STEEL INDUSTRY HERITAGE CORPORATION

ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY

of the following communities in

Lower Armstrong County:

Apollo
Dayton
Freeport
Kiskimere
Leechburg
Schenley
Yatesboro

with brief forays into:

Hyde Park
Lower Burrell
North Apollo
North Vandergrift
NuMine
Smicksburg
Washington Township

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SUMMARY REPORT

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I. Introduction: Concept and Evolution of Fieldwork

This study of the industrial and cultural history of Lower Armstrong County is based on a brief survey of sources such as county histories, town anniversary booklets, newspaper articles, and information provided by local historians, which provides the background for the oral history gathered in taped interviews. Many of the interviewees are retired laborers in the coal, steel, and supporting industries which made Armstrong County a major source of raw materials and industrial products in the last half of the nineteenth and the first three-fourths of the twentieth century. Their memories of work experience and their sharing of Old-World cultural traditions and family history form the substance of this report.

The survey of Lower Armstrong County was started by Dr. Ron Carlisle and Dr. Carmen DiCiccio, then passed on to me for completion in the last two months of the contract period. After a morning at the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation office in Homestead going through the files on Armstrong County, I began my fieldwork with a visit to the Armstrong County Tourism Bureau in Kittanning. I talked with Susan Torrance, who gave me additional contact references, and I gathered materials, made several phone calls, then visited the 26th Annual Fort Armstrong Folk Festival being held along the Allegheny riverfront.

While at the Bureau, I met Ralph Knepshield, who grew up in Leechburg. He offered to spend a day introducing me to people and places in Leechburg that might be relevant to the project. Ralph's thorough and enthusiastic introduction to the Leechburg community set the general direction for my fieldwork. Leechburg became the central focus, given the numerous persons of a variety of backgrounds in occupation, ethnic and religious traditions, and life experience whom I met or to whom I was referred. While this may to some extent have skewed my perspective toward seeing Leechburg as a pivotal community in Lower Armstrong County, it also gave me the opportunity to study a particular community in some depth, providing a means of comparison to other communities.

One of my aims has been to be sure that the African-American perspective is represented in this study, as sometimes, either by oversight or because of lack of "gatekeeper" contacts, their contribution and experience tend to be missing or less visible than those of other ethnic groups. My contacts with African Americans were facilitated by my involvement in another SIHC project, directed by Mrs. Bessie Sewell, which is documenting African-American sacred music traditions in the Kiski Valley. While the focus of that project is in Avonmore and Slickville, across the river in Westmoreland County, the close relationship among the churches in the Allegheny Union Baptist Association in the Kiski Valley brought me into contact with persons in Apollo, North Vandergrift, Spring Church, and Leechburg. I interviewed African-American persons in Spring Church, North Apollo, North Vandergrift and Kiskimere, but in Leechburg I was not able to schedule the interviews which would have given a first-hand account of the experience of African Americans in the steel mills in that area. I met Mrs. Mary Carter at the Leechburg Festival, who would have been most helpful, but she was out of town a great deal thereafter and not available. Other contacts whose names I was given did not respond to telephone requests for interviews. This is an area which needs followup to provide a more balanced perspective.

I conducted 26 interviews in addition to the seven conducted by Carmen DiCiccio and one by Ron Carlisle. I interviewed persons residing in Leechburg, Schenley, Freeport, Gilpin Township, Kiskimere, North Vandergrift, North Apollo, Apollo, Spring Church, NuMine, and Dayton/Smicksburg, and wandered across the river to Washington Township and Hyde Park to interview persons who were recommended as strong contacts.

As I reflect on the results of my interviews, I realize that I found less evidence of living traditional artistic and cultural heritage than I expected. My contacts list indicates that I didn't reach some key people and didn't hear about others until it was too late to include them in this study. When I learned that many of the contacts to whom Marilyn Rae at the Armstrong County League of Arts in Slate Lick referred me were actually in Lydia Strohl's part of the county, I pulled back from pursuing them. In doing so I may have missed the opportunity to

include some artists and crafts persons who should be represented in the Lower Armstrong County survey. The record of traditional arts and crafts in Lower Armstrong County begs further exploration.

I am greatly indebted to Don Stevenson, local Apollo historian, for sharing a number of his manuscripts on the history of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal and the development of the steel industry in Apollo and the Kiskiminetas Valley. I have drawn on them extensively in sketching the industrial history of the area, in addition to other sources. Likewise, Joe Yerace in Freeport, Rev. T. R. R. and Eleanor Stull in Dayton, and Ralph Knepshield and numerous other interviewees in Leechburg provided invaluable historical background.

II. Overview: Physical, Historical and Cultural Geography

The rolling hills of Lower Armstrong County support lush green wooded areas and undulating farmland, dotted with occasional single homes, clusters of suburban housing, small businesses (gardening centers, fruit and vegetable stands, automotive repair shops, catering services, sportsman's supply shops) and sudden, sometimes precipitous descents to the river valley where small industrial towns nestle along the Kiskiminetas and Allegheny rivers. Most of this research has focused in these river towns, approached from the east by Route 66, which crosses the Kiski River at Apollo and angles northwest along the river through North Apollo, North Vandergrift, below Kiskimere, and into Leechburg, where it turns more sharply north into Gilpin Township toward Kelly Station. Freeport and Schenley, tucked in the extreme southwest corner of the county, on opposite sides of the Allegheny River near where the Kiskiminetas River joins it, are easily reached from Route 28 which shoots north from Pittsburgh, or from the east, Freeport at a slight angle west of Leechburg along Route 356 and Schenley north and west of Leechburg off Route 66. The study area also included the towns east of Kittanning along old Route 85, Yatesboro, Rural Valley, and NuMine, and northeast of them, Wayne township and the Dayton community.

The first known residents of what became Armstrong County were Native Americans, primarily the Lenni-Lenape nation, who were forced westward by European settlers, and were defeated by Col. John Armstrong at Kittanning during the French and Indian War in 1756. Except in the name of a golf course, a realty company, a school of practical nursing and a vocational-technical school, few traces and little remembrance of their presence remains. There are, however, areas such as Schenley, site of the Indian village Atteques, where farmers and gardeners find numerous arrowheads, and where roundforts and an Indian burial ground including skeletons, tomahawks and stone vessels have been discovered. (Howard) Dale Morgan, president of the Apollo Historical Society, who collects Indian artifacts, can provide information about Native American life in the southeastern part of Armstrong County. Like the settlers who followed them, Native Americans often established their villages along the banks of the Kiskiminetas River, and the mounds and numerous artifacts they left behind suggest a rich history to which this survey cannot do justice.

Apollo, Leechburg and Freeport, which became the predominant towns on the Armstrong County side of the Kiskiminetas River, were scarcely-recognized villages until the building of the short-lived Pennsylvania Mainline Canal. Built to provide a water route from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh and to ensure that the recently built and provocatively successful Erie Canal did not rob Philadelphia of its role as a major eastern port and Pittsburgh of its role as Gateway to the West, the Pennsylvania Canal ultimately proved a financial failure. But the growth it stimulated first in Freeport, Leechburg and Apollo culminated in the convergence of coal and steel as the economic linchpin of the entire Kiski Valley.

By the early nineteenth century, Pennsylvania had excelled in the building of turnpikes, but its rivers did not provide a natural highway from east to west which could facilitate the exchange of agricultural produce and raw materials from the western areas for manufactured goods from the east. The success of the Erie Canal, which provided an easy trade route from the port at New York City to the Great Lakes, created a virtual panic among Philadelphia businessmen and economists who felt compelled to establish a competing waterway to facilitate

trade between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. However, Pennsylvania's mountainous terrain posed serious obstacles. The railway system which was beginning to develop in England seemed to some a more practicable answer than a canal which would require an extensive system of locks and perhaps tunnels to transverse the Alleghenies. But in its earliest stages the railway did not seem to offer a more feasible way to negotiate the precipitous inclines the route must cross. The Pennsylvania Mainline Canal was built with far less careful planning and cost evaluation than was invested by the builders of the Erie Canal in New York state. Opposition to the Mainline canal was answered partly by the building of branch canals along the way, which distracted funds and precious time from the process of building the Mainline. As it was finally completed, the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal was a combination of the Philadelphia-Columbia railroad, canals and portage railroad which proved cumbersome and expensive. Along its 395-mile length, it climbed to 2,322 feet above sea level, with 174 locks for a total lockage of 1,141.5 feet in addition to the rise and fall on the Allegheny Portage Railroad of 2,570 feet. The cost of building it rose to $12,106,788. The Erie canal, which provided a through waterway, required only 84 locks for a lockage of 689 feet, and cost $7,143,790.

The total length of the Mainline was completed in 1834 (though sections operated locally much earlier) and was sold to the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1857 for $7.5 million. By 1839 shippers found that delays and high tolls on the mainline (largely caused by the need to shift from railroad to canal to railway portage and back to canal) made it cheaper to send goods down the Mississippi to New Orleans then ship them to Philadelphia than to use the "shorter" mainline transportation service. In addition, frequent breakdowns on the western division of the canal caused by floods, deterioration of dams and other maintenance problems caused costly disruption in service.

Parts of the eastern division continued to operate for local traffic until 1900. The western canal division was officially abandoned in 1964; Don Stevenson reports records of soldiers who left for service in the Civil War as passengers on the canal, but returned from the War by railroad. Despite the overall financial failure of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal as a

major east-west trade route, the Canal had a dramatic positive effect on the industrial development of the Kiskiminetas Valley.

Twenty-five miles of the canal stretched through Lower Armstrong County, mostly along the banks of the Kiskiminetas River. This included the seven miles of slackwater between Leechburg past Apollo which was created by the dam built by engineer and entrepreneur David Leech. A wooden acqueduct carried the canal from the mouth of the Kiski River across the Allegheny River and through Freeport. Another acqueduct carried the canal across Buffalo creek, where it joined the Allegheny River for its progress to Pittsburgh. As early as 1828 parts of the western division of the canal were functional, making Freeport an important hub for the trade of merchandise and freight. Large quantities of salt, coal, sand, clay and raw iron began to find eastern markets. A great deal of the region's iron was shipped to Pittsburgh for manufacture and then transported east. Essentially, the canal helped gather produce and raw materials from the western part of the state, including Armstrong County, transport them eastward, and bring manufactured goods and immigrants into the area. The passenger service also facilitated local merchants such as Don Stevenson's great aunt, who purchased supplies in Pittsburgh for her milliner's shop in Leechburg. In addition to the material benefit brought to the region by the canal, the Irish immigrants who were recruited to build the canal settled down to become laborers and land owners in the area.

The steel mills of Leechburg, Bagdad and Apollo (and of Vandergrift across the Kiski River) were fired by the abundant bituminous coal deposits which underlie much of the surface of this area. While the steel mills and some supporting industries were built along the river and the railway line which parallels it, coal deposits were mined throughout the county. Small company towns dotted the countryside, and many homeowners found coal deposits near the surface of their own land which supplied their needs for house coal.

Armstrong County is also rich in supplies of natural gas, a resource first tapped for the iron industry by William Rogers in the 19th century. When the coal reserves dwindled, natural gas became the primary fuel for the steel industry, as it still is today. No interviews of gas

company workers have been conducted for this study . Carmen DiCiccio made inquiries regarding a contact in the Dayton area, and I also pursued this possibility, but was not able to connect with a worker from this industry. Other referrals to gas company workers in the Apollo area came so late in the study that it was not possible to follow up on them. These names appear on the appended contacts list and may be interviewed later.

Although river transportation has often opened frontiers to settlement and economic development, most of the river towns in Lower Armstrong County line the Kiskiminetas River, which is navigable only at limited times of the year. Its shallow water level and the notorious pollution which killed most river fauna for many years made it a poor candidate for river transportation. In Freeport and Schenley, access to the Allegheny River after it was made navigable by dams provided significant transportation and employment. This study has gathered almost no information about the life of river workers, though one interviewee, Joseph Uptegraph, worked briefly on the river. But Joe Yerace recalls lively swimming, boating and fishing activities in Freeport during his boyhood which prefigure the greatly increased river recreation potential being developed along the Allegheny--and even to some extent along the rehabilitated Kiski River.

Though coal mining preceded the steel industry and was far more widely dispersed through the region, the peak of its development is inextricably linked to the rise of the steel industry. Coal was discovered in the mid-19th century, and after the Civil War became a lucrative enterprise--for the owners.

The European settlers who laid claim to the agricultural and mineral wealth of Armstrong County were primarily English, Scots-Irish and German. During the industrial development, these lineages also dominate the rosters of mine, mill, and railroad owners, managers and foremen. As mentioned above, Irish workers were recruited to build the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and many stayed to become part of the industrial labor pool. In some areas, such as Apollo, the majority of the labor force was drawn from the local West European settler communities. In Freeport, in addition to Irish workers who came to build the canal and Italians

drawn to work on the railroad, the work force included local German, English, and Scottish settlers. Likewise in Dayton the local workers of British and German descent were supplemented by Italian workers while the coal mines were operating. But in Leechburg, Schenley, Kiskimere, and Yatesboro, in addition to Irish laborers, large numbers of Eastern and Southern European laborers were drawn or were recruited: Northern and Southern Italians, Hungarians, Ukranians, Slovenians, Poles, Lithuanians, Greeks, and Syrians. African Americans also migrated from the American South in significant numbers, drawn by the prospect of jobs and comparative freedom from racial harassment. In at least one instance, at the Sagamore mine, African Americans were brought in as strike breakers. But for the most part, the difficulty black workers had in securing jobs, particularly in the mills, and the consistent pattern of assigning only the most menial jobs to African Americans limited the size of their migration to Armstrong County. However a number of families persisted, contributing several generations of active community members. In most of these areas, descendents of these laborers from many national and ethnic backgrounds still anchor the social, economic and cultural lives of the community. In Dayton, however, the Italian laborers who joined the British and Western European agricultural workers to mine the local coal departed when the coal supply was depleted, and little trace of their contribution remains, except in the memory of elderly residents.

In the small mining and mill towns, where language barriers and close family ties may at first have limited interaction among these diverse groups, the shared experience of hard work and limited resources forged tight-knit community across ethnic and religious boundaries. "We worked together, we played together, and we were poor, but everyone was the same," is a comment made by interviewees from various ethnic heritages. While some have maintained a few distinctive cultural practices (the most persistent seem to be food traditions, and in some cases, music), there was in these small towns no large enough concentration of any one group to permit the exclusiveness of certain ethnic communities in the larger industrial towns and cities.

Catholic parishioners often shared mass with members of several other nationalities, so the parish could not be the center for cultural preservation and dissemination that it has often been in Pittsburgh. In Leechburg, for example, St. Catherine's was the church for Irish, English and Italian Catholics, so, though Domenica Roppolo thinks the Irish traditions predominated, no single heritage was fostered. The same was true in the Rural Valley area; St. Mary's served all the Catholics, however diverse their Hungarian, Irish, Italian or Polish traditions may have been. In Leechburg only the Polish and the Hungarian Catholics had separate parishes, and now their exclusiveness is greatly diminished. The Hungarian Magyar Presbyterians built a church in Georgetown, but as their numbers dwindled, they merged first with the Hungarian Reformed Church, and finally with the predominantly Scots-Irish congregation at Graystone Presbyterian in the heart of Leechburg.

Today intermarriage across ethnic and religious boundaries has blurred many cultural and religious distinctions, even between African Americans and Euro-Americans. As Rev. Freddie Morman of North Vandergrift says, "We seem to get along better when we become cousins." And in Leechburg, Retha Knappenberger notes with satisfaction the ecumenical spirit which brings members of various denominations together for worship services and community projects. There are a few stories of parents or grandparents who threatened to disown a child for intermarriage or who divided the family along religious lines, but today among parents who are active church members, it seems more important that their children be involved in church than that they belong to a specific church.

Regardless of ethnic background, the laborers who helped make Armstrong County a force in American industrial development shared a work ethic that earned them a reputation for dependability and excellence that reached into the Midwest. The priority of family and church remains strong. Loyalty to their community keeps many who could from moving to newer urban settings, and brings those who've migrated away back home.

Change comes slowly to these communities, and it is not uncommon to find persons who are living in the home in which they were born--though it may be a renovated company

house purchased by their parents from the foundry or the coal company. A town where retired persons outnumber families with young children may have long since woven a variety of national and ethnic strands into its unique tapestry. But it may not so easily thread newcomers of any background into the pattern. Even a spouse of forty years who grew up in Kittanning may still be considered an outsider, though Rev. Freddie Morman, who came from West Virginia, believes that people in North Vandergrift accepted him because everyone knew his wife Olivia Fancher's family. So the arrival of newcomers who do not share the work ethic, the value of craftsmanship, the pride in keeping home spotless and garden groomed, and the trustworthiness of unlocked doors, may cause great unease. Younger generations and newcomers who would rather accept public assistance than leave the area for good jobs bring troubling influences into the community. At the same time, long-time residents realize that their children and grandchildren may never have the access to jobs in this valley that drew their parents and grandparents from distant places.

The murky flow of the Kiski River throughout most of the lifetime of those interviewed in this survey symbolizes the heavy environmental and human cost of industrial development. The writer of the 1914 History of Armstrong County comments somewhat sarcastically on the law prohibiting fishing with seines in the river, "although there is not the slightest possibility of catching anything but a severe cold or being suffocated by the foulness of the stream" (184). Like the river, mine workers and mill laborers suffered incalculable physical damage through accidents and pollution. The labor unions helped to bring compensation and protection to the lives of the workers, but the impetus for cleaning up the river came from outside the Valley, with more stringent government controls on the disposal of industrial waste and the demand to rehabilitate a damaged environment. Now Leechburg residents speak with amazement bordering on awe of the unexpected recovery of the Kiski River, incomplete though it may be. Fishermen are again plying the riverbanks, and beavers are building their homes, sights the old-timers never expected to see again. If only damaged lungs and dismembered fingers could be

repaired and employment opportunities for future generations could be recovered as successfully!

People in Lower Armstrong County are intensely proud of their communities. They take great satisfaction in the part they played in building the industrial economy of the United States. Many have accepted the cost in personal health and a damaged environment as inevitable, though they applaud newer mining and manufacturing methods which cause less physical and environmental stress. Whatever the inconvenience of their isolation in comparison to Pittsburgh or other urban areas, most would never think of living elsewhere--it's the best place in the world to raise a family!

Technically, the Kiskiminetas River is the boundary between Armstrong County and Westmoreland County, but at some point Kiskimere, a former coal company town which sits between Leechburg and North Apollo in Armstrong County, was gerry-mandered into the Vandergrift school district and the residents have Vandergrift post offices, in Westmoreland County. Conversely, Don Stevenson's address in Washington Township, Westmoreland County, is Apollo. And Theodore Stewart, who lives in North Apollo, Armstrong County, has a Vandergrift post box. Whatever socio-political convolutions have led to these vagaries, they highlight a sociological phenomenon, that the river is in many ways an artificial boundary or even a unifier, though it separates counties. Residents of Leechburg and West Leechburg, on opposite sides of the river, consider themselves one community. The Vandergrift bridge has always brought workers across the river from North Vandergrift since it was built circa 1905, soon after the Vandergrift mill was built in 1904. Leechburg residents crossed by ferry and footbridge to the Hyde Park Foundry. Residents from both sides of the river continue to cross over for work and for social and religious activities. So, my interviews reflect a pattern that should be taken into account in future SIHC programming for historical and cultural preservation: some programs should involve interaction and cooperation among communities on both sides of the river, highlighting both the commonalities and the contrasts between their respective locales.

III. Community portraits

A. Apollo - After the Steel Has Gone: Treasuring a Historical, Cultural, and Craftsmanship Heritage

Apollo, Bagdad and Leechburg have been the principal steel towns in Lower Armstrong County. Though salt, not steel, was the earliest industry in Lower Armstrong County, iron and steel production have anchored the area's economy for more than 100 years. From the beginning of the 19th century to 1875 salt was an important export, and the last salt well in operation in Armstrong County, owned by William Gamble & Son, was located on the Kiskiminetas River near the mouth of Roaring Run, near Apollo. Other early Apollo industries included cooperage, tanning, pottery, a gristmill, roller mills, planing mills, a foundry, brickmaking, a lime and ballast company and a woolen mill. Coal and gas reserves were also found in the Apollo area.

The steel industry in the Kiski Valley was born in Apollo in 1825 when the Biddle Iron Furnace was built on the side of a hill on Roaring Run near the Big Falls on the Kiskiminetas River two miles above Apollo (then known as Warren). Using iron ore mined from the hillside, it was fueled by water power and charcoal made from wood felled by a crew of wood choppers in the forests lying above it. Some of the iron was shipped on the Kiski River (navigable at certain times of the year before locks and dams made Allegheny River navigation possible). After the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal opened in 1834, the iron was shipped by canal.

In 1856, several years after the Biddle Iron Furnace closed in 1852, a group of investors opened the Kiskiminetas Iron Company, a nail factory, in Apollo. The canal provided both fuel and transportation for this mill. When it closed in 1860 because of the brittle quality of the iron, it was run for a year by Dr. J. S. Kuhn until the Civil War interrupted operations. One of the former owners, Washington McClintock, joined William Rogers and W. E. Foale in 1863 to reopen the mill, and in 1869 built a rolling mill to manufacture sheet iron on the same site. In

1881, after a series of other owners, George McMurty purchased the plant, then called the Apollo Iron & Steel Company. In 1898 McMurty built a new mill across the river in Westmoreland County, and had the town of Vandergrift built around it. The company moved the Apollo plant to Vandergrift in 1902, partially wrecking the Apollo mill. Ten years later the citizens of Apollo, with the leadership of Robert Lock, an experienced mill superintendent in Leechburg, Vandergrift and Brackenridge, banded together to build a new mill in Apollo. The furnaces of the new mill, "equipped in the most modern manner," were fired in March 1913, bringing Apollo back into the forefront of the steel industry in the valley.

After several difficult years this mill began to operate successfully, and several additions to the facility were made. In 1928 the original mill was abandoned but the company continued to operate at a small loss even through the Depression. In the flood of 1936 the plant was flooded, rendering most of the machinery unusable, but with repairs the plant continued to operate, providing steady work during World War II, when demand was high. In 1946 the plant was sold to a nation-wide syndicate which operated it under the name of Phoenix Apollo Steel until 1949, when it was purchased by a scrap dealer who leased it to three of the former syndicate members.

In the 1957 three Westinghouse scientists secured part of the Apollo steel plant to house the Nuclear Materials and Equipment Corporation, or NUMEC, one of the first producers of nuclear fuel. After a number of years and several changes in ownership, NUMEC was forced to close because of environmental concerns which still cause unease to many area residents. The Babcock and Wilcox plant just below Kiskimere remains as the final reminder of the failures and successes of the nuclear power industry which provided employment in some of its early years in Apollo.

Parts of the Apollo plant continued to operate marginally under a succession of managers even into the 1980s, though it never again employed the majority of workers in the community. Many Apollo workers crossed the river to the Vandergrift plant or travelled to

Leechburg. Just a few years ago the remnants of the once-proud Apollo steel industry were torn down.

Today Apollo suffers the same sense of the loss of a viable future as the other towns in the area. But the small group of fiercely determined people who comprise the Apollo Historical Society share a sense of vision for documenting and preserving Apollo's industrial heritage and for encouraging the expression of traditional crafts as well as inventing or adopting new ones. At least a third of the members present at their September 1997 meeting were young adults, several of whom practice traditional crafts or can recruit others who do. Helen Aikens recently donated a set of glass negatives from Apollo's 1916 Centennial Celebration, which portray late 19th century and early 20th century homes and residents. The Society previewed them--on the glass slide projector which Don Stevenson found at a flea market--at the meeting in preparation for a public viewing in October.

The Society works with schools and other agencies to involve young people in discovering their heritage. And it's working--when the Apollo Ridge seventh graders sponsored a Canal and Historical Day at the Roaring Run Walking Trail in May, they donated two models of the Drake Log Cabin and two canal boats which they had made. Apollo-Ridge sixth graders raised money through a recycling project to purchase an honorary acre, and they built blue bird boxes which are placed at intervals along the trail.

The most immediate expression of the value these Apollo champions give to their history and the enthusiasm they show in passing on their heritage as a part of creating a vibrant future is the Drake's Log Cabin celebration, held this year on Saturday, September 27. The Apollo Sweet Harmonies sang and the Apollo Regional Concert Band played. Area craftspersons demonstrated spinning, beekeeping, corn husk dolls and basket weaving, and the Apollo Quilting Queens from First Methodist Church displayed traditional old quilts and some of their recent handiwork. Don Stevenson led a hike on the Roaring Run Heritage Trail, showing remnants of the old Pennsylvania Mainline Canal and vestiges of the Gloria Mine, one of the Hicks mines. Art Stear coordinated a Car and Truck Show for antique, classic and custom

vehicles, and Bruce Egli portrayed a Revolutionary Soldier. After the pancake breakfast served by the First Methodist Church, one could sip homemade birch and root beer with the bean soup, apple dumplings and venison provided by the Historical Society. And models of the Drake Log Cabin were available for $15.

Don Stevenson believes that in heritage preservation, education and tourism lies the key to a more hopeful future for Apollo, but he finds the local business consortium fixated on the illusory dream of attracting General Motors or some other large corporation to the valley who would resurrect some version of the industrial past. Don cites facts and figures to show that even with the few projects he and others have initiated, visitors and money are being attracted to the area. He may not envision a heritage "moon shot," but like the Apollo space pioneers, he is impatient with pedestrian answers rooted in an unrecoverable past. What can be recovered is knowledge of the past and pride in its rich complexity. On this foundation Apollo can build a new, productive future.

B. Leechburg - A Manufacturing and Cultural Hub of Lower Armstrong County:

Leechburg, situated in a deep bend of the Kiskiminetas River, was less than a village before the Pennsylvania Canal made it an important trade center. The early settlement was known first as Friendship, then as White Plains, possibly for White Mattack, a Native American chief who patented much of the land in 1783. In 1827 engineer David Leech, for whom the town is named, moved in to build the canal dam, in partnership with a man named Trux. Other promoters and builders of the canal settled there as well. Leech soon established a saw mill, a flour mill and a woolen factory, all of which used water power from the dam. He went on to build freight and passenger boats for use on the canal. Leech and his sons also engaged in mercantile trade, and from 1853 to 1856 he was active in the firm of Leech, Chamberlain & Co., which built the Allegheny Valley Railroad from Pittsburgh to Kittanning. One of the Leech houses is now the home of the Leechburg Historical Museum.

In 1871 the iron industry expanded from Apollo to Leechburg when William Rogers, the Apollo iron company owner who had visited Russia to learn new iron-finishing techniques, joined T. J. Burchfield to establish a puddling, annealing and heating mill, the Siberian Iron Works, which produced cast iron products. In 1874 Rogers installed an historical invention, an iron furnace fueled by natural gas, the first use in the United States of natural gas to fuel ironworks. However, the company failed in1875 and was purchased at auction by Joseph Beale, John Kirkpatrick and John Wallace and renamed Kirkpatrick, Beale & Co. This company functioned until 1900 when it was purchased by the Pennsylvania Steel Company, later incorporated into the U. S. Steel Corporation. In the meantime Beale left the firm to build a mill on Canal Street, which he named the Western Pennsylvania Steel Works, and another mill, Sunny Side, across the river in Westmoreland County.

In 1874 a tin mill was founded near the Siberian Iron Works, and the two mills employed 150 workers. In 1900 U. S. Steel bought up several locally-owned mills, forming the American Sheet & Tinplate Company, which became the principal employer in the Leechburg area until it closed in the 1930s. Meanwhile in 1879 Major Beale founded the West Leechburg Steel Company, which was said to be "the finest equipped in the country" at the time, and "the first steel plant in the United States to be operated entirely by American employees" (*Armstrong County* 1914, 139). The company later merged with Allegheny Steel Company in Brackenridge, then became Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corporation. The one steel plant still operating on the Armstrong County side of the Kiski River is the Allegheny Ludlum plant just outside of Leechburg between the river and new Route 66.

In 1914 Leechburg was said to have "furnished more managers, superintendents and promoters of sheet steel mills and steel furnaces than any town of ten times its size anywhere in the United States" (139). As the town moved into industrial prominence in the late19th and early 20th centuries, a large number of immigrant workers from Eastern and Southern Europe and African American workers migrating from the South created a rich mixture of cultural heritages. Allen Knappenberger, who began his 47 years in the steel mills as a laborer, then

moved into the ranks of management until his retirement, described how the Vandergrift mills deployed first-generation immigrants from such varied backgrounds. Initially, to facilitate communication, certain nationalities were assigned to specific departments: the galvanizing department--Italians; the pickle house (where acid fumes permeated the air, often sickening workers)--Slovaks and African Americans; the sheet mill--English and "white Anglos" [white Caucasian northern Europeans and Americans] and African Americans (the blacks "tend to get the dirtier jobs, darker jobs"); machine shop--a mixture of Slovaks, Italians and a majority of "white Anglos" (no blacks); cold rollers--Hungarians; bundling and shipping--Italians; inspection department--Scots. In the forging shop the head blacksmith was Swedish, and his crew were Italians. Some African Americans were crane operators or motor operators, but there were not many. Most of the better jobs, the foreman or supervisor jobs, were assigned to people with German, Scottish or English background.

As the immigrant workers learned to speak English and their children moved into the work force, such labor distribution could not be justified, though informally certain restrictions remained. Workers from immigrant backgrounds might be barred from applying for positions demanding technical skill on the assumption that they were not capable of developing those skills even through the usual apprenticeship process. Job assignments could be doled out according to the whim of the supervisor, regardless of skill. The labor union addressed this problem by instituting the bidding process. Later, technical schooling was required to support a worker's bid for a highly-skilled position, even to begin the apprenticeship process, and a certain level of job seniority might also be required. Charles Budosh, a retired pattern maker of Slovenian descent reports that Slovaks of his father's generation would not have been considered for pattern making--they were assumed not to be capable of such skilled work. By the time he came along, if one had the training one could enter the apprenticeship program, as he did, after training at Connelley Trade School in Pittsburgh.

Allen Knappenberger confirms that the unions played a big part in breaking down discriminatory hiring and job assignments. Before the unions became strong, supervisors had

complete power to hire and fire. "If a superintendent didn't like the looks of a man, or he had a brother-in-law or a nephew or whoever wanted a job, he'd walk up and [say], 'I don't want you anymore. You're done.'" There was no recourse; skill was not the decisive issue. Knappenberger has heard that "a man would be fired in one section of the plant, and would go down to another area and talk to the superintendent and go to work for him, in the same plant. So there was no plant seniority." By the time he became a manager, the bidding process had changed all this, and he recognizes that many of the changes the unions brought were necessary. Besides, whatever benefits the unions won for the workers also benefitted management, because "whatever they got, we got equal or better."

Leechburg coal was so abundant that in addition to the coal mined by the various companies, Knappenberger recalls that "everyone had his little coal supply in the backyard." (Evidence of the prevalence of coal beneath the surface of Leechburg is indisputable in the1990s, as mine subsidence now threatens many of the homes, and the Howard Concrete Pumping company has been employed to fill in the empty mining tunnels.) Small private mines provided house coal for the owners and a bit to sell to neighbors--in the Depression by the bushel rather than by the ton.

Some mills operated their own coal mines. One example of the close relationship of coal mining to the steel industry was the small mine along Shaner Road just outside of Georgetown at the north edge of Leechburg. It employed 10 to 12 men and used mule power to pull the coal cars (the mule barn still sits near the filled-in entrance along Shaner Road). The mine drilled through the hill to the other side where the coal was loaded into cable cars and carried over to the Allegheny Ludlum plant at the bottom of the hill near the river.

How did the immigrant groups interact outside the mills and the mines? The Knappenbergers report that in the early days of immigration, Leechburg was "broken into little communities." West Leechburg had two sections, Hillville and West Leechburg. The West Leechburg section was home to many Slovakian and Russian immigrants. "People hesitated to walk through West Leechburg if you weren't a member of the West Leechburg group, because

you were infringing on their territory. And this was true a lot of places." By most reports, as time went on, their shared experience of difficult labor conditions, their common commitment to providing for their families with severely limited resources, and often their religious faith, drew people of these different backgrounds together to build strong, supportive communities despite their varied cultural heritages. While clusters of families from the same area of Hungary, Italy or Poland might settle in the same neighborhood and apply for similar jobs, the relatively small numbers of any one group necessitated their close interaction with others. In Leechburg, immigrants tended to settle in Georgetown, which was dominated for a time by Hungarians. Many shops were owned by Hungarians, and the Hungarian Club, the Magyar Presbyterian Church and the Hungarian Catholic Church of the Assumption also reflected the strong Hungarian presence. Later more Italian immigrants settled in Georgetown, and after the eight company houses near the Allegheny Ludlum plant which had been reserved for African-American workers were razed, Georgetown also absorbed much of the African-American population.

Andy Nigra, of Italian descent, describes his African-American neighbors and classmates in the 1940s in the most positive terms, but he was stung by the discrimination he felt when Georgetown elementary students were required to attend the elementary school in Gilpin Township which was dominated by teachers and students from English, Scots-Irish and German backgrounds who made no secret of their disdain for the children of immigrant families. In Leechburg, as elsewhere, the social faultline tended to fall between the Protestant managers and the Catholic laborers, between the earlier settlers from northern and western Europe and the latecomers from eastern and southern Europe and the American South.

Overall, though, Leechburg stands out as a community which has learned to accommodate cultural diversity and celebrate its shared industrial heritage. (It is important to note that this study does not include confirmation by Leechburg African Americans that their experience parallels that of other groups, or that the impression of solidarity with African Americans expressed by others reflects the personal experience of those African Americans.)

The hardworking Jewish merchants in town generously supported their fellow immigrants who worked in the mills and the mines through difficult times. The Marconi Club welcomes non-Italians to participate in its social events. Workers of any background stop in for a beer at the Hungarian Club in Georgetown. Leechburgers value their unique blend of unity and diversity, and wish only that their children and grandchildren could find as positive a future along the Kiskiminetas riverbends as they found in the past.

C. Freeport - From Breweries to Brickyards

Freeport, located near the confluence of the Kiskiminetas and the Allegheny Rivers, was an important Native American settlement, as indicated by "mounds, clearings, fortifications and other pre-historic remains" (*Armstrong County* 1914, 155). Todd's Island, separated from mainland by a small ribbon of the Allegheny River until the Guckenheimer Distillery filled in the channel, was home to a Native American, Joe Williams, who for many years served as the Freeport town grave digger. From 1835 to 1855 Philip and Edward Bohlen also lived on the island. Until the invention of artificial ice machines, they conducted a thriving ice business, cutting ice from the river and shipping it to the South on flatboats.

The earliest European structure in Freeport was a blockhouse, built on the Allegheny River above the mouth of Buffalo Creek as a fortification against attack by Indians. First called "Toddstown" by local settlers for William and David Todd, who laid out the town in 1796, it became known as Freeport because of David Todd's insistence that it should always be a free port for water craft.

Though agricultural products such as wheat and flour passed through the "port," Freeport, like Apollo and Leechburg, enjoyed its first significant growth with the building of the Pennsylvania Canal. Canal construction started here in 1927, and by 1829 boats were "plied regularly" between Freeport and Pittsburgh. The first packet boat, the "Benjamin Franklin," carried 30 passengers at five miles an hour in February 1929. The Irish laborers who built the canal lived in two settlements, "Gary Owen" and "Mullengar," above and below Freeport. On

weekends the Irish workers patronized the three Freeport taverns, and stories of their hilarious behavior are kept alive as part of the town's mythology. Joe Yerace reports that the Irish Protestants and Catholics drank together, but by the end of the evening, "they always fought."

Incorporated as a borough in 1833, Freeport soon had its share of industry in a sawmills, a fulling mill, a tanner, a pottery, a gristmill, a foundry, and woolen mills, and a planing mill. As in other parts of Armstrong County, coal reserves were plentiful around Freeport. Joseph Uptegraph remembers going into the mine at about age eight--in the early 1920s before there were child labor laws--to help his father, then going home at midnight to sleep before getting up early to walk to school in time to fire up the stove for the teacher!

Though the Kiskiminetas River, especially, and to a lesser extent, the Allegheny River, suffered serious pollution from coal mining and other industrial waste, fine spring water brought breweries and distilleries to both Freeport and Schenley, the two towns lying closest to the juncture of the two rivers. As transporting sufficient grain from western Pennsylvania across the Alleghenies to eastern markets in exchange for all the supplies farmers needed was difficult and prohibitive in cost, it was easier to distill grain into whiskey and send it in kegs by pack-horse. Whiskey became the medium of exchange for many Pennsylvania farmers.

The first brewery in Freeport was established by J. P. Stuebgen in 1866 and was in operation until 1887. The Guckenheimer Brothers' Distillery was opened in 1855. By 1912 the A. Guckenheimer & Bros. corporation was operating "the largest distillery of rye whiskey in the United States, consuming 2,100 barrels of grain per day" (158). The plant, some of which was located in nearby Laneville, consisted of "a 310,000-bushel grain elevator, a malthouse, a stillhouse, and nine bonded warehouses, with capacity for 150,000 barrels" (158). They made their own barrels and employed 125 men. Ironically, according to Joe Yerace, Mr. Guckenheimer voted for Prohibition for reasons of politics and social status, even though it hindered his business. What Mr. Guckenheimer's role was in supporting the speakeasies which immediately sprang up all over the area during Prohibition may be less easy to discover!

Most Pennsylvania coal deposits were underlaid by a bed of clay from one to fifteen feet in depth. The plastic grades of clay were used to make house bricks and tile. Flint clay was used to manufacture the fire brick needed to line iron and steel furnaces and ladles. In addition to coal reserves, Freeport had a variety of clay deposits which supported brick-making industries from the early 19th century. Joe Yerace reports that the first Freeport house brickmaking company was the Heagy Company founded in 1930 at the upper end of 7th Street and High Street. Beer's history of Armstrong County credits David Putney with establishing the first brickmaking business in 1832. Like Putney's yard, the Laneville Brickyard, founded in 1870, produced house brick. In 1910 the Freeport Clay Products Company was established to make high-quality faced building brick from fireclay. It employed 50 men, and in 1914 was considered the leading business in the township in 1914.

As the steel industry developed, the Freeport Brick Company was established by Francis Laube, Sr., to produce firebrick to line the open hearth furnaces and the ladles. This brick used a different type of clay (flint clay) and was fired at a different temperature from the house brick produced earlier. The firebrick was also made by automation; the earlier house bricks had been made by hand. The demand for firebrick was enormous, as it could be used for only one melt, then had to be replaced.

As in the coal mines around Freeport, many of the brickyard laborers were local Germans and British workers, with perhaps a predominance of Italians. Joseph and Ted Uptegraph, brothers, were of German background. Their father worked as a coal miner from the age of 12, and for many years was a mule driver. He broke the mules not only for the coal companies in the area, but also for the Freeport Brick Company, where all three of them eventually worked. As mentioned earlier, Joseph went into the mines at night to help his father at the age of nine. He also worked for a time on the river and in the clay mines, but these did not provide steady work. So in 1941 he went to work at the Freeport Brick Company for Francis Laube, Sr. He had excellent mechanical skills, and when he quit in protest because a superintendent insisted he do work which would aggravate his respiratory problems, Mr. Laube

sent for him. When he heard Joseph's side of the story, Laube asked him to return. "I need you here. You're more important to me than the superintendent is. . . because you can do anything." Mr. Laube offered him a substantial raise and asked him to "stay to get your watch" for 25 years of service. Joseph earned his watch, then "sold the watch and bought a dog!" He retired in 1969 after 27 years at the brick company.

After his brother Ted returned from the service, Joseph got him a job in the brick company, too, but Ted's experience was not so positive. He had worked there as a teenager--in fact, lied about his age so that he could go to work at 15 instead of 16. But going back to the brick company after the service was "the biggest mistake I ever made." Young workers had to do the dirty jobs. "You had to be able to hold your own, and if you didn't hold your own, they walked over top of you." Ted worked for Francis Laube, Jr., or "Dutch" Laube, who was a much less appreciative employer than his father had been. Ted felt the management tried to hold the workers back. He and many of his co-workers dreaded coming to work. Working around the 300º kilns was hot, and workers often burnt their hands taking bricks from the oven. "It seems like they really pounded you into the dirt. No matter what you've done, you never did enough." Initially the union did not improve working conditions, because, in Ted's opinion the first union committee consisted of men who "didn't know what they were doing," so they were ineffective.

After 27 years of work at the brickyard, Ted was injured in a forklift accident. The company tried not to pay workman's compensation, and Ted eventually won disability in 1969 from the government, not from the company. Ted's brother Joseph commented that Francis Laube, Sr., and Carl Laube were "two wonderful people to work for, but this Dutch Laube, the son of Francis, Sr., . . . there's as much difference between them as there is between day and night."

Few African-Americans worked at the Freeport Brick Company, but both Joseph and Ted remarked that those who were hired quit immediately when they saw how hard and hot the work was. Ted commented, "They worked one day and never came back. The work was too

hard for them; they wouldn't do it." Neither commented on how many other workers responded in the same way. Though Ted hated his job, both he and Joseph seem to take a kind of pride in having been able to endure the difficult conditions at the brick company and persist for so many years.

Despite their comments about the unwillingness of African-American laborers to work at the brick company, both reported good relationships with the several African-American families who lived in Freeport. Two families were close neighbors. The Stewarts were maid and chauffeur for the Cornells, Freeport bankers. The Moody family lived on Mill Street. Bob Moody was a boxer, "a sparring partner for Joe Lewis." He worked as a handyman. Ted trapped with Bob's brother. "When we got older, we drank beer together, too. We had great times together."

Joe Uptegraph commented that there was little diversity in Freeport, an impression that Fr. Dominick DeBlasio might dispute. It is true that Freeport never drew the large numbers of eastern and southern European immigrants who worked in the mines and mills in Leechburg and Yatesboro. But the Irish workers who built the canal became the nucleus of a significant Irish Catholic group in Freeport, and later Italian workers including Fr. Dom's grandfather came to work on the railroad. St. Mary's served both the Irish and the Italian residents of Freeport. Fr. DeBlasio reports that there were a few Polish families and several from other European countries, but the largest group of immigrants were Italians, fifteen or twenty families who came from the same region in Italy, where there was no work to be had. The first to come to work on the railroad wrote back to their family and friends, and other families joined them. His father came alone to find work and lived in a boarding house. He then returned to Italy, married, and brought his wife back with him. Fr. DeBlasio was born in the boarding house where his father stayed.

One indication of the less-than-enthusiastic welcome for immigrants can be heard in Joe Yerace's account of the building of the first St. Mary's Catholic Church. The congregation was established in 1926, before the Irish canal workers swelled the Catholic population. In 1932

brickmaker Dave Putney put up the first building, charging $600. When people saw that he was using inferior brick, they challenged him. His response was, "That's good enough for the Mickeys." Fr. Patrick O'Neill did not intervene, but when the church was finished, he told Putney, "David, tear that building down. Clear up the lot, and get out of here!" Putney lowered his price to $200, but before long the church had to be held together with rods "from one side to the other." A larger building was built in 1949.

The importance of the railroad industry in Lower Armstrong County is illustrated by its role in Freeport and Schenley. When the railroad company bought up the canal right-of-way, the rails provided a major means of transportation until improved highways and trailer trucks began to offer serious competition. In addition to hauling industrial cargo, six passenger trains a day offered relatively fast and affordable transportation from Freeport to Pittsburgh and points in between. The Freeport turntable and the "wreck train" based at Butler Junction demonstrated Freeport's role as a significant stop along the railway.

The wreck train was an emergency train which was dispatched to the site of a train wreck to make repairs. Fr. DeBlasio's father was cook on the wreck train. Whenever there was a train wreck in the division, the wreck train, consisting of three cars and "the big derrick that would raise cars and engines." One car had supplies on it, and the engine pushed the train rather than pulling it. When word of a wreck reached the railway station, the engineer blew the whistle on the engine at Butler Junction, and within a half hour or so the men had to be there ready to go. If they stayed out a number of hours, Fr. Dom's father would cook for the bosses: "the engine master, the conductor, the engineer on the big crane." If they worked through several mealtimes, he cooked for the whole gang. He cooked on a big coal stove in the front car, where they engine master had his office. There was also a track section which replaced or repaired tracks. At that time Mr. DeBlasio made $3.20 a day. "And when those men went to work in those days, they really worked." When there was no emergency, the men worked in the railway yard, resupplying the wreck train and doing maintenance tasks. Later the wreck train was transferred to Brackenridge.

Freeport today is a quiet town whose residents proclaim in typical Armstrong County fashion that "there's no better place to raise a family," though jobs are scarce for young people. The community pride is shown by the volunteers who support the library, clearly a community center. The library is too small to receive state funding, so they hold book sales and other community fundraisers to pay the librarians and maintain the building. It is a friendly place, a repository for local history, such as the notebook of notable Freeport houses surveyed in 1981 (Joe Yerace did much of the research). In the basement Joe proudly shows me the shelves he built to hold the fragile yellowed copies of the nineteenth-century Freeport paper. Just as Joe often does, a Freeport man is going through the pages doing genealogical research, spreading the papers on the specially-built table Joe built beside the shelves. They may not provide the archivist's recommended acid-free storage, but they show this community's intent to preserve its heritage, while making it easily accessible to its members.

D. Schenley - Labor-Management Relations and Gender Roles

In 1856, the North American Oil Company was formed at the juncture of the Kiskiminetas River and the Allegheny River to make oil from the vein of cannel coal found under the bituminous coal stratum. Nine years later the Penn Oil Works was established to refine crude petroleum. In 1894 a group of miners formed the Aladdin Coal Company to mine the high-quality coal in the area. Several years later Joseph G. Beale of Leechburg took over the company. Natural gas was also found in the area in the 1890s, which supplied the Enterprise Gas Company of Freeport and the Leechburg Gaslight and Fuel Company for several years.

The high quality of the fresh spring water also available here drew the founder of the Schenley Distillery in 1888, just across the Allegheny River from Freeport. The distillery grew into an enterprise which eventually had offices in various parts of the United States and Canada, and whose company offices are said to have occupied five stories of the Empire State Building. This explains the significance of the Empire State bottle among the many bird and airplane bottles in the hands of most Schenley bottle collectors.

Of all the industrial plants served by interviewees in this survey, the Schenley Distillery received the consistently highest rating in the opinion of its former employees. In early years the wages were higher than for either mine or steel workers, though the work was seasonal and irregular. The care the management took to create an attractive environment on the plant grounds paralleled the humane and sometimes markedly sensitive care for employees' well-being. The plant was eventually unionized, but I was not able to gather any sense of grievance which the unions needed to address, nor did I hear of resistance to unionization by management. The bidding process did open up greater opportunities for advancement, but seems not to have been as critical in its role in correcting discrimination as in other industries.

Burton Cinpinsky gives a moving account of his return to Schenley as a disabled World War II veteran. Having lost a leg, depressed by his disability and crushed by the insensitive response from passersby on the streets of Leechburg, he was scarcely able to face his former co-workers. He had no intention of reclaiming the position which was being held for him. But his boss treated him to a special dinner at the company lounge which ordinarily served visiting dignitaries, took him for a ride in his car, and insisted that he return to his place in the bottling department. When a young female co-worker nearly knocked him over with her enthusiastic welcome, his boss scolded her--but clearly expected everyone to make him as welcome. Burton credits his rehabilitation to the support of his supervisor.

Schenley was a family--and it also employed nearly the entire family of Pat Cuffia and her sister Julia Poli. The coal mines never employed women, and the steel mills employed women in the office, but until the 1980s only temporarily in the mills, to keep the mills going in order to meet the heavy demand for steel throughout World War II. But Schenley Distillery always employed women in the office, on its bottling lines and for the meticulous labeling and sealing of bottles at which their smaller, more dextrous hands were more skilled than men's.

Women's pay rates did not equal men's, however, until the feminist movement in the 1970s forced regulations allowing women to bid on jobs formerly reserved for men and required equal pay for equal work. Though this resulted in women being required to roll

whiskey barrels into the warehouse, it also allowed them to bid on machine jobs which had formerly been reserved for men. To their surprise they discovered that these higher-paying positions were actually easier to do than the former "women's work." Julia and Pat report that, as might be expected, some men resisted this invasion of their domain, and played tricks on the women, hoping to make them fail. But this phase passed as the men resigned themselves to the reality of equal opportunity in their workplace. Women also moved into supervisory positions.

Through all these changes, the Schenley plant management seems to have retained its supportive attitude toward employees. The Schenley workers considered themselves fortunate to work in such a positive environment and earn decent wages, at least when the plant was operational. This may have compounded the sense of disbelief and betrayal when the last owner sold off the warehouse stock and closed the plant in 1983. The Schenley workers still hold periodic reunions to renew acquaintance and reminisce about the "good old days" at Schenley.

About the time the Schenley Distillery opened, the Pennsylvania Railroad constructed a branch railway from Leechburg to Schenley which connected with the Allegheny Valley railroad. This made it possible to transport the high-quality coal from the Freeport vein in Gilpin Township. One of numerous advantages Schenley employees enjoyed was the train the company provided for its commuting workers. The railway line which runs past the abandoned Schenley plant still carries cargo, but it also sports a new passenger line, the Kiski Junction Railroad, one of several imaginative projects for developing the recreational and tourism potential of Armstrong County. Mary and Charlie (Chuck) Bowyer are not from Armstrong County, but they invest enormous enthusiasm and creative energy in restoring old railway engines, flatcars and cabooses, developing a fleet of railway stock to use in educational tours for school groups and tourists. Already they conduct one-hour scenic tours along the Kiski River from Schenley to Bagdad, pointing out canal remnants and other historic sites along the way. Their passion for preserving and restoring the past is equalled by their vision for the potential future development of the Kiski Junction Railroad as a major resource for recreation and

education. Dale Berkley from New Castle and Larry Vorpe from Kittanning share their commitment to Armstrong's historic heritage and to passing it on.

E. Kiskimere and Yatesboro - Two Company Coal Towns

The village of Kiskimere, which crowns a hill in Parks Township between Leechburg and Apollo, was built as a coal company town early in the twentieth century. The company store is gone, but the former company houses are easily distinguished from the mobile homes, and the prefabricated and newly constructed homes now interspersed among them. The renovations many residents have made to houses purchased from the company now blur the distinctions among the three original types of company houses which ranked their inhabitants: single brick houses along the first street, reserved for bosses; double brick houses on the second street for the next echelon; and the rest, smaller single frame houses for the laborers. The former schoolhouse has been moved across the street from where it first stood and is now a dwelling.

Unlike those in Freeport and Yatesboro, the Kiskimere mine drew a number of African Americans from the South in addition to the Italian and East European workers. Mr. Charley Johnson, 86-year-old retired African-American miner who joined his father and brother in the mine in 1924 at age 13 speaks with pride of the respect his enormous capacity for work and his indomitable spirit won among his fellow workers and supervisors. But he also recalls that when an African-American neighbor brought home a light-skinned wife, several Italian families blew up his house.

Morningside Church, the community church donated by the company to be used equally by the various denominations represented by the workers, is now Morningside Baptist Church, an African-American congregation. Mr. Charley and his wife were active choir members, Charley "bassing" the old-time a capella songs and spirituals. "I used to sing the hell out of those songs," he reports. Now nearly blind, he sits on his porch and sings them by the hour, his foot tapping out the rock-steady rhythm on the floor.

Retired Kiskimere mine workers of Italian and Eastern European backgrounds still live on the hilltop, but everyone agrees that no one can tell the story of the Kiskimere mines like Mr. Charley. On a bad day, Mr. Charley disagrees. "I don't want to talk about the mines. It makes me feel bad. I stayed in the mines too long. Now my back is bad, my knees are bad from shoveling coal on my knees. . . I want to move to Cleveland to be with my sister." But on a good day, he welcomes the visitor who will listen to his vivid descriptions of telescoping his robust six-foot frame to wrestle coal out of the three-foot- eight-inch seam, sometimes with his partner averaging 30 tons of coal a day; of going back into the mine tunnels on a Friday night to check the conveyor belts from east to west and north to south, knowing that if something went wrong, no one would know until Monday morning; and of fighting on the union committee for the rights of his fellow workers, challenging the company when they threatened to fire a good worker, and negotiating a fair settlement. "But you had to be right!" he insists. "If you were wrong, the union won't back you. If you were wrong, the company could fire you. You had to be right!"

In the Rural Valley area of Cowanshannock Township, tiny coal-patch towns--Yatesboro, NuMine, Margaret and Sagamore--dot the countryside. Throughout the 19th century, Cowanshannock Township was a quiet agrarian area with poor roads and few residents. John Patterson settled in the central part of the township and named his homestead Rural Valley. The Rural Valley post office was established at his residence in 1830.

But in 1899 the owners of the Cowanshannock Coal and Coke Company purchased more than a thousand acres of coal and surface land to build the coal town of Yatesboro and opened what became the largest coal mine in Armstrong County, crowding within a mile of the village of Rural Valley. By April 1900 a number of company houses had been built for workers, and the Valley Hotel and the company store and the company doctor were ready. The Yatesboro mine eventually employed nearly 1,100 men and produced 825,000 tones of coal a year. In this area, the railway provided transportation for the coal produced by the

mines. A connecting railway from the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad was built from the main line at Echo to Yatesboro.

At the outset most of the residents of Yatesboro were unnaturalized immigrants. *Armstrong County Pennsylvania, A Collection of Topical and Family Sketches,* published in 1980 by The Armstrong County Historical and Museum Society, reports, "Scotch, Italians, Swedes, Middle Europeans . . . came; some walking, some in railroad coaches and some in box cars. They were housed temporarily at the 35 room Valley Hotel until housing could be arranged in either the company houses or in boarding and rooming house which catered to people of their own ethnic origins" (19).

A few years later the Buffalo & Susquehanna Coal & Coke Company opened five mines in nearby Sagamore, which in 1914 employed 806 men and produced an average of 600,000 tons of coal per year. Sagamore, like Yatesboro, was built by the coal company. In 1910 NuMine was built on the eastern side of Rural Valley, also in close proximity to the Cowanshannock Coal & Coke Company mines. In 1908 the Sagamore power house and tipple were the largest in the world. In 1920 the Margaret Mine was built on Route 03058, which connected Routes 85 and 422.

As in other areas, the mine owners, managers and foremen in the Yatesboro mines were English, Welsh and Scottish. They lived on the high side of the street, in the more substantial houses, and they were given preference in the assignments of physical labor. If they dug coal, it was in the drier rooms, where the constant bone-chilling dripping of water from the ceiling didn't threaten pneumonia, and where the coal seam was deep enough that they could work upright. The majority of the immigrant laborers were Croatian, Polish, Hungarian, Slavic, and Italians--"lots of Italians." The complete absence of African-American workers in the Yatesboro mines led Mrs. Anne Chobody, whose father and husband were miners, and whose son is still a miner, to conclude that African Americans "didn't go into the mines," though nearby Sagamore did employ black workers.

The company provided doctors, but workers paid for their services with a monthly fee deducted from their wages--fifty cents for single men and $1.25 for married men. In addition to medical services, the company owners thought workers needed church facilities, so in addition to their medical fees, both Protestant and Catholic miners were required to donate money for their churches. These "donations" were also deducted from their meagre pay. In 1904 the St. Mary's Catholic Church was founded in Yatesboro, on land deeded by the Cowanshannock Coal and Coke Company. It served the Catholic workers of all ethnic backgrounds. In 1927-1928 St. Gabriel's Catholic Church was built at NuMine.

Food, mining equipment and most clothing had to be purchased at the company store, charged against a $5 "due bill." Often on payday, there was no cash left to collect, so large gardens, pigs, chickens, and a cow or two provided fresh produce and meat, and sometimes extra eggs to sell for cash. Everyone canned large quantities of fruits and vegetables, and hog butchering (especially in the distinctive Hungarian manner) was a community affair. Like their counterparts in Georgetown, the Hungarians said they made use of "everything but the squeal."

When young men came over from Europe to work until they could afford to bring their families--or before they found a wife here--they boarded, sometimes in twos and threes with a single family, or in boarding houses for fifteen or more. One young Hungarian mother took in three boarders to support her three children after her husband was electrocuted in a mining accident. When the company insisted that she must leave the house to make room for a miner's family, one of her boarders first offered to pay the rent, then married her to ensure that she should not have to leave her home.

But for a vigorous young Croatian like Thomas Piscolish, there was a way to circumvent the discrimination against immigrant workers--he could play baseball. The Yatesboro mine owner promoted his company team. "If there was a good baseball player in an area that needed a job, they would take him in, give a job, and let him play ball." The coal-mining towns all had good teams, and even the Pittsburgh Pirates came occasionally to challenge the local players.

Ball players got better jobs in the mines, and they worked "steady daylight, so they could play" every evening. Piscolish now admits that it might not have been "the best thing in the world" to work all day in the mines, then play ball at night, but "you had to. You didn't know any better then, in those days."

Being a ball player had other advantages, too. Everyone knew him, so when he began to court the daughter of an Italian family who was six years young than he, her parents expressed their doubts about her marrying so young, but finally agreed. After all, he was Catholic, not Presbyterian, and said mass at St. Mary's with all the other Catholics--Irish, Italian, Hungarian, Slavic and Croatian. They owned a soda fountain and beer garden, and Ann Piscolish remembers, "One good thing about miners, when they were on strike or something like that, they might not have any money for anything else, but they always had a dime for beer." Thomas was too young for beer, but he'd come in "for peanuts and chocolate milk," or to play cards.

After their marriage, when the company began selling the company houses to miners, Thomas set his sights on a house in the area formerly reserved for English, Welsh and Scottish families--"not for the ethnic groups." After a year of telling him the house was promised to someone else, though it stood empty all the while, the company sold him the house. He spoke English well and was better educated than most of the immigrant workers--and besides, he'd been a ball player--so he got his house in the "English" section of town.

F. Dayton - Local History, Agriculture, and the Amish Community

The earliest European settlers in Armstrong County moved into the area to claim rich agricultural farmland, and some of the earliest industries in canal towns such as Freeport and Leechburg were woolen mills which processed wool supplied by local farmers. The prime example of a predominantly agricultural area surveyed in this study is Dayton, in Wayne Township, the northeasternmost area assigned to me. A 1914 description is still recognizable: "Nature has destined this section of the county for agriculture and man has availed himself of her

bounty from early times. Almost from the first Wayne township has been distinguished for her products, and agriculture and learning have gone hand in hand toward the goal of success. Viewed from any point the landscape expresses tranquility. Vale and glad blend into each other with scarcely an angle to mar the symmetry of the picture" (*Armstrong County*, 234).

The four British families who settled there, in the face of strong resistance by the Native Americans whom they displaced, established large farms before they began to build the schools and churches which would form the nucleus of the town. As mentioned earlier, other English, Scottish, Irish, Scots-Irish, and German settlers joined them, and the brief diversification represented by "Little Italy" during the exploitation of the coal reserves has not persisted. The Dayton Fair, established by the wife of one of the first settlers in the Dayton area, is held annually in early August. This year's fair, the 117th annual fair, provided ample demonstration of the pride Dayton area residents take in their agricultural heritage.

The rich land has drawn a large settlement of Amish farmers to Dayton and east into Indiana County. The Amish community staunchly retains their German and Swiss heritage for religious reasons, and functions as a separate yet deeply connected part of the surrounding "English" community.

As I found in every area covered in this survey, the Dayton community displays great pride in their identity, in this case a proud agricultural tradition which has at least as promising a future as its past is rich. While in some other areas the struggle to preserve a record of the past is carried on by a small group of dedicated volunteers, in Dayton the official guardians of their heritage have no difficulty in rallying the entire community when some piece of their history is threatened. One example is the public outcry when architects planning the renovation of the high school proposed that the section remaining from the Normal School constructed in 1905 be torn down. Of all the existing structures, the Dayton community insisted, that part of the building must remain, and the architects must plan their renovations around it. The generous enthusiasm of area residents who bring antique farm implements to supplement the historic collection at the Marshall House, home of the Dayton Historical Museum (far beyond the

present space to accommodate them), is equalled by the innovative educational programs they devise despite their lack of success in securing financial support from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The annual Dayton Fair demonstrates the sense of pride in their agricultural identity which is also reflected in the neatly-groomed homesteads and farms which surround the village. Sleek horses prance for their costumed riders, sheep are combed and brushed for the shearing competition, and goats bred for beauty preen in their straw-lined stalls. Many families bring a house trailer and spend the week on the fairgrounds to care for their animals and exhibits and to take in all of the excitement.

Exhibitors from other areas who would like to display at the fair are politely turned away. "We prefer not to have them," says Rev. T. R. R. Stull (affectionately known as "Preach"), who is in charge of the religious service which opens the fair. Booths and other fair events such as the flower show, the vegetable competition, or the canned goods judging are managed by specific families, and sometimes the responsibility--or honor--is passed down through generations. The Dayton Fair is the culmination of a year's work, and the ultimate expression of a farm community's pride in their animal husbandry, in their carefully tended garden and field crops, and in the skills required to make their farms and kitchens more productive and profitable.

Preparing for the fair also instills character values. Young people learn early to take responsibility in caring for animals and grooming them for competition. But the complicated protocol of showing an animal in the fair competition also demands intense discipline and well-grounded poise--especially when one's prize sheep decides to bolt while the judge is giving his evaluation of the class! How one handles that stress may be considered the final test of excellence, rather than the obstreperous behavior of one's prize pet. Similarly, the choice of the Fair Queen is not simply a beauty contest. The winner this year was the girl who knew the history of the fair and its traditions, and who could give her speech with confidence and clarity.

Memories of the fair may serve as personal mileposts. Grand Marshall Blair Goode, who has been a horseman all his life and a blacksmith, has not missed a single fair in his 83 years. Tom Marshall, descendant of one of the two Marshall families who helped establish the town, took his wife to the fair on their first date, and they've been active participants throughout their forty years of marriage.

Amish farmers and their families do not appear at the fair, but what the fair represents in the Dayton community helps to explain why the Amish families who've settled in the area find this a congenial home. Care for the land, animal husbandry, producing and preserving wholesome food, and nurturing strong family relationships are important to them, too. Levi and Edna Miller, who came to the Dayton area 30 years ago when the area around Kidron, Ohio, became "too crowded," find their "English" neighbors respectful and supportive of their life style and beliefs. Seldom have they experienced the harassment to which young people in some communities have subjected their Amish neighbors.

One reason for the mutual respect comes into focus when Rev. Stull tells the story of an "English" farmer whose barn roof was torn off in a storm. The next day, a group of Amish farmers visited him to see what help he needed. The mutual help among members of the Amish community is legendary, but in this case, the Amish workmen showed up the next morning at their "English " neighbor's place with lumber and tools, and before evening the new roof was finished. When the farmer asked what he owed them, they replied, "Nothing." He was their neighbor; he was in need, and they could help.

Levi Miller isn't interested in having tourists visit his farm, though it is a model of Amish efficiency despite his refusal to use modern farm equipment. He doesn't want them poking around, asking foolish questions. But he and Edna welcome the visitors Sherry Stockdale has brought to talk with them, inviting us all to sit with them on the porch which faces the house where their daughter lives. He shares freely and with shrewd insight his perceptions of the Amish community, their history, and their religious beliefs. He and Edna enjoy teasing each other and delight in the stable families their children have established.

Edna describes in detail the yearly cycle of household and gardening tasks--including moving to the summer house so that the big house doesn't get tracked up and dirty during the gardening and canning season! She shares wedding and funeral customs. She details favorite recipes, then insists on treating us to tea and cookies. Before we leave, one daughter comes across the yard with a bucket of berries she and her daughter have picked to share with Grandma, and another daughter comes to share family news. As we pass through the kitchen we slip into the adjoining room with its sunny windows lighting a nearly finished quilt in its frame. In this household, quilting is not just a hobby; it's a beautiful but practical and handy routine. Edna reaches into the large icebox just inside the entry-way door and presses Sherry to take a fresh-baked berry pie.

Sherry Stockdale, proprietor of a general store in Dayton patronized by Amish families, conducts an Amish Wedding Feast every Saturday through the summer. She has researched the history of their faith, has visited other Amish communities to compare wedding customs, and carefully checks the details of her presentation to be sure she is accurate and respectful in her account. Her Amish neighbors appreciate her warmth and sensitivity to their customs. She is profiting from their distinctive lifestyle, but her enactment of an Amish Wedding Feast also helps to keep curious tourists from intruding on their family celebrations. Like Sherry, "Preach" and Eleanor Stull go to great lengths to protect the Amish community from intrusive press reporters and inquisitive visitors. "Preach" conducts a bus tour through the Amish farmlands, but he stops by before a tour to check with each family to be sure the visit will not inconvenience or disturb them. In this way the two communities negotiate a closeness and a distancing that benefit them both.

IV. Recurrent Themes

A. Cultural Values

A number of themes, most of them closely interrelated, recurred in interviews with people from the whole range of backgrounds represented in this study. A strong sense of family

cohesiveness and loyalty pervaded the descriptions of growing up and raising children, by men and women, from Italian to German to Hungarian to Polish to African American to Irish to Slovenian. Two men of different backgrounds apologized for "getting emotional" when they talked about their families. For many of this generation of retired or semi-retired persons, their childhood families struggled through difficult financial stress, but the sacrifices to keep the family together and to help care for siblings and parents were taken for granted. In their marriages, planning and providing for a better future for their own children took precedence over vacations--even over honeymoons! And for all their concern that their children and grandchildren face at best an uncertain future, and at worst, no viable economic future in Armstrong County, they have no regrets about raising their families here. Where else could they have provided such a secure, safe and supportive environment for their children?

Financial responsibility was a theme that resonated with the concern for family. Several people took pride in never having a mortgage--they saved, they renovated, they built a home themselves, even if it meant expanding slowly, in stages, rather than going into debt. Or they stayed in the company house they or their parents bought cheap from the mining company, making it over to fit their needs.

A strong work ethic is also closely related to the value of family cohesiveness. As Louise Bonello says, "Be a good worker and take care of your money. And keep your children close." Her children and her grandchildren learned to work by helping their parents in the family business, and she takes pride that "they're not the kind to sit down, because they used to work all the time." Taking satisfaction in hard, productive work was a common sentiment.

Many mine and steel workers spent years doing grueling labor which others might describe as "menial." But more often than they expressed complaints, interviewees took pride in doing jobs that others might refuse as too strenuous. For some, a job in the mills was highly preferable to working in the mines, definitely a "step up" on the employment scale. But Mr. Charley Johnson--on a good day--disputes that ranking: "I loved going into the mines. I loved working there every day. I didn't want to work in the mills."

Both pattern makers I interviewed take intense pride in the skill and artistry of their craft. Their work was crucial to the steel industry and to the whole American economy, and their skill seemed irreplaceable--until computer design make them obsolete. "I loved my job," says Frank Stoughton, who carries his oxygen supply with him because the pulmonary fibrosis to which his work contributed now limits his energy. He shows his set of "shrink rules," the measuring sticks that helped him design a pattern that would allow for the varying shrinkage of different metals, so that a piece of machinery made from the pattern would fit within a few thousandths of an inch after the metal cooled. He knows he was good at his job, and that his job made a difference, even though the demand for his skills is now almost nonexistent.

This tradition of craftsmanship, of pride in doing skilled labor, and of self-reliance translates into the satisfaction in carrying those skills home, "being handy," able to "do anything,": repair cars, renovate one's home, build a sister-in-law's fireplace, raise vegetables (usually a man's job, though his wife might do the canning), help "all the widows in town." The same craftsmanship also translates into an artistic flair that some of these men now express through wood carving and sculpture, oil painting, china painting, and other arts which would formerly have been a luxury.

However grueling the work which brought their families to Lower Armstrong County, this is now their home. In every community, interviewees expressed great pride in their home town. "This was the best place in the world to raise a family," said Retha Knappenberger and others. "This is the best-kept secret in the valley," said Max Israel of his view of the Kiski River from his back yard. "I wouldn't live anywhere else," or "This is home, and I wanted to come back," were other expressions of the same local pride.

For John Powell at Schenley, part of that pride is in the safety of trusting his neighbors. "I knew you were from Pittsburgh," he teased me. "You lock your car." Sometimes new folks come into the area who don't understand, who may steal something from someone. But, Powell says, "they don't last long." People in Schenley won't stand for such behavior. Knowing one can count on one's neighbors is a related source of pride. "We're family. We help each other."

For the local historians in the area a compelling sense of pride resides in discovering and sharing the cultural and industrial history of their communities. Even those who are not natives, like Mary and Chuck Bowyer, who are helping to restore the Kiski Junction Railroad, share with their collaborators Larry Vorpe and Dale Berkley a fierce delight in the progress they are making. Their vision of the potential of this project is almost limitless--it expands with each small success.

B. Paths to the Future

All the people I interviewed in Lower Armstrong County know that the jobs that have allowed them to retire in relative comfort are gone. Most of the mines are depleted or not economically productive, even if coal were still in demand. The few mills that remain employ a much smaller, more technically skilled labor force. Other supporting industries are obsolete or have moved elsewhere. For many people this is a depressing reality, especially as they see their children and grandchildren leaving. Even if they are nearby, some, like Andy Nigra, express great concern that their grandchildren, whose parents must both work, will not have the same secure family support system that nourished him and his wife. Not that they blame their children--as Julia Poli points out, "They have to pay as much for a car as we had to pay for a house."

Much as they love their home communities, the future looks bleak. As Joe Yerace said, "All Freeport's going to be in fifty years from now is just a place to eat and sleep and die." There's nothing to keep the young people, except that it's a great place to live, "just a real small-town community." This wistful, despairing view expresses the bittersweet reality of Lower Armstrong County's present and imagined future.

Most people accept the reality that heavy industry will not return to the valley. But some point with pride to the small businesses which are being established, some in industrial parks which minimize overhead costs and support a variety of young, energetic business women and men. Even better, some are making creative use of abandoned industrial plants. A prime

example is the few businesses which have set up in the vast abandoned Schenley Distillery buildings. The plant still looks desolate to a visitor, but Sparks Technology, a thriving tool and die business, hires skilled machinists who work in light, spacious quarters on the renovated second floor of one Schenley building. As Andy Nigra points out, these businesses are environmentally responsible, and they are drawing on the reservoir of skilled craftsmanship which was so crucial to the industrial past.

These are local young people who have decided to make their future here where they want to live, and where the cost of starting a new business is far more manageable than it would be in an urban setting. There is plenty of space for more hi-tech businesses, like Cook Pacemaker Corporation, a facility to the east of Leechburg which manufactures heart pacemakers.

Allen Knappenberger, too, sees hope in these young entrepreneurs. But he also thinks Armstrong County has great potential as a "bedroom community," a peaceful, attractive place to live and raise a family for commuters to jobs in larger towns and cities. The problem is transportation. Getting across the Allegheny River to Leechburg from Route 28 can be daunting to a non-native, and most commuters want easier access to and from work, even if they resign themselves to snarled traffic on a busy highway. Allen agrees that computer technology may make it possible for some workers to have the best of a high-tech work environment and the best place to live, through home-office computing. But he is doubtful that this will provide a solution for the majority of workers.

Several people, like Don Stevenson, Max Israel, and Marilyn Rae envision combining heritage education and craftsmanship with tourism and recreation to capitalize on Armstrong County's natural physical attractions, rich history and human resources. As Rae says of the many local craftspersons, "This county is so rich; there's so much here, but they don't know it." Max Israel believes that cleaning up the banks of the Kiskiminetas River to attract more fishermen and vacationers would pay far greater dividends than most people realize. The visitors he takes onto the Hyde Park footbridge are as stricken as he is by the beauty of the

view, and he would love for the county planners to catch his vision for the potential to develop the Kiski River as a recreational area. Don Stevenson believes that educating young people, or helping them educate themselves in the history of their area, is another key, along with cleaning up the natural environment and encouraging crafts, both traditional and inventive. Andy Nigra sees the Foxfire model as a proven method of interesting young people in their traditional heritage, honoring the skills of master craftsmen, developing young people's communication skills, and preserving and passing on these traditions.

It may be hard to see how these fragmentary visions could lead to restoring a vibrant, growing economy to Lower Armstrong County. Like the Apollo business leaders of whom Don Stevenson complains, most would find it hard to see how heritage education, preserving traditional crafts and developing tourism and recreation could replace the recruitment of hundreds of workers in an automotive or airline manufacturing plant. But a coalition of resourceful, creative, fiercely determined people such as I've learned to know in Armstrong County just might find a way!

V. Recommendations

Any survey of this kind is by definition less comprehensive than one might wish. In this instance, the necessary restrictions in time limited the scope even more than usual. As has been mentioned, several gaps in the study need to be addressed. It seems to me that finding contacts to document the natural gas industry is crucial, since the that industry has been significant in a number of areas in Lower Armstrong County. Likewise, it is important to demonstrate more fully what additional artistic and cultural traditions are alive in Lower Armstrong County. I would be happy to assist in this process if funds are available to continue beyond this immediate project.

A number of people offered to share pictures which would be valuable additions to SIHC archives and could help in educational programming. "Town meetings" need to be held in several Lower Armstrong County areas, in Leechburg, Freeport and Apollo, in particular.

Several persons, such as Tony Difilippi of Leechburg and Ralph Knepshield, who now lives in Kittanning but has many contacts in Leechburg, also offered to help encourage others to participate.

As for educational and interpretive programming, I think a number of the persons I've mentioned in the body of my report will make valuable partners with SIHC in developing programming. I think these should be developed in collaboration with community resource persons, as SIHC is doing elsewhere. The local historical societies and the "amateur" historians (I use the term *amateur* in its best sense--those who pursue something out of love rather than duty) are a fine resource. They are enthusiastic and dedicated, and they know their communities. Dale and Allen Morgan and Don Stevenson of the Apollo Historical Society are already developing imaginative programming with area schools. Bill Kerr, the principal of Alle-Kiski High School, was formerly mayor of Apollo. He has supported the Apollo Historical Society and the folks developing the Roaring Run Heritage Trail in several collaborative projects. Louise Stoughton, whose husband Floyd I interviewed, with Louise's capable assistance, has already talked with Kerr about this survey and the documentation which will result from it, and he has expressed enthusiasm for followup projects with the school. This is an important opening for developing programming for young people.

In North Vandergrift, Rev. and Freddie and Olivia Fancher Morman would be invaluable resources, and I suspect from my brief conversation with them, that Paul Rowley, present owner of Rowley's Store, and his mother, would also be excellent contacts.

In Leechburg, John Simon and Allen Knappenberger, who are both active in the Historical Society are should be considered, Simon for his knowledge and contacts in the Hungarian community, and Knappenberger for his extensive knowledge of steel production processes and development. J. C. and Jean Lovelace are important contacts in the African-American community in Leechburg. J. C. is president of the local NAACP, and Jean is active in the historical society. I spoke with both of them on the telephone, but was not able to arrange an interview. However, in any future programming they or other persons they might

suggest would provide important perspectives. Ralph Knepshield is very busy, but he would help to encourage participation by community people. And two natural educators, Max Israel and Andy Nigra, both of whom are already thinking about ways to reach young people (as is Allen Knappenberger), should be enlisted to help develop programming.

In Schenley, the four people I met on the Kiski Junction Railroad definitely should be part of programming planning: Mary and Chuck Bowyer, Dale K. Berkley, and Larry Vorpe, and John Powell may also be a good contact. In Freeport, Joe Yerace and Fr. Dominick DeBlasio are important contacts. In Dayton, Rev. T. R. R. and Evelyn Stull and Sherry Stockdale are invaluable resource persons.

I envision a steering committee from Lower Armstrong County who might work with SIHC in developing programming. There should also be a way of providing stronger representation from Lower Armstrong County in any county-wide planning that is done, given the strong sense on the part of residents in the lower part of the county that they are often neglected in county-wide planning.

I think SIHC needs to consider working directly with a planning group from southern part of the county. Perhaps one way to do this is to develop programming for the Kiski Valley area, which could work on projects which enlist community representatives from both sides of the river, showing the importance of the river, its role as a unifying element and its permeability as a barrier, rather than developing only county-specific projects. Clearly in the case of the Kiski Valley both Armstrong County and Westmoreland County residents have always related to their parallel communities on opposite sides of the river in significant ways, and continue to do so. In the process SIHC may be an important catalyst in correcting the tendency for decision-making power and financial and creative resources to be clustered in the Kittanning area to the detriment of outlying communities.

The enthusiasm and commitment that is evident among the people I've mentioned and many others with whom I've spoken bodes well for the potential of future collaboration with SIHC. If SIHC can help to strengthen and enrich the programs that are already underway, such as those in Apollo, and help to coordinate and bring together the people from various parts of the county

who are committed to historical and cultural preservation, and help to bring additional resources to the table, the future of this work appears exciting. I think such partnerships will be mutually beneficial, and may lead to a synergy with unpredictable but positive consequences.

Organaztions

Alle-Kiski Valley Historical Society, Tarentum
Armstrong Concert Band
Armstrong County League of Arts, R. D. 4, Kittanning, PA (Slate Lick)

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