

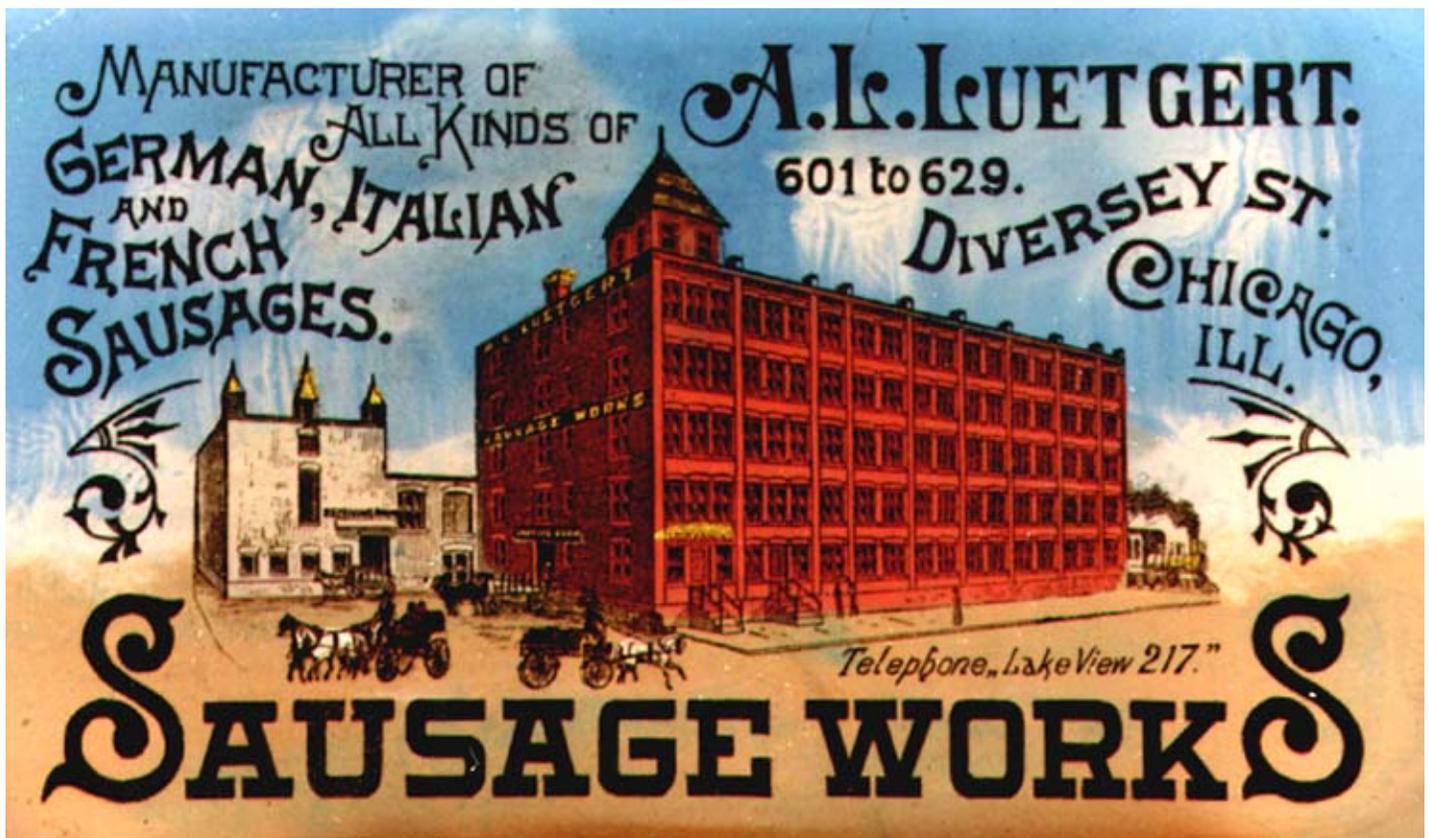


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Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Foods of the American Heartland —Part 1—



An illustration of Chicago's Luetgert Sausage factory, dating from a few years after it was established by German immigrant butcher Adolph L. Luetgert in 1892. The image is from a company paperweight of the time.

CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF ALICE ARNDT, CULINARY HISTORIAN

Along with friends and food scholars from across the country, the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Alice Arndt in Texas on March 7, 2007, after an eight-year struggle with breast cancer. Alice, 65, was an independent food historian and scholar, and one of the leading pioneers in the field of culinary history.

For more than two decades, Alice B. Arndt put her seemingly limitless curiosity and energy to the service of our young field, publishing books and articles, lecturing widely, and teaching classes. She was a founding member of the Houston Culinary Historians in the 1980's, the Historic Foodways Group of Austin in the 1990's, and the Culinary Historians of Northern California more recently. She was also an active friend of the CHAA and other culinary history groups across the country.

Members of the CHAA recall Alice's four talks to our organization as delightful, information-packed, and memorable. Most recently, in October 2005 she spoke to us about her book *Culinary Biographies* (YES Press, 2006), which is the first real historical dictionary of food-related personalities. Alice had systematically turned this dream project of hers into reality, coaxing and coaching dozens of knowledgeable writers, then editing their contributions into a coherent work— about 200 biographies in all, from Pythagoras to Julia Child.

Earlier, in April 2000, in a presentation subtitled "Racy Secrets and Spicy Exposés", Alice shared with us some of the piquant things she'd found in writing her book *Seasoning Savvy: How to Cook with Herbs, Spices, and Other Flavorings* (Haworth Herbal Press, 1999). This book explains the uses, stories, and culture of over 100 international seasonings and blends, from Chinese Five-Spice Powder to Moroccan Ras el Hanout. CHAA veterans will also recall that in April 1993, Alice spoke to us about saffron, and in November 1994 about the Sephardic influences in Turkish cookery.

Some who are aware of Alice's work in food studies may not be aware of her earlier life and its interesting turns. She was actually born in Michigan, the daughter of Robert Bottomley and Jean Williamson Bottomley. Alice grew up in Florida and graduated from college with a mathematics degree, *summa cum laude* from Stetson University (DeLand, FL). After earning a master's in the same field from the Univ. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, she taught mathematics for several years at colleges and universities.

In 1971 Alice married Robert Arndt, who would become (and still is) Editor of *Saudi Aramco World Magazine*, a major portal for Americans' cultural understanding of the Arab and Muslim worlds. Before settling in Houston, various relocations took the Arndt family to a number of different states and countries during the 1970's and 1980's, notably Turkey. These experiences help explain Alice's growing fascination with Turkish, Arab, and other Middle Eastern contributions to world culture— certainly in mathematics and science, but increasingly in cuisine and other facets of society.

Alice was a kind and gentle individual. She always encouraged and supported friends and colleagues to accomplish their goals, especially projects that expanded our knowledge and understanding. Her eternal optimism is captured by the name of the press that she and Robert launched in order to publish her latest book in the way that it needed to be published: YES Press.

We will miss Alice sorely. But while mourning her death, it is also important that we celebrate her life, her courage, and her many contributions. — RKS

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REMNANTS OF “MUSHRAT FRENCH” CUISINE IN MONROE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

by Ralph J. Naveaux

CHAA member Ralph Naveaux, former director of the Monroe County Historical Museum, was born and raised in Monroe, Michigan. He is a descendant of some of the early pioneers of southeastern Michigan and has been involved in the living history hobby since 1978. After earning degrees in history (Michigan State University) and French (Eastern Michigan University), Mr. Naveaux taught those subjects in the Monroe Public Schools for 15 years, then followed his interests into the museum field. He retired as museum director on January 1, 2007.

Monroe County, named after President James Monroe, is nestled in southeastern Michigan, bordering the western shore of Lake Erie. The area was settled in the late 18th Century by French-Canadians who left their family farms in the Detroit-Windsor region and bought lands along the River Raisin and other streams from the Potawatomes, Ottawas, and other tribes. The result was a culturally mixed, or *métis*, community whose principal settlement came to be known as French Town. Father Burke, our first resident Catholic priest (who was also a British spy), described them as a gang of banditti, all armed to the teeth and speaking the Indian languages.

French-Canadian culture predominated until the 1820's, when the Erie Canal opened the gates of Lower Michigan to Eastern immigration. Even then, it took another century before the last generation of French-speaking inhabitants was finally assimilated into the broader American melting pot.

Some things were gained by the transition, but some things were lost, also. The present-day cuisine of Monroe County seems dominated by fast-food and chain restaurants. This is a trend that can be found throughout southeastern Michigan and beyond. As far as ethnicity is concerned, a casual observer might reasonably suspect that Monroe was founded by pioneers from China, Italy, and Mexico.

Although the foods eaten by the French and Indians, as well as the later arriving Germans, have largely disappeared, become so Americanized as to be indisting-



Ralph Naveaux, in traditional French-Canadian dress, boils maple sap at the Navarre-Anderson Trading Post in Monroe, MI. (Photo: Monroe County Historical Museum)

uishable, or receded into the private underground of family and social club dinners, remnants can still be found, lurking just beneath the surface.

Monroe's original *cuisine régionale* was uncomplicated, but hearty. Descended as they were from *voyageurs*, fur traders, and *métis*, the early French were not terribly fastidious in their eating habits. *Voyageurs* came to relish their simple *bouillon*, a soup made from peas, beans, or corn and flavored with a bit of salt pork. Peas were generally of the yellow variety.

Muskrat and Other Aquatic Game

The muskrat, of course, is Monroe's most famous, original, and highly documented food item. Archaeological remains show us that muskrat was being eaten by Native Americans in what is now Monroe County long before the coming of the first French explorers and *voyageurs*. The newcomers soon adopted the practice, however, and helped popularize it to the point that they became known as the "Mushrat French".

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Today, muskrat is still served on special occasions in many local families, and public dinners are still held seasonally in churches, VFW halls, and hunting or boating clubs in Monroe County and in certain downriver communities. In any given year, between early January and early March, there may be a dozen such dinners in the county, but they are not widely advertised and tickets are difficult to obtain. Occasionally muskrat can even appear on a restaurant menu.

After cleaning, and removal of the musk glands, the muskrat is parboiled and then traditionally fried in onions or roasted “Newport style” in creamed corn. More recent “fusions” include serving it with spaghetti or sauerkraut. (Personally, I enjoy de-boning and shredding the meat, then frying it in butter, onions, and bacon, and serving it on a bed of curried couscous.) [The Winter 2004 issue of *Repast* was devoted to the history of muskrat consumption in this region, and included a recipe.]

Although muskrat gets most of the attention because of its uniqueness, it was far from the only wild animal that graced the tables of our ancestors. The local French are still closely identified as hunters and eaters of ducks, turtles, and frogs. Duck was accompanied with wild rice, which was available along the shore in the early days. There were also cranberry bogs inland.

Frogs could be hunted in several ways. In late harvest time, children followed their elders through the fields carrying a club and a bag for the carcasses. After the first frosts, gangs of youth would shoot them, fishermen would cast for them, and punters would shine and spear them at twilight. The most traditional way of consuming the frog is to crumb and fry the legs in hot butter.¹

Few families catch frogs or turtles and eat them at home today, but frog legs and turtle soup continue to be served at area restaurants. In the early 1900’s, many small, family-style guesthouses dotted our waterways. For 50 cents, a patron could select a live fish from a weir at the dock for his first course, to be followed by platters of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, sweet corn, and frog legs.²

Monroe’s commercial fishing industry died off in the 1950’s, and our coastline has been largely walled off from the public by industry and private properties, although sport fishermen can still gain access through Sterling State Park, as well as public boat ramps and private marinas. Lake Erie is best known locally for its bass, pickerel, perch, and walleye. The quintessential fish dinner in Monroe County is fried perch, whether eaten at home, at the club, or in a local restaurant. Generally, it is not advertised whether the perch is from Lake Erie or elsewhere.

Louise Longpré’s Recipe for Turtle Soup

Recipe from Old French Town Cookery (see endnote 7).

Behead and bleed the turtle, dismember and clean well. Separate legs, neck, and other courser parts. Dip in boiling water, and remove skin.

Take out the fine, delicate inside meat and cut into small pieces with the fat. Rinse in cold water, and put all together in a kettle, adding a couple of onions and sweet herbs as desired, salt and pepper; add about 2 quarts of water. Cook very slowly about 5 hours or more. Strain off the liquid, then pick out a quantity of the finer meat and bits of the fat and add to the soup. Add 2 or 3 hard-boiled eggs chopped fine. Add ½ cup of well-flavored wine. Thicken with browned flour. Reheat soup and serve.

Vern Sneider’s Frog Legs Waterfront Style

From the recipe collection of Vern Sneider, who grew up in Monroe thinking that everybody ate muskrat.

At the little waterfront hotels, frogs’ legs were served by the platterful. Today, they are not as plentiful, and are often served as an appetizer, six being sufficient to whet the appetite. Invariably, they were dipped in a batter. In the following hotel recipe, sugar is added to the batter, not to sweeten it, but to brown it when cooked.

Ingredients consist of 6 frog legs per serving, vegetable oil or shortening, 1 cup of sifted flour, 3 teaspoons of baking powder, 1 teaspoon of salt, 1 teaspoon of milk, and 3 eggs.

If fresh frog legs are used, marinate them in salt water for 1½ hours, then rinse them in fresh water. Dry the frog legs. Mix the flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar thoroughly. Add milk and the eggs, which have been lightly beaten. Beat this into a smooth batter; it should be rather thin. Dip legs into it and deep fry in boiling oil or shortening until golden brown.

Bounty from Field, Orchard, and Garden

Not everything on the early French table came from the wild. Although they lagged behind the industrious Germans and the enterprising Yankees in farming techniques, the French did raise crops, and they were well known for their orchards and kitchen gardens. Homes fronted on the waterway and the narrow farms stretched back like ribbons in a regular pattern.

Gardens were usually located just behind the house and contained plantings of a variety of vegetables, including turnips, potatoes, and beans, as well as sometimes cherries, currants, and grapes. A good, local French-Canadian garden would also contain lots of

onions, along with pumpkins, carrots, lettuce, cabbage, and cucumbers.³ Cucumbers and peppers, pickled in salt and vinegar, are mentioned by Father Potier as early as 1748; and *citrouillée* soup made of milk and pumpkin, in 1749.⁴

Turnips are called *navets* in standard French, *navots* (pronounced “navoo”) in eastern Acadian French, and *naveaux* in the *métis* languages of the west. As a winter staple, yellow turnips became popular finely mashed with a little milk, butter, salt, and pepper. Sometimes they are combined with carrots and served as a side dish to pork or pot roast.

Beyond the garden would lie a well-laid-out orchard. Monroe’s founding father, François Navarre, is credited with bringing the first saplings of the old French pear trees from Detroit to French Town in 1786. Although the trees grew to enormous heights, they produced rather small fruit, more suitable for stewing or pickling than eating raw by today’s standards.

Legend has it that the pear trees were planted in groups of 12, representing the apostles, with one set apart in memory of Judas’s betrayal. A few descendants of the original trees can still be found in private holdings around the county. Ironically, they are the result of graftings taken from an ancient “Judas” tree discovered in Detroit’s Waterworks Park in the 1970’s or 80’s.

Some peaches were also raised, but apple orchards were by far the most plentiful and provided a variety of strains, including the *Calville Blanc d’Hiver* and the Detroit Red. However, it was the *fameuse*, also known as the *pomme de neige* or snow apple, which seems to have predominated and can still be found today.⁵

The main fields lay behind the orchard. Rye, corn, oats, and hay were grown mainly to feed the livestock, while wheat and peas (and occasionally some corn) were raised specifically for human consumption. The rest of the farm consisted of pastures and wood lots.

Holiday and Other Food Traditions

Already in the 18th Century, local French families were familiar with all kinds of *fricassée* stews. These stews could contain beef, chicken, or other meats along with turnips, onions, potatoes, carrots, or cabbage. Small potatoes, peas, and onions were boiled to make *patat et pois*, a dish seasoned with salt, pepper, and parsley, and served in a milk and flour gravy. Pea soup could be eaten at breakfast or supper.

Everyday and seasonal farm foods, like *boudin* sausage or head cheese, are no longer as commonly eaten as they once were, but gravy bread remains popular for a

Recipe for French-Canadian *Habitant* Pea Soup

Recipe contributed by Cathy Taylor, who can still prepare it over an open fire, from her mother, Theresa Desjardins Mallon.

Needed are one smoked ham shank (cracked) or 1 pound of smoked ham chunks, 1 medium yellow onion (chopped into small pieces), 16 ounces of yellow split peas, 3 bay leaves, salt and pepper to taste, and 5 cups of water (depending on the desired thickness of the soup.)

Sauté the ham shank until lightly brown, then add onion and continue to sauté until onions are lightly brown also. At this point, add the peas and let them soak up some of the juices while continuing to stir. Add the 5 cups of water and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, then back down to a simmer for a couple of hours. Once the peas have dissolved, add salt and pepper to taste.

(Since it was also eaten at breakfast time, this traveling soup perhaps beat the traditional 18th-Century Quebec home breakfast of onions, bread, and brandy noted by Peter Kalm. – RJN)

light meal. Traditionally, thick gravy, or *sauce grise*, is made with browned flour and the water left over from boiling potatoes. Containing no meat, it could be poured over buttered bread and eaten on Fridays. A thinner gravy, popularized in Erie as *sauce modesse*, is made from chicken broth and milk. *Sasmote*, another gravy made of pork drippings and flour, can also be eaten just with bread.

Glissances (“sliders”) are dumplings cooked in chicken broth. Rolled out flat and cut into two-inch squares, they were until very recently accepted by families of French descent as the embodiment of home-cooked comfort food.⁶ There were a number of variations in the name, shape, and procedure. Another comforting food was *les boulettes*, or “bullets”, a kind of pork meatball rolled in flour and boiled.⁷

As with other ethnic groups, food traditions often centered around religious holidays, as when families took turns baking and bringing the “*pains bénis*”, or “blessed breads”, to church. Five loaves of bread and 25 “*cousins*” (small cakes) was the traditional number for major occasions like Corpus Christi, Easter, or Christmas. The bread was blessed and distributed to the parishioners as a sign of Christian love and unity. The practice died out, although some churches are attempting to revive it.

Ham is a favorite on the menu at Easter time, but the French also had traditions involving eggs. On Friday, April 9, 1852, ten-year-old Libbie Bacon, the future wife of George Armstrong Custer (himself a Monroe native),

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took her friend Mary Disbrow to one of Monroe's Catholic churches to watch them crack eggs. Apparently it was quite a novelty for these girls from conservative Protestant families, but unfortunately, they picked the wrong day and didn't get to observe the rite.⁸

What were then peculiarly French Catholic frivolities have faded away or been supplanted by the Easter traditions of other ethnic groups. The same is true of Mardi Gras, which was a time of feasting and partying late into the night. A major competitive activity involved flipping *crêpes* or pancakes to see who could toss them the highest without dropping them.

Called "*Vives les crêpes*", or "Toasting the Pancakes", guests were invited into the kitchen where each in turn would grab the long-handled pan, "...while another would pour in the pancake batter, scarcely enough to cover the pan. The object was to turn the cake by tossing it as high as possible and bring it down into the pan again without injuring the perfection of its shape. The cakes were piled high in pyramid shape, with butter and maple syrup placed between each layer. These formed the principal part of the substantial supper which followed the pancake toss."⁹

Christmas was very much a religious holiday, but after church came the lighting of the yule log and the *réveillon* feast. *Tourte* or *tourtière* is a local French Canadian pastry dish often associated with festive occasions, especially at Christmas and the New Year. The name comes from a sort of medieval French Dutch oven that this meat pie was originally cooked in. There are many versions that can be made with combinations of beef, pork, veal, or game. The meat is ground or cut into cubes, and flavored with salt, pepper, cinnamon, sage, thyme, cloves, garlic, savory, or a variety of other spices. In Monroe, it is usually a pork and potato pie, and is sometimes served smothered in gravy.¹⁰

As Monroe County's farmland is eaten up by continuing commercial, residential, and industrial development, the concept of local *terroir* is constantly losing out to the pricing, standardization, and convenience of the big-box store. Buckets of KFC fried chicken are slowly replacing home-cooked specialties at family and church potlucks. Nonetheless, our Farmers' Market remains popular, and there is still the desire to experience tastes unique to the area.

Our town newspaper recently extolled Monroe's alimentary delicacies. Honorable mention went to a number of local commercial products, including Spillson's Famous Rice Pudding, Barbara Ann Potatoes, Loretta Baking Mix, Calder Dairy's milk, and Indepen-

dent Dairy's ice cream. Muskrat and *tourtière* did not make the list.¹¹ ■

Recipe for *Tourtière*

Recipe courtesy of Dennis Au, who received it from his step-grandmother, Norie (Mrs. Elnora Bomia-Krueger).

This recipe for *tourtière* is one of the simplest. It calls for a pound of bulk sausage, a half-pound of hamburger, 2 cups of diced potatoes, and a cup of chopped onions.

The ingredients are mixed in a skillet and steamed until the meat is brown and the potatoes are soft. The fat is then drained and the mixture is placed into a pie shell and covered with a vented pie crust. The pie is then baked in a 350° F. oven until brown.

It can be eaten hot or cold. When hot, some of the Mushrat French pour gravy over it. When served cold, maple syrup can be substituted for the gravy.

Endnotes

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3. David C. McCauley, "The River Raisin Settlement, 1796-1812: A French Culture Area" (Master of Arts thesis submitted to the Department of Geography, Eastern Michigan University, 1968), pp. 60-65.
4. Suzanne Gousse, "First Glimpse at New France Eating Habits", *Interprétant Nouvelle France*, No. 17, Sept., 1999. It took some time to convince French people that potatoes were good for more than animal fodder, but by the time the River Raisin was settled, potatoes were well accepted.
5. Bela Hubbard, *Memorials of a Half Century in Michigan and the Great Lakes* (New York: Putnam & Sons, 1888), pp. 125-129.
6. Jennifer L. Berry, "We Got Roots: Ethnic Preservation in the French Community of Monroe, Michigan (1780-1990)" (Senior Honors Thesis in Anthropology, April 23, 1990, school unknown), copy in the Monroe County Historical Museum Archives.
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9. Louis A. Gainsley, "History of Monroe County III", *Monroe County Weekly*, undated clipping in Monroe County Historical Museum Archives Clipping files.
10. Dennis Au and Florence "Dede" Coleman, "*Tourtière: A Comparative Look at the Survival of a French Foodway in the American Midwest*", manuscript.
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DEPRESSION-ERA COOKING ON A GERMAN-AMERICAN FARM IN MICHIGAN

by Agnes Dikeman

Repast subscriber Agnes Schettenhelm Dikeman lives just west of Ann Arbor, and is Public Relations Coordinator for the Saline Area Historical Society (SAHS). At the Rentschler Farm Museum, which is owned by the city of Saline and operated by SAHS, she and other volunteers interpret the farm for the visiting public and demonstrate food preparation and other chores. Agnes and her husband George Dikeman, who is of Dutch ancestry, reside in Lodi Township.



Agnes Dikeman shreds cabbage that she'll make into sauerkraut at the Rentschler Farm Museum in Saline, MI. (Photo: Robert Harrison, Saline Area Historical Society)

This story is about the foods we ate in our home when I was a child on a Michigan farm in the 1930's and 1940's, with a mother who had immigrated from Germany and a father who was first-generation German-American. I will attempt to explain the basis for German frugality regarding food preparation. Then, I'll talk about German-American cooking during the Great Depression years, as we demonstrate for visitors at the Rentschler Farm Museum.

Food has always been a major part of German culture. Visitors to that country come back to America talking about the food! In this country, too, food is a very important component of the social culture of German-American families.

Frugal by Tradition and Need

Frugality and self-sufficiency play a key role in the foods that appear on the German family table. But is being frugal a characteristic of German temperament, or is it born out of necessity? I believe it is a combination of the two.

Germany is a relatively small country, fewer than 150,000 sq. miles in area. Germanic tribes displaced the Celts as early as the 2nd Century B.C., and until the unification of Germany in 1990 the country was involved in one embattlement after another. It is safe to assume that during each trying time, food became scarce and housewives "made do" with what they had. When generation after generation grows up with little on the table and hardship within the household, frugality

becomes a way of life and an ingrained part of human character.

In the 1860's, my own paternal ancestors were peasants who ran a little store and farmed a small plot of land outside the village of Wiesbaden, just west of Frankfurt in the province of Hessen. Because crops had failed for several consecutive years, farmers became destitute, the family store failed, creditors took over, and my ancestors lost everything.

Marie Goetz, my mother, was born in 1905. She lived through two world wars, with a Depression sandwiched in between. During World War I, she was a young teenager living in Obertsrot, a small village nestled in the Black Forest of southwestern Germany. Her family of eight was poor, as Grandfather was a common laborer. Typically, each family had a small piece of land where they raised vegetables and fruits for the family. Nevertheless, each evening there was little on the table. Mother said the children never had meat to eat during the war. If there

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was any meat to be had at all, it would only be a small piece and Grandmother gave it to Grandfather because he had to remain strong. Growing up that way made one frugal.

After coming to America in 1925, Mother was in the Detroit area only a few years before the Great Depression hit. By that time, she had married my father and they lived on an 80-acre farm that belonged to my paternal grandparents. The farm was located in Dearborn Township, on the old Ann Arbor Trail a half-mile west of Telegraph Road. Once again, frugality was the order of the day, but Mother always said farm families were better off than city dwellers because American farm families could be self sufficient if they used what they had wisely. During World War 2, Mother managed to keep my father and four children, her brother-in-law, and hired help fed even though she had to juggle rationing constraints.

Meals from Fresh or Preserved Farm Products

So what did Mother cook? Although I think she was a good cook, she did not cook anything fancy. After eighth grade, Mother had gone to what she called “finishing school” in Germany and when she came to Detroit, she worked for well-to-do families as a maid. She developed a liking for nice things that carried over to her own household. Her table was always set with the silverware placed just so and perfectly ironed napkins. A visually pleasing meal made up for anything that was otherwise lacking. Food dishes were tastily prepared and nicely served but weren’t anything remotely resembling gourmet cooking!

We canned everything the farm produced because Mother did not believe in buying fresh fruits or vegetables from the store. She considered that wasteful “when God gave us all these fruits and vegetables”, even though stores offered the option of fresh things in Wintertime. Without exaggeration, we started each Winter season with well over 125 quarts of applesauce in our fruit cellar and we were never allowed to open a fresh jar if there were jars left from the previous Summer. We canned peaches, pears, and tomatoes; dill pickles and sweet pickles; jams and jellies made from raspberries, black currants, crabapples, and strawberries.

A special canning project was to gather green tomatoes from the garden, and grind them with apples and an orange. To this, raisins and delicious spices were added, then cooked slowly with suet for at least two hours and then canned. This was the makings of **green tomato mincemeat**. Many think of mincemeat pie as British in origin, but German-born Prince Albert is credited with popularizing this pie in England after he married Queen Victoria in 1840. The American practice of using green



Roast chicken

(Photo: James Roth, Saline Area Historical Society)

tomatoes in place of meat is an example of German-American frugality.

Our **bread** was dark, rich-flavored pumpernickel or rye. We seldom had white bread. We breakfasted on hot oatmeal and toast with butter and jam, or coffeecake with cinnamon and sugar.

Dinner was always at 12:00 noon because the men were hungry after working all morning outside. Mother prided herself on learning to cook American dishes, but we often had the old standbys: **roast chicken with bread dressing, roast pork or veal, liver and onions**. Cows could not be sacrificed for meat because they produced milk. Therefore, we seldom had beef on the table. Sometimes Mother stewed an old chicken that was no longer laying eggs. She used the broth to make delicious **chicken noodle soup or chicken and dumplings**.

Back in those days, as we were Catholic we didn’t eat meat on Fridays. (After the Second Vatican Council in the 1960’s, that restriction would be lifted except for the six weeks of Lent.) Thus, **vegetable soup and potato pancakes** or **applesauce over noodles** topped with melted butter and dried toast cubes was the order of the day. **Fresh or cooked vegetables** from our large garden were served plain, with salt and pepper and perhaps a bit of butter: boiled or mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, turnips, cabbage slaw, leaf lettuce with vinegar and oil, pickled beets, and squash.

Supper at 6:00 p.m. consisted of warmed leftovers or **salami sandwiches, knackwurst and sauerkraut, or pork sausage and fried eggs**. Germans love smoked bacon and sausages of all kinds but are especially partial to **salami, pork sausage, knackwurst, and frankfurters**. The adults relished **pickled herring, sardines, limburger cheese with a slice of onion**, and



Stöllen (left) and Springerle
 (Photos: James Roth, Saline Area Historical Society)

such. We children did everything we could to avoid having to eat such things.

Annually in late Fall, we butchered a hog which had been “stuck” in the jugular vein and quickly bled. The blood was captured in a large enamel dish pan, taken into the house while still warm, mixed with copious amounts of sage and other spices, salt, pepper and rice. Pork scraps were cooked and ground prior to adding them to the blood mixture. This was put into casings, cooked in water, cooled, and lightly smoked. It made the most wonderful sausage when fried and served with potatoes. I can still taste it. Mother was very particular about what went into **blutwurst** (blood sausage). She would never try any from a butcher shop; she said she wanted to know what went into it.

We did buy **head cheese** from a family friend who was a butcher by trade. For this, the meat scraps were cured in salt brine, and then cooked in water. After grinding or mincing, many spices were added with natural gelatin and cooking stock. It was placed in a mold in ice water and then refrigerated. We children avoided eating this wiggly stuff that contained “floating things”, but adults loved it with buttered rye bread and coffee.

For a snack that could be carried in one’s pocket out in the field, there was smoked and dried **landjäger** (literally, “country hunter’s” sausage). It was similar to, but much better than, today’s beef sticks.

Sweets to Brighten a Child’s Day

We always had desserts. It might only have been a dish of canned fruit, but sometimes it was **stöllen** (a dry, fruity coffeecake), **springerle** (a cookie imprinted with a picture, hard on the outside, soft on the inside), **lebkuchen** (a bar cookie of honey, molasses, and dried

fruit), or a simple **apfelkuchen** (apple cake). A handful of walnuts and **apfelschnitz** (dried apple slices) was another treat.

When I was a child, I always looked forward to our family’s Christmas package that came from Burlington Flats, NY. We could depend on Mother’s sister Rosa to send springerle and apfelschnitz. Oh my, I could smell the treats through the wrappings! This was a BIG box of several dozen cookies and a large white cotton flour sack about half filled with the dried apples. We probably ate the springerle shortly after receiving them, but the bag of apples (minus a few handfuls) was taken to the cold attic and tied to the clothesline. Periodically, Mother would bring a few apple slices downstairs for snacking. Technically, drying the apples was a way to preserve them for baking, and they had to be reconstituted first. However, in our house they never lasted that long!

Aunt Rosa lived in a farming community near Cooperstown. Once, as a five-year old, I was at her house when she was making springerle. It’s a two-day job to prepare the dough, chill it, and roll out the cookies with a special rolling pin that has pictures carved into it. After that, the cookies had to rest overnight in a cool place. She placed them on cookie sheets on a table just inside the doorway that led to the upstairs bedrooms where we children slept. It took a lot of will power to walk past the butter, egg, and anise aroma on the way to bed! We knew if we snatched one, we would be in trouble.

Aunt Rosa sliced and slowly dried a few apples on the back of her wood-stove. She turned the slices and added a few more, day after day. Those that were sufficiently dried went into a clean white cotton flour bag. She started in the early Fall as soon as apples came in. By Christmas, she had BAGS of apfelschnitz in a cold upstairs room.

continued on next page

GERMAN-AMERICAN *continued from page 9*

Tamping-Down the Sauerkraut

At Saline's Rentschler Farm Museum where I am a volunteer, we interpret the farmhouse as a 1930's Depression-era homestead. An important component of our mission is to show visitors how German-American farm families lived at that time. This farm, which specialized in raising sheep, was sold in 1998 to the city of Saline by the Rentschler family after four generations there.

The Rentschlers fondly recall eating **sauerkraut** two or three times a week in the old days. Making this preserved-cabbage product is one of our frequent demonstrations at the farm. To prepare sauerkraut, I need at least 10 pounds of fresh, firm cabbage from the garden. After washing, removing outer leaves, coring and quartering, the cabbage is shredded into a large crock. The salting process is done gradually and the cabbage is tamped with a wooden mallet every layer or so to get rid of trapped air and to start the juices flowing. When finished, the whole thing is covered with a sterile cloth and weighted down with a plate and a stone. I hold the crock at 68° - 72° F. to complete the fermentation, which takes 10-14 days. In heated basements of today, it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep sauerkraut indefinitely

in a crock, so instead, I "can" the completed sauerkraut following accepted sterile procedures.

Special Events at the museum call for cooking on the old gas stove, a 1930's Hostess model made by the Detroit Stove Works. It is a thrill to cook on it. Our goal is to show how the farmwife could put a substantial meal on the table for her family, even though times were hard during the Depression. And we also show that delicious German-American desserts could satisfy family and friends when made from ingredients found on the farm. Our efforts exemplify that farm families were both self-sufficient and frugal.

Oftentimes, I make **bean soup** so the aroma permeates the house when visitors walk through the front door. It's also easy to keep up a running commentary with visitors while cooking **sweet and sour red cabbage** and **Hot German Potato Salad**. The oven is unreliable, but if watched carefully we can turn out a beautifully roasted chicken, biscuits, or even a pie or two.

To conclude, it is important to note that German foods and recipes differ from region to region and from family to family. It is also important to consider that when German persons married spouses of another ethnic background, food preferences and dishes changed. In other words, German food recipes are as numerous and different as there are persons in the kitchen. ■

**Apfelkuchen**

(Photo: James Roth, Saline Area Historical Society)

FOOD PRODUCTION ON THE HOMEPLACES OF APPALACHIA

by Mark F. Sohn

Mark Sohn, Ph.D. and Professor of Educational Psychology at Pikeville (Kentucky) College, is a foods author, recipe developer, newspaper columnist, cooking teacher, food stylist, and photographer. He served as the food and cooking editor for The Encyclopedia of Appalachia (Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2006) and has three published cookbooks, most recently Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, and Recipes (Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2005). His previous books were Southern Country Cooking (1992) and Mountain Country Cooking: A Gathering of the Best Recipes from the Smokies to the Blue Ridge (1997), which was nominated for a James Beard Foundation award. His recipes have also appeared in a number of well-known magazines, and his cooking demonstrations were televised in more than 450 cable-access shows. Sohn, who is from a family of cooks, first began to cook near his family's home in the hills of western Oregon when he was an 11-year-old Boy Scout. In 1987, at the age of 40, he studied culinary arts at L'École de Cuisine, in Paris, France. He will teach a cooking class, Great American Cuisine, this June 10-16 at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC.

Fifty to 100 years ago the old Appalachian homeplace might have included a house, outbuildings, and farm. Farmers tended gardens, arbors, and orchards. But this land, which for some became almost sacred, was also a gathering place. Even today, the family may return to celebrate holidays, share a traditional meal, and visit the family cemetery, also located on the farm.

The Homeplace

When the old folks were around, the homeplace was where the family gathered for big Sunday dinners with long visits on the front porch. When mountaineers gathered, their minds may have drifted off to mamaw and papaw or to ways that were old-fashioned and old-timey. They entered a unique environment: At one time the place was a food production facility, but now it may be no more than a memory or a repository for family history. For some the old homeplace was acres of land that were passed on from generation to generation, and they held fast to a rule: The land could not be sold outside the family.

As important as the buildings were, so also were the



Mark Sohn

geological features. The property's streams, points, hollows, and ridges carried significance. In addition, many farms had logging roads, coal mine openings, and, later, gas wells. Fences that became part of the land were built of wood, stone, and barbed wire. During the frontier period, livestock roamed wild, but as the population increased, farmers found it necessary to define property lines with some kind of physical boundary. Within farms, fences divided sections so that grazing areas could be controlled. Property lines were important features often running with a point, creek, or ridge and sometimes being marked by a large poplar, shagbark hickory, or other tree. Family members knew the location of property lines as well as they knew the rooms in their house.

Today, this environment is peaceful, bucolic, and moving, but during the first part of the last century, it was a place of hard work. Modern Americans may romanticize a barn raising or hog killing, but the reality of survival and the desire for prosperity required constant toil. Those who lived and worked mountain farms did not have paid holidays, vacations, or delivery trucks. While the barn was a romantic place where kids could get lost, have sex, or tell stories, it was also a place of suffering because it could be the site of accidents, equipment failures, fires, sick horses, and swarms of bees.

Long hours of labor were required because at one time these mountain farms were largely self-contained. The homeplace was a collection of buildings and family, with each family member having a job. Indeed, families not only dried apples, but they also spun yarn, built rifles, and made candles. They canned, cooked, hunted, and prayed. A review of the *Foxfire* series suggests that the Southern mountaineer was extremely adept with skills that led to

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APPALACHIA *continued from page 11*

making museum-quality fiddles, wooden berry-buckets, and pottery of many styles. The *Foxfire* series also documents the making of relatively obscure objects that families used at the homeplace, including shoes, wooden locks, and gourd banjos. On the old homeplace, at least in the first quarter of the 20th Century, farmers made their own tools including dashers, hoes, rakes, and shovels. Looking back, we can understand the relatively brief history of the Appalachian homeplace as the basic unit of frontier living.

Farm Buildings

Not all rural mountain families lived on a homeplace, but those who did can recollect memories of the mule barn, spring house, can house, chicken coop, smokehouse, outhouse, and root cellar. The barn was usually the biggest structure, with space on the ground floor for mules, horses, steers, wagons, and tack, and space above that held straw, fodder, and hay.

Spring houses were built to shelter and collect cool water. Some were built over a spring, but they could not be too far from the kitchen. These covered structures included long shallow basins that held crocks. Besides the crocks for left-over foods, farmers kept milk, cheese, butter, and eggs in the spring house. Somewhere below the water collection point, they often built a spigot so that family members could wash their hands or fill jugs. In place of a spring house, some families used the branch (creek) while others built cisterns.

Another storage building, the can house, held canned vegetables, meats, and fruit. This building protected open crocks of pickled corn and relish, sauerkraut, and fermented drinks such as hard cider, beer, and wine. Sometimes the can house was combined with a root cellar, but many times they were separate.

Some families also maintained potato houses, bee gums, loom houses, and corncribs. During the cold winter months, many folks stored their potatoes in the ground or in a barn, but some had a special potato house, a small building that held potatoes so they would not freeze. A bee gum is really a cavity in a tree that a hive occupied and which could be robbed for honey. Some folks, however, may have used the term for a beehive, which is a man-made box for a hive and for their stores of honey. A loom house is for the storage of a weaving loom. A corncrib is a storage building for ears of corn. Today, most corn is stored as shell corn (i.e., kernels off the cob), but in earlier times full ears of corn were stored in a crib after being harvested by a corn picker, either manual or machine. The crib was a long, narrow building with half-inch ventilation openings between the boards so the corn would stay dry and not mold. Alternatively, the crib might be made of

Bacon Potato Soup

This recipe yields a rich, full-flavored, bacon-garnished, main-dish potato soup, a hearty mountain dish. The puréed vegetables provide the thickening and the cream the richness. The results are heavenly. The soup is like chowder but thickened by puréeing vegetables in a food processor or blender. Note that the bacon and ham provide the needed salt.

Active time: 20 minutes
 Start to finish: 40 minutes
 Yield: 4 cups (6 servings)

2 small potatoes (1 pound)
 2 stalks celery
 1 medium onion
 2 ounces or 2 strips bacon
 1½ cups chicken broth
 6 ounces cooked and diced ham
 ½ cup heavy cream, optional

1. Wash the potatoes and remove spots and blemishes. For this soup, add the potatoes with or without peeling them. Dice into ¾-inch pieces to equal about 3 cups. Wash and dice celery and onion to equal about ¾ cup of each.
2. In a large saucepan fry the bacon until crisp. Remove the bacon and, when cool, crumble. Set the crumbled bacon aside. Leave the bacon grease in the saucepan and add the chicken broth. Bring it to a boil. Add the potatoes and celery, and simmer 15 minutes. Add the onion and simmer an additional 5 minutes. Cook until the potatoes, celery, and onion are tender.
3. Using a food processor or blender, process three-fourths of the potatoes, celery, and onions until smooth. If the vegetables get too thick to process, add broth and continue to process until smooth.
4. Return this purée to the saucepan, and stir it in. At this point the soup should be thick like cream soup.
5. Stir in the ham, and bring to a boil. Continue to stir and add the cream, but do not boil. Serve. Garnish with the crumbled bacon.

SERVING: Serve in soup plates with corn bread, fried apples, or a ham and cheese sandwich.

wire and might be part of a barn.

For a recipe that calls for ingredients that would have been home-grown, try the bacon potato soup (above). Some call it a homeplace potato soup.

Yardbirds: Homeplace Chickens

At the homeplace and in the barnyard, families raised chickens. Chicken was second only to pork in its importance as a mountain meat, and its impact on the homeplace was unparalleled.

In the 18th Century, the Scots-Irish, British, Italian, and German settlers had brought various breeds of chickens to the mountains. Later, in the 19th Century, Africans, who came to the mountains as slaves, introduced other cooking methods. In the 20th Century when American agricultural experiment stations developed new breeds of chickens, mountain farmers adapted them quickly. This was because chickens, like corn seed or fruit trees, could be shipped by the United States Postal Service. When little chicks arrived at the post office, the postmaster sent word of their arrival or delivered them himself.

On the homeplace, chickens were perhaps the most versatile of the domesticated animals. Families raised them for meat and eggs that could be eaten, sold, or traded. This ability to barter or sell chickens and eggs added to their role in the lives of those families who went to town maybe just twice a month. Like hogs, chickens were well adapted to the mountains in that they ate corn, foraged for food, and lived around the house. Because they lived in the yard, mountaineers called them yardbirds. Also like hogs, the consumption of chickens did not require refrigeration because the yardbirds were killed just before cooking. Killing and dressing the chicken were taken for granted as the first step in cooking.

Chickens scratching in the yard, kept in brooding coops, and taken from the fattening coop were seen (and heard) on most mountain farms. In some families their significance went beyond food for the table: the selection of a hen for stew and the lopping off of its head was an unspoken and unpleasant part of becoming an adult. While boys and girls feared the time when they would be asked to do this chore, they also watched with envy as their older siblings handled the task with ease.

Once a decapitated chicken stopped flapping its wings, farm women went on with the task of gutting, scalding, plucking, and singeing. Finally, they cut the chicken into pieces and washed it again. In the kitchen, the family cooks prepared a handful of traditional mountain dishes, the most popular of which were chicken simmered with dumplings and chicken fried in lard and served with cream gravy. In addition, fried chicken livers and chicken pieces baked in pie were common.

The number of chicken recipes in old mountain cookbooks is limited, but this does not reflect chicken's real importance. For example, in *More Than Moonshine: Appalachian Recipes and Recollections* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1983), Sidney Farr lists only three chicken recipes: chicken and dumplings, country fried chicken, and cream gravy. She makes the gravy in the drippings after frying the chicken. In *Hill Country Cookin' and Memoirs* (Gretna, LA, 1991), Ibbie Ledford of east Tennessee offers a recipe for gravediggers' stew. Ledford got the recipe from Minnie Vaughn who lived "down the road a piece"

Oven-Fried Bacon-Wrapped Chicken Thighs

Wrapping chicken thighs with bacon melds two barnyard animals to yield a touch of great flavor. As the chicken bakes, it absorbs some bacon fat as well as a bit of the earthy, salty, smoky tang that is characteristic of cured side meat.

The two tablespoons of salt in this recipe is not a misprint. This chicken coating will be less salty than those prepared from a box, or the chicken you might purchase at KFC or other fast-food stores. In addition, some of the cornmeal coating is left in the bag. Note also that softened bacon bends, stretches, and sticks around the chicken, while cold bacon is a bit firm and difficult to handle.

Active time: 20 minutes
 Start to finish: 1 hour and 25 minutes
 Yield: 8 servings

- 1 strip bacon for each piece of chicken
- 4 pounds skinless chicken thighs or about 10 thighs
- toothpicks
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon pepper

1. Bring the bacon to room temperature or warm it in a microwave oven. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Wash the chicken, and select a roasting pan with an inside rack.
2. Wrap each piece of chicken with a strip of bacon, and secure it with a toothpick or two. In a gallon-sized plastic bag mix the cornmeal, salt, paprika, and pepper. Then, add the chicken to the bag several pieces at a time; seal the bag and roll it on the table to coat the chicken.
3. Piece by piece, remove the chicken from the bag and place it on the baking rack in the roasting pan. Bake until brown on the outside and cooked to the center. The juices will run clear, the internal temperature should reach 170° F., and time elapsed will be 55-65 minutes.

SERVING: Garnish the chicken with parsley or any Spring or Fall greens. Serve with deviled eggs, pork salad, and soup beans or fried potatoes.

from the cemetery, and who felt obligated to provide a hearty meal anytime a family was digging a grave. She made this chicken stew with potatoes and onions as well as home-canned lima beans, corn, and tomatoes. But the few chicken recipes found in books tell us more about mountain cooking skills than they do about the importance of chicken: mountaineers knew how to cook chicken without recipes.

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APPALACHIA *continued from page 13*

In areas where barbecue was popular, chicken was barbecued over coals alongside beef and pork. This was not Southern pit barbecue, but rather what may be called backyard barbecue. Sunday cooks boiled the chicken, roasted it on a grill, and flavored it with sauce. Another important use of chicken that gourmards might prefer to forget was the chicken casserole. In the 1950's when cans of cream soup sold by large corporations became universal binders, chicken became a frequent addition to casseroles baked with broccoli, noodles, or rice. These chicken casseroles went by names such as "No-peek", "Ravishing", "Divine" (often spelled "Devine" or "Divan"), and "Mexican", and they were bound together with the pasty sauce that was spooned from a can.

Today in the mountains, some who do not garden or farm still keep chickens. They can be heard on the streets in small towns and their early morning cries echo up and down hollows throughout the region. Rural families keep chickens as a hobby, because their family always raised them, and because the various breeds are beautiful. A few chicks purchased in the spring will practically sustain themselves until they become young fryers in early summer. Although not a topic for this article, cock fighting is another major focus of raising chickens that suggests the animal's versatility. Fighting cocks were a common source of entertainment and another aspect of the deep relationship between chickens and humans.

Those who raise chickens know their breeds and appreciate the flavor of eggs gathered from hens that were raised free to scratch and eat in the yard. But mountain culture has changed quickly, and today many find it hard to imagine that 50 years ago, the standard rural Appalachian practice when planning a chicken dinner was to go to the yard and catch a young hen. Modern mountain cooks, rather than going to the fattening nook, drive to the supermarket and select chicken from the meat counter. They drop it in their "buggy" (now a motorized vehicle) and use a self-checkout scanner to pay the bill. Then, they drive home with clean, cut-up chicken pieces ready for the skillet or, as in the recipe for oven-fried chicken thighs (page 13), a baking pan.

Continuity and Discontinuity of Tradition

Mountain families not only built barns, chicken coops, and other structures, but because of their isolation many had a cemetery. While Appalachian churches also had cemeteries, some families buried their dead on a hill above the farm. They kept cemeteries either because commercial cemeteries were not always available or because, even in death, they wanted their loved ones to be close.

In death, the homeplace was the center of life. When someone died, the word passed quickly to neighbors who

came to show their respect. Because few rural areas had funeral homes, the women prepared the body for burial, and men dug the grave. Friends brought food and on the day of the burial, the homeplace was the place to gather—to pay respects, visit, and eat. But death was not a time to be away from loved ones, so in addition to watching over the body, family members would tell stories, play games, sing, and court.

Today, these family cemeteries draw the family back. Memorial Day weekend is a time to change the flowers, cut the grass, and then gather for a memorial service. Even if much of the mid-20th-Century production—the pigs, corn, and mules—is gone, when family members come, the farm still has apple trees, remnants of a well, and maybe a garden. The farm might even have an old cheese house, sorghum furnace, or blacksmith shop, but these are rare.

Unfortunately, the old homeplace as it existed is disappearing. For the last 100 years most families have not needed a blacksmith shop, and for the last 50 years, or since the arrival of electricity, families have not had to cure hams in order to preserve them. They have torn down and burned up their chicken coops, and their root cellars have fallen in and been dozed over. When the family founders die, if no one moves to the house, the homeplace changes quickly.

In recent years the physical setting of mountain homes has changed dramatically. Modern mountaineers live in houses that line both sides of paved streets. They enjoy city water, concrete driveways, and storm sewers. An occasional mountain valley is home to a few abandoned silos and chimneys without cabins. But unlike the American Southwest, where the dry climate helps preserve old structures and create ghost towns, the rainy climate and high humidity of Appalachia cause quick deterioration. As soon as the old folks move away, it takes only a season or two for a place to become overgrown. Paths become covered with weeds, and vandals take what they want. After a few years, buildings sprout vines, trees fall, and roofs rot. So while the active homeplace is an environment with a culture and history, the abandoned one quickly becomes wild and dangerous.

For a time, then, the memories are lost. But in some families today, the next generation takes an interest, creates a web page, and writes the old-new stories. Most of all, recipes, and the memories of cooking and eating, seem to stay with families long after they move off the farm. ■

Planned for our Summer 2007 issue—

Foods of the American Heartland, Part 2

- John G. Ragsdale chronicles the Dutch oven in America
- Hanna Miller examines early promotional pamphlets from La Choy (MI and OH) and Gebhardt Mexican Foods (TX)

MORSELS & TIDBITS

In this theme issue on regional and ethnic traditions of the American Heartland, it's fitting to note that April 17, 2007 marks the centennial of the single busiest day in the history of Ellis Island. On April 17, 1907, a whopping total of 11,747 immigrants arrived at that processing center in New York's harbor. In 1907 as a whole, 1,285,349 people started a new life by coming to the U.S., a tally that wasn't surpassed until 1990. By that time, Ellis Island was an historical shrine, but the multicultural influence exerted on American life and foodways by immigrant millions—yesterday's and today's—remains incalculable.

Preparations have gone well for the Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History, "Regional and Ethnic Traditions", to be held this May 18-20 at the Univ. of Michigan. The associated exhibit, "A to Z: An Alphabet of Regional and Ethnic American Culinary Traditions", curated by **Jan Longone**, opened on March 26 at the Clements Library. For more information on the conference, see page 3 of our last issue or visit <http://www.clements.umich.edu/culinary/symposium.html>.

Sherry Sundling is one of the CHAA members reporting a wonderful time at the Michigan Foodways Dinner, held on March 19 at the Common Grill in Chelsea. This was a fundraiser for the upcoming exhibit, as described in this column in our last issue. Sherry writes, "With the foods of Michigan being showcased by the Humanities Council this year, it is a rare opportunity for all of us to take part in whatever capacity we can." A second fundraiser takes place at Schoolcraft College on April 21. Sherry also encourages everyone to visit the website, michiganfoodways.org, where you can read and vote for any of the six finalists in the Recipe and Story Contest: pasties (from Calumet), cranberry apple pie (Cheboygan), sour cream coffee cake with hickory nuts (Chelsea), Michigan Mom's favorite caramel apple pie (Dundee), pretzels (Frankenmuth), and asparagus and red pepper tart (Whitehall). At that website, you'll also find scads of information about the exhibit and about traditional Michigan foods.

Ethnobiology professor and CHAA member **George F. Estabrook** met with some schoolchildren on March 7 to tell them about the history of food. Invited by teachers at Go Like the Wind Montessori School in Dixboro, MI, he visited with two groups of about 25 first-through-third graders. George recounts, "For about 45 minutes each time, we talked about where in the world did some of our common fruits and vegetables originally come from, and where they were first cultivated before they were moved around the world by people." They covered the origin and spread of the orange (Indonesia), potato (South America), squash (North America), melon (Africa), cucumber (India), and grapefruit (Caribbean/Texas). The pupils were excited and had many comments and questions. Teachers **Madelon Takken**, **Dana Benedetto**, **Rachel Young**, and **Rebekah Hendricks** were highly appreciative, and later wrote to thank George again "for the wonderful presentation. You have amazing patience with children." Who knows, maybe he has planted the seeds for some future-budding culinary historians? Also, at the Univ. of Michigan on January 15, Prof. Estabrook gave his annual MLK Day talk on the origins and nutritional value of "soul food".

And speaking of ethnobiology: recently, a research team led

by **Linda Perry**, an archaeobiologist and anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution, determined that chili peppers were cultivated and in widespread use across the Western hemisphere 6,000 years ago. By analyzing fossilized starch grains left on grinding stones, cooking pots, and other kitchen tools at seven excavated sites in the Caribbean, Venezuela, and the Andes, the team concluded that chilies were used by Amerindians not simply as an occasional condiment but as an integral part of a complex and sophisticated diet centered on corn and manioc. *Capsicum*, the genus that includes the 25 known species of chili, seems to have originated in Bolivia, although the center of species diversity is in Brazil. Five of the species have been domesticated and are still grown today. The team's report in the journal *Science* (Feb. 21, 2007) suggests that based on archaeological, genetic, and other evidence, these five species were likely first cultivated in lowland Bolivia (*C. baccatum*), the mid-elevation southern Andes (*C. pubescens*), the northern lowland Amazon valley (*C. chinense*), Mexico or northern Mesoamerica (*C. annuum*), and the Caribbean (*C. frutescens*).

Chef **Alex Young**, whose historically-inspired theme meals at Zingerman's Roadhouse were praised in this column in our last issue, has been nominated for the 2007 James Beard Foundation award in the category "Best Chef: Great Lakes", recognizing a chef who has set new or consistent standards of excellence. Winners will be announced May 7. On March 15, the Zingerman's community of businesses—outgrowths of its Ann Arbor deli, still a flagship—celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Food historian, author, and CHAA friend **Andrew F. Smith** has announced the publication of a new book that he has edited, *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007; 270pp., \$49.95 cloth), not to be confused with his earlier two-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*. The new work is a concise, authoritative, and fascinating treatment of the subject, with nearly 1,000 articles and profuse illustrations. A press release notes that the work is "exuberant", covering "everything from the smell of asparagus to the history of White Castle, and the origin of the Bloody Mary to the ingredients of jambalaya."

Eric C. Rath, Associate Professor of History at the University of Kansas, is soliciting contributions to a book on Food in Japanese History. The project was inspired by a panel on the topic of "(Non)Consumption of Food in Japan, Past and Present", held at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in March 2007. The planned volume will collect 10 essays organized chronologically, written either from an historical, sociological, or anthropological angle, and ranging from early Japanese history to pre-modern Japan to contemporary Japanese society. Contact Prof. Rath at erath@ku.edu.

On the Back-burner: We invite ideas and submissions for these planned future theme-issues of *Repast*: Foods of the American South (Fall 2007); Fairs, Festivals, and Cook-offs (Winter 2008); The Revival of Native American Cooking (Spring 2008); Evolution of Foodways in the Middle East (Summer 2008). Suggestions for future themes are also welcome. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Except where noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, April 15, 2007

(Note change of program)

“A Pound of Peppercorns:

A History of Spices, Taxation, and Economics”

Gauri Thergaonkar,

Retail Manager, Zingerman’s Deli

Friday, May 18 - Sunday, May 20

Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary
History – “Regional and Ethnic Traditions”

The Longone Center for American Culinary Research

William L. Clements Library,

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

(see page 15 for more information)

Sunday, July 29, 2007

4-7 p.m., Earhart Village Clubhouse

(835 Greenhills Drive, Ann Arbor)

CHAA annual participatory theme picnic

“Sandwiches from Around the World”

REPAST

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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First Class