ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY REPORT TO
THE STEEL INDUSTRY HERITAGE CORPORATION
ON THE COMMUNITIES OF WEST HOMESTEAD, HOMESTEAD, MUNHALL, DUQUESNE AND WEST MIFFLIN, PENNSYLVANIA

SUBMITTED BY SARA STURDEVANT

20 OCTOBER, 1993

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present the preliminary findings of ethnographic research done in the Monongahela Valley area, specifically in the communities of West Homestead, Homestead, Munhall, Duquesne and West Mifflin. This report is not meant to be a comprehensive ethnographic treatment of the area but to survey important issues that shape the face of these communities. The focus of the research has been on the historical and contemporary cultures of the various ethnic and occupational groups in this five-community region. This report is meant to be anthropological in its approach. Therefore, an attempt has been made to illustrate how many of the issues, themes and problems encountered are interconnected and that an approach that integrates various topics is needed to understand the area.

While the communities represented in this study are distinct cities and boroughs, they are in many ways culturally homogeneous. This is especially true of West Homestead, Homestead and Munhall. Clearly, much of this resemblance and continuity is based on the shared experience of the steel industry and the prevalence of certain ethnic groups in each area. Certainly each community has its own flavor and residents are quick to point out the important differences.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design I submitted for this project naturally evolved from the dissertation research I am currently involved in here in the Mon Valley. In that capacity I am interested in how people made a living after the mills closed, what parts of the economy they use and how they think about the notion of class. Although the SIHC project does not explicitly incorporate the use of long-term participant observation, I have relied on the material I have gathered and come to understand in the two years that I

have been living and working in the Steel Valley. The purpose statement of my proposal to SIHC included my larger interest in livelihood strategies, but also focused on my interest in looking at the mill and the steel industry as an important symbol for the residents of this area. Therefore much of my interviewing focused on stories and recollections of the informant's mill experience, whether it was his or her own or that of another family member or friend. Because of the SIHC interest in ethnicity, I attempted to explore the relationship between ethnicity and mill work as well as the symbols individuals use to express their ethnic identity. I also am interested in the aspects of the community that people see as important enough to preserve. Because the steel industry had such an impact on nearly everyone's life here, I also looked for various explanations about the rise and fall of that industry.

The research methodology followed along a number of lines. Most of the data were collected through interviews. Contacts for interviews were made through a number of sources. These include: people I am acquainted with from previous research, many of which are now good friends and also some relatives; people I met through contact with institutions such as churches, ethnic clubs, union groups and community groups; people who were referred to me by other researchers in the area; and people I met on the street or at various community functions. While the sample is by no means random, I feel it offers a wide selection of opinion and viewpoint from the area. My sample includes people ranging from the ages of 25 to 85, a mix of males and females, people from a range of ethnic groups and representatives of government, churches, former and current steel workers. The educational background ranged from less than a high-school education to professional degrees. I tried to balance both the female and male perspectives on life in the area, especially in the context of the effect mill work had and has on family life and in relationship to ethnicity and the keeping of tradition. I conducted both formal taped interviews and informal untaped interviews with people who did not wish to be recorded,

or with whom I spoke on the phone. The interview format covered the topics suggested by Doris Dyen. The use of ethnographic futures in the interview also provided a wealth of information about local perceptions of the future of the area.

I attended community cultural events of a wide variety, such as Croatian Day at Kennywood Park in West Mifflin and Homestead Days in Homestead (see ES92-SS1-S, images 17-26). I tried also to attend community functions that occurred on a regular basis, in order to achieve some sort of continuity. A fine and satisfying example of this is the **pirohi** luncheon that takes place every Friday at St. John's Byzantine Catholic Church in Homestead. I visited the gathering places that my informants told me were significant in the community, such as restaurants, parks, shopping areas and local bars, for example, Chiodo's Tavern in Homestead and The Parry Hotel in West Homestead. In one case an interview took place in the Eat'n'Park Restaurant in Homestead. These visits allowed me to better understand the important cultural map of the area and to get a sense for what segments of the community gathered where.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND MATERIALS

I used written historical and sociological accounts of life in the area to aid in the historical and background parts of this report. The fiction that is written about the Mon Valley also offers impressions about the area that I think can be useful. The written material used is included in the bibliography.

The Steel Valley represents a major portion of industrial, labor, and union history in the United States. Because of the importance of the steel industry and the notoriety it gained through the power of its unions, This area is often used as an example of what is good and bad about industrial production in

general. Because of this stature, Homestead has been the subject of many books. In this report, I sought to draw from interviews as the primary source for my statements about the culture here, but several sources have been invaluable.

I sought out locally produced histories of the communities I studies, such as those reproduced in centennial and anniversary booklets of the boroughs in the area. These present a view of history that underscores the events and people that are important locally, not just in the minds of scholars. These were found at the Carnegie Library in Oakland. Unfortunately, these materials are often not to be found in small, community libraries, where they might be best appreciated.

These sources were augmented with works that take a more over-arching and theoretically driven approach, such as Hoerr's And The Wolf Finally Came (1988) and Serrin's Homestead (1992). Serrin's book was especially useful to me, as it was recently published, and offered insight into the politics and business of the steel industry across this century. Because this book presents a rather depressing account of the area, it stimulated me to present what I see as the resiliency and strength of these communities.

In addition to sources specific to the area, I also drew on works that examined unemployment and de-industrialization in other parts of the United States. The Magic City (Pappas, 1989) looks at changing economic strategies caused by plant closings in northeastern Ohio and there I found similar emphasis on the importance of place and family in keeping communities alive through stressful times. The Livelihood of Kin (Halperin 1988) examines survival strategies in the face of economic stress in northern Kentucky. In this work the setting is more rural that in the Mon Valley, but adaptive economic arrangements based on kin and cultural/ethnic identity compare to what I found in the Mon Valley.

I also read the local newspaper, The Valley Mirror, on a regular basis. While I did not include

specific articles from the paper, I gained much insight into the issues and concerns of the residents from it.

GEOGRAPHY: PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL

Most of the area that is covered in this report is what might be called the Steel Valley, a term that the inhabitants use. This area was, in the past, perhaps the most famous steel-making center in the world and the reflection of this production clings to the area even after the mills have closed. The image of this area to the outsider is one of the industrial landscape, and urban decay. It is surprising to realize that the area is far more diverse and lively. Wooded roadways exist minutes from the mill sites and suburban type housing plans are more common than dilapidated worker housing. Shopping malls coexist with working factories and small farmsteads. The diversity of the area should be emphasized.

I have divided this section into comments on both physical and cultural geography. The physical geography of the area addresses questions about boundaries between communities and physical features of the communities. In this section I also include demographic information about each of the areas. The comments on cultural geography explore the relationships between the communities, the invisible, symbolic boundaries and residents' perceptions about the various neighborhoods around them.

In carrying out this research, I was assigned to explore specific geographical communities. What I found was a multiplicity of communities that overlaid and superseded geographical boundaries. These non-geographically based communities were held together along social and symbolic lines such as ethnicity, religion, family, occupation, special interests (music, dance, food) and the like. For some

individuals these symbolic communities are far more important for self-identity than geographical ones. The vagaries of the economy, unemployment, housing availability may displace people from neighborhoods but other types of connections allow them to maintain and sense of group membership and identity. These kinds of ties also allow people to reach out to other areas and expand their social networks by including, for example, a ethnic music group in tons that are far away. This is not to say that geography is not important. The sense of place in the Mon Valley is very strong and many informants stated that they would never leave the area if at all avoidable.

Physical Geography

The communities in this report are for the most part set into the valley associated with the Monongahela River, with the exception of West Mifflin, which is inland farther south and has a much more rural and suburban feel. The study area ranges from 5 to 10 miles up the Monongahela River from the city of Pittsburgh and many of the residents commute to the city to work. The hills of the area are distinctive features and the smaller communities are separated by physical geographical boundaries, such as valleys and ravines.

The communities of West Homestead, Homestead, Munhall and Duquesne are more densely populated than is West Mifflin, and their housing stock is much older for the most part. Homes and businesses are crowded into the hills in these communities while things tend to sprawl out much more in the more recently developed West Mifflin and to some degree in the southern or "upper" parts of Munhall.

West Homestead

West Homestead is located on the southern bank of the Monongahela River about 5 miles southeast of the Point in Downtown Pittsburgh. The borough stretches up the hills of the river valley.

Land use is a mixture of commercial and residential. Eighth Avenue is the major thoroughfare and center of commerce and shopping. Significant landmarks in the area are the Mesta Company, a machine-tool factory founded in 1898 that was owned and operated by George Mesta until about ten years ago when the company declared bankruptcy and the plant was bought by the Park Corporation. The site was renamed Whemco, an acronym for West Homestead Engineering and Machine Company. Mesta also built a mansion and several other large homes on Doyle Avenue. The Sandcastle Waterpark that is run by the Kennywood Company is along the river and sits on a portion of the former Mesta plant property. The waterpark is a big draw to the borough and often cited as one of the success stories of the valley. Many residents hope the complex will expand.

According to the 1990 US census, 2,495 people reside in the borough of West Homestead. Of this, 94.5% are white and 4.4%% are black, with the remainder being for the most part of Asian heritage. The most commonly reported ancestry is Slovak, followed by Irish and German.

Duquesne

Duquesne is situated on the southern side of the Monongahela River about 12 miles south of the city of Pittsburgh. The shoreline area was taken up by the site of the former US Steel Duquesne Works. The town stretches up the banks of the river valley. A town center includes the city hall, a number of schools and a wide array of churches, many of which are celebrating their centennial anniversaries. The mayor, Mel Achtzen (see ES92-SS15-C) was proud to tell me that the town still supports about 40 employees and has its own police and fire departments. Prominent is the town square, with a clock tower in the middle, which has a became a symbol for the city of Duquesne. The city government is working with a number of community groups and regional organizations to revitalize the mill site and a number of options for that redevelopment are currently in the planning stages. The mill

area has been renamed City Center Duquesne.

The 1990 US Census reports that Duquesne has a population of 8,525 people, 68.2% of which are white, 30.8% of which are black. The most commonly reported ancestry is by far Slovak, followed by German, Hungarian and Polish. (See ES92-SS2-S, images 29 and 30.)

West Mifflin

West Mifflin stretches over a much wider area than any other community in this research set. The borough lies along the shoreline of the Monongahela River, about 14 miles from Pittsburgh, between Whitaker and Duquesne and extends inland about 7 miles to the south of the river. It borders every other community in the study. It is by far the most diverse geographically in that there are areas of older homes, newer housing plans, wooded and semi-rural stretches, and a highly developed shopping area centered around the Century III mall. According to Elmer Best (see ES92-SS10-C; ES92-SS2-S, images 32-35), a long-time West Mifflin resident, much of the area was farmland until well into the second half of the 20th century. The Allegheny County Airport is located in West Mifflin as well as a number of technical schools related to aeronautics. The type and number of businesses in West Mifflin are much more diverse that other communities in the study. This is in part due to the size of the borough and the fact that it seemed to be less hard-hit by the closing of the steel mills than were other communities. The US Steel Irvin Works is in West Mifflin and is still in operation.

The population of West Mifflin was reported in the 1990 US Census to be 23,644. Of this number, 92.2% are white and 7.4% are Black. The Census also reports that the most often-claimed ancestry is Slovak, followed by German and African-American groups.

Homestead

The borough of Homestead sits on the south bank of the Monongahela River about 7 miles

south of Pittsburgh and is flanked by the communities of Munhall and West Homestead. The town stretches about twenty blocks in a grid pattern inland to the south of Eighth Avenue and has a jagged outline that even most of the residents cannot describe. Eighth Avenue is the large commercial roadway that runs parallel to the river and accommodates traffic ranging from passenger cars to tractor trailers. Most of the major businesses are along Eighth Avenue, which was once directly adjacent to the now-closed US Steel Homestead Works. The residents refer to it as "The Avenue" and it is the center of the borough (see ES93-SS3-S, images 2-3). The borough has approximately 20 churches of varying denominations that reflect the rich ethnic diversity of the population. These range from Roman Catholic to Russian Orthodox to Protestant store-front churches and a now-closed Jewish synagogue. The religious architecture of the town is well-known and loved by the residents (see ES92-SS1-S, images 1-11). When asking Homesteaders what they considered to be important landmarks, nearly all responded that churches are critical to the history and heritage of the town. The center of the town is marked by Frick Park, a popular site for relaxing in the afternoons and community functions (see ES92-SS1-S, images 12-15). Residents remember when there was a fountain in the center and well-kept gardens and landscaping.

West Street runs inland from the Mon River and the Homestead High Level Bridge, up a steep hill. West Street is dotted with homes and businesses, as well as the Homestead Hospital.

According to the 1990 US Census, 4,179 people reside in Homestead. Of this figure, 54.5% are white and 43.7% are black. The remainder is made up of persons of Asian descent. Significant ethnic groups in this population include Slovak, Irish and German.

Munhall

Munhall is on the southern banks of the Mon River, located about 8 miles from the city of

Pittsburgh and stretches from the river banks inland up the hill. The Carnegie Library of Homestead is actually located on Eleventh Avenue in Munhall. The surrounding residential area is Library Square and is the site of numerous large homes that were built for white-collar workers of the Carnegie Steel Company (later US Steel Homestead Works.) McClure Street marks a rough northern boundary between Homestead and Munhall as one moves southward to the cemetery area at the intersection of Main Street and 22nd Avenue. The cemetery area, consisting of the Homestead, St. Mary's and St. Nicholas's cemeteries is an important place marker that separates "lower Munhall" from "upper Munhall", also called "Homestead Park." The cemeteries are also the burial sites of the men who died in the Homestead Strike of 1892.

Starting at the cemetery area, Main Street runs through "upper Munhall" out to Lincoln Place, which is part of the City of Pittsburgh. It is an important business strip for the area and recently underwent a "face-lift" that has pleased many residents and is hoped to inspire more business along the street. Also on Main Street is the Steel Valley High School, Park Elementary School and a fire station. The borough building is located on West Street and houses borough offices, another fire station and the police court, and is considered by many to be an important piece of architecture in the area (see ES93-SS3-S, image 4).

In 1990, the US Census reported that 13,158 persons resided in Munhall. 98.4% of these are white and 1.2% are black. The census also reported that the most well-represented ethnic groups are Slovak, German, Irish, Polish and Italian.

Cultural Geography

Throughout the interviews, a pattern of community affiliation and inter-dependence emerged. Some communities are more closely linked than others. Groups in various communities perceive

themselves to be connected to other communities in various ways. These patterns or cultural maps are the result of the area's topography in part. For example, Homestead and Munhall are contiguous and therefore the people residing there feel a certain connection between the communities. Throughout the research I found that other factors carried weight in determining these cultural maps as well. Social networks created by merged church congregations and school districts created strong ties between communities.

I asked all the informants to discuss the rivalries that existed between high schools, as most of them attended high school here. Naturally these changed as the school districts themselves changed. For example, older residents told me of the powerful rivalry between Homestead and Munhall high schools, and suggested that "friendly rivalry" persists today, even though the schools have merged. Students that are graduates from the more-recent Steel Valley School District, a merger between Homestead and Munhall, found their arch-rival to be West Mifflin. Residents of the Duquesne area (all of the informants in this population were long-graduated from high school), found their rival in McKeesport.

The broad cultural map that emerged shows a close-knit relationship between West Homestead, Homestead and Munhall, while Duquesne is perceived as an independent entity. West Mifflin presents a more complex situation. The western- most parts of West Mifflin are seen as connected to the three close-knit boroughs, basically because many former residents of the WH-H-M area have moved out to the western suburbs in West Mifflin. Duquesne residents see themselves as related to southeastern parts of West Mifflin. One Duquesne resident said that "West Mifflin used to be part of Duquesne and still is." Homestead and Munhall residents see themselves as most closely connected to the parts of West Mifflin that border their boroughs. Residents of West Mifflin have

various views, but look to the cities and boroughs along the river across family and friendship connections. I asked people what the paths of migration were in their area, where people moved when their finances improved or when they wanted to "move up." Many responded that West Mifflin was the biggest draw for most people from the West Homestead-Homestead-Munhall area. Others cited areas across the river such as Elizabeth Township, North Huntington or Monroeville, but the overwhelming response of "West Mifflin" echoes the idea that to "move up" is literally to move up the hill away from the river and away from the mill. In the Homestead- Munhall area, the cemetery at Main and 22nd streets is an important cultural marker, defining "upper" from "lower" Munhall. Upper Munhall is described as middle class, and "like the suburbs." It is for the most part white. Jerry Manning (see ES92-SS4-C), a Munhall resident says that "Upper Munhall considers itself another world." The same affiliation is true for Duquesne. A West Mifflin resident who grew up in Duquesne says that her neighborhood in West Mifflin is just like Duquesne.

Although the areas along the river in West Homestead, Munhall and Homestead, were once central shopping area, now most residents do their shopping in West Mifflin, near the Century III mall. Several residents of upper Munhall say they hardly ever go down to Eighth Avenue.

HISTORY

The long and rich history of this area will be outlined with more detailed treatment where possible and necessary. Significant historical treatments of the area have been cited as a guideline for further information.

Homestead

The history of Homestead has been the topic of innumerable works by historians and journalists,

especially after the mills closed and during the centenary of the 1892 Homestead Strike. According to William Serrin (1992: 31), the first white person in the area is thought to have been Sebastian Frederick in the 1770s. He claimed a parcel of land that measured 303 acres and ran from the river up the hill to what is now the cemetery. Serrin suggests that he left the area and moved on when the game ran out. John McClure is acknowledged as the earliest permanent settler in Homestead. He established a farm with his wife and six children, and called it the "Amity Homestead." This is likely the source of the street named Amity in Homestead. It is from his farm that Homestead gets its name. Other farms emerged in the area. A descendent of McClure, Abdiel McClure, joined with Lowry H. West to establish the Homestead Bank and Life Insurance Company in 1871 (Serrin 1992: 32). This company sold land for housing as a suburb of Pittsburgh. The first iron foundry was established in 1793,then a rolling mill in 1812. A lumber mill was soon established, as was a glass making facility.

Industrial production began to boom in the Greater Pittsburgh area through the 1800s and in 1873 Andrew Carnegie began construction of the Edgar Thomson Works. Homestead seceded from Mifflin Town ship and became a borough in 1880. In 1881 Pittsburgh Bessemer Steel began producing steel in Homestead and in 1883, Andrew Carnegie bought the company, renaming it Homestead Works. It stretched along he riverfront through parts of the three contiguous communities of West Homestead, Homestead and Munhall. For over 100 years, until the plant closed in 1986, the Homestead works produced armor plate and other steel products, and employed thousand of local workers. Clearly, the steel industry has had a greater impact on the area than any other factor, bringing in thousands of immigrants from Europe and the American South.

Munhall

I found no documents detailing the specific history of Munhall. When discussed, the history of

Munhall is explained as part of the history of Homestead or of the larger Steel Valley. Residents have suggested that Munhall was meant to be the neighborhood of the white-collar workers in the steel mills.

West Homestead

The History of West Homestead follows that of the Mon Valley area as addressed above. The information that follows was collected from the most part from The Official Publication of the West Homestead, Pennsylvania 75th Anniversary Publication. In 1788, Allegheny County was divided into seven townships, one of them being called Mifflin Township, which includes what is now the Borough of West Homestead. The earliest settlers inhabited the area in the late 1700s and included Davis Calhoun, a man of Scotch-Irish descent from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Calhoun and John Shearer acquired a land grant in 1789, known as the Calhoun-Shearer Patent. Calhoun's descendents established a number of homesteads in the area; one is now the site of the Calhoun Junior High School. James H. Hayes began the coal trade in the area in 1828. On January 29, 1901, the area was incorporated into the borough of West Homestead. George Mesta founded the Mesta Machine Company, which drew workers and added to the population. Mesta Machine was internationally known as a producer of machine tools and at one time employed nearly 1,200 workers. Coal mining was also significant, but mining was depleted in the area by the late 1930s. The Mesta plant closed in the 1980s, mirroring the economic devastation throughout the valley, but was reopened as Whemco, a large machine tool company. Other important employers in the borough include American Shear and Knife and US Steel.

Duquesne

The early history of Duquesne follows that discussed for the area as a whole as discussed above. In 1885, the Duquesne Steel Company purchased land along the river front and construction began on a steel mill. In 1887 the Duquesne Tube Works were established, followed by the Howard

Glass Plate Company in 1888. The Duquesne Steel Company was purchased by the Allegheny Bessemer Steel Company which was then sold to Carnegie Steel Company. In 1891 the City of Duquesne was incorporated, taking its name from the eighteenth-century governor general of Canada. In 1941, the oldest part of Duquesne, known as "below the tracks was razed in order to make way for the expansion of the Duquesne Works. The Duquesne works of US Steel operated in Duquesne until 1984. The site is now owned by the Regional Industrial Development Corporation.

West Mifflin

West Mifflin was the last borough to be incorporated of all those originally included in Mifflin Township. The incorporation occurred in 1944. Because of all the previous carving-up of the township by the other boroughs, the boundaries of West Mifflin are irregular and have caused some local people to claim, "It's here, it's there, it's everywhere." The borough now covers 14.35 square miles and is much larger than the other communities included herein.

Mifflin Township was basically agricultural land, but some large mining interests were also developed. These existed until the early part of the 20th century. Resident Elmer Best can remember mining operations as recently as 1926, the Union Valley Coal Company being the last mine in operation on a commercial scale. He suggests that nearly 150 mines operated in the area. Mr. Best is a font of historical information about the area. Born in 1907 on Schultz's Farm in the Lincoln Place area, Mr. Best has lived his entire life in West Mifflin and is a respected local historian. He states that many people started their own small coal mines for personal use in the area and he can remember picking coal when he was 3 or 4 years old. He comments that mining was once as important to the area once as steel was: "Everybody is all upset about the steel industry that left us; the coal industry was almost just

as big."

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The manner in which the area was settled follows the historical development of the region. Initially, the area was farmland and numerous farmsteads appeared. As industrial development flourished, especially in the riverside communities, immigrants arrived and enclaves of work housing grew in the areas near the steel plants, called "below the tracks." Byington (1974) presents a good documentation of this. As the mills expanded in the 1940s, these communities were razed and the residents moved up the hill to other neighborhoods and housing projects built expressly for them. Informants suggested to me that placement of housing along the hills side is directly connected to status. The higher up the hill, the better the area. This is likely due to the fact that conditions were cleaner farther away from the mills.

After the mills closed and populations decreased and changed, ideas about neighborhoods are still somewhat based on the notion of higher up the valley sides as better. Currently, the make-up of neighborhoods id changing. There are new residents moving in and some long-term inhabitants feel uncertain about these newcomers. Often, new residents are seen as a threat, especially those of lower socio-economic status.

CULTURE, WORK AND TRADITION: OCCUPATION IN THE STEEL VALLEY

The culture of the area I surveyed was shaped by two significant factors; the ethnicity of the people who populated the area and the work they found in the steel mills. Certainly, other factors shaped life in this section of the Mon Valley, but not as clearly and distinctly as these did. Most factors

influencing the culture of this area are interwoven, and this is certainly true of occupation and ethnicity. The need for labor in the mills attracted large numbers of immigrants, first from Western Europe, then from eastern Europe and ultimately from the American South. Families established roots in the area and then welcomed other kinsmen, aiding them in finding employment in the mills. Numerous informants discuss how their parents or grandparents had relatives in the area who helped the newcomers adjust. The fact that many perceived most mill workers to be "Hunkies" (a term that suggests Hungarian or at least Slavic descent, see below), and that a resident of Homestead of British Isles extraction "thought he was a Hunkie like everybody else who lived here," bears this connection between occupation and ethnicity out.

The connection between these two factors is often discussed in terms of the area called "below the tracks." These were residential areas near the river where many workers lived. In these neighborhoods many ethnic groups were living together and a sense of bonding emerged. Donna Vranesevic (see ES92-SS14-C) states that these close relationships across ethnic lines gives the Mon Valley residents a much greater sense of tolerance. People were bonded together by work in the steel industry and they not only tolerated other ethnic groups but tried to understand them and appreciate other cultures. Being an American came first.

The Mill as Cultural Symbol: Permanence and Change

To understand the culture of the area is to understand how the mill is a central symbol in the lives of the people who live here. It colors ideas about history, work, livelihood, family and self-identity.

Driving through the region, I could not help but be struck by the absolutely massive and

monumental nature of the structures that made up the production sites of steel. Even as they decay and disappear, they seem like natural formations that have been there forever. That sense of permanence also colored many of my informants' discussions of the area. Even though people know the mills are essentially gone (many are currently being demolished), it still seems to shock many residents. I asked each of my informants what they thought or felt when they drove past the mills, now that they are shut down. The most common response was "sadness." Many people went on to say, "I never thought they would close" or "You thought that would be there forever." Joanne Karaczun (see ES92-SS11-C), who grew up in the area and married a man who worked in the steel industry, remembers a sense of the everlasting. She said, "I think that is why, when it did close, for literally years after that, you had men standing down at the gate carrying signs, still saying it was going to reopen again."

Those reactions indicate ideas about work and occupation that are now forever changed in this area. People who once thought of a job as permanent, and as something you could count on forever now see that there may be no such thing as a permanent job. Because work in the steel industry was something that carried over from generation to generation, the sense of permanent, reliable job opportunity was immense. Several informants said "Everyone in my family worked in the mill, I just took it for granted that I would too." A man in his thirties said that the school system did not have much to offer because "everyone thought we would just be mill hunkies...mill hunkies don't need computer educations." After the steel industry essentially left the area, so did the notion of a one-job employment history. Now people talk of having many jobs and of not expecting to stay in one place too long, because the future may be unsure. The reliance on big companies like US Steel has, of course, dwindled and most people now work for much smaller companies, have their own businesses, or have several part-time jobs. The cultural construction of work has clearly changed.

The steel industry also forged ideas about what proper work is for Americans, especially for men. The notion of "man's work" was brought up by several of my informants, suggesting that proper work for men involved real physical labor, that one got dirty and sweaty. Now those kinds of jobs are gone, and some suggested that this has caused problems in men's self definition. One man in his thirties told me that his father worked in the Homestead mill for nearly thirty years and when it closed, he found work as a security guard. This new employment was unsatisfactory, not only because the pay was lower, but because the work was "wrong" for him. In addition, his wife took this opportunity to find a job of her own, because she wanted to, not merely because of financial need. The son described this as devastating to his father. The idea that his wife was working hurt him, even though she enjoyed her job.

Beyond being a symbol of work, the mill also embodied cultural formulae about family and place. Being employed in the same industry as your father and even grandfather enhanced connections across generations for some men. And the "inheriting " of the mill deepened the sense of place. People told me that their fathers and grandfathers had come here and worked in the mill, and that intensified their ties and commitments to the area. When I asked people why they stayed after the mills and the work was gone, the response was commonly, "This is my home, my heritage, and I am not going to leave it." Of course, not everyone had such sentimental reactions.

If the steel industry shaped people's lives across generations, then the closing of the mills changed their lives. Younger people that I talked to said they "saw it coming." Kathy Boytim (see ES92-SS3-C), a Munhall resident said she and her classmates knew something was happening when the mills were closing, but that it just wasn't something that you would discuss. She knew that her parents and her friends' parents would be hurt, not just financially but also in terms of their pride. From

high school on, she never planned to stay in the area, because she knew there were no job opportunities here. Her older sister, Christine, stayed and has started her own small business. Bill Pelger (see ES92-SS5-C), who is now in his thirties, worked in the mill in 1978. Bill, now a lawyer, quit college to work in the mill because "I thought I could work in the mill to pay the bills and become a great writer." His experience in the mill made him realize it was not going to be around too long and he left the area for a time. Older residents discuss the impact of the closings. Yvonne Godbolt (see ES92-SS6-C, ES92-SS1-S, 15) of West Homestead is from a family in which almost all the men worked in the mill. Her parent's came from Alabama, probably attracted by the work in the area. She remembers that the mill was considered good money and was the "only work you could get around here most of the time." She says she did not expect the mills to ever close, that it "was like a shock, a total shock." Her brothers who worked there said they knew it was happening, that they had heard rumors. Her brother-in-law needed one more week of work there to get certain benefits and the company denied him these benefits. "People got shortchanged." Some older men that I was told worked in the mill refused to talk to me about it when I asked for interviews. They did not explain their reasons, but I was told they were either sick of the "carpetbaggers" using them or the whole thing was just too painful.

The closings also affected people who kept their jobs. Michael Doby (see ES92-SS16-C), who works on a crane at the Irvin Works in West Mifflin, says it was hard to talk about work when all his friends had been laid off. He remembers hanging around with some of his friends at a local garage and saying he had to go to work. One of his friends replied, "At least you got a godammed job." He and his wife Sandy spoke of their friends whose lives were devastated. One of their friends became an alcoholic after the closings. Sandy says "When you sit down next to him at the bar, that's the first thing that comes out of his mouth, the mill. How he could have been more than he is today." Even though the

Irvin Works was still open, the other closings set off a spark of rumors. The 1986 closings caused a shut down of about sixteen months. Michael found other work doing odd jobs with his brother-in-law. He says, "We had no idea what was going to happen to us, we had our eyes on ET (the Edgar Thomson Works) because they were our sole supplier (of steel slabs). If ET would have folded up, then the party would have been over for the rest of us." His wife remembers feeling scared at that time: "I thought we were going to be homeless."

Mill Work: Family and Gender

Because of the pervasive effect that the mill culture had on the community, I talked to several women about the way steel work shaped family life. I tried to get the viewpoint of wives and daughters as well as sisters and mothers.

The first thing that most women mentioned were the consequences of shift work on the family routine. Responses such as, "We learned to live with his turns" and "Whatever turn he was on was the turn that we lived," were common. Sandy Doby's mother kept diaries and the entries detail all of Sandy's father's shift work. She said she could never understand why her mother could not get out of bed, and now, being married to a "mill hunk" who works at US Steel Irvin Works, she understands. Things have changed between the generations (see ES92-SS17-C). Sandy's mother lived her father's schedule, but she herself will not do that. "I live my own schedule and he fends for himself." Joanne Karaczun remembers living with her father's changing shifts and how hard it was to get him up for work.

The feeling that mill wives were like single mothers also surfaced. Sandy Doby commented that "He is never here when you want him to be. I can never plan anything. I'm like a single parent a lot of

the time. The only time I can plan anything is when there is going to be a shut-down." Holidays also present a problem. Joanne Karaczun recalled that her family had to plan their holidays around her father and hope he could attend the festivities.

Consistent in many women's accounts was the fear they felt for the safety of their father, brothers, husbands and sons. Yvonne Godbolt's father had his leg amputated in an accident in the mill. Her mother was pregnant at the time and it was feared that she would lose the baby. She says her father was not bitter about the accident, that he just took it in his stride. After the accident, US Steel guaranteed him a job for life and medical coverage for problems concerning his leg. He wrote to President Roosevelt about the accident and Roosevelt sent him a cane. After the accident, her family worried constantly about the dangers in the mill. He brothers then took jobs in the mill and the families fears escalated. Yvonne remembers seeing signs by the mill that would document how many days since and accident had occurred and that bothered her. "It was really something, but you got used to it." Her daughter and sister both worked in the mill, but the sister quit after one day, because she felt the conditions were just too dangerous.

Some people also mentioned that their mother or grandmothers worked in the mill during the war, but they don't really recall them talking about it.

If there is any mythology in the Steel Valley, it centers on why the steel industry declined. This is not a shared mythology. Everyone has their own opinion and convictions on this topic run deep and strong. The blame is laid at the feet of the unions or the steel companies. Some say that the unions got out of hand, that an anti-work ethic was fostered and that people were being paid extravagant wages. Others say that the steel companies sold the area out and deserted the people in order to make more money elsewhere. Many people stated that US Steel did not keep the factories properly modernized or

even within safe operating standards. Foreign steel is also often thought to be the blame. Joe Bumbas (see ES93-SS19-C; ES93-SS1-B, images 3-5), a life long steel worker from the Duquesne-West Mifflin area suggested that US Steel was thought to have supported the very foreign factories that closed the plants in this area. Bill Pelger told me he knew someone who said that the decision to end steel production in Western Pennsylvania was made in 1952 and the company just let the area decline. Those who blamed the companies also added that the way in which the closing was done was terrible. Dan Karaczun (see ES92-SS7-C) stated "This is the way US Steel disposed of people. They considered people pretty much the same as they would a piece of equipment." This discussion of the way people were misused by the companies also often led to a series of what I called atrocity stories, told almost like war stories. Nearly everyone told me of a suicide that occurred after the closing, of men who shot themselves or hung themselves on the mill site. These tragic stories were often told in grim detail to stress the shock that people felt.

After the Closings

Many contradictions surround the culture of the steel industry. I had informants tell me that life was great when the mills were open, but also that it was a terrible, dirty, dangerous job. Then they might go on to say that we need something like the mill again. These contradictory responses suggest that the after-shocks of the closings are still moving through the culture of the area.

I asked my informants to describe what people did to make a living in the area after the steel industry declined. Most answered first with a discussion of unemployment and sometimes of government assistance. Then people went on to find other work, and/or other members of the household started to work. Donna Vranesevic of West Mifflin commented how her husband got work

in the electronics industry and how many of their friends found similar jobs. She remembers that competition for jobs and work was intense. Small contracting firms would out-bid each other driving prices ridiculously low. Some people took early retirement, if they could get it. Others started their own landscaping or odd-jobbing businesses. Others still have not found work. There were comments about the rise in alcoholism and the increase in domestic abuse (see Serrin, 1992). Younger people mentioned the friends they had in high school who moved to Florida, Texas, or wherever they could find work. The program of the recent reunion of the Steel Valley High School Class of 1976-1977 documents that many have left the area. Jerry Manning remarks "The creme-de-la-creme go out of here, good solid ambitious people took the first train to Clarksburg. They left the area or made the flight to the suburbs."

Conflict about the fate of the mills also stems from the class based conflict that existed between mill workers and educated people who worked outside of the steel industry. Serrin (1992) points out that some educated people in the area felt that the mill workers were getting what they deserved. More than one informant noted the conflict in the mill between the "college boys" who often held summer jobs and the full-time employees. Dan Karaczun, employed in the Homestead Works in the 1970s and 1980s, said, "College boys were at best tolerated and sometimes threatened." Jerry Manning remembers, "When I went to college some of my friends who worked in the mill howled with laughter. Why would you do such a thing...you went down to the mill and you made a big buck." He also perceives the mill as a place where "an uneducated man could make a lot of money."

ETHNICITY IN THE STEEL VALLEY: TRADITION AND THE RE-INVENTION OF TRADITION.

When I first came to the Pittsburgh area in the late 1980s, I was taken with the way that people emphasized ethnicity. Churches claimed ethnic affiliation, people celebrated holidays in a way I had never seen and people I met would readily tell me about their heritage and ancestry. In the context of this project, I came to understand how ethnicity was important to the history of the area. The fact that immigrants were relatively recent, and that all came to the same area to work in the same industry, reinforced ethnicity in a special way. In the communities of West Homestead, Homestead, Munhall, Duquesne and West Mifflin, I found that for many people ethnic affiliation is as important in the make-up of personal and community identity as was the steel industry. Even though not all interviewees stressed national and racial associations to the same degree.

Notes on Tradition as a Folk term

I tried to understand how the people I interviewed perceived the term "tradition." Tradition is carried on in many ways in this area. Certainly the church and religion are primary instruments here. Religion reinforces ethnicity, which is what people seem to most readily connect with the notion of tradition. Beyond religion, occupation is another focus for the inter-generational passage of traditional knowledge. For example, being a steelworker is something that unites men to their grandfathers and fathers. Furthermore, many informants suggest that a pattern of culture was established during the height of the steel industry, especially in areas "below the tracks," which seems to have existed all along the Mon banks before mill expansion. Here people were thrown together, mixing ethnic communities, and were linked in "watching out for each other," presumably in opposition to the steel companies. The bond created there is respected and nearly mythologized by later generations, and is for many an important cultural template that stresses the vast importance of community.

Religion and Ethnicity.

The close tie between religion and ethnicity came clear to me in one of the first interviews I did. When I asked Christine Boytim (see ES92-SS2-C) of Munhall what ethnic group she belonged to, she responded, "Russian Orthodox." She went on to explain that even though her family is of Eastern European descent they went to a Greek Orthodox Church and that plenty of Hunkies are Greek Orthodox.

For many people, the church you attend is the clearest marker of your ethnic affiliation. This was especially true for informants of Eastern European descent, and also was mentioned in discussing people of Western European descent. This seems to be true because the traditions that are seen as the most "ethnic" are often those that center around religious holidays. Christine told me that, as she was growing up, people said she was special because she got to celebrate two Christmases, December 25th as well as January 7th.

For most of my informants, the two most important holidays were Easter and Christmas. For the Orthodox, Christmas was often celebrated on December 25th and then observed again on January 7th. This second celebration rarely included an exchange of gifts, and was more focused on religious themes and family get-togethers. Father Steven Rocknage (see ES92-SS13-C) of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church of Duquesne-McKeeseport discussed the incorporation of the pagan Yule log into the Serbian celebration. Everyone comes to church and an oak branch is cut down. This is the Yule log and is identified as the tree on which Christ was crucified. The log is then cut up and the parishioners are given pieces to take home.

Food is an important part of religious celebrations. The Boytim family gathers on Orthodox Christmas at the family home in Glassport to share a special meal consisting of traditional Ukrainian foods. Donna Vranesevich of West Mifflin, who is Serbian Orthodox, discusses a similar ethnic meal

that marks the Christmas season as special.

Easter also marks another important holiday. Serbian give out special red-dyed Easter eggs that symbolize the tomb of Christ that is now broken open. Mary Boytim (see ES92-SS1-C) remembers her mother, a devout Orthodox woman, painting Easter eggs. Again at Easter, food is an important symbol of ethnicity. Special foods, especially bread called **paska**, are prepared and then blessed by the priest.

The celebration of other holidays varies. Mary Boytim told me that her mother would do no work on important feast days on the Orthodox calendar. She would do all her household work the day before and then attended church in the feast day. The daughters remember visiting their Bub (grandmother) on these days and how strict she was about their observance.

The Serbian community in the area also celebrates the **slava** (see ES93-SS1-B, image 21). This day marks the date that one's ancestors were Christianized, baptized into the Orthodox faith. On their **slava**, people bring bread to the church to commemorate their ancestor and then offer it to God. Father Rocknage comments, "This is a neat custom because it is a very practical thing. It gets the family together; they all come on **slava**. It is a powerful reminder that you cannot be Orthodox, you cannot be Serbian, without the **slava."**

Churches

Aside from the practice of traditions associated with sacred holidays, church also provides important social structures that allow for the maintenance and perpetuation of tradition. In churches in the area, there are numerous groups, such as choirs, women's circles and teen associations, that focus on religious and ethnic heritage.

In Homestead, the African-American Park Place AME Church offers more than 21

organizations for its membership. The church has 500 on its official rolls, but Yvonne Godbolt suggests that about 175 people attend regularly. This congregation is drawn not just from the Homestead area, but also from communities such as East Liberty, Wilkinsburg and Hazelwood. There are a number of choirs in the church that focus on African American sacred music and appeal to members of all ages.

Also in Homestead is the St. Nicholas Carpatho-Rusin Orthodox Church (see ES92-SS1-S, images 6-9). This church, on Ann Street, was designed to be the central Orthodox cathedral for the area. It boasts steel domes that were made in the Homestead Works. The church choir, which sings all music a capella, is well-known throughout the area (see ES93-SS3-S, images 15-18). Priests in other churches told me about the quality of this choir. The choir director, Andrew Talarovich, says the choir is well-versed in both sacred and secular music of the Carpatho-Rusin peoples. They sing each Sunday in Slovak as well as English. He suggests that Orthodox choirs sing a capella because they believe that the human voice, as created by God, is the most perfect instrument of all and the one that deserves to accompany the liturgy.

In the Homestead-Munhall area, St. John's Byzantine Catholic Church offers a less-formal setting for the celebration of traditional culture (see ES92-SS1-S, images 1-2). The church is famous in the area for the **pirohi** luncheon in the church basement on most Fridays. While many patrons are parishioners or of Eastern European descent, many are also members of the community who look forward to a lunch of **pirohi**, **haluski, cheregi** and lentil soup, and an enjoyable hour spent with neighbors and friends. This **pirohi** kitchen has been in operation for about 30 years and a group of older women make the food fresh every week. Most of the women are likely over the age of 50, and they bemoan the lack of young women in the group. When I visited the kitchen, there was one man involved in the food preparation, but he did not have much to say. (See ES92-SS1-S, images 29-36

and ES92-SS2-S, images 1-5 for a pictorial account of the **pirohi** preparation process.) As they sit around the table filling the **pirohi** with potato, cheese, sauerkraut and prune fillings, they rehash the events of the week, and discuss the future of the church which will be moving to a new location in late 1993. Many of the patrons wear hats and jackets that claim their ethnic identity and are often heard speaking to one another in foreign, presumably Eastern European, languages.

Many residents of Duquesne and West Mifflin state that there is a significant Serbian presence in the area and the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church clearly promotes this idea. Located in McKeesport, the church draws its membership from Duquesne, McKeesport and West Mifflin. It has many organizations that foster the relationship between faith and ethnicity, such as the church choir (see ES92-SS12-C). The choir has been in existence for 58 years and sings both secular and sacred music, in Serbian as well as English. They sponsor a concert each year at the McKeesport High School (See ES92-SS2-S, images 6-18). The church also has a women's group called the **kola** ("circle") which has various functions, but is especially involved in food preparation for church activities. Donna Vranesevic says that this is where young women really learn about Serbian foodways: "If you don't know how to make apple strudel, you come down on Saturdays and learn." They also teach children about Serbian traditions such as bread making. The church also sponsors a dance and music group that is lead by Donna Vranesevic.

Mrs. Vranesevic stressed the importance of this group for women. She stated that men's groups do more of the hard work around the church, like setting up for functions. It seems that women are the primary bearers of tradition. This was interesting because she also commented that many women in the group were not Serbian by birth but took on the faith and therefore the ethnicity when they married. She related that she was shocked when she learned that Lorraine Novak (see ES92-

SS8-C) was not Serbian, because Lorraine seemed to know everything about it. The **kola** ia the institution that helps some women to take on that faith and understand the importance of ethnic and religious traditions. When asked why women are often the ones who change faith and in a sense change ethnicity, Mrs. Vranesevic stated that ethnic pride is very important for Serbian men, because they are such a proud people. Ethnicity appears, then, to be central for self-identity among these men and they pursue it earnestly.

In Duquesne there are a number of small churches, many of which have been in existence for more than one hundred years. One example of such a church is the African-American Jerusalem Baptist Church. Ruth Kidd (see ES92-SS9-C; ES92-SS1-S, image 27), a resident of Duquesne and a member of the church, states that the church suffers from an aging population and a dwindling membership, but still remain strong. The church has a number of choirs that are popular in the Duquesne area. The choir director, Mae Etta Grimble, is a member of another McKeesport church but feels that the community benefits from whatever she can do to help (see ES93-SS18-C). There are a number of social groups in the church that promote Bible study and missionary activity.

Not all churches in the area are clearly tied to ethnic heritage. For example, the Community of the Crucified One is a relatively new church in the Mon Valley. Located on 11th Avenue in Homestead, the Community is a quasi-Franciscan sect that began about twenty-five years ago when the founder had a vision. The church started out quite small, with prayer meetings in the founder's house. Now the church has bought the synagogue on 10th Avenue in Homestead and has renamed it the Temple of the Crucified One. The church has a varied membership and is seen as connected philosophically to Katherine Kulhman, a famous evangelical speaker (see ES93-SS3-S,image 1).

Ethnic Social Clubs

Expressions of ethnicity are also important outside of religious holidays and church groups. Social clubs based on ethnicity abound in the area (see ES92-SS1-S, image 16, ES92-SS2-S, image 30). These vary in function to some degree. Some still stay active in promoting traditional culture. Joe Bumbas remembers many ethnic clubs in Duquesne and the array of entertainment they offered. Mr. Bumbas talked about how the clubs stemmed from groups set up to aid immigrants into the area, to allow people to get together with others who spoke their language. For Donna Vranesevic, these clubs are still important. Although she and her husband are Serbian, they belong to the Croatian Club in Duquesne and attend activities there on a regular basis, even after the recent war broke out in the former Yugoslavia. She sees them as viable groups and expects her baby sitter, a young woman who also attends the club, will one day meet her future husband though the club. Other nationality clubs have become simply social clubs, offering food and drink to the members, with nominal attention paid to ethnicity. People who attempt to maintain their ethnicity bemoan this trend and some now deride these clubs as merely places to drink on Sunday.

There are several clubs in the research area that stand out as especially active. In West Homestead, the Bulgaro-Macedonian Beneficial Association is a lively club that sponsors a well-known dance group (See ES93-SS1-B, images 22-25; ES93-SS3-S, images 6-11). The dance group was one of the first to participate in the Pittsburgh International Folk Festival and travels extensively. Several of the club members host exchange students from Bulgaria. The club offers dance and language lessons as well as Saturday night dances. Ed Markhoff, who is the president of the club, is the son of the original founder. In Duquesne, the Croatian Club is also quite active in conserving ethnic traditions. The club sponsors a Junior Tamburitzan dance group, with expert guidance from the staff of the Duquesne University Tamburitzans. The club also offers dance and language classes, as well as a weekly sing-a-

long.

The area offers a wide array of traditional arts organizations. They range from dance groups, to traditional musicians to theater groups. Many of these organizations are geared toward children and act as a means to pass ethnic identity from generation to generation.

There are a number of ethnic musical groups in the area, often connected somehow with the Duquesne University Tamburitzans. That ensemble, based in Pittsburgh, is known internationally and draws much talent to the area as well as providing an outlet for local young people who are interested in ethnic music.

Donna Vranesevic suggests that there are about eight adult tamburitza bands in the area that operate full time. Her husband is a musician in the group Radost, which plays tamburitzan music for various functions. George Salopek, who as a student was also involved with the Duquesne University Tamburitzans, runs a communication company that specializes in ethnic music. He is a good contact for performers.

Not all performers of ethnic music are Eastern European, of course. Joe Bumbas, while he is Croatian and did play with several Tamburitza bands in his lifetime, is a flamenco guitarist. Sparked by a television program about flamenco, a Spanish musical style, he began to study. He travelled to New York on vacations from the Homestead Works, to have lessons with masters of the style. He has performed throughout the local area and across the US. He states that Flamenco drew him in because of the "deepness" of the music and the use of minor chords, which reminded him of other ethnic music he had played and enjoyed earlier. He compares much ethnic music on the basis of themes that seem universal: love, loss, displacement as well as Christian religious motifs (see ES92-SS??-c and ES93-SS1-B, images 3-5).

Lydia Hale, born in Duquesne, is a member of the Waccamaw-Sioux Indian tribe and performs traditional arts from this heritage. As the president of the Pittsburgh American Indian Center, she promotes understanding of Native American culture all around the area. She and her husband, Tim Hale, and grandson, Orlando Benvin, perform dance, music, song and storytelling of the Waccamaw-Sioux. Interestingly, she and her husband are the only example of the marriage custom termed the levirate I have met in the area. When her first husband died, she married his brother, following tradition and keeping kinship ties strong.

People also celebrate their ethnicity in informal ways. Kennywood Park, an amusement park in West Mifflin, is the site of many "Nationality Days" each summer. These include Croatian Day, Russian Day, Serbian Day and African American Day, among others. These events usually include traditional music, dance, often visiting artists from "the old Country," ethnic foods, and sometimes, religious services. McKeeseport International Village is another event that celebrates the ethnic diversity of the region, with a festival that last several days and offers food and entertainment representing the various national heritages of the area. Many churches offer ethnic foods for sale on Fridays.

African American groups are not defined by their religion in the way that Serbians are, but many social groups are formed around the church. There are a number of all black churches in each of the communities that I surveyed. These churches often cooperate with one another within and across community borders and offer their membership a number of social groups and activities, from choirs to teen ministries. When I talked with African Americans I asked them to identify symbols that were reflective of black culture and they were unable to do so. For example, they did not readily identify specific foodways as black. I believe there are a number of important black symbols, but they were identified in this research. Further work on ethnicity in conjunction with Duquesne PRIDE (People

Residing In Duquesne Equally), pointed out various types of music associated with African Americans, such as gospel, the blues and jazz, and foods such as barbecues and greens (see ES92-SS2-S, images 19-28, ES93-SS3-S, images 6-19).

Community groups play another important role in local identity outside the realm of religion, ethnicity and occupation. Groups such as Duquesne PRIDE (see above) exist to enhance community cohesiveness. The PRIDE organization is a coalition of Duquesne citizens that hope to engender cross-ethnic and cross-racial communication and understanding.

Another such group is the recently formed Steel Valley Arts council, which serves West Homestead, Homestead and Munhall. This community-based group hopes to foster tolerance and civic dignity through appreciation of the arts of the area (see ES93-SS3-S, images 20-22).

Ethnicity and steel work are tied together in many ways. The history of the mill is one of different ethnic groups belonging to different occupational categories. Many informants said that in the early days of the mills, Western Europeans were given jobs with better pay, less physical labor and more power. As the Eastern and Southern Europeans entered the work force, they were given the less-desirable jobs. As Blacks migrated north, they were then relegated to the worst positions. Conflict between ethnic groups was reported to be more prevalent in the mill before 1950. Dan Karaczun suggested that, as the second generations began work, everyone spoke English, and were more "American," and therefore tensions decreased." Donna Vranesevich suggested that the common endeavor of steel work in the valley probably united the various ethnic groups rather that segregated them. She points out that the Serbian and Croatian communities in Pittsburgh are far more friendly than in other parts of the U.S. because of their shared occupation.

The "Hunkie"

If any term embodies the relationship between the steel industry and ethnicity it is the term "hunkie." I asked my informants to define the term. Most of the responses centered on the idea of a person of Hungarian or at least Eastern European descent. Some informants responded that the term was once derogatory but no longer carries strong negative responses. The term has expanded to include just about anyone who labored in the mills. Some informants thought it might be related to the term "honkie", meaning white person. Others thought it had to do with the fact that men who worked in the mill were hunks (i.e., physically strong.)

As much as ethnic tradition can be a unifying force across generations, changes in the importance and interpretation of ethnicity occur over time. When asked if her mother cooked ethnic foods, Mary Ann Boytim responded that her mother tried to be open-minded. This points to a feeling that over-emphasis of ethnicity may bring out cultural and class-oriented prejudice. Many informants echoed this sentiment by saying that their parents wanted to be more American and more middle-class rather than being associated with a given ethnic group. Donna Vranesevic teaches ethnic dance in the West Mifflin area and stated that her dance groups now include people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. For some parents, having the children participate in activities is a way to relocate lost ethnic traditions. Father Rocknage agrees that this is true for some Serbian teens at the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church. Their parents may have strayed from the church and from tradition, but the teens are enjoying the process of re-discovering their cultural heritage.

I also found that people exercised a great degree of choice in their affiliation with ethnic communities. Some choose to emphasize one nationality over the other. Christine Boytim identified herself as Hungarian and Russian, while her mother claimed Ukrainian as her national heritage. This case reinforces how heritage and tradition can be "remade" over generations. People choose which

aspects of their heritage they want to express and how. Several informants remarked that they knew people who had been encouraged by their parents to be "American", but who now wanted their children to learn the traditional dances or songs or religious customs of their ethnic background.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FUTURES

The use of the ethnographic futures technique was a helpful way to get informants to think about the future of the area, as well as a way to get more qualitative data about issues that are important to the community. The responses to the question about the best possible future were quite varied. Some people gave specific plans for re-development schemes, others discussed the character of the people that could hold on in the face of anything. Several people made their distress known by saying about the future, "Things could be like they are now." In discussing the worst-possible scenario for the future, my informants were for the most part less forthcoming with an answer, as though they could not imagine much worse that what they have already been through. Many people fear the onset of gangs, increased drug-related problems and further unemployment. The answers for a brighter future were much more specific and drew on personal experience. The probable outcome was discussed in many ways, often as a compromise between the best and the worst.

CULTURAL HERITAGE ISSUES

For the people in my area, issues surrounding heritage focused in large part on the mill. Because the project deals at least in part with the development of institutions to conserve and preserve the steel industry heritage, a large focus of the interviews done focused on this and related issues. I found a great deal of variation in the way that people think of the steel industry in the area. What does emerge is the idea that large institutions are responsible for the quality and tenor of life in the valley. People for the most part live their lives in response to the actions of these institutions that include the steel companies,

the unions and the government. The degree to which the population in the area feels either victimized or aided by the steel industry varies. Opinions are as diverse as the people who live here. The interview data fall out in these rough categories.

1. People who feel that the steel industry was a black mark on the history of the area. Informants who gave these kinds of responses agreed that steel is what made this valley what it is today, that life here was dependent on and supported by the steel industry. Regardless of the benefits of steel in the area, the bad things that happened here are a result of steel. These detrimental effects of steel in the Mon Valley are perceived in a wide range of categories. The most basic and widely reported effect is the loss of jobs, not only in the steel industry but also in many related services, from trucking operations to small businesses such as restaurants and clothing stores. For many people, the era of booming steel industry is something to be forgotten and not remembered. After saying this, one informant suggested to me that the way in which work was organized and how people thought about work was influenced far too much by the unions. He felt that workers were encouraged to have unrealistic expectations about pay, benefits and amount of effort expended. He said that workers became lazy and unrealistic and now the work force here is in some ways spoiled, because they want jobs that cannot exist in today's economy. For these people the notion of conserving the steel industry culture and history is a waste of time and money.

2. People who feel that steel production made the Mon Valley a great place in which to live and that it should be remembered for the benefits it gave to the area. For these informants, there is a great sense of pride in the Steel Valley, and even though steel production is now vastly reduced, the residents can still say this was the greatest steel center in the entire world and that it must be remembered and passed on to future generations. These people felt that the idea of having some

museum regarding the steel industry was vital for community pride and self-esteem and also to commercial purposes, citing that such an institution would bring in tourists.

More than 75% of my informants thought there should be some attempt to preserve some part of the mill and many said they would be saddened if this did not happen.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC PROGRAMMING AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Any programming that I could recommend based on the research done for this project must be driven by education. The central concerns in these communities all focus on identity and self and community esteem. Given what Ia have learned, educational program about the value of the steel industry to the heritage of the area are vital. This may seem obvious, but there is no consensus in these communities about what the steel industry represented and how that should be remembered. Many people talked of the need for a museum and I feel this should be pursued.

When discussing ethnographic futures many informants discussed a need to upgrade the image of the community, both in terms of physical appearance and reputation and character. Some informants mentioned litter control programs as an important first step, as well as measures to regulate absentee landlords. The projects aimed at renovating main streets seem a step in the right direction. Other plans to promote the Steel Valley's virtues to nearby areas, such as the city of Pittsburgh, could be helpful.

The residents of the Steel Valley have seen a great deal of change in a short time, and much of the change is perceived as negative. This seems to be exemplified by some reactions to new migrants into the area. Programs that might introduce various smaller communities within the area would lead to better integration of all parts of the community. Dividing lines seem to have formed across racial, age and socio-economic boundaries.

Since ethnicity is so vital to the complexion of the area, more celebration of the variety of cultural traditions should be fostered. Groups like the Steel Valley Arts Council and Duquesne PRIDE are already working toward those goals. As stated above, African American cultural symbols were not clearly identified in this report. This is in part may fault but also indicative of the variety of those symbols. I would promote any celebration of the wonderfully diverse cultural traditions that African American culture draws from.

There are many directions for future research in this area. Because of the toll the steel mill closings took, local notions of work and occupation are changing. Any research that examined these changes and their implications would aide in organizing job training and retraining in the area. It would also add significantly to labor and culture studies in America, for what happened here has happened and is happening in other parts of the U.S. Additional local research that would document how ethnic traditions are maintained in times of economic stress would also be interesting and valuable.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this report has been on the importance of occupation and ethnicity in the heritage of a 5-community region in the Monongahela Valley. What has emerged from the research is an emphasis on the construction of identity in the past, present and future. I have tried to outline how occupation and ethnicity, among other factors, shape local identity, on the level of the community as well as on the level of the individual. Occupation and ethnicity are strongly linked for many residents in how they think about themselves, their history, and their possibilities for the future. Immigrants came to the Valley for a common purpose, to find work in the mills. Their descendents draw on the symbolic information regarding ethnicity that they brought with them from Europe and the American South as well

as on the symbols that arose out of lifetimes of work in the steel industry. Communities arose in a spatial sense as people gathered here to find work. They also arose along other, non-geographic lines, based on shared history, ethnicity and interests. All of these forms of community have been central to defining local identity.

When I began this project, a former steelworker said that what is wrong with the Steel Valley now is that people here have lost their sense of identity, and with that, their sense of self-esteem. All of the problems, questions, despair and hope that surfaced in my informants' responses were in many ways linked to the problems of redefining a sense of identity. Residents and social scientists in the area have commented to me about the overwhelming impact the steel industry had on people's lives and decision-making. Large institutions like the steel industry and the church told people what to do in explicit and implicit ways. The mill controlled lives explicitly, shaping patterns of work through shift schedules, cycles of employment, and lay-offs. Implicitly, the mill forged notions about the idea of job/career, the permanence of work, acceptable income and gender roles. When this influence was removed, a significant part of people's model for living was removed. This is in no way to suggest that people of the Steel Valley were unable to make decisions for themselves, but suggests that the impact of the steel industry on people's decision-making process should not be underestimated.

It seems to me that the conflict that I have witnessed about the validity and importance of a museum or other heritage activities regarding the steel industry also arises out of this search for new components of local identity. How to view the past is still a contested point in the Steel Valley.

Organizations

Bulgaro-Mcaedonian Beneficial Association
Seventh Avenue

West Homestead, PA 15120
Home of Bulgarian Nationality Dancers. This group is organized by the Bulgaro-Macedonian Beneficial Society in West Homestead, PA.
Duquesne Croatian Club
Duquesne Junior Tamburitzans
Prince Humbert Club of Duquesne

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Byington, Margaret. Homestead: The Household of a Mill Town. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974.

Margaret Byington's study of the household of mill workers in the early 1900s has yet to be matched in detail and wealth of data about income, expenditure and culture of mill worker. While the book is decidedly socialistic in approach, the data is useful and enlightening. She does a particularly good job of illustrating the effects of mill policies on families.

Duquesne Centennial Committee 1991 The City of Duquesne Centennial Celebration Booklet, 1991.

This Booklet was part of the centennial celebration in Duquesne in 1991. It offers a history of the city, highlighting moments important to the development of the town, especially in terms of new development, public works and civic events. It is included in the artifacts submitted for this project.

Halperin, Rhoda H. The Livelihood of Kin: Making Ends Meet "The Kentucky Way." Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

Halperin's book examines plant closings and their effects on rural Kentuckians. She attributes many of the local coping strategies to cultural and ethnic factors in a way that is comparable to the situation in the Mon Valley. Local ideas of work and occupation are explored in a way that gives power and voice to the people studied.

Health and Welfare Planning Association, 1984.
Descriptions of neighborhoods, boroughs and towns in Southwestern Pennsylvania. These documents are based on the 1980 Census and give baseline information about the history, geography and demographics of various communities. For this project, I drew on the descriptions of the Steel Valley. They are available at the Pennsylvania Room at the Carnegie Library of Oakland, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Hoerr, John. And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry. Pittsburgh:

University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988.

John P. Hoerr is another labor writer who tackles the problem of the steel Industry. Like Serrin's book, described above, this work is certainly from the point of view of labor and discusses the local players in the antagonistic association between labor and management. This volume is not for the novice, as his style of flashbacks and skipping through history can be quite confusing. There are some good case studies of individuals and families that make the events documented in this book seem more real.

Pappas, Gregory. The Magic City: Unemployment in a Working Class Community. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

This book documents reaction and adaptation to economic devastation in urban, northeastern Ohio. The book focuses on health care, but includes plenty of information and insight into family and household responses to unemployment and associated problems.

Serrin, William. Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of An American Steel Town. New York: Times Books, 1972.

Serrin is a labor writer for the *New York Times* and this book documents the emergence, evolution and ultimate decline of the steel industry in Homestead and neighboring communities from the point of view of "the working man." This approach, while biased, does offer a glimpse at the impact of the closings on individuals and families. He offers a insightful history of the area, the 1892 strike and the lifetime of Andrew Carnegie. The tone of the book is very gloomy, perhaps not completely fair to the resilience of the people of Homestead.

West Homestead Seventy-fifth Anniversary Committee. The Official Publication of the West Homestead, Pennsylvania Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Celebration, 1976.

This booklet was produced as part of the West Homestead Anniversary Celebration in 1976. The volume includes a fairly detailed history of the area as well as some good profiles of important figures in the history of the Steel Valley, such as John McCLure, Henry Frick, among many. The booklet also include descriptions and histories of various community organizations and churches in the borough, some of which no longer exist. This booklet is available in the Pennsylvania Room of the Carnegie Library of Oakland, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.