describe cabinetmaking activities in detail and few pieces are signed, making it difficult to document the contributions of individual craftsmen or shops. Generally speaking, however, it appears that small operations were the rule, with a single cabinetmaker working alone, perhaps assisted by a solitary apprentice or helper. The largest private operation was in Ephraim, where the Norwegian Carl Uckerman ran a water-powered factory employing four turners and joiners. Ephraim also had a church-sponsored cooperative furniture factory that in 1869, according to a local newspaper correspondent, was "doing a good business, some specimens of work, especially several centre [sic] tables, being elegant in design and finish" (Antrei and Scow 1984:63). But the documentary evidence is fragmentary and inconclusive and we must turn to the furniture itself if we are to construct a collective portrait of the local cabinetmaking tradition. The china cupboards are of particular interest because being the most complex pieces they also yield the most cultural information (Glassie 1983:377).

Sanpete Valley cupboards are in form very typical of this large category of furniture. They are conceptually composed of two cases, upper and lower, both roughly square in shape. Doors are typically found on both upper and lower cases; the upper doors are glazed, the lower ones paneled. The cupboards measure 74-90 inches tall and 45-54 inches wide. The lower cases are 16-20 inches deep and were used primarily for linen storage. The upper cases are only 8-12 inches deep, a difference that leaves a small counter or shelf at the front of the cupboard just about waist height. Two or three shelves with plate rails span the upper case and at the very top there is a notched spoon rack (Fig. 2). Here the best dishes and silver were kept.

Although apparently two separate cases, the cupboards were invariably constructed in one piece. The long vertical side boards are uninterrupted and are generally dovetailed into the top and bottom boards. The back boards are nailed in place, while the shelves in both upper and lower cases are rabbeted into the side boards. The front rails, or facing boards, are butted against the frame and nailed.

The wood used is almost universally the Douglas fir (*pseudotsuga taxifola*), called locally "red pine," that was hauled out of the nearby canyons. Occasionally, packing crates were recycled for drawer bottoms and door panels, but this practice was not common. The earliest cupboards, those dating to the mid-1860s when local furniture production was in its infancy are often hand-planed throughout, but by the 1870s such handwork had generally been replaced by water-powered planing, turning, and milling.

Symmetry is the driving force in the cupboard design. Within the formal constraints of the symmetrical model, however, great variation occurred, suggesting either that individual shops produced a large number of different designs, or, more likely, that many different cabinetmakers were producing cupboards in the same basic style. The most important structural option is a narrow row of drawers placed in either or both of the cases that added six to fourteen inches to the height of the cupboard. These drawers may have been used for storing candles, napkins, and other small household items. The location of the drawer row is a simple diagonistic feature that is useful in forming a typology of the Sanpete cupboards. *Type 1* cupboards (Fig. 3a) contain no drawers and may lack doors, especially on the upper case. The *Type 2* group—quite rare—(Fig. 3b) has drawers in the bottom case only. The most common form is the *Type 3* variety (Fig. 3c) which has a row of drawers in the upper case. *Type 4* (Fig. 3d), with drawers in both cases, is also rare.

All the cupboard types are highly decorative. The standard embellishment has cresting at the top above a small and rather simple cornice. Most crests are doweled into the top board and are invariably symmetrical and tripartite, the larger middle element emphasizing the center point of the design and reiterating the symmetry of the cupboard below. The base is often treated similarly; many pieces have a scroll-cut, symmetrical, tripartite apron running across the bottom.

The finest touches were reserved for the cases themselves. Ornamentation here occurred exclusively in the form of applied turnings. Round medallions are occasionally found on the lower doors, crests, and aprons, but such devices were much more common on beds and lounges. The preferred decorative detail on the cupboards were split spindles. The spindles were formed by ripping a board in half and then gluing it back together. The reconstituted whole was then turned on a lathe, either in an urn or spool pattern, and then re-split along the seam. The halves were then applied to opposite sides of the case and nailed. Generally the spindles were applied vertically to the outside rails. Although several Ephraim pieces have lighter, more delicate spindles on the upper case offsetting heavier ones on the bottom, most examples show little difference between the upper and lower turnings. Several cupboards are even fancier. In addition to spindles on their side rails, they have one on the center rail and others applied horizontally to the crest and apron (Fig. 4).

The cabinetmaker's last step was the finish. In the Sanpete Valley of the nineteenth century this meant painting the local "red pine" to resemble exotic hardwoods such as mahogany and walnut. The process was designed to hide the wood's knotty grain and often entailed what was locally called "killing" the knots by desiccating them with lye. The open knot holes were then covered with plaster before the white, smooth surface was painted. In the 1860s, a dark red mahogany was the favored wood to imitate, but by the late 1870s dark brown walnut had achieved considerable appeal. Oak graining did not gain currency in the valley until the early 1880s.

Split-spindled cupboards with spoon racks are the most commonly encountered Sanpete Valley cupboard form, but they are not found in other parts of the Mormon-settled West (Thatcher 1988; Morningstar 1976:77,79; Richards 1980:70-71), nor are they easily traceable to a particular tradition originating in the American Midwest or East (Garvin 1979; Weidman 1984; Waters 1984; Sikes 1976; Churchill 1983; Winters 1977; Melchor, Lohr, Melchor 1982; Dudrow 1983; Taylor and Warren 1975; Atlanta Historical Society 1983; Western

Reserve Historical Society 1972; Reed 1987). Given the predominantly Scandinavian background of the local cabinetmakers, northern Europe might appear a likely source for the cupboard's design, particularly Denmark, which accounted for a disproportionate number of craftsmen in the area. Yet the spindled cupboard form is not Scandinavian; it has neither Danish (Steensberg 1977; Friis 1976) nor Swedish (Erixon 1938; Frelund 1977) antecedents.[3] In clear rebuttal to the power of diffusionist theory, the Sanpete Valley spindled cupboards have their origin, not in Denmark or in Illinois, but in the Sanpete Valley itself. The form is not an imported one; it is, rather, a product of the western frontier. The Sanpete cupboards represent the creative synthesis of several streams of influence, both folk and popular.

Four basic ingredients were combined to produce the distinctive identity of the Sanpete Valley cupboard: the free-standing cupboard form, the simulated-wood painting, the applied spindled ornamentation, and the inclusion of the spoon rack. Each had its own history before converging in Sanpete Valley workshops. The first two—the cupboard form and the painting— are widely distributed and of relatively recent origin. Before the nineteenth century, Scandinavians customarily stored precious possessions and fancy dinnerware in built-in architectural furniture (Michelsen 1973; Friis 1976:113). By the early nineteenth century, however, free-standing, detached furniture was becoming increasingly fashionable and cupboards, both the flat-wall and corner varieties, began to appear (Michelsen 1973; Friis 1976:109-18). In the English tradition the cupboard form dates to at least the fourteenth century and acquired its joint storage and presentation function early (Lyon 1977:34; Ward 1987:68-69). During the eighteenth century, cupboards in both England and English America lost their low, chest-like medieval form, gradually assuming a taller rectangular shape (Lyon 1977:68-69). Such pieces enjoyed widespread popularity in rural America during the nineteenth century (Churchill 1983:68-69; Taylor and Ward 1975:241-56; Melchor, Lohr, Melchor 1982:61-69; Muller 1984:18-32; van Ravenswaay 1977:333-47; Madden 1974:110) and became important fixtures in Mormon households throughout the West.

The graining of furniture was another popular nineteenth-century tradition that migrated westward with the Latter-day Saints. The essential idea in such practice was to transform—with a veneer of paint—plain, non-prestigious woods like pine and poplar into more exotic and fashionable varieties like mahogany, walnut, and oak. The painting of furniture in colors is an old one throughout Scandinavia, but the nineteenth century witnessed a significant change as older

preferences for bright colors (usually blues and greens) and floral designs were replaced by the new simulated wood grains (Franzen 1970). And while Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian cabinetmakers emigrating to Utah would have been well-versed in the new style, their Anglo-American counterparts would also have been comfortable with it, since painted furniture was enjoying a similar vogue in the United States (Fales 1972; Herman 1977). Thus, painted furniture is not unique to the Sanpete Valley or to the Mormon culture region; instead it constitutes an important element in nineteenth-century furniture style generally.

The history of the applied spindles also involves an understanding of nineteenth-century popular culture. Originally, split spindles were features of the Mannerist style that was popular in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and became the predominant style in colonial New England (Lyon 1977; Trent 1982; St. George 1979a, 1979b). Mannerist ideals eventually passed out of fashion and spindles as decorative devices lay dormant until they were resurrected by furniture designers of the mid-nineteenth century and incorporated into what was then called the new Elizabethan style. Also called "cottage furniture," furniture in the Elizabethan style was generally mass-produced and inexpensive. The pieces were characterized by "spiral or spool turned legs and stiles" (Dubrow 1983:161) and "spool and ball turnings, easily and cheaply turned out on lathes" (Fitzgerald 1982:213). The use of applied decorative turnings, especially spindles, was emblematic of the Elizabethan style (Naeve 1981:33) and apparently quite widespread on factory-produced pieces. One writer has noted that "with split halves glued or nailed on so many cased pieces, these turnings grew in usage until by 1840 some factories more profitably retired from general furniture making and only supplied such turnings to other makers" (McNerney 1981:18).

The national media helped disseminate the new furniture styles. Architectural stylebooks such as Andrew Jackson Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses* discussed appropriate interior settings and contained plates showing spindled furniture in the "Elizabethan style" (Downing 1969:448-60). Tradebooks and catalogs also carried examples of spindled and painted furniture (Fig. 5) and undoubtedly helped bring the new ideas and techniques to cabinetmakers throughout the country (Foster and Lee 1858; McKinstry 1984). Examples of locally produced spindled cupboards are found in Ohio (Muller 1984:28-29; Hageman 1984:66), Iowa (Nelson 1979:110-14; Viel 1983:69,85,88), and Newfoundland (Peddle 1983:103-15), but nowhere have they been found in the quantity exhibited in the Sanpete Valley.

The final defining element, the spoon rack, has its origins in the folk traditions of Scandinavia. Notched shelves or racks for the storage and display of pewter or silver spoons are rare in the Anglo-American tradition, but occur frequently in Denmark in built-in cupboards, hanging shelves, and nineteenth century case pieces (Friis 1976:111-13). The general presence of the spoon rack in northern European tradition is further illustrated by the fact that in the United States this element is found only among the Pennsylvania Germans (Shea 1980:78-79; Forman 1983:152).

The question of origins, then, is complex and multifaceted. The concepts behind the Sanpete cupboard form were carried unified and intact into the valley. None of the four major elements that define the form, however, were particularly original. The cupboard form and the technique of wood-grained painting were ubiquitous, the spindles were prominent in the popular literature of the day, and the spoon rack was well known to Scandinavian craftsmen. What is significant is the innovative way these elements were combined to produce a distinctive local form, instead of simply a copy of an older or a contemporary popular one. The Sanpete cupboard style—the "way they were made," to paraphrase Prown—is based upon a mixture of imported ideas. Each cupboard is different, but they all share a common vision that is at once imaginative in breaking with the past, resourceful in using materials and ideas that were locally available, and practical in their functionality. Such principles are the wellspring of style, and through their style the Sanpete cupboards articulate values and attitudes that are valuable to the historian of the Mormon West.

At a very basic level the cupboards speak of frontier life. The attention and care that went into their production belies the difficult living conditions of their makers and owners. These are not simply expedient and incompetent copies of Eastern prototypes. To the contrary, the cupboards maintain through their symmetrical composition and smoothly finished exteriors a strong formal link with established art conventions, suggesting a continuation of civilization rather than its demise or devolution. The cupboards also reveal a healthy appreciation for older aesthetic values and contemporary fashion. Fancy painted veneers and modish spindling are clues to an underlying vanity—a concern for material things—that must be recognized in the Mormon psyche (Carter 1981).

The cupboards also speak to the complex myth of Mormon homogeneity. Certainly there was in the Mormon West a regional furniture—a furniture, that is, built by and for Mormons that appears different from the furniture traditions of the Midwest and East. To

some extent this regional furniture results from the exigencies of the frontier, but it would be wrong to think that all early Mormon furniture is the same. Sanpete cupboards, for instance, do not closely resemble those of the Cache Valley—the only other location where there is reliable comparative data—nor do they ape styles common in the provincial capital at Salt Lake City. To understand the enigma that is Mormon culture, then, we must begin not by assuming that there is a single Mormon identity, but by looking carefully at different subregional expressions, the building blocks upon which a complex regional whole may be understood.

The style of the Sanpete cupboards also suggests some other conclusions about Mormon culture, a subject that has proved elusive over the years (Sorensen 1973). Recent studies have demonstrated the correlation between social structure and art (Fischer 1971; Glassie 1975:181-82; Pocius 1979:281-82) and suggest that a spectrum may be constructed with egalitarian societies on one end and differentiated, hierarchical, bourgeois societies on the other. Art styles in egalitarian societies are marked by the repetition of simple, symmetrical elements, while hierarchical societies create styles characterized by complexity, non-repetitiveness, and asymmetry.

Along this spectrum, Sanpete cupboards fall somewhere in the middle. Adhering to a basic symmetrical form and stylistically unified from an early date, they are repetitious. But at the same time they are neither plain nor visually simple; they are complex, ornamental, and individualized. Also, by functioning to display the family's best personal belongings—plates and silver—the cupboards served as vehicles of differentiation themselves. Although precise locations of these cupboards in the houses cannot be readily determined (there are no room-by-room inventories from the area), oral histories and recollections verify that they occupied places of prominence within the household. Generally the cupboard was placed in the living room or—when there was one—the dining room, places where visitors would not be likely to miss them or their symbolic significance.

From the perspective of the bipolar model introduced above, the Sanpete Valley cupboards suggest a society simultaneously egalitarian and hierarchical. A study by Henry Glassie of folk housing in eighteenth-century Virginia casts light on this apparent paradox. Glassie found a similar contradiction in house design; there was a strong degree of repetition, yet the buildings remained complex in appearance and highly differentiated in terms of their size and ornamentation. Glassie concluded that the aesthetic conflict visible in the Virginia houses reflected deeper cultural confusions between

American egalitarian ideals and the realities of a competitive capitalistic society (Glassie 1975:181-82). The Mormon colonists in the Sanpete Valley perhaps were not so different. Confronting the task of building a new Kingdom of God, they faced life with a mixture of ideas about how that vision would be translated into reality. On the one hand, there were communitarian objectives that recognized the need to bring the people together in the spirit of cooperation and unity (Arrington, Fox, and May 1976). On the other hand, they maintained the traditional American ideals of individualism and the goal of success, social, spiritual, and economic. Historians have often viewed this duality in Mormon culture as a sign of discontinuity, conflict, and weakness in the social fabric, in opposition to the scholarly ideal of a single Mormon mindset. For the Sanpete Valley Saints, however, those who built and bought cupboards and placed them in their houses, such a duality was seemingly comfortable, reflecting both their cultural heritage and their current aspiration. And it was probably just the way life was.

NOTES

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1 The notable exception is the work of Elaine Thatcher in northern Utah's Cache County (Thatcher 1983). Thatcher's research, however, was largely confined to pieces available in local museums or through the largess of collectors and was not based on a systematic town-by-town survey.

2 Examples of early furniture were observed and recorded while documenting over two hundred of the older houses in the valley. Most of the cupboards were found in attics, basements, and outbuildings where they had been moved in the early 1900s to make room for newly purchased oak chests and sideboards.

3 Extensive research was conducted in the furniture collection of the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen. Access to the collection was generously provided by curator Birget Vorre.

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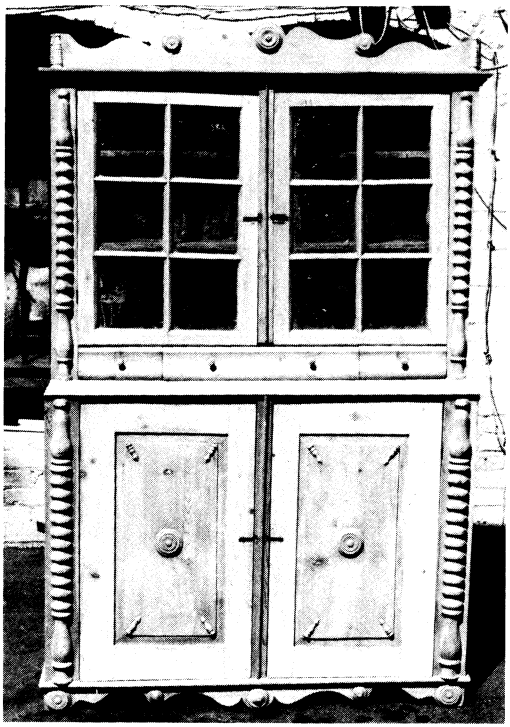

Figure 1: Iver Petersen cupboard with spoon rack, ca. 1865-70, Spring City, Utah. The exterior of this cupboard was originally painted a dark red mahogany, while the interior was a rich blue. For many years it stood in the larger room of a small hall-parlor type house built by the Danish immigrant, Iver Petersen (photograph by Thomas Carter).

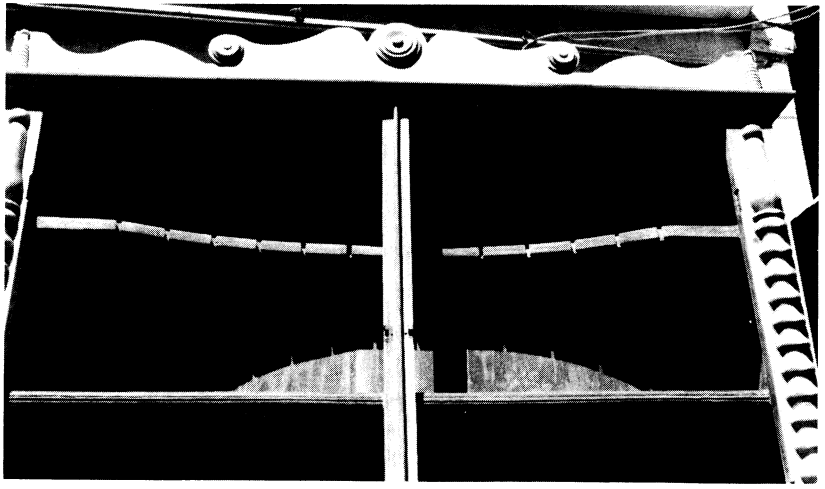

Figure 2: Detail of the Petersen cupboard showing the notched shelf, or spoon rack (photograph by Thomas Carter).

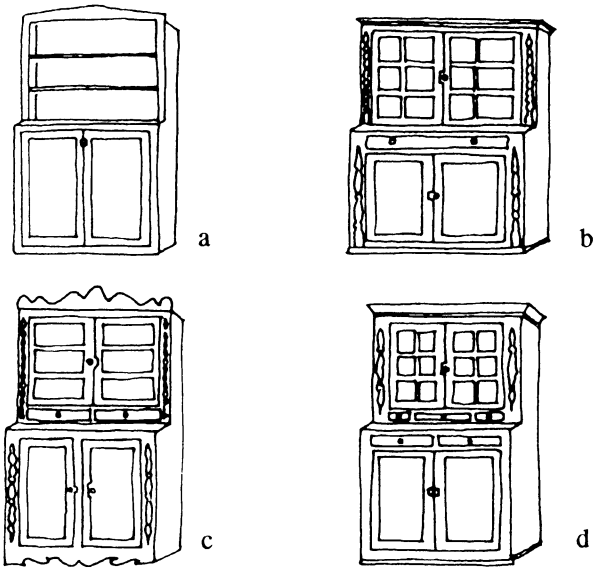

Figure 3: (3a) Type I: Tuttle-Folsom cupboard, ca. 1875, Manti, Utah; (3b) Type II: Peter Monson cupboard, ca. 1880, Spring City, Utah; (3c) Type III: F.C. Sorensen cupboard, ca. 1865-70, Ephraim, Utah; (3d) Type IV: George Bradley cupboard, ca. 1865-70, Moroni, Utah (drawing by Thomas Carter).

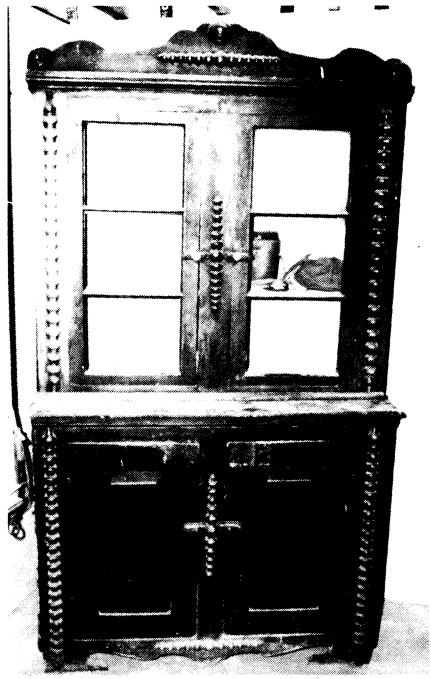

Figure 4: Swensen cupboard, ca. 1875, Manti, Utah. This cupboard retains its original red mahogany painted exterior and off-white interior (photography by Nancy Richards).

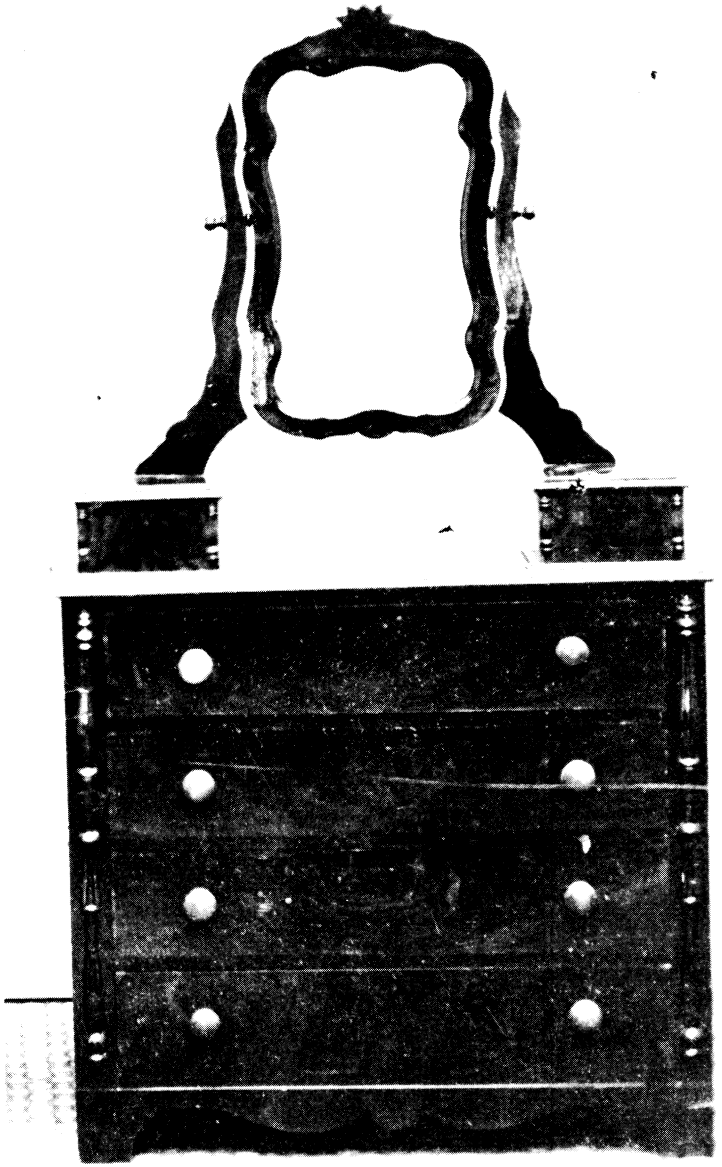

Figure 5: Spindled decoration on a chest of drawers from the nineteenth-century trade catalog *Miami Valley Furniture (1865-1870).* (Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera. No. 68 x 84.)

"We Made 'Em To Fit Our Purpose": The Northern Lake Michigan Fishing Skiff Tradition

JANET C. GILMORE

Commercial fishing is an occupation fraught with change. Experienced fishers know that the abundance of fish ebbs and flows cyclically, but they cannot predict the exact amounts they will be able to catch each year. Likewise they know that fish do not return at precisely the same times nor to exactly the same fishing spots year after year. When the fish are plentiful, they may not be worth much on a glutted market; when scarcer but more valuable, the weather can unexpectedly undo that rare good day of fishing by swamping the boat, dumping the catch, and perhaps destroying the fishing boat and gear as well.

Because of the unpredictability of the business, most commercial fishers follow several kinds of fish and employ different varieties of equipment. If one kind of fish is not plentiful, perhaps another will be; if one kind of gear is not working, perhaps another will; and if one location is not productive at the moment, perhaps another is. Before the days of state-mandated fishing districts, Great Lakes fishermen, like nomads, went where the fish were, over the lakes and across state lines. Louis Ruleau of Cedar River, Michigan, recalls Lake Erie pound-netters coming to the northern Lake Michigan shore in the 1940s to try their luck (Interview 1988). Northern Lake Michigan fishermen like the late "Pep" Nylund fished out of Oscoda on Lake Huron, as well as along the Wisconsin, Illinois, and lower Michigan shores of Lake Michigan (Interview 1986). (See Fig. 1) Tom Ruleau of Bark River, Michigan, formerly migrated over the upper peninsula in the fall with his father and uncles to fish herring and whitefish at Big Bay on Lake Superior (Interview 1988). His cousins, Louis and

Bob Ruleau of Cedar River, built their first steel pound-net skiff in 1958 in order to pack a boat in their semi and bounce it down the highway to Two Rivers, Wisconsin, where they could take good advantage of the earlier arrival and higher prices of smelt in that area; their wooden skiff would not have endured the trip (Louis Ruleau interview 1988).

Wherever they went, fishers encountered other fishers from other Great Lakes locations, observed their equipment and working methods, and picked up ideas. Because of the questing nature of commercial fishermen, pound nets and accompanying pound-net boats spread with and among fishermen from New England to Lake Erie, and by the 1850s, to upper Lake Michigan (Smith and Snell 1891:26,72). At one time they were one of the most prevalent types of fishing gear used throughout the Great Lakes, and Green Bay was "the center of the pound-net fishery" on Lake Michigan during the late 1800s (Smith and Snell 1891:72-73). Subsequently the gill net and the more complicated but less labor-intensive trap net have overshadowed the pound net in popularity for capturing whitefish, the commercial fisher's chief quarry. Yet over the years, fishers in the Green Bay area of Lake Michigan have persisted in making and employing pound nets, most often to capture prolific and low-valued species such as alewives, smelt, and suckers. Some few Wisconsin Lake Superior and Lake Michigan fishers, like Dennis Hickey of Bailey's Harbor, Wisconsin, remain dedicated to using the gear to entrap whitefish, claiming that it injures the fish less and thus produces a better quality catch than the other types of nets do (Hickey interview 1986).

In spite of the flux and experimentation traditional in the fishing business, and despite radical changes in equipment and the character of the fisheries wrought by machines, materials of the industrial era, and legislation during the past century, pound-net fishing equipment has remained remarkably constant. A semi-permanent fish-impounding device, the northern Lake Michigan pound net (pronounced "pond net") consists of three main components—"pot," "hearts," and "lead" —staked in place by wooden poles imbedded in the lake bottom (see Fig. 2).[1] The vertical sections of the net are positioned additionally by floats on the top lines and lead weights on the bottom lines. Composed of netting on the bottom and all four sides, the giant rectangular "pot" is open at the top. It measures ten to sixty feet deep, twenty to forty feet wide, and thirty to forty feet long. A long 1,000 to 1,200 foot fence-like "lead" of netting stretches from the pot shoreward to lead the fish to the pot and into it through a tunnel. In case the fish turn away from the pot, additional fences of netting,

called "hearts," extend from the tunnel opening to confuse the fish and send them back toward the pot. Fishers tailor the dimensions and mesh-sizes of the nets according to the type of fish they seek, the depth and character of the fishing location, and the lengths of their boats.

The related trap net operates on the same principle and is similar in configuration and size. However, the tunnel and hearts are more intricately fashioned; the "trap," the equivalent of the pound-net pot, is entirely enclosed in mesh, top, bottom, and sides; the hearts are also covered and floored with netting; and the entire construction is held taut with lines and anchors instead of wooden stakes. While trickier in design, the trap net has several advantages over the pound net: it can be set on rocky lake bottoms where stakes can not be implanted; it can be pulled up by machine instead of by hand; the prey is protected from predators (birds); and the gear is hidden better in the water from competitors and poachers. As its use has expanded in the past two decades for catching the major commercial species of fish, fishers and specialized net-builders have rapidly refined its design.[2]

For both kinds of net, fishermen employ two boats, generally a larger one with greater power and carrying capacity to get to the nets and carry the catch, and a smaller one with much less power, which can be paddled or rowed, to tend the lines. To work the pound net, fishers generally place the smaller boat, but sometimes the larger one instead,[3] inside the pot; they lift the bottom of the pot up by hand as they move the boat along, "bag" the fish in one end, and scoop the fish out of the net into the larger boat (cf. Hornell 1950:86; von Brandt 1984:190). With the trap net, fishers use the larger boat to lift the trap up over the boat so they can open up the trap and scoop or dump out the fish into the big boat.

A hundred years ago, the two pound-net boats were built of wood, simply and economically (Chapelle 1951:50), "by both boat-builders and fishermen, without plans or models" (Chapelle 1951:128). In the Green Bay area, according to pound-netter Richard Grabowski of Menominee, Michigan:

> Most of the fishermen made their own boats, years ago. Most all the old timers, they always made their own boats. . . . The ones that had money had the carpenters come in and help them . . . just plain carpenters . . . anybody that fished could get ahold of any carpenter that would. . . . A carpenter, he can cut better fits, you know, if he's used to it, and do a lot nicer work, than a guy that isn't used to it. [Interview 1988]

Both the larger "pound boat" and the smaller pound-net dinghy were constructed in roughly the same shape as their New England sharpie relatives (Collins 1891:25-26; Chapelle 1951:104-33, 352-54). They

were open boats with a sharp bow, slight flare to the sides, a square stern with a raked transom which was quite wide in the larger boat and proportionately narrower in the dinghy, and a flat bottom which had "a good deal of camber to the after part" (Collins 1891:26). (See Figs. 3-5) The larger boat was built to sail, and averaged twenty to thirty-four feet in length, seven to twelve feet in beam, and two-and-a-half to four feet in depth on Lakes Erie, Michigan, and Superior (Collins 1891:26; cf. Chapelle 1951:126-31, 354; and Chapelle 1960:302-03). Fish Commission field worker Mr. L. Kumlien reported in 1880 that the pound boats along the northern Lake Michigan shore from the Peshtigo River to the Cedar River (Menominee area) averaged twenty-two feet by seven feet and were steered by a long oar (Collins 1891:26). The dinghy averaged sixteen to eighteen feet long and five feet wide at the fullest part (Collins 1891:28); it was built to be rowed or, according to Richard Grabowski, sculled with one oar that passed through the transom (Interview 1988). (See Fig. 5)

Contemporary Menominee-area fishermen, David Behrend, Richard Grabowski, and Louis Ruleau, now in their fifties, recall working with the smaller wooden boats into the 1950s and '60s (Interviews 1988). Independently, each described a procedure for building the "skiffs" that is virtually identical to the one Howard Chapelle outlined for the sailing sharpie/flat-bottomed skiff class of the American bateau model (Chapelle 1951:46-48). They were built upside down around a jig-like frame. First the side planking was bent around the frame and nailed to the bow stem and stern transom; softwood planking would not be steamed first, whereas hardwood planking would. Each side and the stern consisted of two or three wide (12"), usually pine or cedar planks placed edge to edge lengthwise (cf. Chapelle 1951:128). Side planking was generally 5/8" to 1" thick (1-1/8" planed down to 1" according to Grabowski), while the stern was composed of thicker 1-1/2" to 2" boards. The straight, raked bow stem, carved of a single piece of white oak, was rabbeted so that the butt-ends of the side planks fit into the grooves on each side.[4] Louis Ruleau recalls that:

> . . . they whittled the bow stems out, you know, they were a vee-shaped piece of wood, and notched. They cut in there, I remember them chiseling that out. And then they fit the boards in that so that was a smooth piece. . . . so that this here bow stem took the, if you hit anything, you know I mean that was the whole bow, that was one solid chunk of usually oak. [Interview 1988]

After the side and stern planking had been installed, white oak ribs were inserted every twelve inches to hold the planks together. A strip of white oak was steamed, fitted, and nailed lengthwise to the ribs

inside the "gunnels" (gunwales), the uppermost part of each side (see Figure 6). Another strip, which Grabowski called the "bilge keelson" and Chapelle terms the "chine log," was similarly installed along the ribs inside the bottom of each side. The bottom planking, also of pine or cedar but sometimes 2" thick (and usually no more than 6" wide), was laid crosswise, not lengthwise, and nailed to the sides, the two "bilge keelsons," and additional blocks of oak that had been inserted between the ribs and keelsons at the bottom. The bottom planking was sometimes further secured lengthwise, down the center, with a 4" wide, 1" thick plank inside, and a 4" x 1" to 2" plank outside, which was sometimes rabbeted to the bow stem.[5] According to Louis Ruleau, the outer "center board" additionally acted as a keel and kept the caulking in the bottom seams. Seats placed at the stern, in the bow, and across the center for rowing, supplied additional stiffening; Grabowski called the seats "thwarts," pronouncing the term like "thoughts." All seams were generally caulked except sometimes not between the bottom planks where the swelling of the wood as it soaked up water often sufficed to close up the gaps. Louis Ruleau remembers forged iron square nails as the earliest fastenings, and in later years builders switched to galvanized steel—galvanized screw nails according to Behrend, galvanized eight-penny nails according to Grabowski.

As engines became available, fishermen abandoned sail power and installed inboards in the pound boats and, eventually, outboards in the skiffs. The inboard took up space, added weight, and strained the flat-bottomed build, but it provided the opportunity to fish deeper waters farther from shore more safely. Fishermen began preferring features more characteristic of the bigger, sturdier gill-net tugs; they installed decking and cabins and adopted hulls with slight vee-bottoms and longer, beamier, deeper dimensions. Few pound-net fishermen continued to fish with the open pound boat, but all retained the open skiff. When non-tribal Michigan fishermen were required to switch from gill-netting to trap-netting gear during the 1970s (Kuchenberg 1978: 88-94), many purchased existing pound-netting, trap-netting, and gill-netting "rigs"—mostly steel vessels built after World War II, often obtained from the lower lakes—and subsequently modified them. Many of today's trap-net boats are modified pound-net rigs, and the same kind of big boat is often used for both kinds of fishing. As in current pound-netting, an open skiff remains an integral part of the rig.

Fishermen embraced steel construction and began replacing first the larger wooden boats after World War II, and later the smaller wooden skiffs, with steel versions. Compared to wood, the steel was

"much more durable, didn't need all this maintenance," exclaimed Louis Ruleau (Interview 1988). The non-specialized builders and self-taught welders found the material more forgiving to work, and the "shell" construction even easier to execute in steel.[6] Welder and occasional boat-builder Curtis Folstad of Menominee explained:

> I could cut these pieces out and put them together and shape it up, and if I didn't like it I could change it real easy, you know, taper a little bit more here. . . . If I didn't like it, then I'd just cut a few tacks of weld and lay it down and cut it out a little different. It was easy to change the shape if you didn't like it, or if you didn't have what you wanted. I could change it easy. [Interview 1988]

Whereas the wooden boats "had to be absolutely perfect," according to Richard Grabowski, in order to resist the abuses of work and water, the steel ones would work well even when their shapes and joinery were not true (Interview 1988). Concluded Louis Ruleau, "they weren't real sharp-looking, but they were usable" (Interview 1988).

In order to repair, modify, and build the steel vessels, most northern Lake Michigan fishermen began to acquire "electric" or "stick" welding equipment and skills, often in that order, during the 1940s and 1950s—shortly after electrical service was extended into the area (Louis Ruleau interviews 1986 and 1988). In recent years a few have graduated to more modern "wire-feed" equipment. Richard Grabowski, who picked up the rudiments of welding from a co-worker while temporarily working at the local shipyard, Marinette Marine, in 1950, justifies his acquisition of the equipment this way:

> I bought that welder and that acetylene torch . . . in the fishing business you pr't' near got to have, you got to have that stuff, because you couldn't afford to have it hired all the time. And if you break down right on the job, you got your own stuff to do it with, you know. So you couldn't think of calling a welder out here to weld a patch on a boat, you know, it'd cost you too much. [Interview 1988]

And farther up the shore at Fairport, "Junior" Vetter echoes this sentiment:

> You just buy a machine. You have to. You can't afford to go to town every time you want something welded or something breaks, you know. [Interview 1988]

For the same reasons of economy, speed, and self-sufficiency that they had often built their own wooden skiffs, many fishermen in turn began building their own steel skiffs, basing them directly on wooden forerunners. Similarly today, fishermen base new steel skiffs on existing ones. As in building the wooden skiffs and in acquiring welding skills and equipment, they continue to build steel skiffs

because it is cheaper to do the work themselves than to hire someone else to do it. Richard Grabowski re-used two sheets of steel formerly engaged in making press board at a local plant to build his skiff for well under $100 (Interview 1988). Bob and Louis Ruleau built their first skiff of two new 8' x 4' sheets of steel for a total of $130 (Interview 1988). The same amount of steel purchased new today would cost around $500, but a custom-built steel skiff might run well over $1,000, and there are few custom welders in the region who will readily take on a boatbuilding project for just any commercial fisherman.

The procedure is also perceived to be relatively simple, as Fairport trap-netter Wayne Seaman says, "Nothing to build a boat, 'cause all you got to do is get some idea what you want, then with welding and a steel torch, you can do anything. . ." (Interview 1988). Armed with basic welding skills and equipment, and steel plates easily obtained and custom cut at a local steel supply house, machine shop, or boilerworks, a fisherman—usually with a helper to lift and position the steel plates—takes about three to five days to build a skiff from scratch. Working alone at a less intense pace, some spread the job over ten days to two weeks.

Fishermen also build the small boats because each wants something a little different and, accordingly, they do not make the best clients. Menominee-area pound-netter David Behrend reasoned:

> . . . each individual fisherman will have his own idea what he wants, and if you built it for him it would be nothing but a giant headache because he'd be standing over your shoulder telling you, "I want this, I want that, I don't want what you're doing." Best thing to do is to let him build his own boat. [Interview 1988]

They know what they want in a skiff from their own experiences, observations, and trial and error. Trap-netter Ben Peterson of Fairport states his capability to design and build the skiffs this way:

> I kept watching and looking around, and I watched other guys's boats and I seen how they were holding up, and then we got in their boats and seen how tippy they were and whatnot, and finally, one day, I said, "Well, I think I can build a boat." [Interview 1988]

Pound- and trap-netter Tom Ruleau of Bark River, ". . . more or less went by the ones my uncle had and that stuff there, we kind of got an idea from them there and kind of made them similar to them" (Interview 1988). Basically, says Richard Grabowski, "If you know what a boat looks like, and you've done any welding at all, you just

got to, you got to shape it like you got in your mind, whatever you want, the way you want it. You cut it accordingly" (Interview 1988).

With all the differences in opinion and experiences among their builders, naturally modern-day skiffs vary quite a bit in construction details—materials, building method, exact dimensions and shapes—just as the wooden ones of days past did.[7] Fishermen have variously tried ten-, twelve-, fourteen-, and sixteen-gauge steel, but most are leaning toward the heavier gauges, ten gauge especially.[8] As with the wooden skiffs, some have used heavier gauge material for the stern piece and bottom (ten gauge, for example) than for the sides (twelve gauge, for example).

Fishermen also do not follow the same methods of replicating existing skiffs. David Behrend simply encased his wooden pound boat in steel, later extracting the wooden planks when he decided to enlarge the vessel (Interview 1988). Some make a full-scale pattern from an existing boat, placing cardboard against each plate (side, stern, [bow], bottom) and trimming it to the proper shape. In Fairport, Bill Seaman built his skiff (Fig. 8) from a pattern he made in this manner from a Folstad skiff owned by fellow fisherman Peter Hermess (Interview 1988); in turn Jeff Harvey and "Junior" Vetter made a pattern from Seaman's skiff in order to build theirs (Interview 1988). Richard Grabowski (Fig. 7), however, took key dimensions off a wooden pound boat by placing steel rods on the boat at appropriate intervals along the bottom and sides, and cutting each rod a few inches longer; he first lofted the rods into a skeleton of the boat before cutting the steel plates according to the shapes he had defined (Interview 1988).[9] Still others, like Ben Peterson, figure measurements from internalized models:

> I bought all the steel that I figured I needed. I just kind of drew a plan up in my head and decided what I needed and wrote down dimensions. And I got the steel home and I drew up a pattern on the floor of my dad's garage, on what I had wanted. . . . I had the measurements in my mind, what I wanted, how I wanted it. [Interview 1988]

Most commonly, as in the wooden skiff building tradition, fishermen build the boat upside down, shaping the sides around a jig-like wooden frame. Welder and occasional boat-builder Lyle Thill of the Fairport area explains:

> First of all you make a form out of wood, you know, especially for the center of it and for the stern so you will know that when you get your two sides made, how to pull it into shape, what shape you want. [Interview 1988]

Says Tom Ruleau of the process:

> . . . the shape it more or less falls right into place when you kind of bend it and that stuff there, and bring it in, they pretty much shape theirself. . . . You got an idea what it's going to be like, you know, and you pretty much know. [Interview 1988]

As in the wooden skiff building tradition, they install ribbing or stiffening after the side plates have been shaped and tacked together. Thill continues:

> . . . then you put in the framework afterwards, for your ribs inside and your vee-bottom. You build these upside down, you know. Tack-weld it all together first, get the whole boat tack-welded, and then you start your welding . . . .[Interview 1988]

Richard Grabowski, however, invoked the larger gill-net tug-building tradition by first shaping a skeleton of steel rods, upside down, and then welding the side, stern, and bottom plates onto this framework (Interview 1988). Similarly Ben Peterson reports that he set up his steel ribbing first, upside down, then put on the bottom, sides, stern and bow pieces (Interview 1988). And Jeff Harvey and "Junior" Vetter built their vee-bottom skiff upright, tacking the four bottom plates together and bending the entire structure with a hand-operated winch called a "come-along" "until it shapes how you want it." They then added on the sides and inserted the ribbing later (Interview 1988).

The actual dimensions and shapes of the skiffs vary widely according to the individual's preferences and work habits, just as Richard Grabowski explained of the wooden boats:

> Everybody had a little different idea, they maybe, Williams wanted his built this way, a little longer, a little narrower. See, these boats were all built for what you wanted to use them for, you know. [Interview 1988]

Indeed, increasingly the variations fall into one of two categories of use: pound-netting or trap-netting.

Skiffs built for pound-netting (Fig. 7) bear the strongest resemblance in size and shape to the earlier wooden pound dinghies. Some pound-netters have even kept to the sixteen-by-five-foot average recorded for Green Bay skiffs in the 1880s. Most, however, have modified or built the boats wider, as wide as six to seven feet, proportionately increasing their beam slightly. As Louis Ruleau explains:

> We made 'em to fit our purpose, for lifting these pound nets in. It was a lot nicer lifting in a larger–sixteen foot they were by six foot–and they were real stable, you

> know, you could get three, four guys on one side and they didn't lean down very much . . . .[Interview 1988]

With changes in licensing procedures for tenders, most Michigan pound-netters have also lengthened the skiffs beyond the former sixteen-foot limit to as long as nineteen to twenty feet;[10] the greater lengths ease the use of wider pots that can capture more fish (cf. Taylor 1982:67).

The flat bottom has remained particularly well-suited for the typical pound-net operation, which is worked just off the beach for smelt or in the mouths of shallow rivers for redhorse suckers. The shape rides high even when loaded and thus allows working in the shallow shoal waters; it also gives the vessel good carrying capacity for the typically large loads of fish (cf. Taylor 1982:67). "It carries a big load, and for smelts, that's what we need," confirms Louis Ruleau (Interview 1988). Coupled with adequate beam, the flat bottom additionally affords a measure of stability for working from the boat (cf. Taylor 1982:67).

While pound-netters have also retained the sharp—"peak-ed" they say—bow of the wooden boats, some have curved the forefoot of the bow stem so that the boat will tow more easily (ride up instead of dive) and move more effortlessly over the lines into the pound-net pot. Also to improve the shape's towing performance, some have added one to three keels to the bottom. Finally, in addition to enlarging the boat, widening it proportionately, and making small adjustments for improved performance, most pound-net fishermen have omitted all or most ribbing. They have found that a top rail of 1" diameter steel pipe provides the necessary stiffening; an inner rail that some position for pinning netting while working the net gives additional support.

At the same time in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s that fishermen were building their own steel skiffs, some preferred to purchase them custom-made. In particular, Curtis Folstad of Menominee and his chief welder, Bernie Barker, turned out dozens—some custom built, some stock built—for fishermen all over the Great Lakes (Interview 1988). As a youngster, Folstad had also built wooden skiffs of roughly the pound-net dinghy shape and size, but he applied the bottom planking lengthwise and fitted the boat with ribs that extended across the bottom from side to side—a construction that some area fishermen disliked because the planks tended to splinter when they hit the beach, and their replacement took more work (Louis Ruleau 1988). Later, similarly, Folstad built full ribs across the bottoms of his steel skiffs, applied a keel, and eventually gave the bottom a slight "V" toward the bow, mimicking features of both sportfishing boats and the bigger

wooden vee- and round-bottomed fishing tugs used in the area. Partly in response to his customers, many of whom were trap-netters, he also created more work space in the bow, lessening its sharpness.

When non-tribal Michigan gill-netters suddenly needed trap-netting skiffs in the 1970s, they employed existing ones, the flat-bottomed pound-net variety or Folstad's slight-vee and ribbed type. Over the past decade or two, they have used, modified, and worn out these skiffs, and built new ones incorporating features that work best for their purposes. Elements of the Folstad design have proven particularly workable. Trap-netters have retained roughly the same length to beam ratio for their boats (Figs. 8 and 9) as in the pound-net skiffs, but they prefer slightly shorter lengths, twelve to sixteen feet, with a four- to five-foot beam. With the heavy-gauge steel, the smaller shape guarantees a sturdy build that can take more abuse than the pound-net skiff, but that remains comparatively light enough for two men to lift on board the bigger boat when necessary. Lyle Thill reasons:

> . . . these boats got to be pretty seaworthy out there . . . they use them for setting anchors all the time, for the trap net anchors, and there's two guys in the boat all the time, they use them in the fall of the year for pulling trap net anchors. And if they're not sturdy little boats–and they got to be built light–you know, it could mean somebody's life, if they weren't built sufficient. [Interview 1988]

Because the trap-net skiffs are towed behind the bigger boat for greater distances and at much higher speeds than the pound-net skiffs are, they take a real beating, pounding in the waves from the big boat's wake. Trap-netters insist on plenty of well-braced ribbing, that extends down the sides and across the bottom, to keep the bottom well secured. To keep the boat from pounding and darting back and forth over the waves, they also favor a keel and a slight vee-bottom. Explains "Junior" Vetter, "it breaks the sea, you don't bam all the time with it, throws the waves off to the side. When you're towing it, it follows you straight down the line" (Interview 1988). Finally, because trap-netters often work out of the bow of the boat instead of the side as in pound-netting, they have lessened the sharpness of the bow, and some have built skiffs with pram-like square noses narrower than the stern (Fig. 9).[11] Ben Peterson explains:

> . . . I decided that I'd put a pug nose on it, because we do a lot of the work right in the bow of the boat, and I figured if it was a pug nose, then it would have a little bit more room up there, you know, sometimes two of us have to get in the bow, like when you check over a net . . . .[Interview 1988]

Today, northern Lake Michigan fishermen are building two different kinds of steel fishing skiff depending on "what you wanted to use them for." Fishers mainly in the Menominee area—the "ancient" seat of the pound-net fishery, where pound-netting remains active—articulate a broad, flat-bottomed, "peaked" boat (Fig. 7) for working in shallow, calm waters and bearing large loads of fish, mirroring the wooden pound boats of days past. Fairporters, "converts" from gill-netting to trap-netting, are rapidly evolving a smaller, sturdier, boxier, vee-bottomed skiff (Figs. 8 and 9) for traveling at higher speeds in turbulent offshore water, integrating ideas from pound-net and Folstad skiffs especially.

While the differences between these two builds appear to be increasing, both still share the most basic characteristics and bear the kernel of the older wooden pound-net boat idea. In building either style, fisher-builders adhere roughly to the rule that "one-third the length would be the width" (Folstad interview 1988). They keep within a fairly narrow range of lengths (12' to 20'), widths (4' to 7'), and depths (of the sides; 2' to 2-1/2'). They flare the bow—even a square-nosed one—and the sides to turn water away from the boat. They keep the transom flat and "taper" it (rake it outward), nowadays mostly to accommodate the outboard instead of to row the boat (see Fig. 5).

There still are a few fishermen who like rowing capability, so in addition to retaining the taper of the stern, they "cut up" the bottom (see Fig. 5) and place a seat usually just back of the center and fullest beam so that when rowing the bow will not dive and the stern will ride the water properly. Most fishermen do not care to row the skiffs, however, so they flatten out the after part of the bottom and omit the center rowing seat. Indeed, since the steel build does not require thwarts and because the open work space is most desirable, there is a tendency to eliminate all seats. But many retain some seats anyway: in the stern for convenience while operating the outboard, and in the bow and stern for safety, to double as flotation chambers. Relieved of the need for rowing capability or rowing-seat stiffening, but perhaps frustrated by the resistance of heavy-gauge steel to produce the fairest of lines, builders rarely articulate the graceful continuous curve of the sides from the stem around a midships bulge to the stern. Now they usually make a boxier boat, placing the fullest beam at the stern or keeping the beam constant from the stern to well forward of amidships (at the point where the bow begins to taper into a peak or pug).

For northern Lake Michigan's fisher-builders, the pound-net skiff remains a powerful idea. They see its essence confirmed in the existing pound-net and trap-net tenders of their peers; they recall it in

past generations of skiffs logged now only in memory; and when they begin to build a new skiff, they use it as their point of departure. Conceivably there are other boat shapes with different proportions that might serve as well (cf. Taylor 1982:66-67). But until there is a major upheaval in their fishing methods, these fisher-builders will maintain their legacy, perhaps because the familiar shape and the easy build lend themselves so well to an attitude that appears to have been as current among fishermen a century ago as it is today. David Behrend articulates this stance:

> Most of these boats were built just to serve a purpose, and they weren't supposed to be beautiful or anything else, they just did a job and that was it. I mean it wasn't something you went riding in on Sunday, it was to use. . . . And generally you didn't monkey around with it too much because you needed a boat and you needed it just as quickly and cheaply as you could get it, and hurry up. Get at it and build it, because it's going to have to go in the water. [Interview 1988]

Now over a century old, the fishing skiff building tradition on the northern Lake Michigan shore will likely remain healthy as long as commercial fishermen see a reason for "making them to fit their purpose."

NOTES

I dedicate this very descriptive first step in the analysis of Lake Michigan fishing skiffs to Warren E. Roberts in recognition of his love for the fit of form to function and the legacy of "the old traditional way of life." A shorter, even rougher version of this paper, and the fieldwork upon which it was based, were commissioned by the Michigan Traditional Arts Program of the Michigan State University Museum in East Lansing. The first paper, published in the 1988 Festival of Michigan Folklife program booklet, benefitted from readings by Yvonne H. Lockwood, James P. Leary, and especially David A. Taylor. The opportunity to rework the paper allowed me to act upon many of Taylor's "boatological" suggestions, to improve the accuracy of the description, and most importantly, to bring to the public more of the fisher-builders's wonderful observations about their skiffs, in their own words. I thank all of the victims of my quick fieldwork forays into the U. P. for their graciousness and help in taking me in and answering my peculiar questions. Particularly I am grateful to Richard Grabowski, Louis Ruleau, and David and Eileen Behrend for their patience, kindliness, and helpfulness in talking about those common little skiffs. Hopefully the dialogues will continue and the data will take yet more and better shapes.

1 Cf. Hornell 1950:153-157 and von Brandt 1984:191-192; also Smith and Snell 1891:108-109 for descriptions and measurements of the nets as used in the area during the 1880s. The description of this type of net and its operation, as well as of the trap net, are based especially on interviews conducted in August 1986 with pound-netter Richard Grabowski, pound- and trap-netter Louis Ruleau, trap-netter Ben Peterson (and his crew, Rod Gierke and Rich Lynts), and net-builders Alvin Champion and Otis Smith. Richard Grabowski and Charlie Nylund additionally instructed me in the workings and

set-up of the nets at the Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C., in June-July 1987.

2 According to the testimony of contemporary fishermen, the trap net appears to have as long, but not as wide, a use as the pound net on the Great Lakes and adjacent smaller, primarily sportfishing lakes such as Lake Winnebago in eastern Wisconsin.

3 Richard Grabowski's larger boat, for example, is a boxy 18' x 35' powerless "scow" which he uses inside his pound-net pots.

4 In contrast, Chapelle (1951:48) claims that the stem was usually not rabbeted but "built up" of an inner and outer piece instead. The side planks were thus nailed to the inner piece and sawn off flush with its outer edge, and the outer piece then covered the inner piece and sawn edges of the planks.

5 Louis Ruleau claims that the inner "center board" was sometimes used in the early stages of construction as part of the initial framework of bow stem, transom, and "form."

6 Shell construction, where the ribbing is inserted after the skin of the boat has been shaped, is distinguished from skeleton construction where the ribbing is set up first to define the skin. See Greenhill 1976:287-292.

7 Chapelle (1951:128) noted the concomitance of variation in skiff construction details with the variety of specialized and non-specialized builders who used neither plans nor models in building the boats.

8 The gauge of a sheet of steel pertains to its thickness; a ten-gauge sheet is one-tenth of an inch thick, twelve-gauge one-twelfth of an inch, and so on. The higher the gauge number, the thinner the steel.

9 He thus bypassed the step of translating the measure into a numerical equivalent and using the numbers in turn to mark the proper measure on each rod.

10 With the massive changes in Michigan's fisheries legislation enacted in the late 1960s and mostly in the 1970s, came changes in the registration of boats. Fishers could no longer avoid a registration fee on their smaller boat by claiming it on the larger boat's registration as a powerless tender under sixteen feet.

11 The square nose is not an anomaly in the area. Peterson's fellow Fairporter, Wayne Seaman, also decided to try out a square nose in his latest skiff, recalling that when he was around eight years old (c. 1942), his father built the family a twelve-foot square-nosed flat-bottomed wooden row boat. Seaman referred to the boat as having a "scow-type" shape, and Peterson calls his skiff a "scow," a name that locals usually apply to large, boxy vessels that some area fishermen, like Richard Grabowski and his partner Kurt Williams, use in pound-netting to carry the large catches. Over the past one hundred years, scows appear to have been used to complement other pound-netting boats in one capacity or another. The pile-driving equipment used through the 1940s to hammer pound-net stakes into the lake bottom was generally borne on a scow; Collins describes such a "stake-boat" in Smith and Snell's 1885 fisheries report (1891:29).

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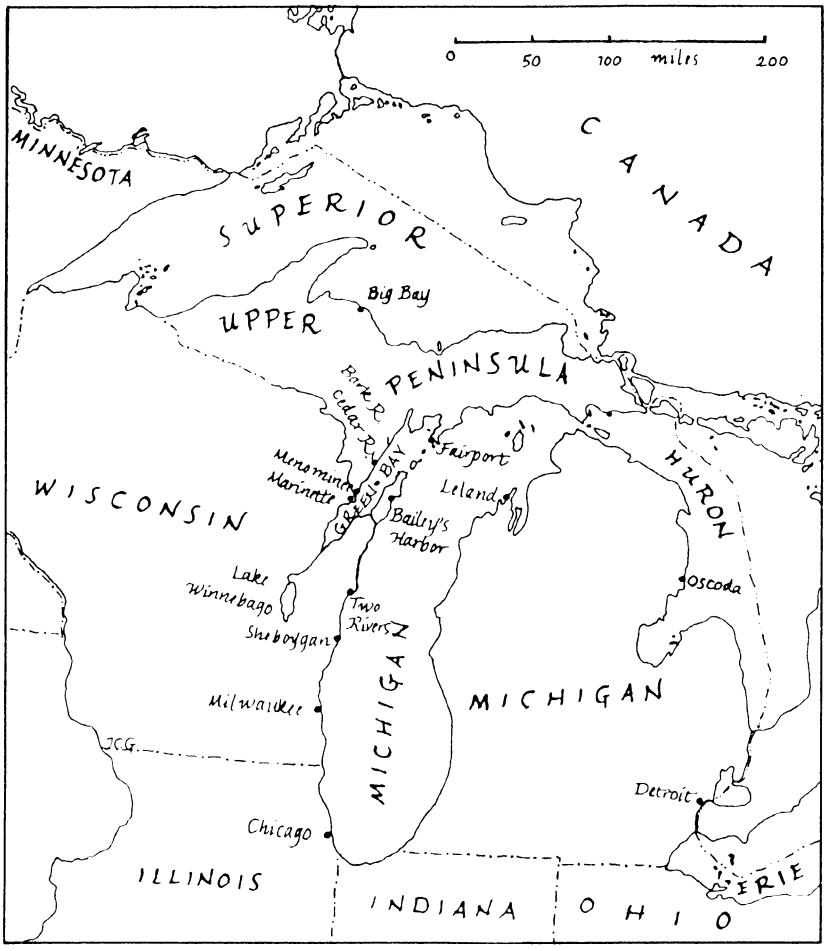

Figure 1. The western Great Lakes region.

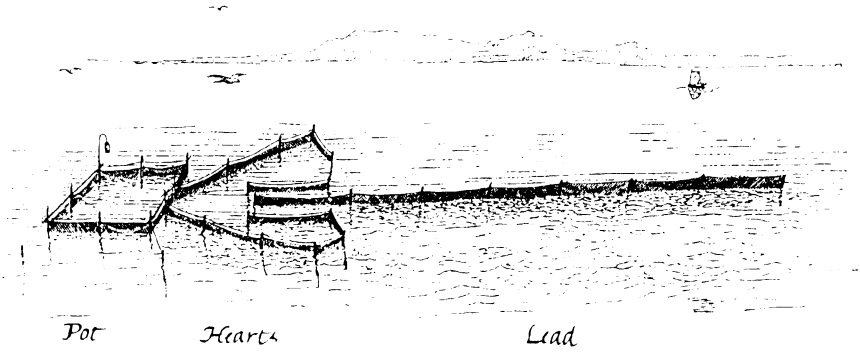

Figure 2. Pound net typical in the Green Bay area of Lake Michigan in the 1880s. Drawing by L. Kumlien reprinted from Smith and Snell 1891: Plate XXI.

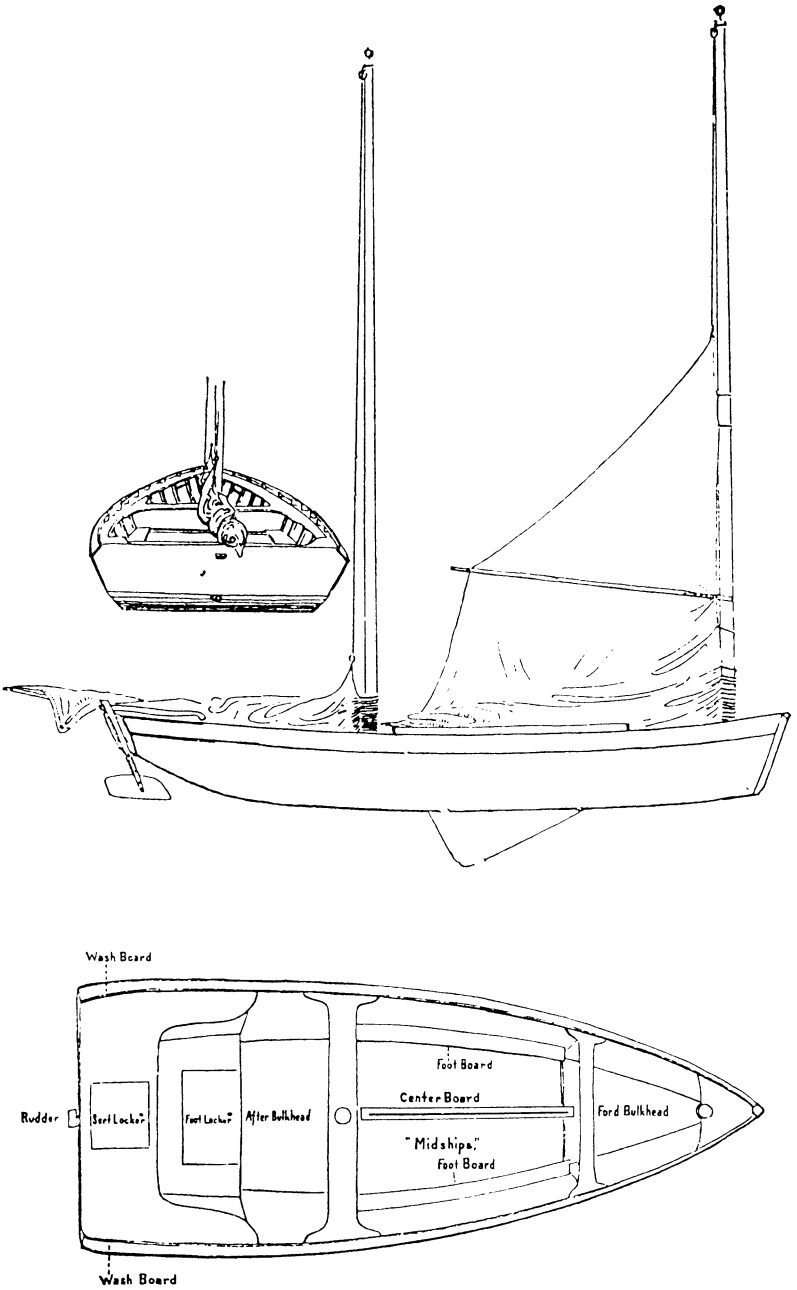

Figure 3. Plans of an 1880s pound-net boat probably more typical of the lower lakes than of northern Lake Michigan. Drawing by Henry W. Elliott reprinted from Smith and Snell 1891: Plate VI.

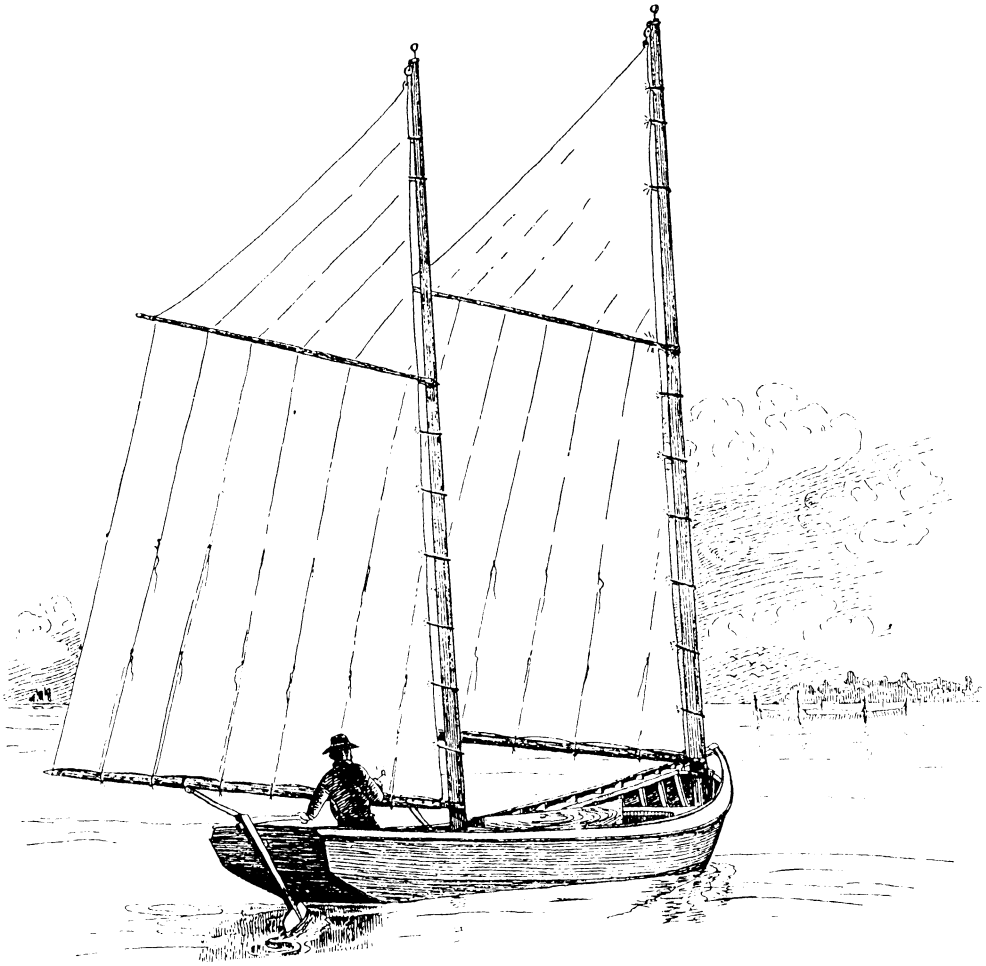

Figure 4. Pound-net boat under sail on Lake Erie in the 1880s. Drawing by Henry W. Elliott reprinted from Smith and Snell 1891: Plate VII.

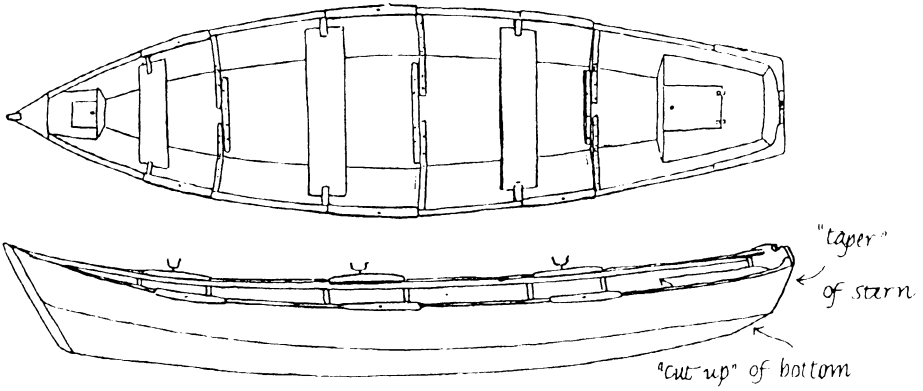

Figure 5. Plans of an 1880s pound-net dinghy drawn by Henry W. Elliott and reprinted from Smith and Snell 1891: Plate VIII. The Green Bay area dinghies were roughly the same shape, but the positioning of the thwarts (seats) appears to have been somewhat different and the interior framing substantially different, more like that in the pound boats shown in Figs. 3 and 4.

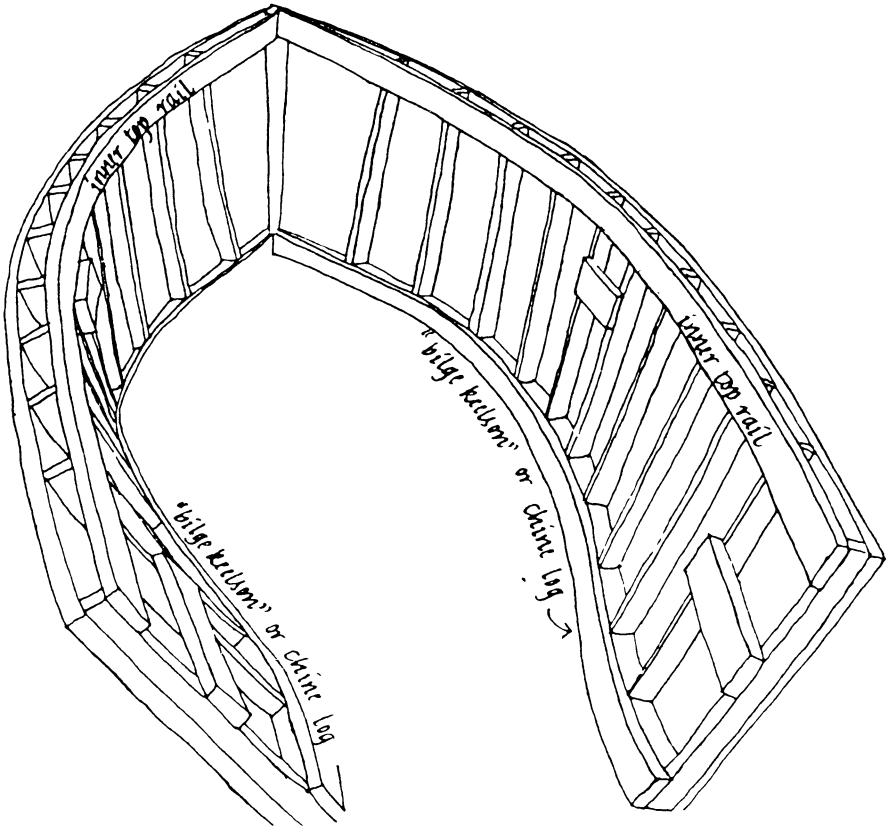

Figure 6. Interior framework of wooden pound-net skiff built and used in the Menominee, Michigan, area. The illustration was drawn from a slide of a skiff deteriorating on the shore of Lake Michigan's Green Bay. The stern transom had disappeared, leaving the side planking and attached frames to open out; the bottom was covered inside with a dense mat of leaves; and the bow framework was obscured inside with a heavy piece of driftwood. In other words, the drawing is not exact.

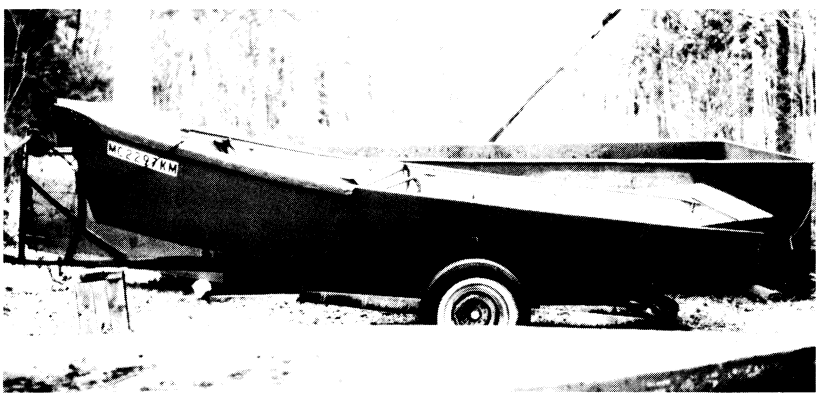

Figure 7. Richard Grabowski's steel pound-net skiff which he fashioned directly after a wooden pound boat. Menominee, MI.

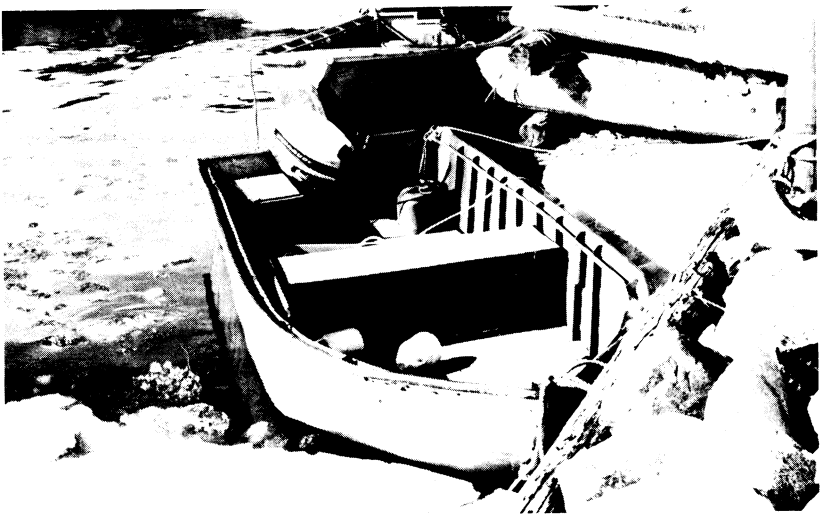

Figure 8. "Bill" Seaman's steel trap-net skiff which he built from a pattern he made of a Folstad skiff. Fairport, MI.

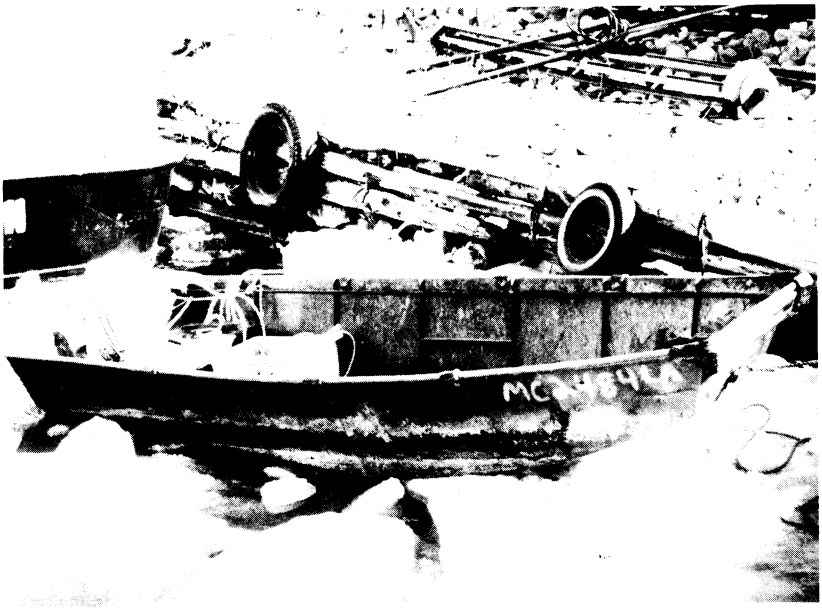

Figure 9. Wayne Seaman's square-nosed vee-bottomed steel trap-net skiff. Fairport, MI.

The Reelfoot Stumpjumper: Traditional Boat Building in Tennessee

HARRY GAMMERDINGER

For a century or more Reelfoot has been a magic word. It described in the minds of men a most unusual bit of the earth's surface.

For a century most persons interested in Reelfoot have been intensively interested. They have fought and they have killed because of their interests in Reelfoot. [Tennessee 1958:i]

Fortunately, there have been other responses to Reelfoot Lake besides the intensively interested murders recognized by the executive director of the Tennessee State Planning Commission. The rich fishing found at Reelfoot did cause bitter disputes over fishing rights, but the lake has also generated interest because of its unusual creation and geography. Reelfoot's distinctive features prompted early residents to develop a unique boat design adapted to the lake's particular conditions.

By the turn of the century an active boat building tradition had become established on Reelfoot Lake. The most active craftsman working in this tradition today is Dale Calhoun, a fourth-generation boat builder who continues to build boats on Reelfoot Lake. His work is remarkable not only because of its traditionality but by its demonstration of adaptation to changing environment, technology, and consumer needs.

Reelfoot Lake

Reelfoot Lake is located in the northwest corner of Tennessee, lying only three miles east of the Mississippi River and immediately south of the Kentucky border. This shallow lake surrounded by bald

cypress swamps is situated on the floodplain between the Mississippi River and the bluffs to the east. Reelfoot is unlike conventional freshwater lakes because of its sudden creation during a series of earthquakes in 1811 and 1812.

A succession of severe earthquakes, known as the New Madrid earthquakes, began on 16 December 1811. There were major quakes on 16 December, 23 January, and 7 February and hundreds of smaller ones. These quakes, centered near the village of New Madrid, Missouri, were some of the most powerful ever to occur in North America. Although they were felt as far away as Canada and rattled windows in Washington, D.C., few lives were lost because of the sparse settlement near the earthquakes' center. But the natural damage was tremendous; entire forests were uprooted and craters were formed by gases erupting from the earth. Settlers' accounts describe the air filled with sulfurous gases, the formation of waterfalls on the Mississippi, and boats sunk by tidal waves caused by the collapse of riverbanks and trees falling into the river.

These earthquakes created Reelfoot Lake through a combination of topographic changes. Some 50,000 acres of low-lying marsh east of the river fell 5 to 20 feet (Tennessee 1958:5) and the underlying channel clay soils were compacted, making a more impervious basin for retaining water. The land south of the lake rose, damming the depression by impeding drainage from the area, and Reelfoot Lake was formed as the basin filled with water. Reelfoot has an unusual shape because it lies in old channels cut by the Mississippi as the river's course has changed over the centuries. It actually consists of several bodies of water largely surrounded by marsh and connected by channels and bayous (Tennessee 1958:11). Although Reelfoot is roughly 5 by 14 miles and encompasses a total area of 19,000 acres, the average depth of the water is only 5 feet and is nowhere deeper than 18 feet (Tennessee 1958:1 and Middleton 1986:130). The shallowness of the lake, combined with the fact that its bottom is flooded forest, created a lake filled with standing trees, stumps, and other snags. Boating was so difficult that the Tennessee Supreme Court pronounced the lake unnavigable when ruling on a land claims case in 1902 (Vanderwood 1969:11).

But Reelfoot is a rich area for fish, waterfowl, and other game because this shallow, calm lake with a fertile bottom is excellent for fish propagation. In the late 1800s extensive commercial fishing developed on the lake when it became possible to ship catches to distant markets, including New York City. Many residents made their living off the lake through a combination of fishing, hunting, trapping

turtles and gigging frogs. In 1894 more fish were caught in Reelfoot Lake than were taken in the entire Tennessee River system (Comeaux 1978:91), and turn-of-the-century newspaper accounts report five hundred commercial fishermen operating on the lake (Smith 1988). It is estimated that in 1925 fishermen were running 200 miles of trotline in the lake with 500 hooks per mile (Smith 1988). Sport fishing and hunting became an important part of the local economy in the 1920s. Many residents began guiding visiting fishermen and waterfowl hunters on the lake, renting boats and earning income through other tourist businesses. Tourism dwindled during the 1930s and 40s but resurged during the 1950s (Smith 1988) and continues to be an important part of the region's economy.

Besides fishing, residents also commercially hunted other wildlife on Reelfoot Lake. During the 1920s and 30s as many as 1000 ducks a day were killed on the lake and shipped by train to distant markets including Chicago and New York. Commercial fishermen also often supplemented their income by turtling. In 1949 a biologist estimated that 20,000 turtles were taken between the first week of April and the end of August of the previous year, making a total of 62,000 pounds marketed during the season. This combination of fishing and turtling supported many of the families living on the lake (Schoffman 1949).

Commercial fishing and hunting have greatly declined from these peak figures. There are now only about twenty-five commercial fishermen operating on the lake, most of whom work another job, and only a few residents trap turtles to supplement their income. But catfish and crappie continue to be fished commercially and Reelfoot currently yields the largest fish poundage per acre of any Tennessee Lake (Middleton 1986:130).

These livelihoods created the need for a dependable, affordable craft that could navigate on the snag-filled Reelfoot Lake. The difficulty of boating on Reelfoot was attested to by a government-sponsored plan for development which observed that, "The hazard of using conventional type boats on the lake probably reduces fishing pressure below what it might otherwise be . . ." (Tennessee 1958:70). While this danger did apply to conventional boats, craftsmen at Reelfoot had for a long time solved this problem with their own boat design.

Origin of the Stumpjumper

The answer to these needs was the Reelfoot stumpjumper, so called because of its ability to ride over submerged stumps. This unique wooden boat with its flat bottom and double bow resembles a

wide canoe, and is generally referred to simply as a "lake boat" by residents. The exact origin of the stumpjumper is the stuff of local legend. Boat builders and commercial fishermen credit the original design to a man named Herman B. "Con" Young. Very little is know about Herman Young except that he is said to have lived in the late nineteenth century and built boats.[1] William Calhoun, a 76-year-old retired boat builder, reports that the first stumpjumpers were made by Herman Young, but he admits that, "I never seen him or seen nobody that seen him. That was way back."[2]

Ralph Burrus, the superintendent of Reelfoot Lake State Park when it was established in 1956, and widely recognized for his knowledge of local history, was interviewed concerning the origin of Reelfoot boats.

> A cabinet maker came in here to fish and hunt a little bit and never went back to his work. He started building Reelfoot Boats, that was Con Young. He designed this round-ribbed (?) boat that we use here now because when he came in we were using bateaus. Before that we were using dugouts. Then they got a sawmill in here and it slabbed up some of the cypress and we put it together and caulked it, and made a bateau. But this man came in and the idea of getting on that stump and staying so long without getting off and the wood wasn't protected. Sometime the stump would have a point and you really got hung. So he designed this that you could rock the boat without tilting it without dipping water. . . .
>
> The first Reelfoot Boat was built around night rider time. [1907-08] That's when it started and he had two or three people working with him and each one left and built boats on his own. But each one changed it enough and these fishermen like Lex's father can identify a Cap Lye (?) boat or a Milligan boat or a Con Young boat, Sam Morgan boat. They originally were from the same pattern. [Smith and Pardue 1985:117]

Young was not working in a total vacuum. There is a pervasive tradition of boat building in the region from which he no doubt drew upon for construction techniques and designs. Large scale commercial fishing, which would have required boats, began along the Mississippi probably about the time of the Civil War (Comeaux 1978:75) and the availability of Southern cypress and Pacific redwood after the 1880s made skiff-building an important industry in many river towns (Lund 1983:690). While I have not found any references to boats entirely like the Reelfoot stumpjumper being independently developed elsewhere, many of its characteristics can be found in other traditional boat building designs. Although establishing a precise history of boat design is difficult because of the wide variation in names used for specific boat types, it is clear that the stumpjumper utilizes many traditional construction techniques and design elements. The stumpjumper appears to be most closely related to the pirogue, a term

which has been used for a dugout canoe or plank boat built to the dimensions of a dugout canoe (Lund 1983:680). Although the pirogue is generally associated with Francophone Louisiana, it is found in many parts of the Mississippi Valley, particularly on shallow, swampy water. Jens Lund believes that most of the canoes used during the settlement of the Ohio Valley were probably similar to this type and notes that in the lower Ohio Valley pirogues are still occasionally used by duck hunters in tree-filled swamps (1983:682). Malcolm Comeaux has described the use of canoes by hunters and fishermen for navigating swamps and overflowed land and characterized the Reelfoot stumpjumper as a type of canoe (1978:88). In east Tennessee there is a tradition of building flat-bottomed, plank boats for negotiating the swift, rocky streams found there. These boats resemble Reelfoot stumpjumpers in length, width, and rib structure, but they are blunt at both ends (Kear, Stout and Ross 1978). These boats sometimes have a rudder, but its dimensions and function are very different from the rudder found on Reelfoot stumpjumpers.

Calhoun Boat Builders

By far the most recognized builder of Reelfoot stumpjumpers today is Dale Calhoun. Although he works full-time as a shift captain at a local prison, he still manages to build on the average a boat each week. When asked how he learned the trade Dale usually explains that, "It's a hand-me-down generation thing." He proudly describes himself as a fourth generation Reelfoot boat builder and cites the Calhoun lineage of boat builders: his father, William Calhoun, grandfather, Boone Calhoun, and great-grandfather, Joseph Marion Calhoun.

Although now retired, William Calhoun remembers well his boat building days and family boat building history. William was told that Joseph Marion, the first acknowledged Calhoun boat builder, lived in Dyer, Tennessee, a small town thirty miles southeast of Reelfoot Lake, where he worked as a brick mason and also did some carpentry work.[3] While Joseph Marion was living in Dyer his eldest child, Boone, was born in January 1889.

Between 1900 and 1910 Joseph Marion and his family moved to Obion County on the eastern shore of Reelfoot Lake. He bought a farm in the hills near Shawtown, a small community about four miles by road east of Reelfoot Lake. Joseph Marion started farming, erected a brick kiln, and built chimneys and other brickwork in the area. William recalls that Joseph Marion made a few john boats (plain, flat-bottomed boats with blunt ends) but he did not make any stump-

jumpers. Joseph Marion died in 1926 or 1927 when he was 75 years old.

William's father, Boone Calhoun, had a blacksmith shop in Shawtown. Besides doing blacksmith work Boone also worked as a farrier, carpenter, automobile mechanic, and boat builder. Boone hired John Milligan, a migratory laborer, because he needed someone to help him build boats. Milligan had learned boat building from Herman Young (Andrews 1973:5 and Smith and Pardue 1985:117) and passed some of these techniques on to Boone. William was born on 6 February 1913 and began working with his father and Milligan when an adolescent.

William estimates that his father began making the stumpjumpers around 1927.[4] He believes that Boone refined his own design but drew upon the stumpjumpers that he saw on the lake. His stumpjumper resembled those built by Herman Young, but Boone's was generally larger and had a wider bottom. William describes this design as the perfect adaptation for Reelfoot Lake, "just like it was supposed to be," and Dale Calhoun continues to build stumpjumpers using essentially the same design.

William built his first boat when he was fourteen and soon became a full-time boat builder, along with his brother, in their father's shop. Around 1940 they moved the shop from Shawtown to the south shore of Reelfoot Lake. William worked in a Michigan factory during World War Two because of a lack of demand for boats during that time, but he returned after the war and continued to build boats. Shortly after the war, Boone moved to Michigan where he worked in a factory until his death in August 1965.

William estimates that he built 100 to 150 boats per year on Reelfoot Lake for 35 years (Andrews 1973:5). Most of these boats were stumpjumpers, but he also occasionally built boats for other purposes. He built two or three skiffs for commercial fishermen, a few john boats, and some custom boats designed to the specifications of the buyer. William built boats out of many woods but principally he used cypress, sassafras, and catalpa obtained from local sawmills. Although he stopped building boats thirty years ago he proudly observes that some of his boats are still on the lake.

William's son Dale was born on 24 July 1935. William notes that, "Dale's got my dad's mind," and quickly showed an aptitude for building boats. He enjoys telling the story of returning from vacation to find a boat in the shop built by fourteen-year-old Dale. Dale credits learning most of his boat building skills by working with his

father. Dale's earliest responsibilities were making the chairs that go in the boats and nailing the tin covering onto the boats.

The busiest time for the Calhouns was during the late 1940s and 50s when Dale and William hired two helpers but still had difficulty keeping up with the demand for stumpjumpers. Even though they were finishing three boats each day they often had twenty to fifty boats on order.

But the demand for the Calhoun stumpjumpers declined around 1960, probably due to the growing popularity of fiberglass and aluminum boats and a decrease in guide trips. William felt that there was not enough business to support both Dale and himself so he left to do carpentry work in Michigan and Memphis.

At about this time Dale tore down the original shop and built a larger one at the same location. He continued to build boats but sometimes worked other jobs as well. He opened a store that sold boats, motors, and trailers and operated a boat dock (Pomeroy 1974). In the early seventies there were busy periods and slow times but Dale still produced 150 to 200 boats per year (Andrews 1973 and Tennessee Department 1974:20). About ten years ago Dale decided to begin working full-time at the nearby Lake County Regional Prison because, "its a lot easier and I make more money."

But Dale remains a very committed boat builder, and he manages to average forty hours a week building boats. He finds no need to advertise because word-of-mouth and his reputation creates a sufficient demand for his boats. There have been several newspaper and magazine stories about Dale published during the 1970s and 80s, and he has also begun demonstrating at festivals, including the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville and the 1986 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C.

Changes in the Stumpjumper

Although Dale uses essentially the same design as Boone Calhoun, the stumpjumper has undergone some changes over the last sixty years due to changing technology and the availability of materials. Originally the stumpjumpers were made entirely of caulked wood, but Boone began covering the boats with metal strips, and later tin, to help protect them from snags. William continued covering the sides and bottoms of the boats with tin. Before nailing on the tin, both Boone and William covered the boats with canvas which they saturated with paint to make it waterproof. William covered the boats with aluminum for awhile, but he went back to tin when aluminum became

too expensive. In the 1950s William began covering the boats with fiberglass instead of tin.

The Reelfoot stumpjumpers were originally propelled with paddles or oars. Fred Allen, a sport fisherman from Monmouth, Illinois, often visited Reelfoot Lake and used stumpjumpers. While home in 1884 he invented an articulated oar which allowed boaters to face the direction in which they were rowing. Generally called "bow-facing oars," they caught on immediately because of their usefulness in the tree-filled waters of Reelfoot. In 1959 Dale bought the company that manufactured these oars from Allen's heir and continues to market them. Dale assembles the components, which are cast in an Iowa foundry, and then outfits his own boats with them and sells the oars separately.

The advent of small, gasoline-powered motors allowed boat builders to motorize the stumpjumper about fifty years ago. Boone began mounting one-third horsepower, kick-start motors from Maytag washing machines in the rear of his boats. At the time such power seemed adequate but as more powerful engines became light enough they were put in the boats. Today Dale installs engines ranging from three to sixteen horsepower, according to the customer's request. The stumpjumpers that are built today are generally wider than those built at the turn of the century. Dale still builds the boats with the same length, about fifteen and one-half feet, but he has increased the width from a three foot beam to a four or five foot beam. Dale increased the width because the addition of motors made streamlining less important and sport fishermen today generally want to take more equipment with them.

Current Building Technique

Although Dale has built boats out of almost every wood except hickory and oak, most of the boats he builds are made of air-dried cypress planks nailed to a white oak frame. He prefers cypress because of its durability in a maritime environment and generally obtains it from local sawmills.

Dale begins construction by laying out the bottom, made of two 3/4" planks which run the full length of the boat, and then attaching the ribs. There are generally nine ribs, laid about 15" apart. The bottom ribs (1" x 1 1/2") cross the flat bottom of the boat and to the ends of these are attached the side ribs (1" x 1"). Bow and stern stems are nailed to the ends of the bottom.

Dale then places the bottom and ribs upside down in a jig to hold the work. William built this jig in the early 1940s, patterning it after a similar jig used by Boone.

Dale steams the 16 foot, 3/8" side planks and then quickly bends them to the curve by nailing two planks to the ribs on each side. The planks are steamed by immersing them in a vat of boiling water behind the shop. Boone used to steam the wood by laying it out in the sun wet but found that he could get better results by using a steamer. Dale has also steamed the wood by laying it in the sun during hot weather but finds steaming a more dependable technique. After nailing on the sides Dale turns the boat upright and nails a wood strip or "whaling" on top of the gunwales. A spray rail is added on top of the whaling from the bow to amidships and a small section of decking is added to the bow and stern. If the boat will have a motor he adds a shelf at the stern for the battery. Cypress chairs are generally included, the height of which are designed to fit the customer. A hinged mount for a trolling motor is sometimes added to the side of the boat near the bow.

Dale covers the outside of the boat with fiberglass to make it waterproof and then sands and paints the boat. Dale says that customers may choose any color but they generally want gray or green because these colors are better camouflage. Dale will still occasionally tin a boat instead of coating it with fiberglass because the tin makes a heavier boat which sits deeper in the water and is consequently more stable.

Dale builds the stumpjumpers with essentially the same shape that his grandfather used but works without plans. Dale uses templates to cut parts of the boat but he only uses the two entire bottom templates built by Boone which hang in the shop to measure for pieces when repairing boats. The planks Dale uses are 16' long when they come from the sawmill, but he explains that this is not the reason why the stumpjumper is 15 1/2' long. He feels that, "It just balances out better that way. It has to be that long to have the room in it." But Dale does note that he would have to splice boards together to make a longer boat. Other typical dimensions for the stumpjumper are 2'3" at the widest part of the bottom, 4'1" wide at the gunwales and 1'4" tall at the sides, but the width and height can vary according to the customer's request.

Most of the stumpjumpers Dale builds today have motors mounted to the floor in the stern. Dale buys these general purpose industrial motors, which are installed in such equipment as concrete mixers, hay balers and pumps, direct from their manufacturers. These gas motors

range from three to sixteen horsepower but the most popular size is the eight horsepower which can propel the boat at about fifteen miles per hour. Dale recalls that a three horsepower motor used to be considered sufficient power for winding through the trees standing in Reelfoot Lake, but now that there are fewer trees standing bigger motors have become popular (Tuberville 1987:5).

The addition of motors required modifications in the design to accommodate a propeller and rudder. The shaft and bronze propeller are protected from snags by a steel plate extending beneath it. Dale cuts this protecting plate, called a "log" or "shoe" locally, from 3/16" steel plate and bolts it to an oak wedge on the bottom of the boat. Dale also cuts the rudder from 3/16" steel. The rudder, typically 13 1/2" long by 11" tall, is hinged so that it will kick up and not be damaged if it strikes a submerged obstruction. The steering mechanism consists of a 6 1/2' steel rod, which extends from a lever attached to the rudder post forward to a wooden stick hinged to the boat floor. The rudder is turned by pushing the stick forward and backward. Dale is fond of the simple design because of its dependability and economy.

Customers still often ask Dale to build an "oar boat," a stumpjumper without an engine. Oar boats are virtually identical to motorized stumpjumpers except that they are more narrow, generally three feet wide, and do not need a rudder. An oar boat typically weighs 185 pounds while a motorized stumpjumper weighs 250 pounds.

Dale occasionally makes other kinds of boats besides the stumpjumper. He sometimes makes skiffs for commercial fishermen on Reelfoot, and the particular design is referred to locally as a "D-line skiff." These skiffs have a pointed or "model" bow, flat stern, and sides which flare out. The design is especially suitable for commercial fishing because the fishermen can walk along the flared side while handling nets and haul nets in and out of the water at the stern. These skiffs are powered by outboard motors which are taken off once fishing begins and then oars are used to move the boat. Their longer length of twenty feet also provides more room and allows the skiff to carry a heavy load. Dale explains that one of his skiffs can haul, "two men, a wet net and a ton of fish." There is little demand for skiffs today because of the decline in commercial fishing but at one time Dale and his father made so many skiffs that, "We used to make them until we'd get so sick and tired seeing them we'd like to scream."

On rare occasions Dale makes custom designed boats to a client's specifications. In these cases people bring in a photograph or design for the boat and ask him to construct one like it. Dale and William have made inboard cruisers and once an inboard boat designed for ice

breaking. They also made a tug for a farmer to pull his ferry of farm equipment to an island in the Mississippi River that he farmed. This tug was about twenty-two feet long with a powerful engine and enclosed cabin. Dale also sometimes builds john boats for sport fishermen.

Current Market for Stumpjumpers

Dale finds that he gets all the orders for stumpjumpers that he can fill working forty hours per week. These boats remain in demand because of their adaptation to Reelfoot Lake and the local boating clientele. The boats are used for a wide variety of purposes including pleasure boating, hunting, fishing, and transportation by government agencies. Dale sells most of his boats to local individuals and rental businesses on Reelfoot, but his boats are also used on neighboring lakes and are occasionally shipped far away. The most often recognized advantage of these boats is their adaptation to shallow, snag-filled water. The flat bottom of these boats gives them a shallow draft so they can generally navigate in six to eight inches of water. The boat is protected from snags by having the shoe beneath the propeller and the kick-up rudder. The stumpjumper's flat bottom and flaring sides also make it a more stable platform than round-bottomed boats.

The stumpjumper is designed to be an economical boat. Dale uses a relatively simple design and general purpose hardware and motors in order to keep the boat competitively priced for local boaters. He is able to sell the oar boats for 700 dollars and the lowest-priced motor boat for 975 dollars. While a comparably-sized aluminum boat can be bought for less, it will tear more easily on a snag and be more expensive to repair.

The stumpjumper is a very durable boat. Dale proudly explains that a stumpjumper will last you the rest of your life if you take care of it. Dale points out that there are stumpjumpers afloat on the lake that are fifty years old. The motors that Dale installs are very durable, some continue to run after thirty to forty years, and he uses galvanized or coated box nails which resist corrosion.

A major attraction for fishermen is that a wood boat is quieter. Alvin Gooch, a commercial fisherman on Reelfoot Lake, explains that the noise made by net leads hitting the sides of an aluminum boat will scare away fish. He prefers the quiet operation of a wood boat and rowing so that the fish will not scatter. Although there are fewer commercial fishermen on Reelfoot now, they generally prefer to use the D-line skiffs and commercial guides often use the stumpjumper.

Reelfoot Lake Boat-Building Tradition

While the Calhoun family has received the most attention in newspapers and magazines, there have been other boat builders working on Reelfoot Lake. Photographs of Reelfoot Lake from the 1920s through 40s show a wide variety of boats on the lake (Nelson 1924 and Smith 1988). Along with a range of stumpjumpers there are also john boats, D-line skiffs, larger inboard motor boats with cockpits, and boats used for towing strings of stumpjumpers.

Besides the occasional john boat builder, knowledgeable older residents remember several craftsmen who used to build stumpjumpers on Reelfoot, although none of these individuals appear to be making boats today. Along with these full-time boat builders, there were individuals who would occasionally make a stumpjumper. An example of such a boat builder is Grady Taylor. Now deceased, Taylor was an amateur woodworker and made several stumpjumpers in the 1960s. Taylor knew Dale Calhoun and used the Calhoun pattern for his boats (Smith 1988).

Bob Kelly, Sr. of Lawrenceville, Illinois, built a stumpjumper after seeing them on Reelfoot Lake (Lund 1983:683-684). During the 1950s and 60s he had built many boats, mostly john boats, at his band-sawmill on the Embarras River, but he also built a stumpjumper like those he had used while on hunting trips to Reelfoot. Kelly's stumpjumper closely resembles those on Reelfoot although he inserted the ribs after assembling the boat's planking. After viewing a photograph of Kelly's boat, Dale remarked that it was a lot like his boats but it had fewer ribs, no whaling on the gunwales, and the steering mechanism used a rope and pulley system. Dale remembered that such a steering system was sometimes used in stumpjumpers so that the hunters could steer with their feet.

Probably the only other boat builder currently making stumpjumpers is Thomas Alexander of Samburg, on the eastern shore of Reelfoot. Alexander has been fascinated by boats since he was a child and promised himself that he would build one when he grew up.[5] Alexander was raised in a woodworking family and his uncle was an active boat builder during the 1920s through 40s. Now 42 years old, Alexander has built about twenty-five stumpjumpers and six skiffs. Alexander is largely self-taught but he also learned some from Lewis "Booster" Walden, a recently deceased boatbuilder who was an uncle to Dale Calhoun. Alexander got his stumpjumper pattern from Walden but Walden never built a skiff. Alexander's stumpjumper resembles Dale's and is generally equipped with a eight horsepower

Briggs engine. Alexander is a commercial fisherman himself and enjoys going out on the lake when not working at the nearby Goodyear plant.

Declining Demand

Despite the fact that Dale is kept busy turning out one stumpjumper per week, the overall demand for stumpjumpers appears to be declining, judging from the number of full-time boat builders who once made their living at Reelfoot. The primary reason for the declining demand is the advent of fiberglass and aluminum boats which are now often used in the place of wooden boats. Many of the boats now in use on Reelfoot are aluminum john boats.

Another technological change that has reduced the demand for stumpjumpers is the development of the outboard motor. Outboard motors came into widespread use after World War Two as they became more sturdy and reliable. With these improvements in outboards the disadvantages of the stumpjumper engines became less tolerable. The stumpjumper engines have only one gear because of their direct drive to the prop and some boaters find them more difficult to operate than an outboard.

The stumpjumper is also losing its environmental niche. When the stumpjumper was developed Reelfoot was filled with standing trees and snags, but over the decades these obstacles have been greatly reduced. The number of trees and snags in Reelfoot has decreased because they have been gathered for firewood and during the winter they are worn down by ice. It has also been reported that fishermen would burn standing trees to serve as beacons while fishing at night (Smith 1988). With this reduction in obstacles, standard aluminum boats have become a less treacherous means of boating.

A final cause for the decline in the demand for stumpjumpers is the fact that most tourists today bring their own boats when visiting Reelfoot. In earlier times visitors would rent stumpjumpers for their fishing and hunting activities, but the increased number of private boats and their portability make renting a rarer occurrence. Today many pleasure boaters find the stumpjumper too small for their needs.

Despite these reasons for the declining demand for stumpjumpers from their peak production, probably during the 1920s and 30s, there continues to be a market for the boat. Part of this steady demand can be credited to the stumpjumper's adaptation to Reelfoot Lake and local needs, but the aesthetic preference for hand-built wooden boats with a local heritage also contributes to supporting this boat building tradition.

NOTES

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1 A Herman Young appears in the 1910 Census of Obion County, the county which borders the eastern shore of Reelfoot Lake. He is identified as a 50-year-old carpenter born in New York State.

2 The description of Calhoun family history and boat building is based upon interviews with William and Dale Calhoun conducted by the author during October through December of 1988.

3 Joseph Marion is listed in the 1900 Census of Gibson County, which contains Dyer. He is identified as being a farmer born in November of 1851 in Tennessee, and with a wife Emma and four children including a son Boone born in January of 1889. The same family appears in the 1910 Census of Obion County. All the information in the later census is the same except that his birthplace is listed as Alabama.

4 Most publications on the Calhoun boat building tradition assert that they began making stumpjumpers around 1860, but census records appear to make this early date virtually impossible. The only reasonable date to appear in print is, "Three generations of Calhouns have been handmaking wooden boats at the lake since 1914" (Tennessee Department 1974:20).

5 Interview with the author, 22 December 1988.

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Figure 1. William and Dale Calhoun in an oar stumpjumper on Reelfoot Lake. (Photograph by Jack Tuberville)

Figure 2. Dale Calhoun working at the band saw in his shop. The boat-building jig is in the foreground.