

CULTURE, CORRIDORS, AND CARS: WASHINGTON STATE'S HERITAGE TOURS

The Partners

> **Washington State Arts Commission**
Olympia, WA
www.arts.wa.gov/index.html

> **Jack Straw Foundation**
Seattle, WA
www.sonarchy.org/
Dedicated to the production and presentation of all forms of audio art, the foundation focuses on arts and heritage partnerships. Jack Straw also runs a full-service recording studio.

> **National Endowment for the Arts**
Washington, D.C.
www.arts.endow.gov

> **Northwest Heritage Resources**
Olympia, WA
A nonprofit organization that administers heritage grant projects

> **USDA Forest Service**
Olympic National Forest
www.fs.fed.us/r6/
The Forest Service manages six national forests in Washington State.

> **Washington State Department of Transportation**
Olympia, WA
www.wsdot.wa.gov/



Visitors driving on U.S. Highway 12 might catch a glimpse of the brig Lady Washington at port near Aberdeen. Tourists can book cruises on this authentically reproduced sailing ship at Guys Harbor Historical Station.

The Setting

IN WASHINGTON STATE, FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES WITH SEEMINGLY DISPARATE MISSIONS HAVE WORKED TOGETHER TO SUPPORT AN AUDIO-TAPE TOUR AND BOOKLET PROJECT THAT SERVES THEIR SHARED



GOALS: USING THE STATE'S CULTURAL HERITAGE TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE OF DRIVING SELECTED ROUTES. ALTHOUGH DEVELOPED PRIMARILY AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM TO IDENTIFY AND PRESERVE DIVERSE CULTURAL TRADITIONS, THE PROJECT HAS GROWN INTO ONE THAT ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH HERITAGE TOURISM.



Once every four years the canoe-building and paddling Native tribes of the Northwest gather in a ceremony known as an *skiatit* or "paddle," in which one Native community invites other tribes who paddle over open seas to the host tribe.

From Native peoples like the Skokomish and Klallam to those of African, European, Latino, or Asian descent, Washington State contains a potpourri of cultures and traditions. The stories, music, crafts, songs, dances, and customs of these disparate cultures make up what Willie Smyth calls the "invisible landscape."

Smyth is manager of the Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC) Folk Arts Program. His program's goal is to develop ways to recognize and preserve the state's diverse expressions of cultural heritage and to encourage public awareness of and appreciation for these traditions. The challenge is to document and present them through exhibits, festivals, recordings and publications. The problem is that not only are these folk art traditions unknown and unseen by most people, they're often widely scattered in little traveled areas.



As a cultural historian, fisherman David Whitson of the Squaxin Island Tribe recovers traditional legends such as how the first salmon came to the Native people of Puget Sound.

Folklorist Jens Lund knows a lot about Washington's past. He knows there are songs and legends and untold stories about oyster farmers, lumber mill workers, loggers, orchard growers, salmon fishermen, and ship's carpenters. Lund knows that the multi-faceted state population has produced arts and crafts from Native woodcarvings and woven baskets by artisans like Hazel Pete of the Chehalis Indian Reservation, to Finnish weavings like those by Mary Koski of Aberdeen, and Norwegian rosemaling, a traditional form of decorative painting handed down and practiced by people like Shari Underwood of Bedy. Lund also knows that without preservation efforts, many of these traditions will fade from time and memory.

Willie Smyth thought it was time to "bring the invisible landscape alive in an area where the natural beauty is evident." But he needed help. Happily, it was available—but from an unlikely source.

"The Arts Commission's idea to capture the incredibly rich and diverse heritage of these corridors was easy to support. It enabled our state to bring to life the invisible landscapes of the past for travelers to better understand the sense of place they are experiencing today."

— Judy Lorenzo, Washington State Department of Transportation



Audiotapes and accompanying booklets give auto-travelers in-depth looks at the cultural landscapes through which they drive.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Through the nonprofit Northwest Heritage Resources, Willie Smyth contracted with Jens Lund to begin the lengthy process of inventorying and documenting cultural traditions in rural areas of the state. Early fact gathering showed a surprising diversity of cultures not even Lund or Smyth expected. They brainstormed and decided that a combined informational guide and audio-tape would be a satisfactory way to capture the essence of so many cultural treasures.

"We chose the tape and booklet format for the self-guided tour because it brings together such colorful traditional arts as songs, crafts, narratives, and music from Washington communities and presents them in an informative and accessible way to both locals and the public," explains Smyth. When drivers play the tape while following the tour, they hear the words and music of the residents featured in the booklet. In this way, the local residents speak directly to their visitors.

Looking for funding support, they began to consider a somewhat untraditional source. They approached Judy Lorenzo at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), who is in charge of promoting the state's designated Heritage Corridors. These are scenic, older routes that often get bypassed by speedier, but often less interesting, Interstate highways. As director of that program, Lorenzo

must find ways to preserve the unique scenic character along the routes and help travelers get information about natural, cultural and historic features near them.

After considering the Folk Arts Program proposal, Lorenzo approved WSDOT's grant of \$25,000 for the first Washington Heritage Tour. Othello to Omak is a 153-mile, south-north drive through central Washington that traverses ranch lands, farmlands, arid landscapes strewn with boulders, passes the 400-foot-high, four-mile-wide canyon at Dry Falls, the Upper Grand Coulee and the Grand Coulee Dam, and winds through the Colville Indian Reservation and forests of ponderosa pine. Lund conducted the cultural resource inventory for that area—interviewing people like Jess Goodwin, a cowboy poet; Rev. Frank Andrews, who tends the grave of his great-uncle, Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé; and traditional Mexican folk artist, Arminda Saldivar—which netted hundreds of hours of taped interviews and performances by singers, musicians, and storytellers, as well as thousands of photographs.

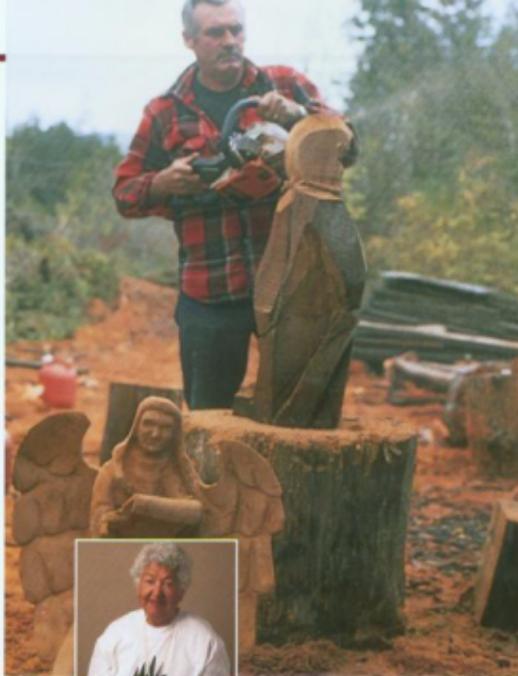
Lund then edited the vast accumulation of information into a cohesive, compact package. He began with the audio editing. "One of the hardest parts of the R&D process is choosing which sound clips to use from the huge selection that we come away with," he explains. "Sometimes the most significant things aren't as interesting

as the little, quirkiest things. It's a balancing act to provide important historical information with entertaining folklore." Much of what gets cut from the tour tape is written into the accompanying booklet.

WSDOT also provided technical assistance for the booklet by mapping and identifying roads, towns, lakes and other landmarks, one of the most challenging aspects of this endeavor. At Jack Straw Productions, sound engineer Tom Stiles mixed the narrator's voice along with the clips from the taped interviews and other audio material.

Each tape tour takes from one to two years to bring to completion. Before the tapes and booklets are printed, Lund conducts extensive field testing by actually driving the tours using the audiotape and the booklet. Completed tapes and booklets are sold through bookstores and museum gift shops, and can be purchased from Northwest Heritage Resources. Up to 20 copies of the tour sets are provided to Washington's public library system, along with order forms for residents who want to purchase their own copies.

Three more heritage driving tours were conceived, researched, tested, produced, and marketed in partnership with WSDOT and the National Endowment for the Arts. One of these tours, the Olympic Peninsula Loop tour, was supported by a joint grant program known as the National Endowment for the Arts/U.S. Forest Service



Cultural traditions can range from songs and stories to chair-saw sculptures, like these by former logger Dennis Chastan, or woven baskets, such as Hazel Pen's of the Chohokai Indian Reservation.

Arts and Rural Community Assistance Initiative. The Forest Service partnered in the tour since the Olympic National Forest is on the Peninsula. Along this tour in the Hoquiam River Valley, travelers will see the great stands of forests and hear the history of the logging industry on the peninsula from the earliest methods using double-bit axes and crosscut saws (known as "misery whips" or "Swede fiddles") to today's massive machines that do everything from cutting to limbing, bucking, and loading logs. Visible along the route are remnants of logging railroads and river pilings that once moored great rafts of logs as they were assembled for towing. Travelers will hear from Diane Ellison, a world champion "birdie," or competition log roller in the 1960s, who traveled the world over to demonstrate the sport.

Plans are underway for three tours along the state's more heavily traveled Interstate highways. Since these are not Heritage Corridors, WSDOT won't be participating. Instead, WSAC will consider corporate funding possibilities.

Cultural inventory for Othello to Omak tour begins

Material selected for tapes and booties and production begins

1995

Lanauver to Maryhill tour completed

Richland to Clatsop tour completed

1997

Studies conducted for new driving tours; WSAC investigates new funding partners

2001

1994

Partnership forged between WSAC and WSDOT to fund first driving tour in Washington

1996

Othello to Omak tape tour completed

2000

Olympic Peninsula Loop tour completed

MAKING THE MOST OF OPPORTUNITIES

Collaborate: The partners helped shape the rural auto tours in Washington. WSAC's goal was refined by WSDOT's interest in focusing the tours along specific corridors versus broad regions. The DOT provided a level of expertise with the mapping of resources that would have been difficult to achieve by the Folk Arts Program. On the Olympic Peninsula, the U.S. Forest Service's participation through Rural Community Assistance funding ensured that the tour focuses on the significance of wood and timber-dependent lifestyles. Ongoing support from the National Endowment for the Arts has also played a critical role.

Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism: Lund literally took to the streets, visiting museums, radio stations, parks, bars and workplaces to find his subjects for the tours. In one community



When folklorist Jens Lund resorts off beaten paths to get to know people on a personal level he creates a level of comfort that makes it easy for them to share their folkways.

after another, he talked to the locals, asked who had folkways to share, or songs to sing, stories to tell. It was an organic process that relied heavily on the willingness of people to participate, and the information found in one locale often led him to the next. Thus, the shape of the tour route at times was determined by his subjects, while keeping within a predetermined framework for the overall tour.

Make Sites and Programs Come Alive: The tape tours include oral histories and interviews with local folk artists and often feature obscure art forms and cultural traditions. For visitors who don't have the time to seek out locals, the tapes help them gain a better understanding of unique cultural heritage traditions. "In Soap Lake, in the center of the state, I heard an astonishingly beautiful Russian choir at the Slavic Brethren Church," says Lund. "They are an economically stressed community, yet the voices of the people are filled with hope and wonder. It was a fantastic surprise and one I was delighted to find and share with travelers."

Focus on Quality and Authenticity: In sifting through a vast amount of information that can be included in each tour, a folklorist selects information that provides an accurate representation of the diverse folk traditions along each route. Quality is essential, and only clear recordings and high quality photographs are included in the final product.

Preserve and Protect Resources: Not only do the tape/booklet tours capture and acknowledge significant Washington state folk art traditions, the research preceding the production of the tours results in thousands of documents, photographs and a wealth of audio-taped information. What can't be included in the tours due to space constraints becomes a valuable resource, managed by WSAC, for teachers, researchers, and others who wish to trace the history and heritage of the state.

RESULTS

>What began as an effort to recapture cultural traditions has evolved into a significant tourism tool, mainly through direct sales and online marketing. WSDOT's study of one of the Eastern Washington tours concludes that 30 percent of the tour purchasers traveled that route specifically to use the tour guide. WSAC estimates the figures to be much higher in remote areas. The tours bring people to an area they might not otherwise visit and encourages them to stay there longer, with recommendations in the guidebooks for additional places to visit.

>The partnerships WSAC forged during this process opened the door for many more collaborative efforts between non-profit agencies, state agencies and federal agencies. The program has a strong endorsement from Lorenzo, who says, "It was an honor for the Department of Transportation to contribute to this effort, and I commend the Arts Commission for its passion and teamwork."

>Due to the quality and success of these tours, WSAC has provided assistance on at least 10 similar projects across the country including ones in Utah, Kentucky and Maryland.

>The tape tours are already shared with libraries statewide, but the Folk Arts Program is not stopping there. They are planning to disseminate their inventory of heritage traditions through the development of a CD-ROM and searchable database.



BRINGING ART TO NEW HAMPSHIRE'S WELCOME CENTERS

The New Hampshire State Council on the Arts (NHSCA) has teamed up with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to install art exhibits in state welcome centers. The exhibits feature the work of local artists and give visitors an introduction to the state's natural landmarks, built environment, and cultural activities. NHDOT pays for artist fees and installation costs, and NHSCA secures bids from artists, selects the images, and writes the text to accompany each exhibit. Welcome centers in Seabrook and Salem have already been completed, with NHDOT providing a \$20,000 budget for each to purchase and install the art and pay for an exhibit designer. The art that is included is high quality, but relatively inexpensive. Examples of pieces include teapots, decorative hinges forged by blacksmiths, pottery, glasswork and artistic photos of New Hampshire landscapes. The welcome centers offer a tremendous opportunity to reach the traveling public, as the Seabrook Center alone attracts 875,000 vehicles a year. Contact the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts at (603) 271-2789.



PUBLIC ART ON SCENIC HIGHWAYS IN NEW MEXICO

Armed with over \$1 million in U.S. DOT Transportation Enhancements through the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department, New Mexico Arts (a division of the Office of Cultural Affairs) has created a public art program along historic Route 66 and El Camino Real called "Cultural Corridors: Public Art on Scenic Highways." The monumental, landmark art works are deeply rooted in the surrounding communities, their history, and their people. Each of the seven installations completed to date includes a plaque stating basic information such as the name of the piece, the medium used, date completed, and the artist's name. The local community determines how much cultural or historical information they want to include with the art. Types of art range from abstract to representational, serious to whimsical. Tom Coffin's "Roadside Attraction" is a tremendous road-motif pyramid topped with a chrome-like caddy tail fin that illuminates the night with the glow of its topedo-shaped brake light. In Gallup,



Public art along New Mexico's highways spans the nation from abstract, like Tom Coffin's well-named "Roadside Attraction," to representational, such as the "Secret Wheel of History" by Claudia De Monte and Ed McGehee, which depicts episodes of area history.

when Charlie Mallery and Bob Hymer's "Paso Por Aqui" used neon detailing, the Gallup Beautification Department added more neon sculptures in the adjacent park, transforming Gallup's nighttime cityscape. Contact New Mexico Arts at (505) 827-6490.