Intangible heritage in the United States: a history of separate initiatives

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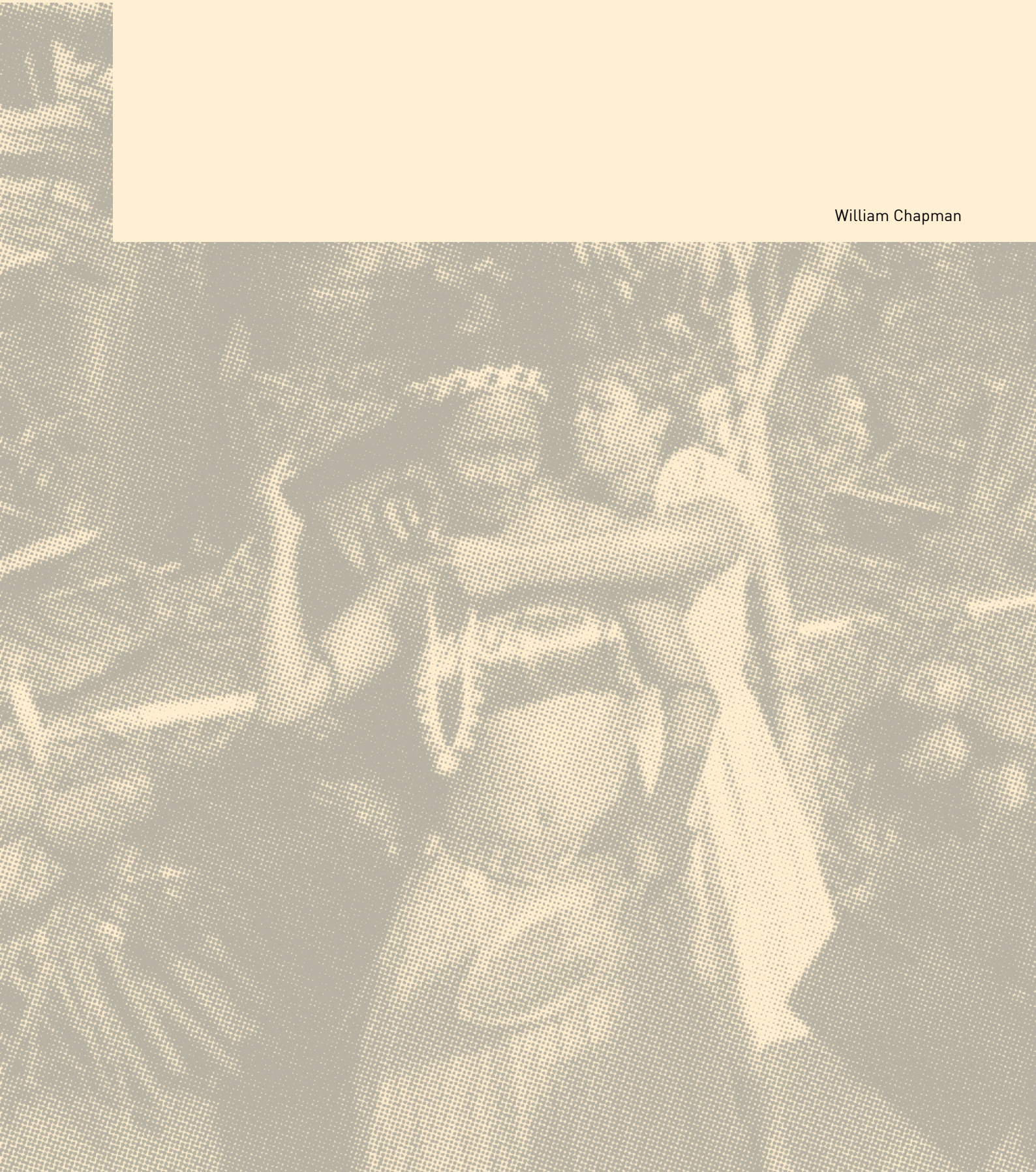

Intangible heritage in the United States: a history of separate initiatives

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the history of the United States' forays into the recognition and protection of elements of intangible heritage. It traces the beginnings of US initiatives to programmes of the Library of Congress in the late 1920s through several Smithsonian Institution Programmes from the 1930s on, notably the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, begun in 1967 and more recently, the NEA National Heritage Fellowship Programmes. It further examines the work of the National Park Service and Tribal Preservation Programmes, as well as the more recent Pacific Island Programmes. A final section examines regional and citywide efforts to identify and conserve aspects of intangible heritage. Although the US has officially withdrawn from participation in the work of UNESCO it is consoling to recognise the important strides the US has made in the effort to promote and protect traditional modes of cultural expression and the diversity of US approaches, which is in fact in line with the objectives of the organisation's international *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.*

Keywords

UNESCO, Library of Congress, Smithsonian Institution, Folklife, Global Sound Collection, blues, jazz, National Heritage Fellowship, National Park Service, tribal preservation, Interior Department, Pacific Islands

Introduction

A charter member of the UN, the US is also host to its General Assembly and is one of five permanent members of the Security Council (as well as providing about 28% of the UN's annual budget). Breaking with the UN over points of policy and management, the US has periodically held back its agreed-upon share of the organisation's annual dues. In 1983, it separately halted its support for UNESCO; although in 2003, President George W. Bush restored funding for a time. Following UNESCO's decision to admit Palestine as a member in 2011 (under

the Obama administration), the US again held back its contribution following the automatic application of 20+-year old legislation created in different times and circumstances. (Rubin: 2013; UNESCO.US: 2017). This position was reaffirmed in October 2017, when Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, announced that the US was both ending its participation and furthermore would not be paying an unpaid balance of $600 million in contributions legally due prior to the admission of Palestine (Rosenberg and Morello: 2017).

The UNESCO General Conference adopted the international *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in October 2003—the same year the US began its eight-year re-engagement with UNESCO (UNESCO: 2003; Kurin: 2004). By 2016, 171 member states had ratified the convention. The US was apparently moving toward ratification, but the momentum ended when it withdrew once again from the international organisation. It is now extremely unlikely that it will reverse course given the country's present political circumstances (Curtis: 2017).

The US's withdrawal from UNESCO at the time of the implementation of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* was unfortunate. The US has developed strong governmental and institutional support for the preservation of many aspects of cultural heritage and has much to share with other countries. These efforts have been of longstanding character and have resulted in substantial US contributions to cultural preservation, spread over several governmental agencies and non-profit organisations. Many heritage advocates deeply regret the US decision to step away from both participation and leadership at an international level. Many, too, hope the country will at some point re-join the international community to promote the protection and conservation of tangible and—more recently, following passage of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* - intangible cultural assets as well.

In the meantime, it is worth pausing to consider how the US has approached intangible heritage in the past and the ways that these efforts have found expression and support in US policies in both the governmental and nongovernmental sectors. The preservation of intangible heritage has clearly had strong support in the US. Moreover, US approaches have demonstrated increasing sophistication in both conceptualising intangible heritage and formulating ways to promote recognition and continuity—methods and ideals that still might contribute to an international understanding of intangible heritage.

The Library of Congress

The US's cultural preservation efforts date back as early as the 1920s, with the creation of the Archive of American Folk-Song in the Library of Congress's Music Division in 1928. Instigated by folk music enthusiast, Robert Winslow Gordon (1888-1961), with the encouragement of Herbert Putnam (1861-1955), then Librarian of Congress, the archive struggled until the 1930s, when John A. Lomax (1867-1948) came to the library and created the first paid position in folklore—a job that went to his son, the noted folk music collector, Alan Lomax (1915-2002). Later Benjamin Botkin (1901-1975) joined the staff, expanding the scope of the collection to include an ever-increasing number of recordings, in addition to sheet music (Groce: 2016) (Plate 1).

In the post-World War II era, the Library of Congress's 'Folk Archive' (as it came to be known over the years) continued to expand, under the leadership of Duncan Emrich (1908-1977) and of his successor, Rae Korson (1901-1991). Korson, the wife of noted folklorist, George Korson, expanded the library's reference section and increased the number of recordings converted

Plate 1
Virginia string band, Ballard Branch Bogtrotters Band (1934-1942), Galax, Virginia, 1937. The types of folk traditions recorded through early federal recording efforts.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

to 33-rpm albums, which were then becoming the industry standard. The late 1950s and 1960s marked a blossoming of popular interest, fuelled by nascent folk festivals, individual performances, and a sudden increase in the number of commercial recordings. This new interest coincided with the birth of a new subculture of folk enthusiasts, coalescing with movements for nuclear disarmament, social justice, and racial equality (Hardin: 2004).

In 1976, reflective of the enthusiasm surrounding the US Bicentennial, the United States Congress passed the American Folklife Preservation Act (Public Law 94-201), which created the American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress *to preserve and present American Folklife* through programmes of research, scholarship, education, performances, exhibits, and publications (Groce: 2016). In 1978, the Library of Congress took the important step of transferring what was then known as the 'Folk Archive' from the Music Division to the new centre (Hardin: 2001; Cutting-Baker and Farley: 1994).

The AFC's first director was Alan Jabbour (1942-2017), a noted musician, folklorist, and scholar. An American of Syrian descent, Jabbour had studied music in his home state of Florida before receiving his PhD in English literature from Duke University in 1968. His early interest was folk music of the Upper South, including North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, and he turned his training as a classical violinist to the recording and performance of traditional songs. Serving as an assistant professor in English and folklore at UCLA, he became head of the Archive of Folk Culture, transferring his title to the new centre with its creation. Jabbour immediately introduced two significant initiatives in documentation: one focused on Chicago and a second on South-Central Georgia. Similar efforts followed in northern Maine, in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the New Jersey Pine Barrens, at New River Gorge in West Virginia, and at Paradise Valley in Nevada, among others (Jabbour: 2005).

In 1979, the American Folklife Center launched the Federal Cylinder Project, an ambitious effort to record over ten thousand wax cylinder recordings of ethnographic materials on to tape (American Folklife Center: 2013). This project coincided with a widening of the centre's purview to place equal emphasis on history, material culture, celebrations, and other customs; it also began to collect materials on culture of the post-World War II period (American Folklife Center: 2011). In 1981, in reflection of its greater breadth, the earlier Archive of Folk Song became part of the the 'Archive of Folk Culture', now more commonly called the 'American Folklife Center's archive', to distinguish it from the other work of the centre (Groce: 2016).

Technically, the work of the American Folklife Center falls under what can be considered 'documentary heritage', though the work of the centre certainly has ramifications for the promotion of intangible heritage. Since its beginnings in the 1920s, recordings and other materials collected by the centre have served living artists in their quest for older performances and musical forms. In this way, it transcribes neat divisions between documentation (and memory) and the perpetuation of living traditions.

The Smithsonian Institution

By the early 1980s, the Smithsonian Institution had joined with the Archive of Folk Culture in the promotion of folklore and popular culture. In early January 1967, Jim Morris (James R. Morris: 2016), the Smithsonian's Director of Museum Services, suggested the creation of an outdoor festival to celebrate folk traditions from throughout the US. Morris hired Ralph Rinzler (1934-1994), a figure previously associated with the Newport Folklife Festival, to head up the initiative, and in July 1967, the first annual Festival of American Folklife was held on the National Mall (Spitz: 2016). With a budget of $4,900, the first festival included eighty-four participants—among them, Jones and the Sea Islanders, blues-artist John Jackson, storyteller Janie Hunter, cowboy singer Glenn Ohrlin, Libba Cotton, Dejan's Olympia Brass Band, and the King Island Eskimo Dancers (Morris: 2016). The Festival drew over 430,000 visitors and received a great deal of media attention and support from members of Congress (Smithsonian: 1967). Secretary S. Dillon Ripley (1913-2001) was enthusiastic and gave his continued endorsement to the project (Kurin: 1991).

In addition to the Festival, Jim Morris also organised a symposium on folklife. This featured veteran music collector Alan Lomax (1915-2002), recording engineer Moses Asch (1905-1986), African folklorist Roger

Abrahams (b.1933), German-American folklorist Don Yoder (1921-2015), Utah-based scholar Austin Fife (1909-1986), ethno-musicologist D.K. (Donald Knight) Wilgus (1918-1989), and pioneering folklorist Richard Dorson (1916-1981), among others (Spitz: 2016). Collectively, the participants suggested a comprehensive programme of folklife, to be housed at the Smithsonian. At first, part of the Smithsonian's Division of Performing Arts, a separate Office of Folklife Programs emerged in 1980 (Smithsonian Institution Archives: 2017).

In 1987, the Office of Folklife Programs acquired the Moses and Frances Asch Collection, consisting of the original recordings, business records, correspondence, and photographic materials of Folkways Records, a label founded by Moses Asch (1905-1986) in 1948 (Smithsonian Folkways: 2007). With 2,168 titles, the Asch collection was truly one of the world's greatest single repositories of folk music. This collection formed the core of what later became known as the 'Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections', named after the first director of the Folklife Festival and longtime head of the Office of Folklife Programs (Smithsonian Institution: 2017). The collection eventually included additional recordings from the Paredon, Cook, Dyer-Bennet, Fast Folk, and Monitor record labels, which now form the play list of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. Notably strong in Euro-American, African American, Caribbean, and Native American musical performance and traditions, the Smithsonian's collection now extends to a truly global assemblage of ethnic performance traditions, spoken word recordings, sounds of nature and science, occupational folklore, and family folklore (Smithsonian Institution: 2017a).

Presently, the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage is one of nine Smithsonian research centres. The centre, in turn, is divided into four separate administrative units and activity portals (Smithsonian Newsdesk: 2013). The headquarters is located on the National Mall, near the Smithsonian's other museums and research centres. The Folkways Recordings Collection is one of the most popular aspects of the centre and one of the four areas of activity (Smithsonian Folkways: 2017a). Part of the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archive and Collections since 1987, recordings produced by the label from 1948 are available online through the Smithsonian, or through retail outlets.

The second major activity is that of the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collection and includes the research branch of the centre. This is designed for use by scholars and is available by appointment. The reading room for the collection is located just off the National Mall on Maryland Avenue, SW. Much of the collection, however, is stored off site and is made available for *bona fide* researchers upon request. The collection includes binders of photographs, slides; contact sheets from the Folklife Festival; and the separate Diane Davies and Robert C. Malone photograph collections; along with finding aids. There are also printed monographs on ethno-musicology, anthropology, and records of music businesses (Smithsonian: 2017b).

The Archives also include a separate study collection of audio and visual materials. These include over 17,000 commercial disc recordings, 4,000 acetate discs, 450,000 audiotapes, more than 2,000 CDs, 2,000 videotapes, and 5,000,000 linear feet of motion picture film (Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections: 2016).

A third focus of interest is the Smithsonian Global Sound collection. Launched in 2005, Global Sound allows researchers and music lovers to search for recordings of world musical traditions, drawing from the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, the Archive and Research Centre of the American Institute for Indian Studies (ARCE) in New Delhi, and the International Library of African Music (ILAM) in Grahamstown, South Africa. Since 2009, these recordings have been linked directly to the Smithsonian Folkways website (Smithsonian Folkways: 2009).

In addition to the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the Folklore Archives, the Smithsonian also maintains the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center and the Smithsonian Latino Center, both of which strive to highlight the cultural contributions of significant minorities in American life. The Asian Pacific Center hosts programmes from across a wide range of cultural productions. A recent exhibit is *Salaam (I Come in Peace), an exhibition on Muslim Life in America.* The centre also underwrites *Culture Labs*, a series of 'pop-up experiences' that explore cultural issues with noted creative thinkers and artists (Smithsonian Asia Pacific Center: 2017).

The Latino Center has an equally active series of programmes and exhibitions. Recent exhibitions include *Caribbean Indigenous Legacies, Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art,* and *One Life: Dolores Huerta*, focusing on the life of the Latino activist and labour organiser. Public programmes have included poetry readings, artist talks, and panel discussions on a wide range of cultural issues involving the country's Hispanic population and its relations to other parts of the Americas (Smithsonian Latino Center: 2017).

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival

A principal activity of the Smithsonian remains the Folklife Festival (since 1998 retitled the 'Smithsonian Folklife Festival' to reflect its international span). Now in its fiftieth year, the festival has historically employed a thematic approach to programming, though allowing for considerable diversity as well. In 1967, the performances included American fife and drum groups, brass bands, string bands, New Orleans jazz, and Cajun music, together with displays of basketry by Native Americans, as well as work by a variety of American potters, silversmiths, spinners, and weavers. The year 1968 focused on Texas, with additional performances and demonstrations of bluegrass music, butter churning, sheep shearing, and soap and candy making. The next year Pennsylvania was the focus, with additional activities; then, Arkansas, followed by Ohio and afterwards, Maryland. By the 1970s, the themes focused on regional folkloric output: the Northern Plains (and California), followed by the Northeast and Great Lakes. In 1978, the theme was the Native American community, with a strong focus on New Mexico and the Southwest (Smithsonian Folklife Festival: 2017) (Plate 2).

Plate 2
The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, 2002.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

In more recent years, the festival has become increasingly international in scope. In 2002, the theme was *The Silk Road*. Haiti was the key focus in 2004; the Mekong River in 2008, and Bhutan in 2009. This trend continued in subsequent festivals. The year 2010 focused on Asia-Pacific connections. The next year was Colombia. Women's role in the transmission of cultural heritage was an overriding theme in 2012, a year that also focused on African American musical performance. Hungary followed in 2013, China in 2014, Peru in 2015, and the Basque heritage in 2016. Typically, the festival features more than a single theme. The 2003 programme on Appalachia also included a section on Scotland and another on Mali. The 2008 festival featuring Bhutan also gave space to Texas and the North American Space Administration (NASA). China joined with Kenya; and Basque Culture also included a programme on *Sounds of California*. Each of the festivals features music and dance performances, crafts and cooking displays, storytelling, and opportunities for visitor participation and engagement (Smithsonian Folklife Festival: 2016).

From a high of 4,400,000 visitors in 1976, the festival has continued to attract large crowds. Over forty years, as many as 38 million people have attended the festival, visiting the mall over its two-week period each summer (Duong: 2008). The festival occupies a tent city spread over the mall between the Castle and the Museum of Natural History. The hours are between 11:00am and 5:00pm with special events and performances taking place in the evenings. Typical events include demonstrations of crafts and cooking, storytelling sessions, illustrations for cultural products, and musical performances. The 2016 festival had 120 tents, some with multiple and others with single displays. The two main divisions devoted to Basque culture covered two squares and *Sounds of California*, covered one of the four block-size areas set aside for the festival (Smithsonian Folklife Festival: 2016). Special provision is made for visitors with disabilities, including American Sign Language interpreters and Braille versions of schedules and other information (Smithsonian Folklife Festival: 2017).

While popular, and in many ways successful, the summer Smithsonian Folklife Festival has not been

without its critics. Many writers have questioned the idea of 'cultural diversity' as represented through the festivals. Vietnamese American Studies scholar, Anh Hong Duong, questioned the overall ambition of the festival, wondering whether in fact the festival could fully capture a sense of American diversity. She also questioned whether the festival adequately bridged the interests of scholars and more popular understandings of cultural heritage and cultural expression (Duong: 2008, pp.15-19). American Studies scholar, Heather Diamond, looking specifically at the representation of Hawaiian Culture through the 1989 festival, identified notable 'disjunctions' between the view of Hawaiians about their own cultural heritage and that of festival staff. She also criticised the festival's inherent proclivity to create a separation between what was deemed 'authentic' and 'inauthentic', stealing the initiative, in a sense, from the festival participants themselves (Diamond: 2008, pp.9-10).

The NEA National Heritage Fellowship Program

One of the most innovative efforts to recognise and perpetuate traditional forms of performance and production has been the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEA) National Heritage Fellowship Program (Binkiewicz: 2004). Modelled on the Japanese concept of 'National Living Treasures' the programme sought to address *lacunae* in US efforts to both recognise and sustain traditional performing artists and folk artisans. The programme was initiated in 1982 and recognises outstanding practitioners in what it identifies as *our nation's traditional arts heritage* (National Endowment for the Arts: 2017; Shiele: 2017) (Plate 3).

The first year's fellows included fifteen noted performers and artists from across the country. Dewey Balfa was a Cajun fiddler from Bayou Grand Louis, Louisiana. He had gained his knowledge from his father, a fourth-generation musician, performing professionally during the 1940s and 1950s before being invited to the Newport Folk Festival in 1964. Bessie Jones, another first-year honoree, was a noted Sea Island singer, maintaining traditions of song and performance dating back to Africa and the early days of slavery. Tommy Jarrell was a fiddler from Surry County, North Carolina, whose career as a Blue Ridge Mountain musician began in the early 1900s.

Plate 3
Sheila Kay Adams, story teller, banjo player and NEA Heritage Fellowship recipient.
Source: Garius Hill, Wikimedia Commons.

Subsequent years of the programme followed the same pattern of selection. The year 1983 featured Sister Mildred Barker, a member of the Shaker community and one of the few surviving members to still perform their traditional songs; Ray Hicks, a storyteller from North Carolina; John Lee Hooker, a famous blues artist; and Rafael Cepeda, a *bomba* and *plena* (African inspired singing, drumming, and dancing) performer, all of whom were among the usual fifteen selected. 1984 featured accordionist, Clifton Chenier; potter, Burlon Craig; dancer, Howard 'Sandman' Sims; and clarinetist, Dave Tarras. 1985 had banjo player, Lily May Ledford; spoon player, Horace 'Spoons' Williams; and cowboy singer, Glenn Ohrlin.

More recent years have continued in the same vein. The 2014 fellows included master basket maker, Henry Arquette, a native Mohawk (Haudenosanee); Kevin Doyle, noted Irish step dancer, and quilter, Carolyn Mazloomi. The following year included ceramicist and teacher, Yary Livan; 'Blues Doctor' Drink Small; and *nihon buyo* dancer, Gertrude Yukie Tsutsumi. And 2016 featured native Alaskan (Tlingit) weaver, Clarissa Rizal; Mardi Gras Indian artisan and musician, Joseph Pierre 'Big Chief Monk' Bordeaux; and birch-bark canoe maker, Theresa Secord (Larson: 2016).

The only noticeable change in the configuration and character of the awards has been a gradual decrease in the number of honourees, from twenty in 1982, to sixteen in the 1990s to twelve in recent years. The programme has always recognised a wide range of honourees, distributed among numerous artistic and performing traditions. The selection process also cuts across age and gender, providing a representative sampling of some of the most dynamic and committed artists and artisans in the country.

As of 2017, over 300 artists had received recognition through the programme. Following up on the fellowship's close connection to the Smithsonian's Office of Folklife Programs, over sixty of the selected fellows also featured on the Folkways label. True to its aims of impartiality, the NEA Fellowship Program depends on nominations from 'ordinary citizens' who relay their choices to a panel for the final selection. All designees travel to Washington, DC to receive their awards and to participate in an annual concert (Smithsonian Folkways: 2017b).

As with many arts-related programmes, the National Heritage Fellowship is now under threat along with other initiatives of the NEA. Despite the success of the programme and its enthusiastic reception across the cultural divides of the US, present budget proposals zero-out the NEA.

The National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS), founded in 1916, remains a key player in the recognition of traditional cultural practices. In addition to the agency's responsibility for maintaining the country's national park system—spanning 59 National Parks and 417 other units and 21,651 employees (Office of Communications: 2016; Heacox: 2016)—the NPS is also the lead agency for historic preservation and heritage efforts under the watershed National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA). These include the administration of the *National Register of Historic Places*, the nation's list of culturally and historically significant properties, and the management of the Historic Preservation Fund, an entity that underwrites the operations of the State, Territorial, and, after 1992, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (described below), as well as special programmes, such as *Save America's Treasures* and *Preserve America* (Stipe: 2003).

The *National Register of Historic Places* (NRHP) is the central programme affecting historically and culturally significant places in the US. Designed to recognise, and ideally protect, historic buildings, sites, districts and objects, the *National Register* focused—and continues to focus—on historic places and sites with clear physical properties. Properties range from individual monuments, such as commemorative sculptures, through historic houses, archaeological sites, and larger historic and archaeological districts (National Park Service: 2017a). The NRHP also includes landscapes, both designed and vernacular, as well as battlefields, bridges, lighthouses, historic mines, graveyards, and many other historic properties. As of 2017, there are a total of over 80,000 individual listings, many of which include multiple buildings, sites, and other features (*National Register of Historic Places*: 2017).

In the 1980s, the NPS introduced a new concept known as 'Traditional Cultural Properties' (TCPs) to better deal with places of important cultural significance but lacking the kinds of historic resources or assets normally associated with historic sites. Initiated by anthropologist Patricia Parker and archaeologist Tom King as a result of their fieldwork experience among Pacific Islanders and Native Americans, the TCP concept applied to places such as those *associated with traditional beliefs of a Native American group*; *rural communities, the organisation of which reflects cultural traditions valued by* [their] *long-term residents*; an urban neighbourhood *that is the traditional home of a particular cultural group; a location where Native American religious practitioners have historically gone* and where they perform *ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice;* or *a location where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity* (Parker and King: 1990; National Park Service: 2012) (Plate 4).

Although tied specifically to 'place' in accordance with the *National Register's* own emphasis, the TCP idea helped to steer registration efforts in new directions. Most importantly, the TCP approach helped to shift

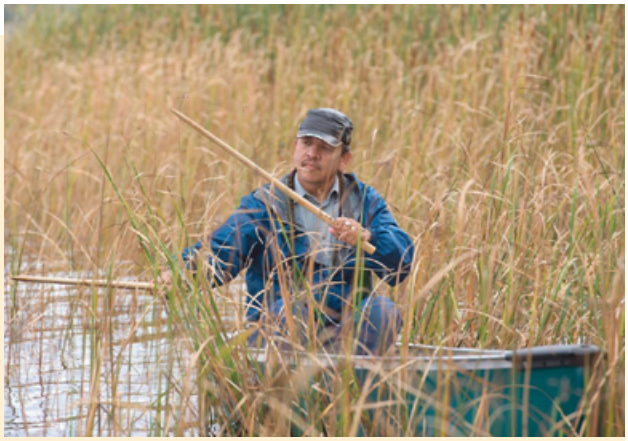

Plate 4
Donald Chosa Jr. Traditional rice gathering in Minnesota, Mark Sauer, Source: *Mesabi Daily News*.

attention away from objects and toward the people associated with them. It was not a perfect solution, but it did give voice to longstanding concerns that the NR was more involved with saving places than with recognising their ongoing cultural significance.

Although much of the NPS's effort still focuses on the preservation of tangible heritage, there is widespread recognition that intangible heritage plays an important part in the interpretation and understanding even of tangible sites. This is reflected particularly in the increasing expansion of the *National Register* to include more sites of 'cultural' rather than strictly 'historical' value. These include the designation of numerous 'Chinatowns', as well as other ethnic neighbourhoods and conclaves within the US.

Recent good examples include View Park Historic District in Los Angeles, an area distinguished by a range of building types dating from the early twentieth century but distinguished especially by its association with African American residents beginning in the 1960s (listed in 2016). Pilsen Historic District in Chicago has a comparable ethnic story. Begun in the late nineteenth century following the 1871 fire, Pilsen (listed in 2015) became associated with Bohemian settlement up until the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the 1950s, the neighbourhood became increasingly associated with Mexican immigrants, who by the early twenty-first century comprised 93% of its residents. The significance of the 'later' history and the contributions of Latinos to the fabric and character of the district are centrally cited in the *National Register* documentation in recognition of this clearly 'intangible' aspect of the district's character (Sommers: 2016).

These are but two examples of many districts and individual properties now listed for their association with specific cultures in the country's history. Other recent instances of what folklorist Laurie Kay Sommers recognises as a *more humanistic approach to historic preservation* are the Tarpon Springs Greektown National Register District, a site associated with Greek settlement in Pinellas County, Florida (listed in 2014); the Green River Drift Cattle Trail, an expansive TCP associated with ranching in Wyoming (listed in 2014); and Rice Bay, a recently designated TCP in Michigan's remote Upper Peninsula, recognising an area that once served as the traditional rice-growing grounds for the local band of Chippewa Indians (listed in 2016).

Tribal Preservation Program

In addition to the *National Register*, the NPS is also responsible for the administration of the Tribal Historic Preservation Program. Initiated in 1990, with a Congressional directive to the NPS to *study and report on Tribal preservation funding needs*, an effort to better advance preservation activities among native people—advocated in the report *Keepers of the Treasures—Protecting Historic Properties and Cultural Traditions on Indian Lands* (National Park Service: 1990). Underpinned by an amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act in 1992, this programme involves Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and Tribal Heritage Grants for recognised tribal groupings, with the latter earmarked for all Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. Allied to this initiative are funding opportunities for Pacific Islands, again under the aegis of the National Park Service. The championship of initiatives by staff of various state and federal agencies, and their hard work, are bright points in an increasingly dark landscape for heritage preservation.

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office programme is limited to federally recognised Indian tribes with reservations or tribal trust lands. Once approved, a THPO assumes the same duties as State Historic Preservation Offices, including the right to review federal undertakings that might affect historic or cultural properties and the responsibility for maintaining a list of significant sites

and ensuring that additional sites are added to the *National Register*. The Tribal Heritage Grants are earmarked for all Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, and do not require the oversight of a THPO. These are generally two-year grants, from the Historic Preservation Fund, and may be used for the identification of cultural resources, the preservation of listed properties, comprehensive planning, oral history and documentation efforts, and educational purposes (Hawkins: 2016).

In 1996, the Secretary of the Interior approved twelve tribes as qualified to assume responsibilities of a THPO on tribal lands. By 2012, this number was 140. Although the amount of funding has not kept pace, a large number of Native American entities now receive funding for historic preservation purposes. Annual funding as of 2013 was $7,867,323 for then 142 THPOs, for an average of - as of that year - about $52,000. (The average in 1999, then with fewer tribes in the pool, was about $72,000). In 2016 the total increased to $9,780,208, though it is now distributed among 157 Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers: 2016). The largest programmes have been those of the Zuni and Navajo, with the latter operating on a budget as high as $7 million annually from the Historic Preservation Fund and other sources (Hawkins: 2016).

Since 1990, the Interior Department has awarded more than $17 million in grants under the Tribal Heritage Program, with the usual annual funding in the $500,000-$600,000 range. In 2016, sixteen organisations received a total of $531,187 in grants. Notable awards in 2016—many focused on the preservation and interpretation of intangible heritage—included $14,900 to the Yavapai Apache Nation in Arizona to document a 180-mile historic trail; $36,369 to the Tejon Indian Tribe in California, to create a new GIS system; $5,848 to the Mashantucket Pequot in Connecticut for interpretive signage highlighting the 'Sugar Shack' cultural site; and $39,681 to the Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho for the transcription of 33 recordings focused on Nez Perce storytelling traditions (National Park Service: 2016).

With an average award of $33,199, this programme has taken important steps toward the recognition of heritage in the broadest sense. A few 'bricks and mortar' projects are also included, but even these often have an 'intangible' component, such as applying craft skills, recording processes of traditional construction, soliciting input from elders, and so on. As Valerie Hauser, Director of Native American Affairs, ACHP points out: *There seems to be a better understanding of the responsibility that Federal agencies have to Tribes and Native Hawaiians, but we still have a lot of work to do* (National Park Service: 2016, p.8).

Pacific Island Program

In addition to grants to Tribes, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Natives, the NPS has also played an important role in the development of heritage preservation/conservation programmes in the Pacific Islands. In the Territory of Samoa, the NPS has entered into a partnership relationship with local chiefs to protect valuable cultural and natural areas as part of the 'National Park of Samoa' (National Geographic Travel: 2017). In addition, the NPS has provided individual grants through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants programme for conservation work at several public parks and beach areas, some of it involving school groups and elders (National Park Service: 2008). The NPS also funded archaeological research, again, involving local young people, and the collection of stories and information from village elders (National Park Service: 2017b; Wells and Hommon: 2000). There were also projects focused on native botany involving both Samoan and North American participants, conducted under cooperative agreements with the University of Hawai'i and other institutions (Ragone and Lorence: 2006).

The NPS provided funding for similar projects in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), both territorial possessions of the US. These included support for the Territorial Historic Preservation Offices in both places, and individual grants both to the national parks in Guam and the CNMI, and to other agencies involved in both environmental and heritage conservation efforts (National Park Service: 2013). The annual grant to Guam is around $400,000 and that to the CNMI about the same (unfortunately down from 2012). In 2016, Guam received $410,831 and the CNMI $410,831 (Downer: 2017). This money funds a variety of projects, some of them involving the collection of information on traditional practices, languages, and storytelling (Plate 5).

Plate 5
Nansemond tribal members recognised by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1985.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The NPS is also centrally involved in heritage preservation in the former territories of the US, including the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands—known collectively as the Freely Associated States of Micronesia (National Park Service: 2011). These three entities receive collectively approximately the same as Guam and the CNMI (about $400,000), spread among three separate island countries and several states within them. Projects are divided across several areas, including archaeology, underwater resources, collections management, and training. Many of these activities focus on, or at least touch upon, intangible heritage. The state of Kosrae, part of the FSM, for example, compiled an extensive archive of videotaped coming-of-age ceremonies, as well as recordings of traditional songs and stories. Similar programmes have been carried out by other Historic Preservation Offices in the former US territories. The state of Yap completed projects on traditional fish weirs and canoes, both of which included extensive oral history collection, as well as the application of traditional skills (Jeffery: 2010) (Plate 6).

In addition to government sanctioned and/or funded projects there are numerous programmes sponsored by private non-profit organisations, schools, and universities. The Guam Preservation Trust (GPT) has promoted a number of programmes involving oral histories and the preservation of intangible heritage. These include a 'cultural map' of Guam's Spanish heritage, an oral history of the abandoned town of Pågat, and numerous cultural performances (Guam Preservation Trust: 2015). The Micronesia Area Research Center (MARC) at the University of Guam has been similarly active. Among activities in the period between 2009 and 2016 were the completion of a *Traditional Cultural Property Report* for Guam's military lands, publication of works on *Baseball in Palau* and the *Lepers of the Mariana Islands*, as well as projects on Chamorro weaving, house building, and dance (MARC: 2017). Father Francis Hezel, S.J., founder of the Micronesian Seminar in Pohnpei, authored dozens of articles and several books touching upon traditional culture in Micronesia, and also helped develop programmes focusing on traditions of musical performance and storytelling (Micronesia Seminar: 2010).

Much of this work is now continued in island schools throughout US territories and former territories throughout the Pacific. There has also been support from the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), the Peace Corps, and other international organisations involving traditional practices and heritage. JOCV volunteers, for example, assisted the FSM and Pohnpei State in the inscription of the megalithic ruins of Nan Madol to the *World Heritage List*, a project involving the collection of oral traditions pertaining to the sites. They also initiated video recordings of legends, tales, historical accounts, chants, and songs (Nagaoka: 2016).

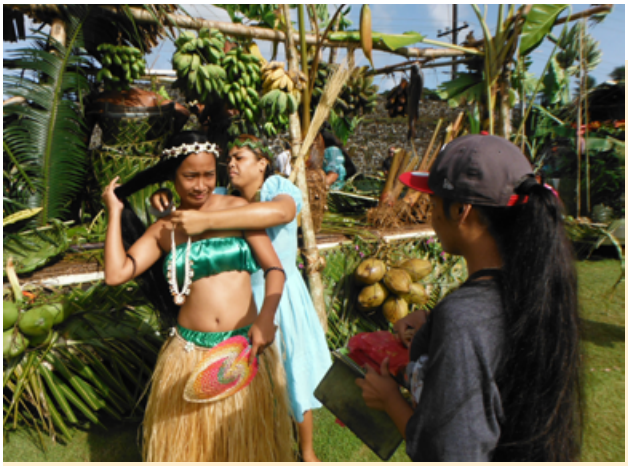

Plate 6
Preparing for local ceremony, Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia.
Source: Danaleeling.

Examples of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The US possesses a wealth of intangible cultural assets as might be expected of a complex, multicultural country. Some of these assets are long recognised. Others have been identified only recently. Throughout the country are folk traditions of musical performance, crafts, dance, storytelling, and other cultural expressions—especially cuisines—that speak to the diversity of American life. Some of these have become recognised as part of a kind of 'official national canon'. Others are only now being recorded and brought to public attention.

Several states, territories, cities, and regions have especially recognised folk heritages. These include Hawai'i, New Mexico (notably Santa Fe and the state's Pueblo Culture), Louisiana (with its Cajun traditions and the culturally complex mix of New Orleans), the mountain states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and North Carolina, and territories such as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. But every state and territory has some form of intangible cultural heritage, typically celebrated through annual or periodic performances, long-standing notice in the media, or scholarly investigation.

Texas has chilli, barbecued beef brisket, tamales, country-western dancing, high-school football, cheerleaders, calf roping (and other ranching skills), singing and yodelling, and rodeos generally. There are also distinct traditions reflective of both indigenous and immigrant communities in Texas: German, Czech, Polish, Mexican, African, and 'Southern Anglo' (Mendoza: 2015). Tiny Vermont has traditions associated with small-town life: town meetings, volunteer fire departments, and parades. The state is also home to rich craft traditions, including furniture and bowl making, pottery manufacture, country dancing and folk music, as well as many practices associated with the state's long agricultural past—apple picking, canning of preserves, vegetables and fruits, maple sugar production, dairy production, cheese-making. Its heritage also reflects its complex immigrant past and earlier history, including traditions of the state's indigenous Abenaki Indians, Italian, Polish, French Canadian, and Finnish immigrants, and the longstanding practices and cultural heritage of the dominant English, Dutch, and Scotch-Irish settlers (*Vermont, Cultural Life*: 2016) (Plate 7).

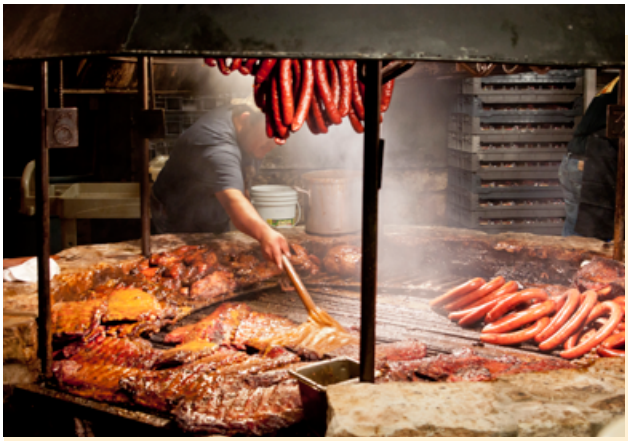

Plate 7
Barbecued meats, Texas.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Similar lists can be complied for other states as well: North Carolina and South Carolina with their combination of lowland and mountain traditions, the Pacific Northwest, with both indigenous and immigrant contributions to maritime and forest industries, agriculture, mining, and other activities. Even the Midwest, with its diverse populations of Amish and Mennonites, German and English settlers, folk music, agricultural contests, and African American musical forms. More recently, all of these places record the significant recent presence of both Latino and Arabic-speaking immigrants, who have made significant contributions to each region's cultural heritage (Ohio Arts Council: 2017). A similar story is true in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Upper and Lower South, and Southwest. Even 'modern' California has rich substrata of Latino, Aboriginal, Anglo, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other cultural traditions worthy of recognition.

One of the richest *loci* of intangible heritage can be found in Hawai'i. Reinvigorated through a recent renaissance of interest in Native Hawaiian culture, the island state has a lively assemblage of traditional dance troops (*halau*) distributed throughout the state that have done much to both resurrect and enliven traditional dance (*hula*), song (*mele*), and chant (*oli*). The annual performance at Hilo's Merrie Monarch Festival brings *halau* from all over the state (as well as other locals) to compete in a three-day event attended by locals and visitors. *Hula* is also performed at many island schools, as are traditional forms of song, and other performance arts. *Oli* are now incorporated into many public functions, as are Hawaiian blessings (*pule*) for

new undertakings, both of which constitute important revivals of traditional practice (Plate 8).

Other aspects of the Hawaiian renaissance include a new appreciation for traditional surfing techniques, including a revival of long-board surfing and stand-up paddle boarding (*hoe he'e nalu*). The exceedingly dangerous ancient sport of *he'e hōlua* (sledding on lava courses) has also experienced a revival, as have the making of *kapa* (known also as *tapa*) from mulberry bark, bowl manufacture, tattooing (*tātau or kākau*), woodcarving, and quilt making—the latter a practice introduced by Christian missionaries but adapted by the Hawaiians for their own use (McGregor: 2007).

In addition to the continuation and revival of traditional Hawaiian practices, the islands also embrace the traditional culture and folk heritage of numerous other ethnic groups. These include *sumo* wrestling from Japan and Okinawa, Japanese and Okinawan drumming, Chinese dragon dancing, boy and girl day ceremonies from Korea and Japan, temple *bon* dancing (*Oban* dancing originating in a Nenbutsu folk dance), Filipino 'money dances', and the celebration of Chinese and other Asian new years. Food in Hawaii also derives from a variety of ethnic sources, some cuisines still reflective of particular cultures, others fully hybridised within the culture as a whole (McDermott and Andrade: 2011) (Plate 9).

Another vibrant home for traditional culture is the American Southwest, especially the state of New Mexico and its capital Santa Fe. Important centres for both Navajo and Apache culture, New Mexico also has a rich legacy of Spanish culture, dating to early settlement in the sixteenth century. (Some of the area's Spanish settlers retained the practices of Hispanic Judaism, adding another wrinkle to the region's cultural diversity). About half the state's residents are of Hispanic origin, 10% are of native background. This diversity adds to the linguistic and cultural complexity of the state, and is evident in traditions of cuisine, religion, artisanship, and ceremonial practices.

New Mexico's traditional culture has long been a magnet for outside visitors. Artists and writers (notably Georgia O'Keefe and D.H. Lawrence) have been drawn to the landscape, vernacular buildings, and other traditions of the area. Archaeologist, Edgar Lee Hewett (1865-1946), founder of the Museum of New Mexico in 1909, did much to focus attention on the unique cultural heritage of Santa Fe and the Pueblo heritage surrounding the historic Spanish city, through the promotion of continuing traditions of pottery, basket making, and jewellery manufacture and the customs of the region. Today, the Southwestern Association

Plate 8
Hula performance, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.
Source: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior.

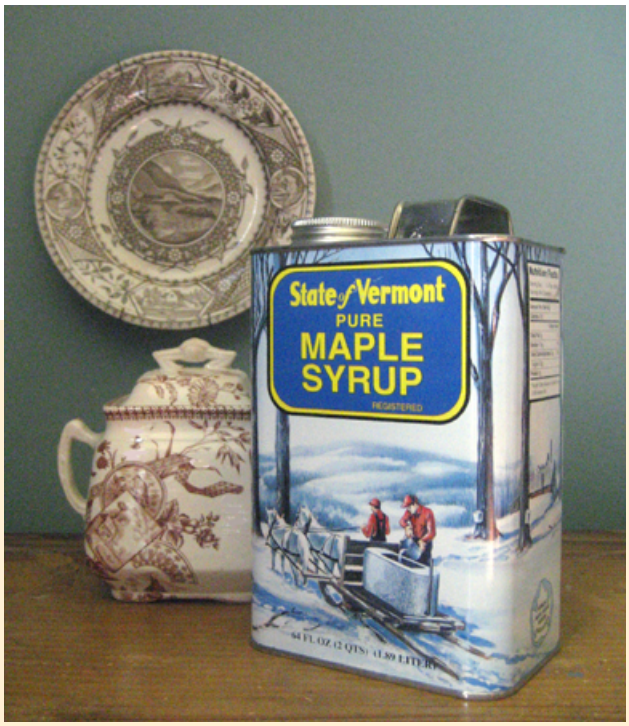

Plate 9
Vermont maple syrup.
Source: Jim Hood, Wikimedia commons.

for Indian Arts helps to perpetuate traditional crafts, overseeing the sales spaces lining the arcade of the Palace of the Governors, and sponsoring special events to highlight the work of native artists (Santa Fe Indian Market: 2016).

Santa Fe has for over sixty years preserved historic buildings and traditions of building within the area. It also promotes local festivals, such as the annual burning of *Zozobra*, a giant marionette effigy symbolising gloom, a tradition dating from as early as 1712. There are also saints' feast days, Holy Week, the Fiesta Entrada (a reenactment of the founding of Santa Fe), as well as numerous more recent activities, nonetheless focused on Santa Fe and New Mexico's traditions, including the area's unique cuisine (Santa Fe Selection: 2016).

Yet another example of traditional cultural heritage is Louisiana and its principal city of New Orleans. Unusual among US states for its French and Spanish heritage, Louisiana retains a strongly multicultural aspect, incorporating elements from French, Spanish, Native American, and African cultures, blended with layers of Anglo settlement and recent Asian (mostly Vietnamese) immigration. New Orleans was a unique *locus* of Haitian immigration following the revolution there, and also was an important site for Sephardic Jews, migrating from the Caribbean in the eighteenth century. Purchased by the US in 1803, Louisiana retains aspects of French and Creole heritage, including rural enclaves of Acadian—also called Cajun—inhabitants. French and Creole are still spoken languages in parts of the state.

This diverse cultural makeup has made a distinct contribution to Louisiana's musical, literary, and cooking traditions, as well as underwriting the still-vibrant festivals, practices, crafts, and ways of expression. Louisiana is the home of a number of distinct religious traditions, including Catholicism, various forms of Protestantism, and different Creole expressions, most famously Voodoo. New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz and also forms of the blues. *Zydeco* is a musical form associated with the French-speaking African Americans of South Louisiana. Acadians have their own musical traditions, collectively called 'Cajun music'. There is also gospel music (Plate 10).

For food, New Orleans and the surrounding areas of Louisiana embrace distinct Creole traditions, based on African, Native American, and Spanish and French roots. *Gumbo, étouffée, jambalaya, muffletta, po'boy,* and red beans and rice are all dishes associated with South Louisiana, as are desserts such as beignets, pralines, and sweet potato pie. Festivals include Mardi Gras (in New Orleans and other places), numerous music festivals, and several annual folk gatherings. There is also a heritage of dancing, parades (including Mardi Gras), funerals, and much more, all combining to make Louisiana and New Orleans a rich area for the celebration of folk arts. As jazz musician, Wynton Marsalis, announced, imitating the New Orleans patois: *Man, they have things down there you wouldn't believe... A city with they own cuisine, they own architecture, they own music...* (Wynton Marsalis: 2010). In short, much that fits the definition of 'intangible heritage'.

Steps toward a National Programme

The US has long demonstrated a high level of resourcefulness vis-à-vis the country's intangible cultural heritage. This has taken many forms: direct governmental support, the initiatives of government institutions such as the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution, and support by numerous types of local entities, from tourism boards through non-profit organisations. Threatened by the present US administration with reduced or eliminated funding, these organisations do much of the hard work of promoting and interpreting the country's rich legacy of non-material heritage.

Plate 10
Hot 8 Brass band at a New Orleans funeral.
Source: Howard Lurzus, Wikimedia Commons.

To return to the initial argument that the US has had a longstanding institutional involvement with intangible heritage, this descriptive overview provides just a sampling of governmental agencies, non-profit organisations, and programmes that have shown some level of commitment to and understanding of intangible heritage. These efforts have ranged from ways of documenting and recording intangible heritage—an effort dating back to the 1930s—through innovative means of funding heritage practices to ways of rethinking and reassessing intangible heritage in a complex and multicultural environment. These are not commitments that can be easily replicated in a single generation. The institutional apparatus in the US, moreover, is one now populated with high levels of experience and knowledge that contribute overall to the value of US practice.

The most tenacious supporters have been state and local arts and humanities organisations. Often funded at least in part by the federal government, these organisations have come closest to supporting the spirit and essence of the UNESCO *Convention*. Typically, the staffs of state organisations have a detailed understanding of trends and approaches toward traditional culture and intangible heritage. Many have been trained in both administration and the more salient aspects of arts management. Frequently they come from fields such as cultural studies and folklore; many too are contributing members to the broader arts and cultural communities.

The same certainly can be said of administrators in national programmes, such as the National Park Service and the Smithsonian Institution. Comprised of professionals with strong backgrounds in cultural heritage and the arts, the staffs of these organisations are closely in touch with developments at all levels of arts interpretation and promotion. This includes international initiatives to which, often, they have had contributing roles.

It is difficult to know what kinds of intangible assets the US might nominate under the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage* was it, in fact, again in a position to participate. The US is obviously a complex country with multiple heritages. The Smithsonian and National Park Service efforts have tended always to focus on the cultural production of minorities, and by the politically, economically, and culturally marginalised segments of American society: native peoples, rural peoples, and certainly African-Americans. These expressions collectively form a 'kind' of national picture, but they are significantly different in their totality from the kinds of intangible heritage that might be recognised in other countries. *Kabuki* or *Bunraku*, *Sumo* or *Noh* can clearly be called 'national' cultural expressions for Japan, which has an accepted canon of traditional performance arts. Bluegrass music, *hula* performance, and African-American storytelling are all recognised performance arts—generally seen as 'folk culture' and appreciated by many, but they are by no means canonical expressions of American cultural heritage as a whole. The same is true of American cuisine—rich and varied, but by no means 'national' in character.

The American experience certainly adds a sense of complexity to the enterprise of protecting intangible heritage. US practitioners, both those involved with the preservation of traditional arts and performance, and the artists or performers themselves, offer a rich legacy of experience and artistic excellence. US cultural administrators and academicians also bring a significant lens to the cause of cultural protection and promotion. It is a shame that the US's present position prevents greater participation in efforts to recognise and preserve traditional cultural expression through the UNESCO *Convention on Intangible Heritage*. It can only be hoped that this will change in the future.

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