

Oral History in Pennsylvania: A Historiographic Overview

Linda Shopes

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

Let me begin by acknowledging that there is no textbook definition of oral history that I can conveniently draw upon to delimit the scope of this essay. In her popular manual *Oral History for the Local Historical Society*, Willa Baum offers a commonsense definition: "Oral history is the tape-recording of reminiscences about which the narrator can speak from first-hand knowledge. Through pre-planned interviews, the information is captured in question and answer form by oral history interviews." Alice Hoffman, who directed the United Steelworkers of America Oral History Project at Pennsylvania State University discussed elsewhere in this issue, refines Baum's definition by including the concepts of interpretation and significance: "Oral history," she writes, "may be defined as a process of collecting, usually by means of a tape-recorded interview, reminiscences, accounts, and interpretations of events from the recent past which are of historical significance."

Shifting the emphasis from the interview process to the material so generated, Louis Starr, a dean of the oral history movement in the United States, offered what is probably the most often cited definition: "Oral history is primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words—generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews—of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information worth preserving." Yet another definition, one that focuses on the cognitive and hence subjective aspect of oral history, is proposed by Barbara Allen and Lynwood Montell, both with backgrounds in folklore and history. They write: "The term *oral history* . . . can refer to the method by which oral information about the past is collected and recorded, and it can also mean a body of knowledge that exists only in people's memories and will be lost at their deaths."¹

There is a certain irony in the use of the phrase "oral history" at all: until the rather recent past, with the development of widespread literacy, the destruction of indigenous cultures, and the professionalization of history, most knowledge of the past was transmitted orally. In fact, much of it still is, in the family stories that are told around the dinner table, in the recollections of a community's past that are embedded in neighborly conversations, and in the invocations of "the way we do things" within any institution.

Indeed, oral history is not one thing. It is both process and product, a recovery of information—"accounts"—as well as interpretations of the past, and it necessarily involves subjective issues of meaning—what's significant and to whom—and of memory—who remembers what. In this essay I understand oral history to be a social exchange in which one person requests another to articulate his/her memories of an aspect of the past. At its best this inquiry is systematic and disciplined: both parties work to create an account that is as thoughtful, precise, and searching as possible; both parties, but especially the interviewer, have developed some methodology for the inquiry. And it has a life longer than the moment in which it occurred: it is recorded, often on audio tape, increasingly on videotape, and sometimes on paper. Thus, oral history is not a solitary musing, nor is it a casual conversation. It is essentially interactive and has a measure of self-consciousness.

Based on this definition, I attempt to present in this essay a historiographic overview of oral history collections in Pennsylvania. I will focus on collections within the state that pertain to the history of the state; while the material surveyed will thus necessarily be *about* Pennsylvania, it in many cases will be useful to those interested in broader themes that cut across state boundaries, for example industrial communities or African-American history. To keep the discussion within manageable bounds, I have not included the considerable body of oral history materials relevant to Pennsylvania history in repositories outside the state. Researchers interested in such material are advised to consult existing directories of oral history collections, finding aids for specific collections, and the major computerized data bases.² I have also not included collections within the state that are not pertinent to Pennsylvania history.

I am, moreover, more concerned with historiographic issues than with providing a comprehensive catalogue of extant collections. I have not attempted to note all pertinent oral history collections in the state, and I have specifically excluded any reference to collections in private hands or done as pedagogical projects within a precollegiate setting. Along the lines of the essays on oral history that have appeared annually in the *Journal of American History* since 1987,³ this essay is intended to alert readers to the kinds of information that is available from oral history material, the subject matter and themes in Pennsylvania history it is (and, in some cases, isn't) documenting, the questions, the interpretive possibilities and problems these materials open up, and the context within which oral history work has taken place. It is within this framework that I will make reference to specific collections.⁴

Early Work

Historians generally acknowledge that oral history, as a systematic effort to record the memoirs of people with a story to tell, had its beginnings in the United States in the work of Columbia University historian Allan Nevins. Nevins came upon the idea of interviewing participants in recent history in the 1930s, when he was working on a biography of Grover Cleveland and found that Cleveland's associates had left few accounts that illuminated his life. The idea remained unrealized until May 18, 1948, when Nevins, with modest institutional support—and no recording machine—conducted his first interview, with New York civic leader George McAneny. The Columbia Oral History Research Office—and, presumably, the oral history movement—was born.⁵

No similar apocryphal moment apparently exists in Pennsylvania oral historiography, though it is likely that the first oral histories in the Commonwealth were some twenty-nine interviews conducted between 1965 and 1967 by the late Arthur N. Cook, then professor emeritus of history at Temple University, for a history of that university. Several projects followed in the late 1960s and early 1970s including those at Bryn Mawr College, documenting the history of the college as well as the achievements of distinguished alumnae; the United Steelworkers of America project at Penn State; and a series of interviews conducted by the Pittsburgh Section of the National Council of Jewish Women documenting the immigrant Jewish experience in that city.⁶

But the search for firsts is perhaps specious. Indeed, an expansive definition of oral history might appropriately include the accounts of Native Americans and frontiersmen recorded by scribes during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, material that even today stands as an important source of information about life in early Pennsylvania.⁷ One might also count as oral history the social data recorded by investigators and reformers during the early twentieth century, who documented the conditions of life among the laboring classes as the first step in an effort to reform those conditions.⁸ Notable also is the tradition of folklore and folklife research in Pennsylvania, much of it involving interviewing, including the seminal work of Alfred L. Shoemaker, Don Yoder, and J. William Frey at Franklin and Marshall College to document Pennsylvania Dutch (the term they preferred) culture during the 1940s and 1950s and George Corson's pioneering work on mining folklore in the 1950s.⁹ Finally, any catalogue of antecedents to contemporary oral history initiatives must necessarily include the ethnic survey work conducted in Pennsylvania by the folklore program of the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s and early 1940s.¹⁰

While the absence of recording technology and the resultant reliance upon human note-takers make this material highly mediated and first-hand only by the most generous of definitions, much of it was generated for reasons quite similar to those driving contemporary oral history work: a desire to preserve for the record accounts of events and people likely to be absent from traditional documentary sources, an interest in recording the everyday life experiences of ordinary people, a desire to use research for broad social and political ends, and a recognition that the act of preserving for the historical record the experiences of those out of the mainstream is a way to affirm the importance of those experiences. Indeed, in 1949 Alfred Shoemaker stated the goals of *The Pennsylvania Dutchman*, a weekly publication of the folklore center at Franklin and Marshall, in terms that resonate quite clearly with the University of Pittsburgh's description of its oral history program in the 1970s. Shoemaker wrote:

We, the Pennsylvania Dutch, were taught for generations to despise and disrespect our traditional culture. The task that we of THE PENNSYLVANIA DUTCHMAN have set ourselves is to teach NOT hate, NOT disrespect, but UNDERSTANDING, APPRECIATION, and, most important of all, a LOVE FOR OUR HERITAGE.¹¹

And the University of Pittsburgh program material states:

Textbook history has frequently overlooked the stories of the working people who were the history—your parents and grandparents—people who had not time to write books. . . . Through tape recorded interviews, we can begin to understand events through the life histories of those who were there. We can gather together an accurate history of all people, not merely the wealthy and powerful. Through oral history, our history becomes richer, documenting the struggles of ordinary people to build a nation. . . . History becomes our story.¹²

Moreover, if early efforts to record accounts of past events and life ways reveal, in sometimes glaringly obvious ways, how the biases of the recorders shaped the material they recorded, this insight can perhaps alert us to more subtle ways researchers' agendas shape contemporary oral histories. Only in the most basic of ways does the tape recorder prevent misrepresentation, distortion, and skew; to note only one example, community oral history projects that interview longtime residents of a particular place while ignoring both newcomers and those who have moved away by definition promote a false sense of residential and social stability.

Contemporary Work: Social History

Since the 1960s, when oral history as it is generally defined gained momentum in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, the topics oral historians have chosen to

investigate, the people they have selected to interview, very much parallel dominant trends in the historical profession. Pennsylvania oral history, like much recent United States historiography, has focused on industrial workers, ethnic peoples, and local communities. John Bodnar, who as head of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's (PHMC) Ethnic Studies Program during the 1970s was responsible for considerable oral history work done in the state during that decade, summarized the spirit that animated much of this work in a letter to the National Endowment for the Humanities requesting funding for a series of community based oral history projects:

Pennsylvania is a state filled with older, industrial towns and an aging population left behind in urban neighborhoods, mining districts, and mill towns. These citizens possess not only rich recollections of life in industrial society but first-hand information about the difficulties of living today in its aftermath with lost pensions, crippling diseases, abandoned neighborhoods, and scattered families. Connecting the promise and security of the industrial past with the often unsettling realities of a present through the experience of individual lives is the intended goal of this project.¹³

Surely this emphasis on industrial and ethnic history makes considerable sense in a state that has been a national leader in manufacturing since the mid-eighteenth century and where, as late as 1990, well over half of the residents identified an ethnic ancestry for themselves.¹⁴ The single largest collection of oral histories on these topics—numbering over one thousand—is maintained by the PHMC at the state archives. Included in the collection are individual projects documenting ethnic workers in the Pittsburgh area, ethnic mining communities in Washington County, coal miners in the Scranton area, residents of the coal patch town of Eckley in the northeastern part of the state, African Americans in Chester County and in Harrisburg, the Bethlehem community, electrical workers from Pittsburgh and Erie, Puerto Rican migrants to Philadelphia, working-class Croatians in Monessen, Greek-Americans in the Lancaster area, and others. While these collections include women narrators, the Nanticoke Project collection is comprised exclusively of interviews with ethnic women of that region. Many of them were initiated by PHMC staff in collaboration with colleges and universities around the state during the 1970s and early 1980s; others were generated by individual scholars who then placed them in the state archives to facilitate public access. Approximately one-fourth of the interviews are transcribed; most are summarized and indexed. A variety of finding aids are available at the state archives.¹⁵

As institutional priorities and staff interests shifted in the 1980s, the PHMC's efforts to collect oral histories waned. However, beginning in 1990, the Folklife Division of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), a National Park Service initiative designed to stimulate the economy of a nine county region of western Pennsylvania through the development of heritage tourism, has continued the work of documenting industrial labor and working-class communities. From 1990 to 1992, the Folklife Division conducted extensive cultural surveys in the nine counties of the AIHP region, including hundreds of hours of interviews; it has also developed specific projects focusing on African Americans in Johnstown and aluminum workers in New Kensington. The Folklife Division also coordinates the work of six folklife documentation centers, which are connected with existing institutions and in some cases build upon extant oral history projects: coal and coke heritage is being documented by the Patchwork/Voices Project at The Pennsylvania University—Fayette, which has amassed approximately 450 interviews on the subject since 1976;¹⁶ coal mining at Special Collections and Archives of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), where archivist Eileen Cooper has been conducting interviews since 1978; railroading and related family and community topics at the Railroaders Memorial Museum in Altoona, which has collected several dozen interviews intermittently since the mid-1980s; steel and steel towns at the Johnstown Area Heritage Association; and the history of agriculture in the southwest region, with an emphasis on the impact of industrialization and technology on farming practices and rural life, at the Somerset Historical Center in Somerset. The Gender Studies Center at Seton Hill College is documenting women's role in the region's industrial history, including interviewing women workers in the glassmaking and aluminum industries. All interview material is being summarized and indexed; it currently is archived at the Folklife Division offices in Johnstown and will ultimately be placed in the Special Collections and Archives of IUP. Copies of material developed by each documentation center will also remain at that center.¹⁷

The other major repository for oral histories documenting industrial and ethnic history in Pennsylvania is the Archives of Industrial Society (AIS) at the University of Pittsburgh, which holds more than seven hundred interviews in several individual collections, all generated by institutions and individuals for their own research purposes and then deposited in the archives. Notable collections include two generated by the Pittsburgh Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, documenting the immigrant generation and the Jewish community of

South Hills in Pittsburgh; the Grandmothers, Mothers, and Daughters Project, conducted by Corrine Azen Krause and the American Jewish Committee to document changing experiences of three generations of Jewish-, Italian-, and Slavic-American women; the Ethnic Fraternal Organizations Oral History Project, conducted by the University of Pittsburgh history department; the Homestead Album Oral History Project, conducted by the Pennsylvania Ethnic Heritage Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh and documenting life in that working-class community; a group of interviews by Peter Gottlieb with early twentieth century southern black migrants to Pittsburgh; a series on black sport in Pittsburgh by Rob Ruck; the Beaver Valley Labor History Society Oral History Project, a series of interviews with individuals who had been active in the United Steelworkers of America at the Jones and Laughlin plant in Aliquippa; a series of videotaped interviews with retired workers of the Pittsburgh area conducted by labor activist and writer Larry Evans; the McKeesport Oral History Project, sponsored by the Mon Valley Unemployed Committee and designed to elicit comparative views of the depression of the 1930s and that of the 1980s; a collection by political activist Bob Anderson documenting the movement of the unemployed in the Mon Valley during the 1980s; and interviews with Steve Nelson, radical political activist and industrial organizer, conducted by Rob Ruck and James Barrett. Transcripts are available for many of the interviews; most are indexed in a variety of ways.¹⁸

Additional labor history subjects addressed by existing oral history collections include labor organizations, especially the United Steelworkers of America and the Graphic Communications International Union, at the Historical Collections and Labor Archives at Penn State; canal boat workers along with Lehigh Navigation and Delaware Canal, at the Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums; the impact of technology on longshoring, at the Philadelphia Maritime Museum; General Electric workers in Erie, at the Mercyhurst College Archives; the technical and social history of oil production, at the Drake Well Museum; viticulture, at the Erie County Historical Society; and the 1919 steel strikes in Pittsburgh and McKeesport, at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. While several of these collections include interviews with activists, individuals' efforts to achieve social justice are the exclusive focus of interview collections at the American Friends Service Committee; of the Visions of Equality project of the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia at Temple University's Urban Archives; and of the series of interviews with Benjamin Sherman about his experiences in the Workman's Circle and the Jewish Left at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.¹⁹

Local ethnic history is documented in collections of the Historical Society of Berks County, the German-American Greater Beneficial Union of Pittsburgh, the Jewish Museum of Eastern Pennsylvania, the Hershey Community Archives; Westmoreland County Community College; and the Center for Northern Appalachian Studies at Saint Vincent College, which is documenting the Jewish community of Westmoreland County. The Holocaust Oral History Archive at Gratz College includes interviews with Pennsylvanians who were victims of Nazi persecution, as well as rescuers, resisters, and liberators. African-American life in Philadelphia in the twentieth century, with an emphasis on the experiences of southern migrants, is documented in collections at the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum and the Atwater-Kent Museum. A variety of African-, Asian-, and Euro-American cultural traditions and ethnic arts are documented in the collections of the Philadelphia Folklore Project and the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission in Harrisburg.²⁰

If there is a prototypical oral history interview in the state, it is with a white male coal miner, a Catholic of Eastern European descent, who has lived for years in a blue-collar community. Collection descriptions include a predictable litany of topics: work experiences, unionization and strikes, family life, ethnic identity and culture, community life, discrimination, interethnic relations, immigration experiences and early years in the United States, women's roles, attitudes toward religion, unemployment, and success, and hard times during the Great Depression.

The question here is what is the value of all these interviews? What do they all add up to? Their major significance, I would suggest, is the contribution they have made to the broader reorientation of this generation of historical scholarship away from the study of the privileged and the powerful and the institutions they created to the study of the everyday lives of ordinary people. Moreover, they—and thousands of other interviews generated elsewhere—have not simply helped shift the content of history but also the perspective from which it is told. Oral history by its very nature is first-person; skillfully done, it allows a narrator to tell his story in his own words, from his point of view. Much contemporary history, some of it based directly on oral history, attempts to make the ordinary people of whom it writes historical actors, creators of their own lives, not simply actors in someone else's drama. Oral history thus serves not only as a method, but also as a metaphor for social history as it has come to dominate the practice of history. Bodnar's *The Transplanted* serves as an important example: drawing in part upon his oral history work in Pennsylvania, *The Transplanted* counters a view of immigrants as

alienated and uprooted, forever strangers in an unfamiliar world. Bodnar argues that, in fact, immigrants actively fashioned a way of life and a place for themselves in the United States, one that accommodated old world culture to new world realities.²¹ Moreover, I would suggest that it is not simply those interviews that have directly contributed to scholarship that are of significance. The oral history enterprise has engaged hundreds of interviewers and institutions and thousands of narrators in a broad cultural reconfiguration, one that is allowing for, in Michael Frisch's apt phrase, "a shared authority" among professionals and lay people in defining who and what is important in the past.²²

The hundreds of interviews that have been generated in Pennsylvania on ethnic and industrial history are thus of considerable significance. They are not, however, without their limits. Although women and African Americans are included in many of the collections noted above and indeed comprise the entire group of narrators in a few of them, these groups are still underrepresented in much of the work done to date. Several current projects are thus especially welcome: the Women Miners History Project is documenting the experience of women coal miners, including women in western Pennsylvania;²³ the Lackawanna County Historical Society has embarked on a project to interview women from a variety of social circumstances; former steelworker Ray Henderson is collaborating with filmmaker Tony Buba to interview black steelworkers for a film on this subject, and these interviews will be available at Braddock's Field Historical Society.

The interest in industrial labor and working-class communities that has driven much oral history work to date also has deflected attention from other forms of work and other kinds of communities. To be sure, a few of the projects detailed above have somewhat of a broader focus: the PHMC sponsored project on the community of Bethlehem included a cross-section of the population; the National Council of Jewish Women projects at the Archives of Industrial Society include professionals among their narrators; AIHP's Steel Folklife Documentation Center at the Johnstown Area Heritage Association conducted its first set of interviews with both residents and domestic workers in Westmont, a suburb created by Cambria Steel for its upper management. Some of the community projects detailed below also include among their narrators a cross-section of occupational groups and social classes. And there are a few projects that interview service workers and professionals: the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission Oral History Project is interviewing former employees in a range of occupations; Fireman's Hall in Philadelphia is conducting

interviews with members of the city's fire department; and the University City Historical Society in West Philadelphia is initiating a project to interview former nursing, maintenance, and support workers at Philadelphia General Hospital. Nonetheless, many kinds of work have not captured the imagination of oral historians in Pennsylvania. Much of what women do has not been well documented, for example waitressing, clerical work, sales, and unpaid volunteer activities. Neither have the trades or the professions, perhaps because these workers, employed and sometimes more prosperous, are not so willing as retired or unemployed workers to sit down with a curious investigator. Perhaps too, the work culture of a bus driver or an architect or a minister is less compelling, though arguably no less historically significant than that of a coal miner.²⁴ Similarly, suburban communities and small towns have largely escaped oral historians; queries, perhaps because they too are less accessible or are deemed less colorful, less historically interesting than working-class, ethnic communities.

Perhaps the deepest limitation of extant interview collections is not who has been excluded from them, but what has not been asked of people who have been interviewed. Like much of social history, the emphasis on work and local culture in interviews has precluded discussion of the larger world of politics or, more broadly, the way individual narrators have negotiated power in the public arena. Few interviewers have asked about voting practices, party politics, participation in—or resistance to—reform movements, and other related topics. There is another silence in many of these interviews also. It is no accident that they have been done precisely at that historical moment when the very subjects they are documenting—industrial labor and ethnic communities—are being irrevocably transformed—some would say, destroyed—by the process of deindustrialization. They thus serve to memorialize a world we are rapidly losing without interrogating the moment of their creation, without making explicit within the conversation that is the interview, the context, or historical moment, in which they occur. Some narrators do talk about “decline,” the “lost pensions, crippling diseases, abandoned neighborhoods, and scattered families” that Bodnar referred to above, but they are generally not asked to explain causes of decline, nor are they asked to consider how their current reality perhaps colors their view of the past.²⁵

Contemporary Work: Community History Projects

Collections documenting specific communities form the second largest group of extant oral history interviews in Pennsylvania. Admittedly, the category of “com-

munity projects” isn’t neatly distinct from the social history projects detailed above: some of those projects focus on specific communities, and some of the community collections include among their narrators industrial workers and representatives of ethnic groups. But, unlike the social history projects, community projects are more likely to include people from a variety of occupational groups and personal backgrounds. They are also grounded in that affinity for locale, for one’s own home place, that characterizes much of local history work. Typically, they seek to identify the configuration of people, places, and activities that defined everyday life in a particular place during the first half of the twentieth century.

A description of the oral history collection of the Memorial Library of Radnor Township suggests the perspective underlying many community interviews:

Oral history interviews can acquaint the listener with day-to-day experiences of a way of life that would otherwise be unknown [sic]. Without this oral tradition of our oldest citizens transmitting their history, values and culture, then perhaps each new generation would have to create its world anew. Each Oral History interview is indeed a small “book” dramatically depicting life as it was. . . . In all of the Oral History interviews, the objective has been to reveal a life and time of Radnor when it was unhurried and had unspoiled open landscape.²⁶

Libraries, along with local historical societies, are the locus of many of these community projects. In addition to the Radnor project, sizable collections have been developed by the Bowlby Public Library in Waynesburg, the Middletown Public Library, and the Lancaster County Public Library. The Chester County Library initiated and maintains two collections: one adopting the approach typified by the Radnor library collection, the other focusing on Friends in the county. Several college and university libraries, including those at York, Gettysburg, and Mercyhurst colleges, the Urban Archives at Temple University, and West Chester University, maintain collections of interviews generated by students either in conjunction with oral history courses or as individual research projects; while most of these collections are not specifically focused on the local community, many do include several individual interviews of this genre.²⁷

Additional community collections have been generated by the historical societies of Clinton, Crawford, Lawrence, Lycoming, Union, and Lehigh counties and the towns of New Hope and Equinunk. The Hershey Community Archives also has an active oral history program, documenting both the company and the town. Overall, conditions of access vary widely: most collections are partially transcribed and have a limited index; some, however, are simply a drawer of audiotapes with

no transcripts or finding aids, while others are fully transcribed and indexed. Most have not been entered on computerized data bases.²⁸

Local history projects typically interview the oldest members of the community, often from those families whose local roots go back the farthest in time. They frequently take a "life and times" approach: autobiographical information is mixed in with anecdotes of community life. They are particularly rich in information about small businesses, local schools, and community cultural practices, especially holiday traditions. Many also include considerable detail about social geography—who lived where, when—and about the location, appearance, and use of various local structures. Material culture and craft traditions are also well documented, most notably by the well-known Oral Traditions Project in Union County, discussed elsewhere in this issue.

These collections have considerable value within their own communities. They are, first of all, a resource for information about elements of everyday life and local culture in the past that is often unavailable elsewhere. The anecdotal style of many community interviews also preserves an informal tradition of telling stories about the old days that is otherwise being eroded by the distractions and mobility of contemporary life. But within communities, the process of conducting an oral history project is perhaps of greater significance than the particular information collected. The codification of local memories in a more-or-less permanent form itself affirms the value of those memories and implicitly the value of the community itself. Moreover, community oral histories, like many local history projects, by bringing history home, by bringing it to the level of the familiar, the ordinary, provide a vehicle for individuals to understand that what they have lived through is indeed history, that they are, in fact, historical actors.²⁹

Yet the very specificity, the localness of these collections is also problematic. Unlike the social history projects detailed above, they are less likely to have been directed by a professional scholar. As a result, and with some exceptions, they are not especially informed by the larger body of historical scholarship; they do not generally look outward to the themes and questions that historians and other scholars ask. Moreover, perhaps because they frequently involve community insiders interviewing other community insiders, there tends to be within the interview itself an underlying complicity in creating a version of the past that is benign, noncritical, nonthreatening, and ultimately ahistorical. Narrators are not encouraged to explain themselves, their choices, their points of view; interviewers do not ask probing questions designed to get underneath the glosses people often use to

explain their world, their experiences. An extended example from one such community interview will serve as illustration. The narrator is a lifetime resident of the community and owner of a meat company founded by his father. The interviewer has begun by asking him “about what year” his father came to this country. Here’s his reply:

He was born in 1871. Now put twenty years on that, is when he got out of the army and then he went to town in Germany and learned to be a butcher. The reason, the time that he came in 1896 when he came to Ellis Island, he was a trained butcher. The reason I mention that is, our country then was just turning the century and we were a young country, and we needed a lot of skilled help. And that’s what Europe was sending over then. Not Germany only, Italy and Greece, you name them. But those are the people that made our country. It’s a little hard to tell people that. They come over with skills, all kind. The only skilled labors that weren’t needed was like the Union Pacific Railroad was being developed. There was a movie called *The Golden Spike*, that’s when the East met the West.³⁰

The interviewer interjects “in Utah,” and the narrator goes on:

On the West Coast they got Chinese laborers and East Coast they got unskilled Italian laborers. That’s what built, the railroads were the backbone of our country then. [Our town] was on the main line. That’s when our depot was down across from the [local hotel]. Now the old [hotel], see here’s I’m meandering again.

And the interviewer gets him back on course, asking him to “get back to your father arriving at Ellis Island.”

There’s a good bit in this quote to command our attention, not the least of which is the narrator’s unselfconscious joining of actual history and the Hollywood version in his reference to the movie *The Golden Spike*. But most relevant to this discussion is the commentary he’s beginning to offer about ethnic history. He says “those are the people that made our country. It’s a little hard to tell people that.” What does he mean “It’s a little hard to tell people that”? Does he still feel a bit on the defensive about his own immigrant background? Is he reacting against the recent increase in ethnic tensions locally and nationally? And what does he make of immigrants who came over without skills, the Chinese and the Italians working on the railroad? How does he explain why they, and not the Germans of his background, came to do this work? And how does he explain the internal contradiction in his own account: first he notes the Italians as part of the group of skilled laborers who immigrated here; then he almost immediately lists them as among the unskilled. Nowhere does the interviewer ask any follow-up questions to encourage

the narrators to explicate more fully his understanding of ethnic history.

Further on in this interview the narrator recounts his mental map of the community at some time in the past. He begins with topography and physical features but then segues into social geography and observations about ethnicity. Again, to quote:

If you go down East Main Street, at Fourth and Fifth, and go south, it was mostly Jewish people down there. They would, at that time, you asked about the western, Collingwood Hills, now are you acquainted with that, that was developed the same as this development was. Those Jewish people, in the meantime, had enough money to go out there is those real nice homes out in Collingwood Hills. When I was a kid there was only two houses out there: Bronstein and Esterson, the hardware man. Zimmerman had the clothing plant. Interviewer: You just talked about neighborhoods. Were there a lot of ethnic neighborhoods?

Narrator: Yes. . . .

Interviewer: Was there an Irish enclave?

Narrator: Yeah, let me put it this way. St. Catherine's Church was out, which is now out on East Lincoln Street, way out, that's Lincoln and Cedar, they had all the Italian people. The oldest Catholic church was St. Mary's down on Green Street. . . . 1741, that was the oldest Catholic Church in the city and the county. St. Mary's—that's the one with the cemetery up the street here. They were all Irish, in the beginning they were all Irish.

Interviewer: Was there ever an oriental population?

Narrator: No.

Interviewer: Mostly European?

Narrator: Yep. This is what happened in the city today. We never had anything, problems that they have today. I don't know why people are down on Puerto Ricans, but they are in this city.

Interviewer: How about the fire brigades?

To which the narrator politely responds with appropriate information.

Here too there is much going on just underneath the surface, none of it attended to by the interviewer. Obviously the narrator is inclined to think of ethnicity in terms of who lives where, but more noteworthy is the way he frames his account of three ethnic groups in terms of easy stereotypes: upwardly mobile Jews moving to Collington Hills and devout Italian and Irish Catholic immigrants clustered near their churches. Where might the interviewer have taken these observations? Perhaps ask the narrator more about his experiences with or knowledge of Jews, Italians, Irish. Perhaps, had they gotten into the subject a bit and established a good rapport, even point out how he has talked about each

group and see how he responds.

Most interesting though is the narrator's rather quixotic and unsolicited comparison between ethnic relations years ago and today: "We never had anything, problems that they have today. I don't know why people are down on Puerto Ricans, but they are in this city." He, like many, is clearly troubled about ethnic/racial tensions in our society and, also like many today, recalls a past when social relations seemed less stressful. This is on his mind: it comes out without anyone asking. But then in what is surely a classic example of avoiding difficult lines of inquiry, the interviewer follows up on this teaser with a question about "the fire brigades." Had he seen the narrator as someone who has lived his life among a variety of ethnic groups in his community, as himself playing a particular role within the community as a German meat man, and as having ideas about all this, we might have learned more about the critical issue of ethnic relations and less about fire brigades.

Ronald Grele, in a recent essay on oral history and the dialectic of narratives, writes of the need to place at the center of an interview, not a series of questions designed to elicit information, stories, or anecdotes, but a spirited dialogue, encouraging the narrator to articulate what it has been like to occupy a particular position in time and space:

Oral history . . . invite[s] nonhistorians, if we can even use that term any more, to share in the work of the historian. To do so, we must, of necessity, grant to those who are invited to the table a certain autonomy in constructing their own histories and the power to share in the interpretation of our common pasts. History has become a cooperative enterprise, and for this to be so the historian must insist that those with whom he or she shares have the imagination and ability, or the possibility of cultivating the imagination and ability, to create their own narratives and analyses of their experience.³¹

It is admittedly difficult to foster this sort of self-consciousness among those who assume unproblematically the value of their community and its history, for whom the value of their community has never been challenged. Some community projects, however, particularly in minority communities that exist uneasily within the dominant society, have been conceived, not as an effort to record the life and times of an earlier period but as a means of cultivating community pride and empowerment. In these sorts of projects, as in the ethnic history projects developed two decades ago, the act of speaking for the record about one's experiences becomes a way to define them in one's own terms rather than absorb others' definitions of them; making this interview material public through publications

and other programs becomes a way to assert the value of one's community against cultural forces that devalue it. Among current work of this nature are initiatives to document the Puerto Rican community of Hazleton undertaken by the Lower Anthracite Project; African-American public culture in South Philadelphia, a project of the grassroots community group Odunde; and the experience of living in the James Weldon Johnson Homes, a public housing development also in Philadelphia, a project developed by the Museums in the Life of a City program.³²

Other Projects

Social history topics focusing on ethnic and industrial history and community projects designed to document particular places clearly dominate the oral history materials generated in Pennsylvania. Numerous other interview collections documenting a variety of topics also exist, though the volume of materials generated on any single subject is considerably less than that detailed in previous pages. Several educational institutions, including Alliance, American, Bryn Mawr, Cedar Crest, Franklin and Marshall, Haverford, Gettysburg, Grove City, Mercyhurst, Messiah, Muhlenberg, and Swarthmore colleges, Bloomsburg and Temple universities, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, maintain oral history collections documenting both their administrative histories and the more general subject of campus life. The collection at the American College Oral History Center documents the history of professional life insurance education during the twentieth century. The Barrows Dunham-Fred Zimring Collection at Temple includes more than seventy interviews conducted by Zimring for his research on the subject of Dunham's dismissal from the university during the McCarthy period. The collection at Mercyhurst, along with those at the archives of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in Rosemont, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Bensalem, and the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, documents the activities of Roman Catholic religious sisters; the Messiah collection and the Oral History Program at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society address the history of Mennonite related groups in the state.³³

State and local politics and civic affairs are the subject of several collections, although overall these topics deserve much more oral history documentation in Pennsylvania. Interviews with elected officials, including several governors, government administrators, and political journalists, are included in the Pennsylvania Politicians and Legislative Oral History projects at PHMC. The Archives of Industrial Society maintains collections on the Pittsburgh Renaissance and the

career of David L. Lawrence; this latter collection includes interviews conducted by Michael Weber for his book, *Don't Call Me Boss: David L. Lawrence, Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor* (1988). Lawrence is also the subject of a collection of interviews conducted by Thomas J. Donaghy for his book, *Keystone Democrat: David Lawrence Remembered* (1986), and now housed at the LaSalle University Archives. The Walter Phillips Oral History Project at Temple University's Urban Archives documents the history of mid-twentieth century Philadelphia city government; Marywood College maintains a collection of interviews conducted by Kathleen Munley for her research on Democratic party politics in Lackawanna County, 1920-1960.³⁴

The fiftieth anniversary of the United States's participation in World War II has catalyzed oral history projects in Chester and Lehigh counties and completed interviews will be archived at the county historical societies there. Women's homefront labor in World War II is the focus of projects at the Center for Northern Appalachian Studies at Saint Vincent College and by Elizabeth Jones at California University of Pennsylvania. World War II experiences are also detailed in several oral histories at the Special Collections and Archives at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Interviews with army and navy nurses during World Wars I and II comprise the Military Nurses Project at the PHMC. Interviews with Vietnam War veterans are available at the Archives and Special Collections Department of Franklin and Marshall College.

A few historic sites in the state have conducted oral histories to enhance their interpretative programs: in addition to the work of the Kemerer Museum described by Sarah LeCount elsewhere in this issue, the Eisenhower National Historic Site has developed a large collection documenting the life of General and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower in Gettysburg; Lehigh County Historical Society interviewed teachers and students about their experiences in one-room schools to provide an interpretive base for its Claussville School; Pennsbury Manor has collected recollections of reconstruction and archaeology work done at the site in the twentieth century; descendants of the Wyck family have been interviewed about their memories of that historic house; tenants and employees of the Battles Farm, now owned by the Erie County Historical Society, have been interviewed about farm life; and the Springs Museum is using oral history to document its artifact collection. The arts are documented by the Eugene Ormandy Oral History Project currently underway at the University of Pennsylvania, which focuses on Ormandy's forty-four year career as conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Finally, child-

hood and the experience of growing up in Philadelphia are the subject of a collection at the Please Touch Museum.³⁵

Future Directions

It is appropriate to frame the conclusion to this assessment of extant oral history collections in and about Pennsylvania with some observations about possible future directions for oral history work within the Commonwealth. My comments cluster around three interrelated issues: content, project design and methodology, and access. While any topic about which people have memories is arguably a potential subject for an oral history project, some especially cry out for attention in the state: nonindustrial forms of labor, including women's work; politics, especially at the local level where the written record is limited, and including political activity outside the bounds of party politics, e.g. activism for and against abortion; gay and lesbian communities and politics, which are at a critical moment in their history; African-American communities, especially those outside of major urban areas; recent immigration, especially from Latin America and Asia; medicine, including traditional practices, professional health care, and medical institutions; and cultural affairs and volunteer organizations. Moreover, while many projects have been sensitive to recording a diversity of voices, the need for continued vigilance remains: project organizers periodically need to review their list of narrators, ask who is left out, and take steps to include them.

Diversity, however, is not simply a statistical matter. Who is left out often reflects the way a project is conceptualized, which in turn reflects what—and who—are deemed important. For example, a community project focusing on "business leaders" will likely interview few people of modest means, few minorities, and few women. Redefining the topic as "community entrepreneurs" would result in a much more textured, multivocal account of local commercial enterprise. Diversity is also not the exclusive experience of "the other," those-who-are-defined-as-diverse. All people—male and female, prosperous and poor, black, white, and brown, gay and straight—have a social identity that can be questioned or made explicit. As John Hinshaw suggests elsewhere in this issue, members of an all male occupation or all white community need to be asked how that came to be, what choices led them to that job or that place, how the status quo was maintained. Such methodological sophistication might also appropriately lead projects to focus their inquiries more narrowly. While such a caveat might seem to contradict the appeal for diverse voices, it doesn't: projects designed to survey

“working in the local steel industry” or “the experience of living in the community,” for example, often interview the most accessible individuals, the most mainstream, the spokesmen; projects driven by a sharper set of questions are more likely to be more selective and more self-conscious in their choice of narrators.³⁶

The most carefully designed and executed project, however, is ultimately of little use to anyone if it is not made accessible. While some of the larger, better funded, and more scholarly oral history projects have followed sound archival practices, continuing attention needs to be paid to indexing, transcribing, and publicizing available interviews. To date, few interview collections in Pennsylvania have been entered on computerized data bases, yet this is becoming essential if they are to be brought to the attention of potential users. The survey upon which this article is based also turned up several oral history collections in private hands. These need to be placed in public repositories when the projects for which they are being generated are completed. This is not only sound professional practice, allowing others to evaluate and build upon one’s own work; it also can prevent duplication of efforts.³⁷ Ultimately, however, accessibility is not simply an archival issue. Oral narratives can be powerful documents that speak to scholars and citizens, professionals and laypeople, in a meaningful way about issues both deeply historical and profoundly human. Yet their power is lost if they languish in archives. Opportunities for their use abound: publications, audiotapes, films, exhibitions, discussion groups, public programs. It seems important then, to conclude this essay with an invitation to readers both to use existing interview material in creative ways and to consider ways future oral history work may be used to enliven public conversations about the meaning of the past.

Notes:

My thanks to my colleagues in the Bureau of Archives and History at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for their generous assistance in tracking down what seemed like endless bits of information about extant oral history material in the state.

1. Willa K. Baum, *Oral History for the Local Historical Society*, 3rd ed., rev. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1987), 1; Alice Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), 68; Louis Starr, "Oral History," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 4; Barbara Allen and Lynwood Montell, *From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), 23. Interestingly, Ronald J. Grele, in his *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Praeger, 1991), has recently expressed dissatisfaction with any functional definition of oral history, given the complexities of a fieldwork-based methodology and the developing body of critical theory that can be brought to bear upon oral material; see especially pp. 243-44.

2. Directories of oral history collections in the United States include Allen Smith, ed., *Directory of Oral History Collections* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1988); Patsy A. Cook, comp. and ed., *Directory of Oral History Programs in the United States* (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982); Alan H. Meckler and Ruth McMullin, comps., and eds., *Oral History Collections* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1975); Gary Shumway, comp., *Oral History in the United States* (Burlington, Vt.: Oral History Association, 1971). It must be emphasized that these directories are not comprehensive; for example, the survey of oral history collections in Pennsylvania conducted for this article turned up dozens of collections not included in

any of them. (See footnote 4 for a description of this survey.) The *National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections* also includes citations for oral history collections. Guides to collections in specific states have been published for a few states. Major repositories have published guides to their collections, also; these often include a listing of individual narrators. Only a few collections have been entered on computerized data bases. The problem of access remains serious: thousands of interviews languishing in archives around the country are unknown to researchers.

3. See "Oral History," *Journal of American History*, 72 (September 1987), pp. 568-595; and the oral history section in the second issue (September) of each subsequent volume of the *Journal*.

4. In preparation for writing this article, I conducted an extensive—but not comprehensive—survey of extant oral history collections within Pennsylvania. Survey forms were sent to all major historical organizations, including all county historical societies; all major archives; college and university libraries; county and district libraries; all oral history collections in Pennsylvania listed in the four directories noted in footnote 2; and all in-state repositories turning up in an RLIN search for oral history interviews pertaining to Pennsylvania history. Correspondence included with the survey form asked for leads to additional oral history collections. Letters of inquiry were also sent to colleagues known to me to be engaged in/knowledgeable of oral history work. In addition, announcements of this oral history theme issue of *Pennsylvania History*, including both a call for papers and a request for information about existing oral history collections, were placed in numerous national, regional, and state newsletters and other publications directed at historians, oral historians, archivists, and librarians. All leads turned up by these inquiries were, in turn, sent survey forms. However, no systematic effort was made to follow up the mail survey with telephone

or in-person contact, either to get additional information about known collections or determine if a nonresponding institution, in fact, had oral history material. Overall, the survey turned up information about dozens of collections and created the data base for this article. It is hoped that at some future date this data, currently available in the author's files at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, can be updated, refined, and codified into a directory of oral history collections in Pennsylvania.

5. See Starr, "Oral History," for a fuller discussion of Nevin's early work, as well as a review of the early years of oral history work in the United States.

6. For a survey of early oral history initiatives in Pennsylvania, see Harry E. Whipkey, "The 1970 Research Conference at Harrisburg: Oral History in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 37 (October 1970): 387-400.

7. See, for example, Marshall Joseph Becker, "Legends about Hannah Freeman ('Indian Hannah'): Squaring the Written Accounts with the Oral Traditions," *Keystone Folklore* 4 (Summer 1992): 1-25; also the genre of "captivity narratives," for example, James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, June Namais, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

8. See, for example, the Gladys Palmer/Philadelphia Labor Market Study Collection at the Urban Archives of Temple University. This study, sponsored by the Works Progress Administration in 1936-37, accumulated employment information on 2,399 workers, including personal testimony by women on their work experiences. Among other collections within the state that include social data from personal testimony are the records of the Philadelphia Housing Association Negro Migrant Study of 1923 at the Urban Archives; and the records of the American Service Institute and the Pittsburgh Branch of the NAACP at the Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh. My thanks to John Hinshaw for bringing the Pitts-

burgh material to my attention. Unfortunately, no manuscript records exist for the Pittsburgh Survey, undertaken by a group of Progressive reformers in 1907-1908 and subsequently published in six volumes; however, the published work does include considerable interview material. These volumes are Elizabeth Butler, *Women and the Trades: Pittsburgh, 1907-1908* (1908); Margaret Byington, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* (1910); Crystal Eastman, *Work Accidents and the Law* (1910); John Fitch, *The Steel Workers* (1910); Paul Kellogg, ed., *The Pittsburgh District, The Civic Frontage* (1914); and Kellogg, ed., *Wage Earning Pittsburgh* (1914).

9. Surveys of folklore/folklife research in Pennsylvania include Simon J. Bronner, "A Prophetic Vision of Public and Academic Folklife: Alfred Shoemaker and America's First Department of Folklore," *The Folklore Historian* 8 (1990): 38-55; Simon J. Bronner, "Folklife Starts Here: The Background of Material Culture Scholarship in Pennsylvania," in *The Old Traditional Way of Life: Essays in Honor of Warren E. Roberts*, Robert E. Walls and George Schoemaker, eds. (Bloomington, Ind.: Trickster Press, 1989), 230-43; Don Yoder, "Folklife in Pennsylvania: An Historical Survey," *Keystone Folklore* 1 (1982): 8-20. My thanks to Professor Bronner for identifying these sources and for sharing his extensive knowledge of folklore/folklife historiography. The George Korson Folklore Archive is maintained at the King's College Library in Wilkes-Barre; it includes interviews for his *Black Rock: Mining Folklore of the Pennsylvania Dutch* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960). See also Korson's *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), and *Minstrels of the Mine Patch: Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry* (Hatboro, Penn.: Folklore Associates, 1964).

10. Portions of this material can be found in four separate repositories: the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Balch Institute for Ethnic

Studies, and the state archives. See James Abrams, "Composite Pennsylvania: Cultural Pluralism and WPA Folklife Programming in the Keystone State, 1936-41" (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1988).

11. Quoted in Bronner, "A Prophetic Vision," pp. 45-6.

12. "History: Our Story," a pamphlet issued by the Oral History Program at the University of Pittsburgh (1975[?]) and located in Project Data file, Ethnic Fraternal Organizations Oral History Project (OH 76:26), Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh.

13. John Bodnar to M. Sammye Miller, 23 October 1979, Bureau of Archives and History Administrative and Correspondence Files, Records of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, The State Archives of Pennsylvania.

14. Edward K. Miller, ed., *A Concise Historical Atlas of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 100-106; data on the self-reported ancestry of Pennsylvania residents was compiled from the United States Bureau of the Census, 1990 *Census of Population and Housing* and provided to the author by the Pennsylvania State Data Center, Penn State Harrisburg.

15. See Matthew S. Magda, *Summary Guide to the Oral History Collections of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission* (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1981) for a brief description of Commission collections archived through 1981. Several collections have been added since that time. Carl Oblinger's *Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania: A Conceptual Guide to Oral History* (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1978) outlines an approach to oral history as it was practiced at the Commission during the 1970s, when collecting was most intense. Several Commission collecting initiatives resulted in publications including John Bodnar, *Anthracite People: Families, Unions and Work, 1900-1940* (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1983); Amelia Davis, Carl Oblinger, and David McBride, eds. *Glimpses into Our Lives: Memories of Harrisburg's Black Senior*

Citizens (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1978); Matthew S. Magda, *Monessen: Industrial Boomtown and Steel Community, 1898-1980* (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1985); and Carl Oblinger, *Corwall: The People and Culture of an Industrial Camelot, 1890-1980* (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1984). Interviews with electrical workers in Western Pennsylvania were conducted by Ronald W. Schatz for his *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Taller Puertorriqueno in Philadelphia sponsored the project documenting Puerto Rican migrant experiences in that city; interview excerpts are included in the project's final report, *Batiendo La Olla ("Stirring the Pot"): A Cross-Generational Comparison and Self-Study by Second Generation Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia* (1979).

16. Interview material from The Patchwork/Voices Project has been published in Dennis F. Bretensy, Evelyn A. Hovanec, and Albert N. Skokmra, eds., *Patch/Work Voices: The Culture and Lore of a Mining People* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991); it is reviewed in David Glassberg's essay in this volume.

17. The Folklife Division has developed an audio tour of the Johnstown-Altoona heritage corridor, "Voices of the Ridge," comprised largely of excerpts of interviews in its collections. It has also produced three videos: "We Made the Journey," based on its Johnstown African-American documentation project; "The Struggle for an American Way of Life: Coal Miners and Operators in Central Pennsylvania, 1919-1933," by the Coal Documentation Center and discussed elsewhere in this issue by Jim Dougherty; and "Working the Mountain: Workers of the Horseshoe Curve," by the Railroad Documentation Center.

18. Finding aids for AIS interview collections have been included in the National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the United States, Part III, published by Chadwyck-Healey, Inc. A finding aid for The National Council of Jewish Women collections

has also been published: Richard J. Smith and Elizabeth Ann Roberts, eds., *Access to an Oral History Collection: The Jewish Experience in Pittsburgh, 1972-1991* (Pittsburgh: National Council for Jewish Women, Pittsburgh Section, 1991).

Research for which these interviews have been generated has resulted in several publications including Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Corinne Azen Krause, *Grandmothers, Mothers, and Daughters: Oral Histories of Three Generations of Ethnic American Women* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991); McKeesport Oral History Project, *Crashin' Out: Hard Times in McKeesport* (McKeesport: Mon Valley Unemployed Committee, 1983); Steve Nelson, James Barrett, and Rob Ruck, *Steve Nelson, American Radical* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981); Pittsburgh Section, National Council of Jewish Women, *By Myself I'm a Book: An Oral History of the Immigrant Jewish Experience in Pittsburgh* (Waltham, Mass.: American Jewish Historical Society, 1972) and *My Voice Was Heard*, Ida Cohen Selavan, ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1981); Robert Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons: Sport in Black Pittsburgh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

19. Finding aids of varying degrees of sophistication are available for most of these collections: all collections are catalogued; most are indexed, some in considerable detail. Interviews at the Mercyhurst College archives are included in its printed *Catalogue of Manuscript Collections* (1986). All the American Friends Service Committee interviews are transcribed; limited transcripts are available for most of the other collections. On the Erie County Historical Society project, see "Viticultural Seasonal Workers Oral History Project," *From the Cashiers House* 14:1 (Winter 1989): 1-2.

The video interviews in the collection at Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums were used in

its documentary, "The Boatmen's Hour." The collection at the Drake Well Museum was used in Cynthia Andes, *Living the Lease Life, 1919* (Titusville: Drake Well Oil Museum Educational Program, 1991), reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

20. All collections have at least an index, inventory, or log that includes the narrator's name and the subject of the interview; most have a portion of their interviews transcribed; some have interview abstracts or summaries available. The Hershey Community Archives project is included in Pamela Cassidy, comp, *Guide to the Hershey Community Archives Oral History Collections: Abstracts and Subject Index* (Hershey: Hershey Community Archives, 1993). It also resulted in Natalie Mykta Dekle's *Building a New Life: The Italian Community in Hershey* (Hershey: Hershey Italian Lodge, 1990), reviewed elsewhere in this volume. Fifteen of the hundreds of interviews in the Gratz College collection have been included in Josey G. Fisher, ed., *The Persistence of Youth: Oral Testimonies of the Holocaust* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1991). Transcripts of some of the Saint Vincent College Center for Northern Appalachian Studies interviews have been included in *The Jewish Community of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania Collection of Oral Histories: 1991-1992*, vol. 1, Richard David Wissolik, gen. ed. (Latrobe: St. Vincent College Center for Northern Appalachian Studies/Oral History Program, 1993). The Philadelphia Folklife Project has a number of books, pamphlets, working papers, and videos, as well as a triannual newsletter, available, including Dorothy Noyes, *Arts of Italian Americans in Philadelphia* (1989), reviewed in this volume. Its *Philadelphia Folklife Resources: A Guide to Local Folk Traditions*, Jennifer Michael, ed. (1991) notes several additional folklore related collections in the Philadelphia area.

21. John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); as a synthetic work, it does not directly draw upon oral history material,

but rather represents a point of view deeply informed by both the content and method of oral history. Bodnar's *Workers' World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) is a collection of lengthy interview excerpts connected by an authorial narrative. See also his *Steelton: Immigration and Industrialization, 1870-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990) (originally published as *Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill Town* [1977]); and Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

22. Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

23. Marat Moore, "Oral History: An Organizing Tool and a Healing Art for Labor Union Women," *Oral History Association Newsletter* 26:3 (1992): 1-2.

24. It must also be noted that various kinds of professional work are being documented by oral history projects that, like the identity of professional workers, transcend local boundaries. So, for example, the Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine at The Medical College of Pennsylvania has conducted interviews with women physicians, including African- and Asian-American women, from around the country. While some of their experiences have been in Pennsylvania, locale was not a significant factor in the interview design. Other collections of interviews documenting particular professions, located in repositories around the country, likely include narrators with some Pennsylvania connection.

25. For a summary and critique of this generation's scholarship in social history, see Alice Kessler-Harris, "Social History," in *The New American History*, Eric Foner, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 163-184. On the historicizing of cultures at the moment of their

demise, see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-25. On an oral history interview as an event situated in history, see Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Praeger, 1991), especially "Private Memories and Public Presentation: The Art of Oral History," pp. 242-72. One set of interviews that does make explicit the circumstances of their creation is found in *Portraits in Steel*, photographs by Milton Rogovin, interviews by Michael Frisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). See also William Serrin, *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town* (New York: Times Books, 1992). While not oral history, see "Deindustrialization: A Panel Discussion," *Pennsylvania History* 58 (July 1991): 181-211.

26. "The Way It Was," pamphlet describing the Oral History Project of the Memorial Library of Radnor Township (n.d.).

27. The Memorial Library of Radnor Township collection has been used to develop slide-tape presentations of community history; it is summarized in "The Way It Was" (see note 26). The Chester County Library collections are summarized in two pamphlets: "Oral History Cassette Tape Catalogue" (n.d.) and "Oral History Among Friends in Chester County" (n.d.). Mercyhurst interviews are included in the archives *Catalogue* (see note 19). The collection at West Chester University has been entered on OCLC.

28. The Union County and Equinunk historical societies' projects have both resulted in a series of publications, some of which are reviewed elsewhere in this volume. Hershey interviews are included in the archives *Guide* (see note 20).

29. On community history projects see Linda Shopes, "Oral History and Community Involvement: The Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project" and Jeremy Brecher, "A Report on Doing History from Below: The Brass Workers History Project," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on His-*

tory and the Public, Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 248-277.

30. This and the following quotations are taken from a transcript of an interview conducted by a local history project and in the author's possession. To prevent unnecessary embarrassment to either the interviewer or the sponsoring institution, I have decided not to cite the specific source. Proper names have also been changed to preserve anonymity.

31. Ronald J. Grele, "Useful Discoveries: Oral History, Public History, and the Dialectic of Narrative," *The Public Historian* 13 (Spring 1991): 63.

32. The Lower Anthracite Project has recently published *Descubriendo Nuevos Amigos/Discovering New Friends* (Hazleton: Lower Anthracite Project, 1993), based on its oral history project. The Johnson Homes project is a cooperative program of the Johnson Homes Tenant Council, the Housing Association of Delaware Valley, and the Free Library of Philadelphia, under the sponsorship of the Museums in the Life of the City initiative. It is producing a video documenting tenants' efforts to make public housing decent housing.

33. The conditions of access for these collections are typical of others noted in this article: most are catalogued and inventoried; some in most collections are transcribed; the majority are not well indexed. Mercyhurst interviews are included in

the archives *Catalogue* (see note 19). The Bryn Mawr collection has produced "The Thomas Years," a 154-page collection of excerpts from twenty-nine interviews documenting student life during the presidency of M. Carey Thomas (1894-1922). The Cedar Crest interviews were conducted as part of the research for a sesquicentennial history of the college, scheduled for publication in 1994. On the Durham case, see Fred Zimring, "Academic Freedom and the Cold War: The Dismissal of Barrows Dunham from Temple University, A Case Study" (Ed.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1981).

34. See note 18 for information on access to interviews at the Archives of Industrial Society. For Munley's research, see Kathleen Munley, "From Minority to Majority: A Study of the Democratic Party in Lackawanna County, 1920-1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, Lehigh University, 1981).

35. Individual interviews in the Ormandy collection will be catalogued in RLIN's AMC file when the project is complete.

36. Linda Shopes, "Beyond Trivia and Nostalgia: Collaborating in the Construction of a Local History," *International Journal of Oral History* 5 (November 1984): 151-158.

37. On the need for professionals to make their interviews accessible, see "Statement on Interviewing for Historical Documentation," in *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1990), 25-27.