

DUNBAR'S HERITAGE IS MORE THAN INDUSTRIAL

Like every village and town in this area, Dunbar can lay claim to having been a part of southwestern Pennsylvania's industrial heritage. Dunbar's furnaces, coke ovens, glass plant, sand plant, brick works and coal mines provided jobs for many who were willing to work hard in less than ideal conditions. Coming from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, men and women of strong will with a steeled determination worked in difficult circumstances to provide for their families. While a debt of gratitude is owed to those who left this rich industrial heritage, we must also remember the unique cultural heritage that has been passed down through the years.

Dunbar's musical heritage was memorialized, when Samuel Preston Bayard came to Dunbar in the early 1940s to interview the local musicians. Those interviews are included in his book, Hill Country Tunes: Instrumental Folk Music of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Bayard's book was devoted exclusively to American folk tunes and the history of the music. He found in Dunbar "a love of traditional music and song, more intense than in surrounding neighborhoods." Here, it seems, were families in unusual numbers who had vivid memories of folk musicians of bygone days. They not only possessed the memories of these former musicians, but were, in fact, their descendants. He states that Dunbar, along with the surrounding villages, "had more than its share of fiddlers, singers, fifers and musical families, in which several members played, sang and shared this inherited folk art...often getting together for informal concerts and dances". The musical families included the Lowrys, Hughes, Martins, Devans, Smitleys, Provances, Yaughers, Bryners, Wingroves, Gilpins, McClains and Ahrenburgs.

One of the most vividly remembered musicians from Dunbar was Sam Waggle. He had been a fifer during the Civil War, where he lost one of his legs. A wooden leg did not deter him from marching in the parades where the "music from his old rosewood fife might be required."

One of Dunbar's most beloved fiddlers was Jim Bryner, who helped preserve and pass down to the present generation his love of "mountain" music. Bryner loved to get together with others and play the old mountain tunes. As a result of these get-togethers, the Old-Time Fiddler's Association was formed. These musicians still meet at the Fayette County Fairgrounds. Through the generosity of the John Mort family, several CDs of Bryner's music were donated to the society to preserve this musical genre and make it available for anyone wishing to hear it.

Along with its music, one of Dunbar's early artists was William "Bill" Warnick. Born in Dunbar in June of 1889, he was a coalminer by trade, but his passion was art and stone sculpting. Self-taught, he loved to paint local scenes. His painting of Ohiopyle, once owned by the Fruehauf Corporation, was especially prized. One of his paintings was donated to the Dunbar Historical Society and a second painting is owned by a local Dunbar family.

Some readers may remember Rippling Waters restaurant and the sculpted stone piece by Warnick. It was an Indianhead penny that adorned the front of the restaurant owned and operated by Wayne and Lena Martin in the 1960's. The restaurant's unique location, inside a stone trestle across from the former Bluestone quarry on the Dunbar-Ohiopyle Road, was always a popular place for locals. Last known, the penny graced the front yard of a South Connellsville home. One wonders if it is still there.

Warnick's most recognizable work of art can be seen along Rt. 119. The stone Indian that stands majestically in front of Ye Olde Inn was his crowning achievement. The Indian weighs two tons and was made out of local sandstone. In 1959, the chief was moved to its present location. It has ironically not

been bows and arrows that have scarred him, but cars that have plowed into him. Each time, like a phoenix, the Chief rises again to stand guard over that part of Fayette County. Warnick died in April of 1982 at the age of ninety-two, never having been recognized for his artistic contributions.

There are other artists with ties to the Dunbar area. Most notably remembered for his love of local history, William "Bill" Rockwell painted in oil. After his death, one of his oil paintings was donated to the Dunbar Historical Society. The late Robert M. Martin donated his folk art drawing of Betty Knox shortly before he passed away. Several other pieces of art have been donated to the society including Connellsville artist Helen Alt's painting of Dunbar Township High School which was painted for Daniel Houser, president of the 1955 DTHS class. Wanting others to see the work and to honor his memory, his wife Jean, lovingly donated it in 2010. Former Dunbar resident Bob Rankin presented his oil painting of downtown Dunbar this past September during the Dunbar Community Fest. The Society is honored to have these, along with several other beautiful works, on display at the society center in Dunbar.

While not from Dunbar, Suzanne Pascal, whose story appeared in the December Crossroads Magazine, must be included when discussing Dunbar artists. For it was Pascal that merged Dunbar's industrial heritage with its cultural heritage. Using the glass left in the abandoned PA Wire Glass plant, she turned the glass into sculpted works of art, which made her the world's only glass sculptor, selling her "Seated Torso" for \$3 million dollars.

These artists and musicians, through their works, leave a unique part of themselves for present and future generations. Their works are a window to the past through which one may look and be inspired to create. The importance of creative expression can be summed up in the following quote: "Every work of art has two faces, one looking toward its own time and one looking toward the future." (Daniel Barenboim) A debt of gratitude is owed to the many talented and creative people, both past and present, who have contributed to Fayette County's cultural landscape.