

Ethnographic Survey Of Rankin, Pennsylvania
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I. Background

A. Geography

Rankin, Pennsylvania has a roughly geometric shape of a rectangle formed by arbitrary boundaries drawn after its incorporation as a Pennsylvania borough on March 9, 1892, coincidentally and approximately the same time as the famous 1892 Homestead Steel Strike.

Formerly a part of Braddock Township, Rankin occupies an area between the flood plain of the Monongahela River on its southern boarder, the old Pennsylvania Railroad tracks which separates it from Swissvale on the north, part way up the hills which incline from the flood plain, Braddock on the east and Swissvale on the west.

Between the flood plain and the northern, upper section of Rankin is a steep terrace on which no homes or buildings can be built, sharply dividing Rankin into two distinct parts.

B. Geology

Rankin lies at 40°25' N longitude and 79°52' W latitude on the Allegheny Peneplain. Its temperate climate, rich soil and river access, made Rankin a ripe area for early settlers to farm. Because of its coal deposits and natural gas it was also ideal for the infant steel industry to locate within its boundaries. As the steel and mining industries developed, migration from the eastern states began attracting families of English and Irish backgrounds who sought opportunities for a better life. These groups were followed soon after by people of German and Swedish heritage.

In 1883 Carrie Furnace was erected to supply molten iron for the steel furnaces in Homestead. Carrie Furnace was built upon the flood plain near the shores of the Monongahela River with a steel girder bridge connecting the opposing shore. From this bridge the striking steel workers fired their rifles at the approaching Pinkertons during the strike of 1892. Other steel manufacturing plants were also built in the same proximity to the river.

C. Climate

Located nine miles from the confluence of the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers, Rankin is exposed to evaporating moisture in the summer which unites with southwestern breezes bringing already moist air from the Gulf of Mexico. In summer the "lake effect" of Lake Erie adds additional moisture when breezes shift from the northwest.

In winter the "lake effect" has little or no effect to the snow accumulation as in the northern tier of western Pennsylvania as the prevailing westerly winds generally move across Rankin directly from the west. During the heyday of steel making with the discharges of warm water into the river and hot gasses expelled into the air, it was generally thought that the mean temperature was raised relieving the Pittsburgh region of heavy snowfalls.

Rankin is classified as DFA, with long summers and a growing season of approximately 180 days, with the first killing frost expected October 20 and the last killing frost expected April 21.

The annual mean temperature is 51.89°F, mean maximum temperature is 63.16°F, mean minimum temperature is 40.62°F. Average rainfall is 40.16" and average snowfall is 52". During the transition periods between extreme temperatures in spring and autumn, drainage and evaporation from the rivers produce thick fog. Rankin is also a transition zone between the warm, moist Gulf of Mexico air and the cool dry Canadian air.

The foliage of Rankin contains southern hardwoods such as chestnut, chestnut-oak,

black oak, red oak, black ash, white ash, red ash, yellow poplar, sweet gum buckeye and honey locust. Because it is a transition zone with the northeastern deciduous hardwoods, Rankin also has birch, beech, red maple, elm and sycamore.

D. History

As many other communities have been exploited by economic conditions and necessities, so has Rankin and perhaps more so than most.

The region was originally inhabited by the Shawnee, Iroquois and Delaware Indians who were replaced by white settlers as early as the early 1700s. The first large successful farm in Rankin was established by Robert Hawkins in the middle of the 1800s. As the railroads pushed west, he successfully negotiated that a small station be built bearing his name as a condition of "right-of-way". A few years later, Thomas Rankin purchased a section of land from Hawkins along the Baltimore & Ohio tracks where another, larger station was erected bearing the name Rankin Station.

Gradually a small cluster of homes were erected around the Rankin Station as was also the case at Hawkins Station. Because of its river access and railroad transportation the Duquesne Forge Company moved its plant from Pittsburgh to Rankin and manufactured river boat parts and other forgings for waterway applications. Gunboats for the Civil War were built there as were some of the gates for the Panama Canal locks. Before long other companies followed. In 1883 Carrie Furnace was constructed followed by McClintock-Marshall Company (later purchased by Bethlehem Steel), American Steel and Wire Company, and many other smaller companies.

The upper portions of Rankin attracted the many workers who worked in the mills and also served as an expansion of Braddock, then overflowing with immigrant families. On May 9, 1892 the incorporation of Rankin Station was recorded. The name was changed to the Borough of Rankin and the boundaries set on March 31, 1894. On June 23, 1906 Rankin was divided into wards numbered 221, 222 and 223 which exist until today.

E. Ethnicity & Religious Background

As steel manufacturing proliferated so did the need for labor to staff the mills. Early migrants from the eastern states of English and Irish decent occurred during the mid 1800s with Germans and Swedes following soon after. A substantial number of Jews also participated in the early settlement of Rankin. They founded a Synagogue which later closed as Jews moved away after the large influx of eastern Europeans and Negroes. During the decade between 1880 and 1890 many central and south-central Europeans immigrated to supply the hungry steel mills with the needed labor. Deteriorating economic conditions in central, south-central and eastern Europe and the growing opportunity in America brought people who sought a better life and economic conditions to Rankin, Braddock and North Braddock. The largest ethnic groups were the Slovaks, Ruthenians (Carpatho Rusyn, usually Greek Catholic), Croatians, and Italians. This central European immigration continued although at a reduced rate until the 1950s (ES92-DAK-6-C). Afro/Americans migrated from the south as early as the 1890s as replacement workers for the strikers and later to replace whites that were drafted by or joined the armed forces during the two World Wars.

Rankin, Braddock and Swissvale are among the first industrial communities to become integrated in the Pittsburgh vicinity. Relative harmony persisted between the various nationalities and races with no real problems throughout the history of Rankin although some veiled racism has always existed. During a telephone conversation with one of the interviewees it was

mentioned that a neighboring Afro/American man was interviewed and he responded that his neighbor was “okay for his kind”. Other veiled racist remarks were prevalent during conversations with other white interviewees. When questioned further, most responded that there was no race problem in Rankin, although there seemed to be some problems at Hawkins Village, a project built in the 1940s housing mostly Afro/Americans today. In addition, familiarity seemed to have an effect on the white interviewees, if they knew the people, they respected them. Some of the new comers to Hawkins Village were unknown entities and therefore suspicious.

As these families matured and the sons and daughters of prospering steel workers married starting families of their own, many second generation Rankinites sought better conditions than the small old homes on the narrow streets of Rankin and moved to North Braddock and Swissvale. The third generation influenced by the proliferation of family owned automobiles after World War II and growing prosperity, moved to locations even farther from Rankin to Churchill, Wilkins, Forest Hills and Monroeville, yet they still worked in Rankin, Braddock or Homestead at the mills.

Although intermarriage proliferated in Rankin, most ethnic groups married within homogeneous religious groups. The majority of Rankinites were Roman Catholic owing to the groups that immigrated after the early settlement, followed by Baptists, Greek Catholics, Lutherans and other Protestant denominations. Today it is difficult to find a young white Rankinite that has a pure ethnic background. As demonstrated by the Junior Rankin Tamburitzans that practice at the Hrvatski Dom (Croatian Home, Lodge 37 of the CFU), most are of mixed ethnic backgrounds and come from other Boroughs and the City of Pittsburgh to practice. In many cases, families of Roman Catholics have intermarried with Greek Catholics and have had to make a choice between the churches. One of the interviewees Ray Huck is German, Irish, Croatian and Italian and celebrates all of his ethnic heritages by participating at the Hrvatski Dom, attending church at The Madonna del Castello, a predominantly Italian parish in Swissvale and belonging to the Irish group in the Pittsburgh Folk Festival (ES92-DAK-12-C). Although he does not participate in any German organizations, he enjoys a good German meal every so often.

As the pure ethnic groups die off it is difficult to imagine how some of the ethnic organizations like the Hrvatski Dom and Carpatho-Russian Club will survive. When asked about ethnic and religious intermarriage, most interviewees responded that it was up to the individuals involved in the relationship that should determine who should marry whom and that love was the determining factor for whether or not a couple should marry. Some even said that it was none of their business who their children married, while a few responded that it was better to marry within a particular religion to avoid conflict for the children. When the racial intermarriage question was posed, the one Afro/American man, Clarence Stewart responded that the white partner would be received warmly with love in the black family while the black partner would have a difficult time being accepted into a white family (ES92-DAK-7,8-C). Most white respondents agreed that black families had fewer problems accepting a white member into the family than did a black into a white family. Still, love seemed to be the overriding concern.

F. Population

The Borough of Rankin grew as a result of the industrial revolution of the late 1800s and industrial expansion of the first half of the 1900s. As the industrial expansion reached its climax so too did the population of Rankin until its peak in the 1930s. Thereafter the population

declined as people looked for better housing opportunities in other locations. With the decline in steel production ending with the closing of the mills in the early 1980s, the exodus from Rankin has left a community with a large proportion of older people on fixed incomes.

Trends in Rankin Population Change

Year	Total #	Population	Change	% White	Afro White	% Afro American	American
1900	3,775						
1910	6,042	2,267					
1920	7,301	1,259					
1930	7,956	655					
1940	7,470	-486	5,845	78.25%	1,622	21.71%	
1950	6,941	-529	4,922	70.91%	2,018	29.07%	
1960	5,164	-1,777	3,405	65.94%	1,756	34.00%	
1970	3,817	-1,347	2,462	64.50%	1,352	35.42%	
1980	2,892	-925	1,578	54.56%	1,294	44.74%	
1990	2,503	-389	1,065	42.55%	1,416	56.57%	

Notice that as the Borough aged and the Afro/American population increased that the white population declined so that today Rankin is 57% Afro/American and 43% white. The population decline was noticed by residents as early as 1940 and revitalization efforts culminated in the 1950s after a large fire decimated a large portion of Hamilton Avenue. Although the Allegheny County revitalization program aided the Borough council in the study and reconstruction, the intended economic revitalization never materialized leaving many residents to conclude that the efforts were wasted. As residential housing replaced small shops and businesses the town suffered from a lack of activity (Art Moziek, ES92-ADK-10-C).

Many residents complain that a lack of community activities outside of the ethnic organizations and churches have contributed to the decline of Rankin. The lack of a park or other community gathering places has contributed to a lack of community spirit and interest in the community by the youth resulting in an exodus of youth to the suburbs. Contradictory evidence exists when interviewees recall the good old days and the activities of Rankin sports teams and community spirit that existed at the McCrady Elementary School and Rankin High School. This community spirit is manifested by the frequent High School reunions bringing together all the graduates of Rankin High from 1929 until the merger with the General Braddock School District together in one multi-class reunion. The local school system seems to have been a unifying factor that disappeared after the merger. Ray Huck recalls the nurturing climate of the Rankin School system and the personal attention that the students received. Many interviewees complain that today's students cannot socialize after school hours due to the long distances between homes in the district and that too much time is spent traveling to school on the buses. Large numbers of people agree that the modern education factories are less than satisfying experiences for today's youth.

According to the Mayor, Rankin is populated by aging retirees and welfare recipients in public housing who pay little or no taxes. This means that the eroded tax base will continue to erode as more youth flee the depressed community in favor of better employment opportunities elsewhere.

G. Community and Neighboring Communities

It has been said often that the fate of Rankin is tied to the fate of Swissvale and Braddock. Not

only does Rankin have much of the same immigration patterns as Braddock and later Swissvale, but contiguous borders and a common history that pre-dates the steel industry. In the past many of the area residents have said, “live in Swissvale, work in Rankin, shop in Braddock”, owing to the nature of the development of each community as independent yet interdependent.

H. Economy and Industry

What little business remains in Rankin is predominantly business to business commercial, and taverns with a smattering of small consumer oriented stores. Companies like Dipcraft, Kopp Glass, Inc. and Epic Metals cannot supply enough jobs for the community and without jobs there is little money to support local stores and commerce.

The construction of Edgewood Center in Swissvale has eliminated the possibility of business development within Rankin due to the competitive nature of the national chain stores. With the disappearance of the mills and WABCO in Swissvale, the industrial base which supplied jobs for Rankinites has vanished as well. What jobs are left in Rankin are low paying near the minimum wage.

As a result of low wages, an aging population and residents in public housing, Rankin's tax base has eroded to the point that it can no longer pay bills and has resorted to borrowing money from local banks and the State of Pennsylvania in order to provide basic municipal services. Rankin has one full-time employee, the Borough Secretary. All other employees are part time and a great many jobs have been filled with volunteers. According to the Mayor, if some large corporation does not soon build in Rankin to provide a tax base, the Borough will go bankrupt.

I. Organizations

1. Churches

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Third Street
 St. John Greek Catholic Church, 44 Miller Street
 St. Michael Greek Catholic Church, 146 Third Street
 Emanuel Baptist Church, 245 Third Street
 Triedstone Baptist Church, 18 Harriet Street
 Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 30 Fourth Street

The Catholic churches in Rankin and Swissvale are being considered for consolidation in cluster 3 in the Diocese attempt at consolidating resources for the Catholic community. This third cluster is to begin evaluation in late 1993 or early 1994. Anticipated closings of churches, if any, is not expected until 1994 or later according to Fr. Duch, Pastor of St. Barnabas church in Swissvale who heads the Diocesan committee.

During an unrecorded telephone conversation with Fr. Duch, the reason for possible consolidation is the limited number of priests available by the turn of the century. Currently each Catholic Priest serves several hundred worshippers, but by the 21st Century that number will increase to 1500 per priest as a result of few Catholic men entering the seminaries.

Another reason is the declining number of Catholics in the Diocese and a reduction of available funds. According to Afro/American Baptists in Rankin and Swissvale, the same phenomena is occurring; fewer churchgoers.

The Church is aware of the sensitivity of various ethnic groups and the possible closings of their churches. In order to accommodate their desires, an ethnic committee to be headed by Ms. Cynthia Maleski will study these concerns and recommend a course of action to accommodate the desire for continued ethnic worship and preservation ethnic of culture. One possibility is to identify various churches as ethnic parishes although many may have to commute

long distances to attend. Nearly every ethnic Catholic interviewed was concerned with the loss of their ethnic church because their faith and ethnic identity are so closely intertwined.

2. Ethnic Organizations

Croatian Beneficial Club, 4th & Antisburly Streets

American Carpatho Russian Club, 242 Fourth Street

Dante Club (Italian), West Braddock Avenue

3. Borough Services

a. Fire

Currently there are 17 active Volunteer Firemen with a total membership of 70.

b. Police

Rankin is patrolled by 9 part-time police officers, two on each shift, one driver and one assistant who respond to calls on a dispatch system.

c. Ambulance services

Emergency assistance is provided by Swissvale Borough.

d. Maintenance and Salt Crews

Provided by the Turtle Creek COG joint services to Rankin, Braddock and Chalfont.

5. Community Civic Organizations

Rankin Christian Center, 230 Third Street

Alma Illery Medical Center, Family Health Center, 7227 Hamilton Avenue

Rankin Community Development Corporation, 230 Third Street

Hawkins Village Tenant Council, Ava Johnson, President

American Legion, West Braddock Avenue

J. Calendar Events

Very few calendar events are in existence today. One exception is the St. Simeon Festival which takes place on the second Sunday in October each year and has continued for the last 32 years and is discussed below.

The Junior Tamburitzans of Rankin hold an Annual Concert each fall that usually takes place in early November and is held at the Croatian Home.

K. Folklore/Folklife

The St. Simeon Festival was transported from Italy and duplicated in the Rankin/Swissvale area. It is sponsored by an ad hoc committee of men from the Madonna del Castello Roman Catholic Church in Swissvale and the Swissvale Knight of Columbus. The Festival is full of Italian tradition and rights of passage.

Young boys begin their passage as Altar Boys at Madonna del Castello and become escorts for the cart bearing the statue of St. Simeon. Later they move up the ranks by becoming members of the Knights of Columbus Color Guard and carry first the State Flag, then the U. S. Flag and finally the Knights of Columbus Flag. Their ultimate goal is to become the Meista Fiest, Master of the Festival. Although different families have different lines of progression to the top, they all converge in the Meista Fiest.

The day begins at 8:00 am when the band assembles at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Swissvale where coffee, donuts, sweet rolls and whisky provide fortification for what will be an enjoyable but tiring day. The band conducts a brief rehearsal while the director, Fred DelMonte reviews the itinerary noting exceptions from the previous year and behooves the band members not to take advantage of the businesses that they will visit along the way for refreshments.

At 9:30 am the band boards a U-Haul truck rented for the day, and rides up to church.

They assemble in front of the church and play until 9:50 am greeting parishioners with warm welcomes.

Mass begins at 10:00 am and is conducted in both English and Italian with a special Homily dedicated to St. Simeon. The Knights of Columbus participate in the pageantry from beginning to end and seem to enjoy every minute of the event.

After Mass the band plays once more in front of the church until the cart bearing the statue of St. Simeon is brought outside and the parade forms up behind a Swissvale Police cruiser. At the signal of the Meista Fiest the parade begins and winds down Westmoreland Avenue to Woodstock Avenue where we turned southeast towards Rankin.

Along the way residents come out of their homes to view the parade and listen to the music. Many of the Italian residents come up to the cart to pin money on the ribbons, flowers and skirt. In addition, Domenic Petrarca, the son of Samuel Petrarca, Meista Fiest, goes to the homes along the way collecting money and giving out St. Simeon prayer cards in return. This money will be used to conduct next year's festival. An interesting note, many non-Italians including blacks, give money and warmly hug the members of the committee. Neighborhoods are strong in Swissvale and Rankin and neighbors support one another regardless the purpose or reason.

After parading down Woodstock Avenue the parade stops in front of St. Barnabas Roman Catholic Church and reboards the U-Haul along with the cart for a short ride to lower Rankin and the first "Pit Stop" at the Dante Club under the Rankin Bridge.

In the Dante Club everyone has something to drink and uses the rest facilities before the band plays in thanks for the hospitality. The atmosphere in the club is warm and friendly with much conversation and laughter. It becomes obvious that these people love each other and enjoy spending time together.

The parade reforms in front of the Dante Club and begins its march down lower Rankin on Fleet Street and the adjoining neighborhood near Braddock. Every so often the band stops in front of a house where a notable Italian family resides and plays especially for them. One such occasion was for the mother and father who's son, a young Catholic Priest age 42, had died the previous week. The parade actually deviated from its normal path by several blocks in order to pay tribute to the family.

After boarding the U-Haul for the last time, the band was deposited in front of Emil's Restaurant for the final "Pit Stop" where everyone had another drink and used the rest facilities. The band showed its appreciation by playing several songs in front of the restaurant.

The next event was only a half of a block away where the founder of the Festival's house is located. Now deceased, his sons carry on the tradition of their father by welcoming the entire troop into their small home for wine, cheese, pepperonis, donuts, salad, beer and whiskey. The family, Raucci (pronounced Rossi), plays host while old friends catch up on the latest news within the community and others stare transfixed at the TV watching the Steelers football game.

After thirty minutes or so the band continues its parade down the streets of Rankin making stops along the way at Italian homes to play.

Along this route in upper Rankin one of the oldest members, Joe Chapone of the Knights of Columbus pointed out the old pole where in days passed they used to hold a greased pole climbing contest as a part of the St. Simeon Festival. Evidently the mothers of the boys who attempted to climb the pole in their Sunday best were displeased and the tradition was stopped. This particular gentleman was well into his eighty's and first attempted the pole climb at age twelve. The pole still stands as a silent reminder of the past and better days for Rankin.

The parade continues all the way back to the Knights of Columbus Hall where a brief round of speeches and Benediction proceeds a buffet dinner prepared by the wives of the committee. Again, the hospitality is more than enough, in fact there is more food than twice the number people could eat. The very old mingle with the very young, families sit together, generations running four deep. Friends from the community that are not Italian stop by just to say hello and share a toast with old friends.

This fieldworker was welcomed into the fold as if I was an old friend with the warmth and hospitality of ordinary people who love life and enjoy each others company. As one of the speakers said before the dinner, “if these politicians want to see family values, they should be here today”.

II. Issues

A. Resonant Themes

1. Family

One of the most talked about topics during the interviews was family. Being an old community, family values are an important part of daily life. The love and respect from generation to generation of the family members is quite unique compared to that in large urban centers elsewhere in the country. This is due to the close ties between family, ethnic organizations and church membership. Familiarity and tradition have contributed to strong loving families.

2. Employment

Jobs, jobs and jobs are all that anyone can talk about. There are precious few good paying jobs in Rankin or even the surrounding communities. Jobs are the major concern for families, churches, ethnic organizations and even the borough. People with good jobs pay taxes, contribute to collection baskets on Sundays and spend money in local stores and businesses. Everyone agrees that what Rankin needs most is a new large employer who can revitalize the community.

3. Neighborhood Cooperation

Although the various ethnic groups in Rankin respect one another and have intermarried, their seems to be a distinct gap between the white and black communities. Some veiled racism is in evidence against the blacks but I believe that this is a result of learned behavior and differences in religion. The difference in skin color is merely a manifestation of deeper cultural differences. Still, most white people like and respect their Afro/American neighbors.

During an interview with Joe Matesic, he related his experience of white and black cooperation in helping the Rankin Police break up a crack house on his block, but when a meeting convened about the issue, he was the only white person in attendance. Furthermore, when asked what he would do to help, he refused stating that he was the minority and it was up to the blacks in the community to take responsibility.

Cooperation in Rankin between whites and blacks is more a result of necessity than desire. There must be more of a unifying effort made before Rankin can solve its common problems. Tolerance and respect are a good beginning and Rankin exhibits better race relations than most communities, but until the two groups learn to like each other and realize that they share a common fate, nothing can be done to improve resident participation is solving common

problems. The white community must learn more about their Afro/American neighbors and the black community must learn more about the white ethnic groups that compose the white community.

The Rankin Christian Center deserves some future study. Having just learned enough about Rankin to understand the community somewhat, the Christian Center is something of a mystery. Perhaps it could be the unifying element necessary to produce positive results in the revitalization of Rankin.

B. Politics and Economy

In the early days of industrial development Rankin was predominantly Republican in registration. With the eastern and central European immigration the voter registration shifted to the Democratic Party in the 1930s due in large part to the union membership of Rankin residents and union support for Democratic candidates. Workingmen's issues dominated political conversation with little attention to business large or small. Today voter registration is nearly 10 Democratic to 1 Republican. A point of interest is that although the racial majority is Afro/American, the Mayor, Matt Frejanic is white and has been Mayor for as long as anyone can remember.

Mayor Frejanic has made it a point to express his opposition to the Steel Heritage Museum proposed on the site of the old Carrie Furnace. Although he refused a tape recorded interview, he expressed his disapproval of the museum on the grounds that the property stood in the way of attracting a new manufacturing facility because the raised portion in Swissvale adjoins the still standing portion in Rankin and that no venture would show an interest until the entire property was available for sale. The Mayor believes that the only salvation for economic recovery for Rankin is a large manufacturing facility to replace the tax base of the steel industry.

III. Place

A. Immigration

The pull factors of good jobs and a better way of life are what attracted the original immigration to Rankin. These same factors play a part in the exodus of youth from Rankin today. With the absence of good jobs the young people are seeking better education than their parents and moving away from Rankin and the Pittsburgh vicinity for better jobs in other areas of the country and even overseas.

Inter-marriages have diluted the ethnic heritage of most of the residents although these ties are stronger in Rankin than some other parts of Allegheny County. Even though most young people are of mixed heritage, they are aware of their ancestors and their culture. In many cases, they are actively preserving the culture and folk traditions of their parents and grandparents.

Most immigration has stopped. There is a trickle of oriental immigration according to the 1990 census, although I was not able to find anyone. Further investigation is necessary to do a valid study on the topic.

As white families either die off or move from Rankin and the redevelopment of other communities displaces poor Afro/American families, the population of the Rankin Black community should grow.

B. Ethnic Concerns

The recent changes and conflagration in what was Yugoslavia between Serbians, Croatian, Slovenians and Bosnians has not effected the Croatians in Rankin to a great extent. One of the

reasons is that most Croatians have Serbian friends that have participated in Croatian cultural events and were raised as neighbors. What has concerned the Croatians is the senseless killing and starvation of their brethren in Croatia and Bosnia. Many Rankinites have contributed large sums of money to helping children's relief and refugee efforts in Europe. Although many of them have good reason to express hate for the Serbian government, most do not and only shake their heads in disbelief at what is happening. The feelings of helplessness and dismay are the prevalent expressions.

The Croatian community seems to be the strongest and best organized if not the largest. Perhaps this is because of the Croatian Fraternal Union and the Jr. Tamburitzan phenomena that keeps the culture alive.

The Carpatho-Russians seem to have lost their identity more quickly than the Croatians. Most just refer to themselves as Russian which is far from accurate. There are no cultural events in the community and few of them express an interest.

Slovaks in Rankin are mostly Greek Catholic Slovaks. The Roman Catholic Slovaks seem to have settled in Braddock. Many have intermarried with Roman Catholics, in the second and third generations and live outside of Rankin in Swissvale.

The Italians in Rankin have suffered the same fate as other ethnic groups with inter-marriages, but have managed to hold on to their traditions nearly as well as the Croatians have. Although most Italians do not participate in preserving musical or dance culture like the Croatians, it is the family traditions of daily life that they seem to have successfully managed to maintain as evidenced by the St. Simeon Festival and other traditions that revolve around the church.

The Afro/American community continues to grow although there is little or no participation in African cultural heritage, but rather southern Negro culture transmitted by the Baptist Church. Very little research was done relative to the Afro/American community because of problems getting interviews granted by a suspicious population.

C. Displacement

1. Recreation

With the exception of Little League baseball and youth facilities offered by the Christian Center, there is little to do in Rankin. For entertainment residents must go elsewhere to see a movie, roller-skate, bowl or even have a good meal at a restaurant. What little recreation remains is offered by the Christian Center.

2. Ties

A great number of people who have moved from Rankin to outlying communities still have close ties to family, ethnic organizations and church. The Perstac sisters who moved to Swissvale after World War II still belong to St. Mary's in Rankin because it is a Croatian parish. Many of the young people who belong to the Rankin Jr. Tamburitzans live outside Rankin in North Braddock, West Mifflin and other suburban communities.

Joe Matesic stated that even people who move to California come back to Rankin when they die for burial in the Cemetery in North Braddock.

During the holidays of Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, many second and third generation Rankinites who have moved away, return to Rankin to visit parents and grandparents. Because of traditional family values and fond memories of the old days, Rankin draws people back during these important religious and family holidays.

One Sunday, my family and I attended Mass at St. Mary's. Although the single Mass offered on

Sunday was well attended, the church was not full. Most of the people were old, about 80% while the remaining 20% of younger people and the few children are mostly from other communities. Perhaps this explains the large number of automobiles parked near the church.

IV. Conclusions

The history of Rankin, as is the case of many other boroughs near Pittsburgh, is the history of exploitation. The early settlers exploited the natural resources of the area for farming, the early industrialist exploited the natural resources of water, coal and natural gas for their enterprises. As the central and east European immigrants arrived there was yet another resource to exploit, and when used up, discarded much like the slag heaps that dot the area.

Often the terms opportunity and exploitation could be interchanged as the exploiters probably consider themselves as opportunist meaning no ill will to the peoples lives they effect. As is the case with expansion and industrialization throughout United States history, corporations have had the reputation of exploiters while offering the employees “opportunities” for employment. When conditions change from favorable to unfavorable in the business climate, the companies pull up stakes and leave town without so much as a thank you.

Foreign competition, aging facilities accompanied by high maintenance costs and strong unions that hoped to provide their members with high wages in order to realize the “American Dream”, were all factors that gave the steel industry a reason to leave Rankin for greener pastures. Until cheap labor, lax environmental regulations and abundant local, natural resources in other parts of our world are eliminated, this history will continue while only the names of the towns will change.

A lack of public vision created a situation where a single industry dominated the local economy leaving it open to misery and disappointment for future generations. If Rankin is to revive and flourish it needs a large industrial base to provide fuel for the local economy. However, the industrial base must be diversified so that the loss of one industry is not fatal to the economy. In addition, the local labor force must be willing to gain or lose wages as the various industries prosper or suffer. Companies must have a commitment to the labor force and the community in which it exist. With a common fate industry, labor and government can and will survive and prosper.

In order to accomplish the desired results, the residents of Rankin of various races and creeds must become more involved with one another to achieve a common purpose. The animosity between races, little as it is, is the net result of unfamiliarity group to group, low educational standards and poverty from which misunderstanding is the result.

V. Recommendations

Due to the limited scope of this study and the relatively small number of interviewees, it has become clear that I know less about Rankin than the purpose of this study deserves. With limited funds and resources little can be done to understand the concerns of the community let alone recommend solutions to problems.

I believe that the initial organization of the study is flawed. The approach to each area should have been pre-established by initial library research, meetings with various organizations and churches in the community so that a strategy could be developed to make the time spent yield better results. The time allowed for the study was too short to yield valid results without strict organizational principles and assertive leadership.

Without clear direction, I as an amateur cultural archeologist, and the people under my direction do not have the expertise to conduct such a study even though we have the desire and interest.

Some of our inadequacies could have been overcome with more time spent in research prior to conducting interviews. However, the budgetary constraints of the study did not permit this.

The scope of the study was too broad for the time budgeted. Adherence to the outlines provided as examples for the reports created duplication of effort by the field workers that could have been redirected to more fruitful pursuits. In addition, contiguous communities would have yielded better results in the final reports. It would have been better to have studied Rankin, Swissvale, North Braddock and Braddock by the same team than to have Bridgeville, Carnegie, Rankin and Swissvale. This is true especially since the former group of boroughs developed simultaneously as communities around a single industrial base and have suffered nearly identical fates when that industrial base vanished. Comparison and contrast could have been done at a higher level.

Financial considerations for future studies should be amended so that funds are allotted for payment based upon the time spent rather than an anticipated result. Everyone in our group felt that they were inadequate relative to what was expected from them and underpaid for the time spent. Part of the dilemma is a result of Publassist's problem figuring out how to pay people. Equipment was purchased to conduct the study and the cost deducted from the funding pool reducing the per diem rate. For budgetary reasons it was decided to pay each individual on a per interview basis for the study and to allow 2 and 1/2 days for the reports. The anticipated quantity of arranging and conducting two interview per day, keeping a diary, logs of tapes and photographs and running out to get photographs developed proved to be more than a full days work. Often, days were spent on the telephone doing initial contact work to find people to interview. In addition the scope of the reports required much more time than the time allowed in the budget.

Because none of the field workers could conduct the study on a full time basis as a result of other commitments, the efforts were not concentrated yielding poorer, less fruitful results.

Appendices:

Contacts and Potential Contacts

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