



PUBLISHED BY URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY INC. SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER, 2014

12-year study of greater Milwaukee ethnic groups

About Milwaukee Ethnic News

Milwaukee Ethnic News is published bimonthly by Urban Anthropology Inc. and is managed by volunteer anthropologists. The purpose of the newsletter is to offer ethnic organizations and individuals opportunities to share news and information about their cultures. The newsletter does not receive funds from any external source.



Disputes continue over timing of Indian settlement in America

A recent article in *Indian Country Today* outlined the tensions among archaeologists, geneticists, and linguists over when (and if) American Indians migrated to the New World from Asia. For decades, most scientists believed the first Americans were big-game hunters who crossed a land bridge across the Bering Strait from Siberia about 11,500 years ago.

Argument of linguists

While some American Indians have countered the Bering Strait theory with their own oral histories, since 1987 linguists have entered the debate. Some, including Johanna Nichols, have claimed that Indian languages demonstrate a much earlier settlement in America.

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Part One: Overview of study findings

Between 2000 and 2012 Urban Anthropology Inc. conducted a study of over 60 ethnic groups in the greater Milwaukee area. The results of this study were published in the 2013 book, *American Ethnic Practices in the Twentieth Century: The Milwaukee Study* (Lexington Books) by Jill Florence Lackey. This article is the first installment on the study findings.

Contributions of ethnicity

Older studies focused on ways that ethnic practices benefited (or failed to benefit) *individuals*, often because ethnicity could become a vehicle for organizing economic and politi-

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Milwaukee ethnic study

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cal self interests. These benefits lingered with ethnic Milwaukeeans in the twenty-first century through leisure time activities that participants could draw on and the economic and political functions of many ethnic organizations. But what was also found in the Milwaukee was the benefits of ethnicity to collectivities in which individuals belong.

The first and most obvious of these is the family.

Benefits to Families

When looking back at the practices discussed by the Milwaukee informants, it is difficult to find any that did not include the entire nuclear family and at times the extended family. How often, for example, would parents attend a Kwanza celebration, a powwow, *Festa Italiana*, a *Cinco de Mayo* parade, or the Scottish Highland Games without their children? Ethnic arts such as rosemaling, Hmong story cloths, pasta making, and Indian beading are passed on through families. Genealogy, as a practice, is the celebration of the family, the extended family, and the lineage.

But *wider* collectivities also benefit from ethnic practices.

Benefits to Wider Collectivities

Collectivities beyond one's family and known lineage can include the neighborhood, organizations, the town, the nation, and beyond. Ethnic practices add many benefits to the wider collectivities such as enriching the population, adding voluntary associations, illuminating the past, and filling niches.

Enriching the Population

In the Milwaukee study, informants described a range of enrichments they reaped from their routine ethnic involvement. Some of these included:

- A greater knowledge of history, often extending beyond the history of past homelands
- Proficiency in languages other than English
- Involvement in visual, performance, and culinary arts
- Travel
- Technological skills (e.g., to access ethnic websites, listservs)
- Knowledge of a body of healing practices and preventive health measures such as saunas, foods, and herbs
- Participation in sports and other health-promoting physical activities

The sum of these endeavors potentially leads to a more educated, cultivated, and healthy American population. Add to this the variety of menus, art forms, dress styles, literature traditions, and music genres (to name just a few) that ethnic practices generally contribute to American life, and the result is more enriched families, neighborhoods, and municipalities.

But there are other ways that ethnic practices enhance collectivities.

Added Voluntary Associations

The Milwaukee study found over 250 ethnic voluntary organizations in Milwaukee County. The original number from the interviews had exceeded 350, but a team of researchers refined the list to include only those with websites, telephone directory listings, or incorporation status with the State of Wisconsin, acknowledging that a possible hundred more "bedroom organizations" probably exist. Many of the functions of these ethnic organizations added value to the wider society by offering services to ethnic members and others in the wider community. These included:

- Job training
- Voter registration drives
- Services that help families adapt to change
- Leisure time activities such as festivals, parades, picnics, and dinners
- Charitable functions for ethnic members and the wider society
- Healthcare facilities



Illuminating the Past

Ethnicity, by definition, is oriented toward the past, as a celebration of ancestral lineages, former homelands, passed-down traditions, and migration patterns over the centuries. Participants in the Milwaukee study were active seekers of ethnic history, often via genealogy research. Through oral histories and the examination of census records, ships' manifestos, handed-down letters, wills, birth

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Milwaukee ethnic study

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and death records, and tax lists, they captured a history “from below.” They learned about the perils, and successes of their ancestors. Unwittingly, they became participants in movements to democratize history by unearthing the conditions on the ground while more powerful forces were reporting on the events that would one day appear as chapters in elementary school history texts.

But perhaps the most meaningful finding among informants studying their ancestral roots was the effect it had on their current lives. Many discussed how the knowledge of the past became transformational. By learning about tragedies, sacrifices, and accomplishments of their ancestors, they were able to put the present in perspective, assume more of a global orientation, and become much more appreciative of their current lives.

Filling Niches

Many European and non European immigrants and migrants had actually been recruited from their former homes to work in Milwaukee enterprises. Others arrived of their own volition and many already possessed the skills to fill a needed niche or took jobs that no one else wanted. The 434 informants in the Milwaukee study described how their immigrant or migrant generation worked long hours for low pay and made sacrifices that would improve opportunities for the next generation, and the findings were similar for the European and non European groups. Informants from both global areas also described some of the dangerous and/or low-status jobs accepted by their earliest ethnic ancestors (sometimes very recent ones) in America, including:

- Janitorial services
- Building the transcontinental railroad
- Working in mines, foundries, and tanneries
- Hotel service
- Asbestos abatement
- Food service
- Day care work
- Domestic service
- Opening grocery stores or gas stations in disadvantaged neighborhoods
- Temp service

Other informants described skills they brought to the US from their past homelands, including tanning, glass blowing, metal work, printing, tool and die making, brewing, and ethnic culinary arts.

The unexpected finding in the interviews was the discussions initiated by informants on the relative work ethics of members of their ethnic groups. While informants tended to extol the work ethics of the earliest generations in the US, this was not the case when they discussed later generations. Both the descendants of European and non European immigrants/migrants acknowledged that jobs were

much easier today than they had been in the past. However, they also suggested that the work ethic in their groups had diminished considerably over succeeding generations.

See more installments of this study in future editions.

Indian settlement

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Nichols’ published “Linguistic Diversity and the First Settlement of the New World,” in the journal *Language* in 1990. Her analysis used six independent linguistic methods for calculating American Indian antiquity and suggested that it would have taken a minimum of 50,000 years for all of the American Indian languages to have evolved from one language, or 35,000 years if migrants had come in multiple waves.

Nichols argued that, “the unmistakable testimony of the linguistic evidence is that the New World has been inhabited nearly as long as Australia or New Guinea.”

The advocates of the Bering Strait theory have insisted that the linguistic evidence is not proof that Indians have inhabited the Americas for more than 15,000 years. Geneticists have tended to follow the Bering Strait theory in their publications as well, claims *Indian Country Today*.



Fall 2014 Exhibition Season *At the Union Art Gallery*



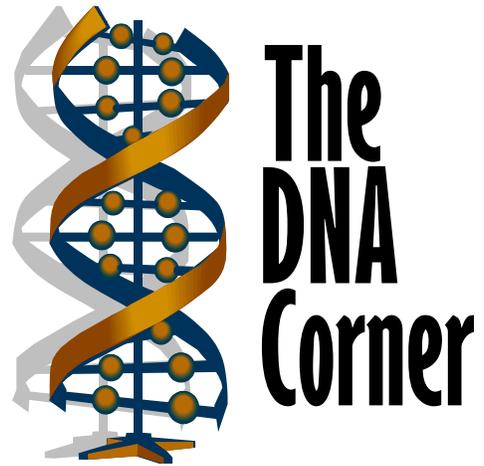
November 14 – December 12

Visualizing Sovereignty features a selection of contemporary American Indian artists whose work addresses cultural implications of sovereignty through vivid, visual commentaries. Exhibiting artists include Bernard Perley, Jolene Rickard, and Truman Lowe, among others.

Opening Reception: Friday, November 14, 5-8 PM; Artist Talk @ 7PM

For information on opening receptions, artist talks and other special events, visit: Unionartgallery.uwm.edu - Facebook: [Union Art Gallery](#) - Tumblr: [unionartgallery](#)

UWM Student Union campus level, W199 - 414-229-6310
Mon-Wed, Fri: Noon - 5pm - Thurs Noon-7pm; 2200 E Kenwood Blvd.



New DNA research reveals Ashkenazi Jews carry sizeable European maternal ancestry

Like Judaism, mitochondrial DNA is passed along the maternal line. DNA variation in the Ashkenazim, while controversial, is highly distinctive, with four major and numerous minor founders. According to a recent article in *Nature Communications* entitled “A Substantial Prehistoric European Ancestry Amongst Ashkenazi Maternal Lineages” (Costa et al), approximately 40 percent of Ashkenazi mitochondrial DNA variation of the four major founders (and much of the minor founders) has ancestry in prehistoric Europe, rather than Caucasus or the Near East.

Early conversions

According to the authors, the results suggest a considerable role for the conversion of women in the makeup of the Ashkenazi community. “Overall, it seems that at least 80% of Ashkenazi maternal ancestry is due to the assimilation of mtDNA’s indigenous to Europe, most likely through conversion.” (pg. 8). The authors state that it seems likely that the major founders moved west from the Mediterranean into central Europe in the last 1,500 years.

Not unlike other Jewish communities

The Ashkenazim resemble other Jewish communities, such as those in India and Eastern Africa, where they also carry a substantial fraction of maternal lineages from their host communities.

Publisher focuses on ethnic Milwaukee

Presents opportunities for local writers



Milwaukee Ethnic Collection of Arts and Humanities (MECAH Publishing) recently opened in Milwaukee. Its goals are to:

- Interest readers in the cultural diversity of Milwaukee and its surrounding communities.
- Produce products that fit one or more of these arts and humanities: history, anthropology/archaeology, folk art, art history, museums, literature (including poetry and fiction), language, architecture, and religion.
- Target the products to lay audiences of all ages (e.g., non-academic).

Products that relate to urban centers of southeast Wisconsin and highlight cultural diversity will be considered, and can include any of the following:

- Nonfiction books (e.g., small museums in southeastern Wisconsin, the history of Pentecostal churches in Milwaukee).
- Fiction books (e.g., a mystery set in Milwaukee, a book for young people with a local immigration theme).
- Documentaries (e.g., the Irish of southeastern Wisconsin; a reproduction of a play with a Milwaukee theme).

MECAH Publishing

Milwaukee Ethnic Collection of Arts and Humanities

MECAHMilwaukee.com

Kids in Cultures released in August

Book tells stories of Milwaukee ethnic children of various eras



A work written for children and about children released by MECAH Publishing.

Kids in Cultures is a fully-illustrated book written for students grades 4 through 8. The stories describe life in various cultural groups during salient periods of history in Southeastern Wisconsin. A study guide is included, as the stories teach students about ethnicity in general and ethnic groups in particular. Stories include:

- Life in Great Lakes prehistory
- Current Hmong culture
- A Polish/Mexican exchange in the 1970s
- African American/Jewish life in Bronzeville in the 1940s
- Growing up German
- Urban Indian playtime (Oneida)

To order this volume, contact Jackie Freeman at infoMECAHMilwaukee@Gmail.com

The marriage of Owen Williams: A Welsh story

By Richard Prestor

My mother's parents were Welsh.

Owen

Grandfather Owen Williams, the youngest of eight children, was born 1882 at "Ponc yr Efail" ("smithy on a small hill"), a small-holder farm near the village of Marian Glas, on the Isle of Anglesey, Wales, Great Britain. [Still today in North Wales, most homes do not have street number addresses; each home has a proper Name.]

A month before their marriage, Owen's parents borrowed a carriage and horse to travel cold, October 1868 roads to purchase Ponc yr Efail at an auction. The home's fieldstone walls were fifteen inches thick; a narrow, 27-inch-wide stairway led to the second floor; and only the ground-floor rooms had fireplaces.

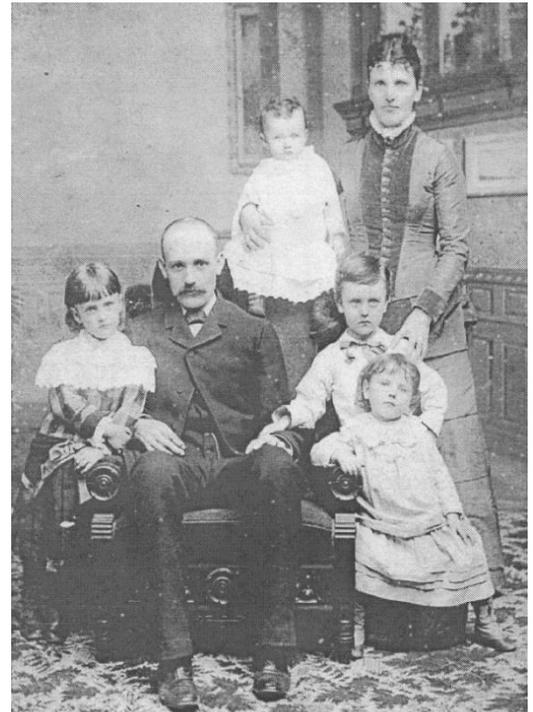


Owen Williams and his wagon

Owen's education ended after third grade. Besides helping on the farm, he likely worked with two older brothers who later became carpenters. By his twentieth birthday, all four brothers had immigrated to America. In 1903 Owen arrived in Milwaukee, joining brothers William and Griff, who provided lodging and carpentry work.

Persis

My grandmother was Persis Jane Humphreys. Her entire family had emigrated from North Wales, but Persis was born in Wisconsin. Her father quickly secured work plastering a new building in Nebraska. Settling miles outside of Omaha, the family constructed a sod house on the windswept prairie. Nine years later, tuberculosis devastated the family, taking the lives of Persis' oldest sister and their dear mother, Jane. Persis' father could not cope. Left to rear his two young daughters and a son, he delivered them into the care of relatives near Milwaukee and returned to Omaha.



Persis Humphrey family

Persis Humphreys became a member of Milwaukee's Calvinistic Methodist Welsh Church. [The Welsh Church, on the NW

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ADVERTISEMENT

Tour the Old South Side Settlement Museum



Learn about the families and ethnic groups that settled this neighborhood by touring an historic house and its settlement rooms.

To reserve a group tour, call (414) 271-9417. The museum is located at 707 W. Lincoln Avenue.

Marriage of Owen

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corner of N. Milwaukee and E. State streets, was purchased by MSOE in 1954 for use as a bookstore.] This is where Owen Williams (21) met Persis Humphreys (18) in 1903. Owen could speak only Welsh, Persis spoke only English. Persis began teaching Owen English.

In 1907 Owen and Persis married. Owen's elderly mother made the long journey from Wales for the wedding. After the ceremony, Owen turned from a conversation to find his new wife talking with his mother in flawless Welsh! Amazed, he asked Persis why *he* had never heard her speak Welsh. Her explanation? Persis knew Owen must speak English to be successful in America and what is a better learning incentive than the courting of a young woman?

Invitation to join

The KRAKOW POLISH DANCERS of MILWAUKEE COUNTY invite guys and gals age 9 and up to join our award winning company.

We rehearse weekly on Wednesday evenings from 6:45-8:30pm on the Southside of Milwaukee. Contact for more information: Annette M. Kuligowski at 414-521-5750.



Prague 1939: A True Story of Talent Lost

Paul and Hedy Strnad are trapped as the Nazis close in.

Can Hedy's dress designs and their cousin in Milwaukee help them get to the United States?

All efforts failed. Hedy and Paul perished in the Holocaust, but their memory lives on in the letter and sketches which form the core of this haunting exhibit. Come and experience Hedy's designs brought to life.

September 14, 2014 through February 28, 2015

Ensembles created by the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's
Costume Shop

Sponsors: Anonymous, The Bradley Foundation, Brico Fund, Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust, Penny & Jim Deshur, Suzy Ettinger, Evan & Marion Helfaer Foundation, Herzfeld Foundation, Helen & Ron Jacobs, Marianne & Sheldon Lubar, Sue & Bud Selig, The Strnad Family

Funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State of Wisconsin.

Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

This project is funded in part through a grant from the City of Milwaukee Arts Board and the Wisconsin Arts Board.

Co-sponsored by the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

Jewish Museum Milwaukee

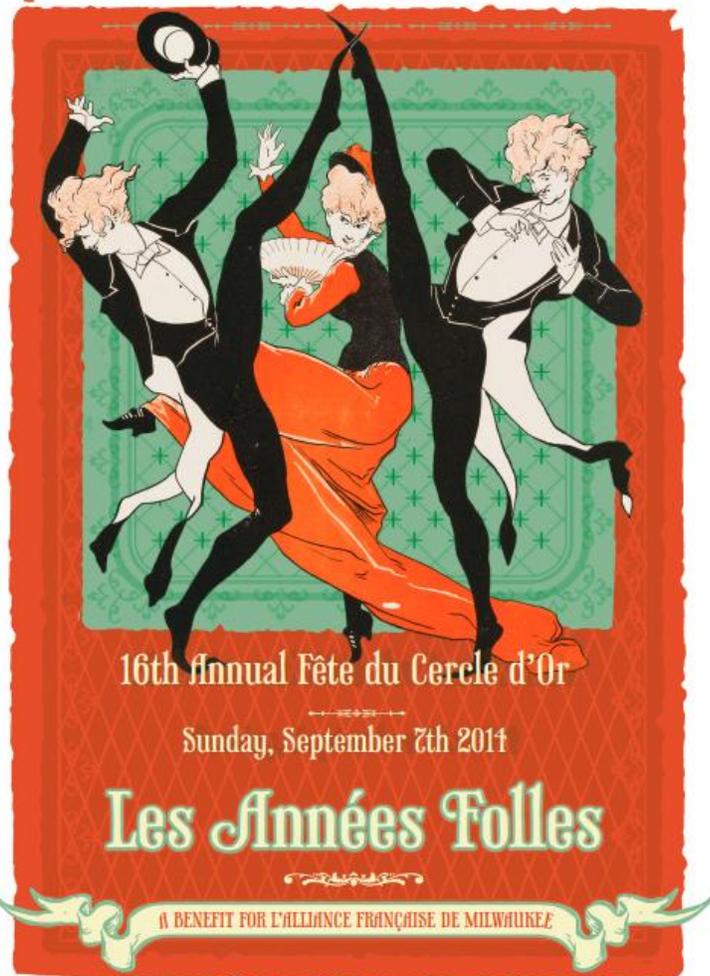
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Experience l'esprit de Paris
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embodied by Montmartre locales, such as les Folies Bergère, and the people who frequented these places, including Gertrude Stein, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Josephine Baker.

When: Sunday September 7, 2014 from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM CDT

Where: East Newberry Mansion, 2727 East Newberry Boulevard Milwaukee, WI 53211

Discover the 1896 Victorian Gothic mansion, the first home constructed on East Newberry Boulevard.

Enjoy delicious food and drink specialties from premier Milwaukee establishments. Dress as you please or show your *joie de vivre* with a touch or more of **red**.

SAVE THE DATE WILLIAM LE BARON JENNEY (1832-1907) PROGRAM

l'Ecole Centrale de Paris aux gratte-ciel de
Chicago, Milwaukee



Discover the work of an alumnus of Paris' Ecole Centrale Des Arts et Manufactures and Chicago's most influential architect: the "father of the skyscraper," William Le Baron Jenney.

This event will feature a talk by Milwaukee and Chicago historians, H. Russell Zimmermann and Robert Brueggmann, as well as a documentary film about Jenney "in his own voice," in French. The Alliance Française de Milwaukee invites all attendees to a reception following the program and film.

Saturday, October 11
Promptly 2 PM

Railway Exchange Building, Top Floor
229 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
53202

Free admission. In French and English.
Attendance Limited.

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Subscriptions

The newsletter is emailed to anyone wishing to receive it. People subscribing themselves and their friends went from 48 in June, 2012 to over 1,000 currently. If you wish your email or that of a friend to be added to the subscriber list, send the email addresses to JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net.

Submitting stories

Milwaukee Ethnic News is interested in stories from individuals, businesses, and organizations that have an ethnic appeal. These can be stories about an immigrant family, special ethnic events, or ethnic issues that need to be aired as guest editorials. Stories that show interethnic cooperation are most welcome.

Stories must be between 100 and 400 words. Some editing will be done to match our style guidelines and spatial constraints. We will write the stories for you if you simply send us a list of the information that you want included. A photo of less than 2 MBs is always required for a story to be published. Please do not refer us to websites to collect information or photos. If we write your story from the general information you send, we do not send proofs for approval.

Stories are always due on the 25th of the month preceding a publication month. At times later submissions may be allowed (ask first). Publication months are July, September, November, January, March, and May. Please send your stories to JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net.

Editorials

Milwaukee Ethnic News occasionally prints editorials that deal with controversial topics on ethnic topics. Guest editorials are also welcome, but need prior approval to be published.



707 W. Lincoln Ave. Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53215, (414) 271-9417
Email RickPetrie@gmail.com

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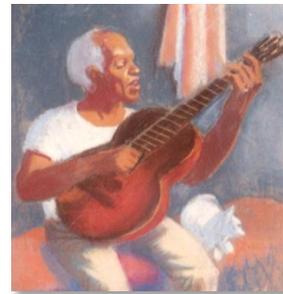
ETHNIC DOCUMENTARIES FROM URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY INC.

The Kaszubs of Jones Island: The People That Nobody Knew

Story of a fishing community that once thrived in the middle of an urban center, and then disappeared.

Urban Indians and the Culture of Collective Action

The cultural practices and local contributions of North American Indians in Milwaukee.



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The fall of Bronzeville and contributions of African Americans in Milwaukee.

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When thousands of Hmong came to the United States, they made an incredible adaptation to a complex society, while keeping their own cultural practices alive.

The Varieties of Latino Experience

This documentary focuses on the diversity (as well as similarities) among various Latino groups in Milwaukee.



The Cultural Roots of Milwaukee's Socialist Movement

How German cultural practices helped solidify the Socialist Movement in Milwaukee.

DVDs are \$25.00 each. All are based on studies done by cultural anthropologists. To order go to www.urban-anthropology.org/Paypalorders.html