

**MCKEESPORT AND GLASSPORT:**  
THE CHANGES THROUGH THE YEARS-  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PROJECT FOR  
THE STEEL INDUSTRY HERITAGE CORPORATION

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## **INTRODUCTION**

McKeesport and Glassport are two areas in the Lower Mon Valley region that are rich in ethnic, industrial and religious heritage. However, since the decline of the steel industry in the region, problems plague both areas. The problems associated with the decline of the steel mills which are manifested most significantly in the attitudes of the people, threaten the preservation of cultural resources; these attitudes include animosity towards the steel industry which gave life to the communities, ambivalence towards ethnic traditions, and a lack of faith in potential solutions which the people feel will not provide immediate results. As a consequence, obtaining information on past cultural practices within the areas is not an easy task. Such generalizations, on the other hand, do not present the positive aspects of McKeesport and Glassport, nor do they exemplify the attitudes of all inhabitants of the area. In addition, these generalizations do not reflect the cultural differences between McKeesport and Glassport. The following report, therefore, serves a two-fold purpose: first, to relate what facets of cultural life are important to the persons who consented to interviews; second, to present fairly the positive and negative points of past and present life in both communities.

I was contracted by the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation in Homestead, Pennsylvania to gather information about the "living traditions" of people in both McKeesport and Glassport. Living traditions, as defined by the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation, ". . . include skills, events, places and values that play a vital role in the ongoing life of the community." My goal, then, was to attain the ethnographic information that the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation needed; furthermore, I wished to establish new contacts in the communities for later projects in the area. I did accomplish the goals I originally set for myself; however, the degree to which they were met diverged from my initial

expectations, because

I encountered problems in establishing contacts and in getting people to consent to interviews. While doing fieldwork, I attempted to discern and to construct reasons why difficulties such as the preceding arose. Accordingly, I developed two hypotheses to provide potential explanations for the obstacles that were met. I set forth these hypotheses so future researchers may understand the types of problems that may arise while doing fieldwork in McKeesport and Glassport.

### **FIELDWORK DILEMMAS: ANALYSIS, EVALUATION AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

The first hypothesis is based on the anthropological concept of the **closed corporate community**. Daniel G. Bates and Fred Plog define in their text Human Adaptive Strategies a closed corporate community as being, "a community that strongly emphasizes community identity and discourages outsiders from settling there by restricting land use to village members and prohibiting the sale or lease of property to outsiders." Closed corporate communities are normally associated with peasant societies in which, historically, the social, economic, and political power was not "in the hands" of the people of the community. Even when the people of the community were able to gain social, political, and economic control of their villages, they still remained subject to the forces of the larger society. As a result, the people of the community developed ways to maintain community stability. The means of maintaining stability were and are through certain leveling mechanisms which are social or economic practices that function to lessen dissimilarities between people in the community. The leveling mechanisms include social pressure and public scrutiny.

How, then, are McKeesport and Glassport like closed corporate communities? I do not suggest that the two areas are peasant societies; however, striking similarities between McKeesport and Glassport and the traditional closed corporate communities do exist. First, as in a closed corporate community where historically the power has not been controlled by the people of the community, the real power in the McKeesport and Glassport seemed to be associated for many years with the industrial proprietors. Second, when the mills closed down, the people of McKeesport and Glassport, both

within the political spectrum and within the communities themselves, did not believe that they were receiving adequate help from the forces of larger society; this point was strongly emphasized by the people with whom I spoke in the Community Development Department of McKeesport on 19 August 1992 as well as by Carol at the New Chestnut Inn during my brief conversation with her on 14 August 1992 when she said, "No one is doin' nuthin.'" The lack of outside help conceivably could cause suspicion towards outsiders working on various projects coming into the area. The difference between McKeesport and Glassport and traditional closed corporate communities is that the resource is not land, but instead is knowledge. The people of the communities may wish to restrict the flow of knowledge of cultural and historical resources to outsiders, because they may not be certain what the outsiders may do with the knowledge; this, of course, is related to the suspicion of outsiders that was hypothesized above. Leveling mechanisms may be at work to prevent people within the community from allowing the knowledge to be obtained by an outsider; social pressures and public scrutiny (e.g., "So and so was talking to this researcher about all of the people here," etc.) function to maintain the balance of community relations, especially in a tight-knit ethnic community. A person may not be willing to consent to doing an interview, for example, because of the concern over what other people in the group may think is occurring regardless of whether or not the concern is verifiable.

The second hypothesis is more related to social psychology; it is based on a conversation that I had with a staff member at the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation who has done heritage preservation work in Pittsburgh and the surrounding region for many years. From her experience, she believes that people do not want to discuss the "old days" which were "good times" because of an underlying guilt. The guilt is associated with the fact that the people of the region had a "good thing," (i.e., the steel industry,) but they "blew it" because of excessive demands; this point was also touched upon by Ralph Pater (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 230-243) and Raymond J. Smith in a pre-interview discussion. Because the people "blew it," they feel guilty and do not want to talk about the old days. My research reflects to a certain degree the perspective of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation staff member, but I feel that it is a combination of guilt about "blowing it" and

anger towards the steel companies for, as Johanna Bell in the Community Development Department of McKeesport and other local people stated, "bleeding the town dry."

Initiating applicable solutions to the problems encountered in McKeesport and Glassport while doing fieldwork may require changes in the approach to doing the type of ethnographic research undertaken for the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation. Establishing **trust** with the people of McKeesport and Glassport is the key to success. Sending a few researchers each of a different background, age, and gender could allow a bond of trust to be developed more strongly and with a wider segment of the population. For example, as a "white" male in his early twenties, I was able to access information shared by social groups more similar to my background (one of my informants in Glassport, Anna DePalatis, exemplifies the point), but I was hindered to a degree by these characteristics when trying to learn the knowledge of the older members of the communities. Many of the older members of the community stated that they were reluctant to speak with me because they did not feel that I could have any real authority due to my youthfulness. Trust, then, is based on perceived legitimacy by the members of the communities.

Obvious differences in socio-economic background and levels of education also affect gaining the trust of various members of the communities. Again, Anna DePalatis illustrates the point. Both Anna and I are college graduates and I knew some of her relatives in college; as a result, the two of us had had similar experiences. On the other hand, as I was conducting fieldwork at Renziehausen Park one day, one gentleman refused to speak with me because he said that I was a "young know-it-all college kid" and that I probably thought that I was better than a person of the working class. Matching researchers to different socio-cultural groups, then, conceivably can increase trust between researchers and the McKeesport and Glassport community members with the end result being a more successful project. Allowing more time in the field to establish rapport would also be beneficial.

One final means of overcoming the encountered problems in Glassport, at least, is to visit the Glassport Public Library. On January 19, 1993, I went to the library there to do follow-up research on the history of Glassport. While at the library, I was recognized by the three librarians and the children at

the library as being an outsider in the community. As a result, they were very curious about why I was there. As soon as they learned that I was doing research on Glassport, the librarians and especially the children overwhelmed me with their knowledge of the folk history of Glassport (e.g., one male adolescent about 11 or 12 years old told me a story that he had learned from a teacher about a man and a woman who killed another male whom I recall to be a relative of the woman; consequently, they were hung), the physical movement of the student population from one school building to another (e.g., the elementary school is the old Glassport High School), and general information past employers. The child who told me about the hanging also emphasized to me that just because he is young does not mean that he does not have the knowledge of local history; his grandmother who still resides in Glassport has told him about past life in Glassport. The librarians when they overheard the children speaking with me verified the data the children supplied to me. As a consequence of my experience, I highly recommend visiting the Glassport Public Library; in addition to the invaluable information that the library keeps, I speculate that many contacts could be established while visiting the library.

Understanding the problems associated with doing fieldwork in the area should be beneficial to others planning to do future fieldwork in the upper Mon-Valley region. With the problems of fieldwork having been addressed, more important questions about McKeesport and Glassport need to be considered. The questions include: Where have McKeesport and Glassport been? Where are McKeesport and Glassport now? What are the future prospects for McKeesport and Glassport? What is the role of geography in the continuing development of McKeesport and Glassport? What was, is, and will be the cultural heritage of McKeesport and Glassport?

## **GENERAL HISTORY**

The general history of McKeesport was supplied to me by the McKeesport Chamber of Commerce. The handout that the people at the Chamber of Commerce gave to me read as follows:

The town's name comes from David McKee, who operated the first ferryboats across the Monongahela and Youghioghney Rivers.

McKeesport is located at the junction of these important waterways.

In 1795, son John McKee founded the community by dividing up the cleared land he inherited from his father and sold lots for \$20 each. Then it was a village, part of Versailles Township. The discovery of natural gas, the establishment of coalmines, and the founding of iron and steel industries in the area made McKeesport grow at its fastest rate between 1880 and 1890. In 1891, it was chartered as a third-class city.

The rails that brought development to McKeesport through passengers and freight became regarded as a hazard and an inconvenience in the growing downtown in mid-20th century. It was not until 1970 that the train tracks were relocated to skirt the business district, but many buildings bear testimony to its former path in the diagonal angles of their walls. But the steel rails that cut through the center of town, and the frequent traffic jams of the vehicles they carried, are one of the most enduring memories of the old city.

Though of recent vintage, the decline of the mills was far from the only catastrophe that McKeesport has weathered. The floods of 1907 and 1936 did great damage. The city was as hard-hit by the Great Depression as any other part of the country; and in 1976, a downtown fire destroyed 29 stores and homes worth over \$4 million.

The populations in McKeesport in 1990 is about 26,000, and it occupies 4-1/2 square miles of land at widely-varying elevations. Highway access is by state routes 48 and 148, as well as via the Mansfield Bridge over the Mon River, which brings the McKeesport-Pittsburgh Road onto West Fifth Avenue. Downtown Pittsburgh or the Pennsylvania Turnpike are just 30 minutes away.

(Much of this information has been derived from the history of McKeesport published by the McKeesport American Revolution Bicentennial Committee in 1976.)

The data gained on the history of Glassport can be found in a book called *Glassport, PA.: "It Happened Here"*. The information available on Glassport before 1851 is limited. Records indicate a house owned by Mrs. Jane McClure located on the public road from Elizabeth to Glassport; this locale was the settling place of the first pioneers. The first pioneers included immigrants from Finland, England, Scotland, Poland, Italy, Romania, Serbia and other Slavic countries. The area that was originally settled

was part of Elizabeth Township, but a division occurred in 1869 and Glassport became part of Lincoln Borough. The area as it grew eventually merged to form Port Vue Borough. In March of 1895, the president of the United States Glass Company " . . . called a special meeting for the purpose of considering the proposition received from the Glassport land Company offering to purchase five hundred acres of its property in Port Vue Borough, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania for the price of four hundred and ninety-nine thousand, five hundred dollars (\$499,500.00)" (1). At this time, Glassport

. . . began to take on a distinctive geographical formation that made it almost separate from Port Vue. As the population centered toward the riverfront and with the coming of the Glass Company, a new unity was developed. That independence led leading citizens to seek detachment from Port Vue Borough and to establish a government of their own . . . In August of 1902 the articles of incorporation were drawn up and the borough of Glassport became a reality (1).

Glassport received its name from the glass manufacturer that was located there. On January 8, 1894, the President of the United States Glass Company " . . . told the Directors that it was important that a distinctive, original, descriptive name should be adopted for the company's proposed new manufacturing location" (2). During a meeting, a Mr. Ripley and a Mr. Hobbs came up with the idea of the name Glassport and the idea was adopted. The town was then built around this mill in 1894.

In 1899, another major employer came to Glassport- the Pittsburgh Steel Foundry. The Foundry was "destined to become one of the largest and best equipped foundries in the world, supplying castings from 5,000 pounds to over 75 tons" (3). In 1959, the Foundry joined with Textron, Inc. and changed its name to "Pittron." After a devastating strike in 1972, a chapel was set up in a ". . . damp, converted storage room" (3). Prayer and bible services were held at this make-shift chapel which in turn lead to a harmonious relationship between management and labor. "Pittron" was purchased by the Bucyrus-Erie Company in 1974 and

developed products to ease the energy crisis in the oil and fossil fuel fields(3).

The other historic major employer in Glassport was the Copperweld Corporation. The Copperweld Steel Company, as it was known originally, moved its operations from Rankin to Glassport in May 1927. Simultaneously, the use of Copperweld wire in the utility industry grew very quickly. Even the Depression in the 1930s was not completely crippling for the Copperweld Steel Company. Copperweld's Sales Department was successful in maintaining a work force because of a principal contract with the United States Corps of Engineers. The United States Corps of Engineers " . . . selected non-rusting Copperweld wire for revetment fabric used in flood control programs along the Mississippi River" (6). Copper conductors were another significant product in the 1930s. World War II brought about changes for Copperweld. "Hundreds of thousands of miles of Copperweld communication lines were built in practically every country of the world" (7). In 1973, the Copperweld Steel Company changed its name to the Copperweld Corporation because of the diversification of its products. The newer products included specialty metal products such as specialty tubing, alloy steels, and bimetallic rod, wire and strand. In September 1976, the Copperweld Corporation was bought by a French company known as Societe Imetal which was owned by the Rothschild family. As a result, Glassport made world news (7).

## **GEOGRAPHY**

The most important environmental asset of McKeesport and Glassport are the Monongahela and the Youghiogheny rivers. The rivers have been essential to the continual development of the areas. Also, they seem to have the greatest potential for aiding in the economic recovery of McKeesport and Glassport.

Raymond Smith clearly pointed out during my interview with him that the river was " . . . all [McKeesport] had" (Accession #ES92-SL2-C, counter number 428). The river was " . . . what made [McKeesport]" (counter number 427). The river and the railroads were the main means of

transportation before the construction of the highways (counter number 429).

In McKeesport's past, the rivers suffered from the results of infrastructure development in the city. Raymond Smith described to me the sewage system that was present in the 1920s.

We had, in those days, practically no sewers in McKeesport to amount to anything. What sewers they had just all ran into a sewer that ran down to the Youghiogeny River. The mouth of each one of those sewers along each one of those streets coming down . . . nothing but soapy water and stuff floating out in the river . . . I had three fellows, Italian fellows come over here as immigrants and they got a job working for us down there just taking care of the sewers, trying to keep them open (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 482-490).

The geography of the Lower Mon-Valley region impacted the layout of the community. From direct observation alone of McKeesport and Glassport, one can ascertain how the environment affected settlement patters. Both communities are situated on hills that run down to the rivers. Near the rivers are industrial and business districts. As one moves up the slope of the hill towards the top of the hill, the number of residences increase dramatically with the only businesses being small convenience-type stores, specialty stores that probably once catered to the particular needs of the ethnic community, bars, and barber shops. In the past, however, residential communities were present in areas that are now industrialized. For instance, Raymond Smith told me during our interview that,

where the [B. & O.] railroad tracks are today, that was Fourth Avenue. Fourth Avenue was paved with logs in between the tracks so you could drive on it. You could get on down to Market Street and go way down almost to Duquesne bridge on Fourth Avenue on the railroad tracks. You just had to watch there's no trains coming. And they had Second Avenue; First Avenue was supposed to be the river, along the riverbank that was First Avenue there . . . But Third Avenue, you go down there on Market Street down Third Avenue and turn left and there was the first bridge across the river there . . . so this bridge went across there and they built another bridge where Jerome Street bridge is today. That was the Fifth Avenue bridge. It went, do you know where the Palisades is? On the corner of . . . Water and Fifth. This Fifth Avenue bridge came straight across there and . . . right up to the balcony in the amusement place. And they had a door, you could walk up on the bridge and go in the door to get in the Palisades . . . They tore that down and built the Jerome Street bridge (counter number 202-232).

Ralph Pater also specified changes that have occurred in which industrial districts replaced residential areas. Mr. Pater discussed the area where the Jewish people predominantly lived.

Jewish people located down close to the river. From the river up to about Fifth Avenue in the First ward area which was the area where the bridge, the Lysle Bridge there, was. That place is now occupied by National Tube down around Second Avenue . . . but they were there. And I can remember the Jewish Synagogue was down in that area too (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 672-684).

Many people with whom I spoke believed the rivers to be advantageous resources for future growth in the region. Raymond Smith had the most well defined ideas of all the people with whom I spoke regarding what should be done with the riverfront areas. After he read an article to me about a proposed recreational park on the riverfront, he said to me:

Why'd you want a recreational park down there? You can't beat that Renzie Park; it's one of the prettiest parks around here. You have this bicycle trail, go up there a few miles . . . beautiful parks, parks everywhere. Who's going to go down in there? You'd have to cross the railroad tracks and the only one way in is underneath. If they'd start running that train that they took off, said it didn't have enough passengers, I'd bet you they could bring that train back and bring it into this place, make a siding there, bring it in there, unload and load up, go back to Pittsburgh several times a day. It'd help the railroads out, help the rivers out. In the winter time when you get ice on the river, you can come up by rail . . . have a switch to take you right into, unload you right at the place . . . go back to Pittsburgh; from down there, you can unload into the boats; that'd be a beautiful boat ride . . . (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 120-134 on Side 2).

Ralph Pater and Anna DePalatis, who both reside in Glassport, also suggested that development could be done along the riverfront areas (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 823-854 and Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 796-840). Anna DePalatis added that a lot of cleaning up would have to be done along the riverfront, but if the time was spent doing so, then the children of the area would probably go down there to swim and to play.

In the realm of expressive culture as related to geography, hunting was one of the main activities.

Alverna Murray informed me during an interview which occurred during a telephone interview that "[a] lot of the men went hunting." Although Ms. Murray was my primary informant for the African-American community, I infer that her account could be applied to the male population as a whole in the region.

A lot of the men went hunting, but they didn't hunt around here because there wasn't too much places around here to hunt or fish so usually what they did is went in groups and went off for say . . . a couple days up to Pymatuning dam or up to West Newton or out to Sutersville and this is where they went hunting and fishing. Well, fishing they couldn't do around here, because the water, the river at the time was too muddy, too dirty. So this is what some of the men also did.

## **OCCUPATION**

The basis of the economy for both McKeesport and Glassport was the steel industry. The African-American work experience is detailed in a later section titled "Case Study: African-American Culture in McKeesport". Unfortunately, my research did not disclose a lot of in-depth information about past occupational experiences; however occupation, or more appropriately the lack of occupations, is the primary concern of almost all the people in both McKeesport and Glassport. In fact, many of the problems that I encountered while doing research were due in part to the fact that the results of the project would not aid in providing immediate relief from the economic problems that both McKeesport and Glassport are experiencing.

The decline of the steel industry had a drastic impact on both McKeesport and Glassport that still affects the regions today. Pastor William Erving of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran church and McKeesport's Ministerial Association recalled grown men crying as the mills went down. In addition, the closing of the mills had a snowball effect that devastated the other businesses in McKeesport and Glassport. Without an income, people had diminishing resources with which to maintain their former lifestyle and small businesses as a result lost their source of profit. Socially, families were fractured as relatives were forced to move away in search of employment in other regions of the country; everyone with whom I spoke had a family member who left the area because of the lack of employment

opportunities. Nevertheless, the steel mills before their closing in the 1970s and 1980s were the basis for the community growth that began in the earlier part of the century.

The first extensive employer in McKeesport was the American Tin Plate Company established in the late 1800s.

Tin Plate Hill is what they call Highland Grove. We called it Tin Plate Hill because down over the hill where those mills are was the first starting steel company. It was a tin company, tin plate. Then they built the big tin plate mill down here in Port Vue borough. That's across the river from the, where they put in the Fifteenth Street bridge where the steel mill is today. That was a big tin mill, one of the biggest in the world . . . People came here from all over the country and up in Curry Hollow they built little houses for them just like shacks. Give a place for people to live, short on homes and everything, because it was hard to get people in . . . They would come up to the high school . . . and ask us to come down and work on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, anytime. Just come down, hang up your check and give you a day's work. So we worked down in the mill laboring for forty cents an hour. We worked ten hours a day. We got \$4.00; we thought that was good money. They were so short of help those days they went down into Mexico and they had a special train bring up two or three hundred Mexicans to work in our mills here . . . 1919, 1917, 1920 (Raymond Smith, Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 122-157).

The major steel industry employer in McKeesport was the National Tube Works established in 1902. All of the people whom I interviewed identified the National Tube Works as being the major employer, but again Raymond Smith provided the most in depth information concerning National Tube.

[National Tube] employed during the war ten or twelve thousand people I guess. Back in the good ol' days, the president of National Tube, he would . . . the Youghiogheny Country Club over here, they practically built it with National Tube help and labor. The YMCA down there in McKeesport on Sinclair Street, they had a lot to do with building that. They helped out on things like that, but they didn't have any pensions or stuff in those days. They just did what they thought was some nice things for the employees (Accession #ES92-SL2-C, counter number 328-352).

Another mill (the name of which is unknown) existed in the present day location of the Camp Hill Corporation. "There was one other mill down at this end where Camp Hill is today . . . It was different than the National Tube. National Tube started around Walnut Street" (Accession #ES92-SL2-C, counter number 196-200; S-25; S-27).

Mills were not the only employers in McKeesport. Other early employers included the National Biscuit Company and Hunter's Livery Stable. The National Biscuit Company was located originally at Seventh and Walnut, but that location became too small for the growing business and it relocated to an area around Ninth and Walnut Street. The National Biscuit Company employed Raymond Smith's father around 1912 or 1913. While it was located in McKeesport, horse-drawn wagons were still used to transport the crackers, bread, and other baked goods to the different stores in the area. Hunter's Livery Stable also employed people while the horse-drawn carts were still being used. Raymond Smith recalled during the interview that the horses that were used were all kept at Hunter's Livery Stables. The rings to which the horses were tied are still in the mortar joints located in the alley on the side the present Hunter-Edmonson-Striffler, Inc. funeral home (Accession #ES92-SL2-C, counter number 430-444; S-24; S-26). Slightly later employers that were also of immense importance were, as Raymond Smith mentioned and to which Alverna Murray alluded in our telephone interview, the B.& O. and Union railroads. Interestingly, Raymond Smith believes that "[g]etting rid of those railroad tracks, the town was wrong to get rid of them, because it died. After then, it was the end of McKeesport . . . " (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 804-808). Mr. Smith has been active in preserving the railroad's heritage in McKeesport; he is responsible for the preservation of the railroad tower on Walnut Street in downtown McKeesport (S-29); "Informant A" also said to me that the railroad tower is an important marker of McKeesport's railroad legacy. Alverna Murray recollected during our telephone interview that there were also many construction jobs at which both African-Americans and white people worked. Finally, service industries such as McKeesport's first department store, Scully's, located at the corner of Market and Fifth before the building burned down probably employed some people as well as provided a shopping outlet for people to obtain their desired goods (Raymond Smith,

Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 765-784; S-22).

Glassport, in contrast, had two main employers: Copperweld and The Foundry. Ralph Pater and Anna DePalatis in their relative interviews stated that people from Glassport worked in other areas as well, such as at the National Tube Works, the Irvin Works, the Christy Park mill, the Duquesne mills, and the Clairton works (e.g., Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 511-523). Since no one whom I interviewed worked at Copperweld or The Foundry, further information about the mills in Glassport is lacking; however, a potential contact, Casimir Pasinski, was established (the incompatibility of our schedules prevented us from meeting for an interview).

During the Depression years in McKeesport and Glassport (the 1930s), many of the workers would take on additional jobs to bring in more money for their families. Two examples were cited to me. Ralph Pater's father worked in his spare time as a barber in McKeesport; there was large family to feed, so his father had to supplement his income in some way (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 116-122). Betty Pater told me that her father worked at the National Tube and worked as an electrician on the side which helped during the Depression years (counter number 167-175).

None of the original employers in either area are still active; however, some of the former sites are being used and some new employers have entered the region. Camp Hill, a relatively later employer in McKeesport, is still "doing well" according to Tracey Shank the Public Relations Specialist for the Community Development Department. The Camp Hill Corporation which is involved in light manufacturing has been designated as a state enterprise zone and still has three shifts that are operating. Ms. Shank also mentioned the Flexcell Corporation, which is involved in new technology products, and Arista Marketing Associates, Inc., a service oriented company, as being two other vital employers in McKeesport. Furthermore, the McKeesport Development Corporation is very involved in trying to bring new businesses into the area by offering incentives such as ". . . low interest loan programs; effective and creative loan packaging; a three year abatement on City, School District and County property taxes on new construction and renovations, customized job training, State Enterprise Zone tax credits; and other fiscal supports . . ." (The information provided was supplied to me by John Heft, the

Incubator Business Manager for the McKeesport Development Corporation). Lastly, in an "Open Letter to the Business Community," the present mayor of McKeesport, Lou Washowich, wrote about the ". . . RIDC's renovation of the former National Tube Mill site . . ." which suggests that the site again has the potential to be active.

The situation in Glassport bears some similarities. The former Copperweld Corporation which at its peak employed about six to eight hundred people (Ralph Pater, Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 288-331) was bought by a French company (Societe Imetal) that later moved its operations to Kentucky; now the Copperweld site is an RIDC park that has space to rent to any small company that wants to get started. As in McKeesport, incentives are being offered to possible businesses to move into the site (Ralph Pater, counter number 257-286; Anna DePalatis, Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 511-523; S-14; S-15; S-16). The Foundry, on the other hand, which employed about one thousand people at its peak (Ralph Pater, counter number 288-331) was bought by Bucyrus-Erie who eventually left the area altogether. The Foundry is now being torn down and the metal of which the mill was constructed is being sold (Ralph Pater, counter number 257-286; S-19; S-20; S-21).

Revitalization efforts in both McKeesport and Glassport have stimulated definite opinions about what each community needs; the basic need upon which all people appear to agree is bringing employment back to the areas. All of the people with whom I spoke want a more diversified economic base; no one wants to have "all of their eggs in one basket." Suggestions included light manufacturing industries, new technology industries, and service industries. Pastor William Erving, however, does not believe that service industries will benefit the community, because of lower pay scales and lesser benefits; "nothing will work unless it's industry." Alverna Murray was the strongest critic of the current local administration's efforts to revitalize the community. "[McKeesport] [has] had, unfortunately, a mayor that has not tried to bring any industry here and so the place has really just gone to pot" (Accession #ES92-SL4-C, counter number 525-528). "They had been talking about getting some type of aluminum plant here and everyone has been looking forward to it and so far, I'd say it's been about

five years, and still no aluminum plant" (counter number 691-696). "Everyone was always used to working and when they closed up the mills, people . . . they were just lost and I think this is what has caused McKeesport to really go down hill" (counter number 522-525).

Alverna Murray's statement regarding the fact that, "[e]veryone was used to working . . ." implies a significant point about the work ethic of the people in the area. A strong sense of work ethic seems to have been deeply ingrained in the values of the people for many years. Mr. Raymond Smith spoke of working after finishing high school in the early 1920s: "We'd work day and night, any old time" (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 462-463). The work ethic crossed gender boundaries as well. Alverna Murray mentioned her mother working at the Christy Park mill sweeping chips during World War II when the mill was making bombs (Accession #ES92-SL4-C, counter number 562-568). Even during peaceful times, women still worked although historically they occupied positions different from men. Betty Pater related to me that the types of jobs in which women worked during the late 1930s and after World War II were waitressing, babysitting, and some clerical work; it was rare at that time for a woman to further her education by going to college, so these were the types of jobs available to her (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 420-442). Maria DePalatis maintains that the primary occupation for women during that era still was as a homemaker; when women did go to work they worked in the types of jobs that Betty Pater also listed. An interesting statement in regard to women and homemaking was made by Raymond Smith during our interview which helped to define what people may constitute as "real work": "My mother ended up with six children; she never worked a day in her life" (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 332-333).

Three other points were mentioned briefly during interviews. The first point concerns unionization; the second point relates to expressive culture; the third point relates to employee-employer relations. First, full-scale unionization did not take place until after World War II. When the unions first came into power in the 1940s, they were needed, but once they gained control they began making exorbitant demands such as thirteen week paid vacations which would be very costly to any company (Ralph Pater, Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 230-243). During the 1960s, after the

workers finished their shifts, they would gather at various bars, such as the Chestnut Inn in McKeesport and Ben's (which is now known by another name). "The names change so much," said Anna DePalatis (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 562-573). The drink that was popular with the steel workers was a "boilermaker" which was a "shot and a beer" (Ralph and Betty Pater, Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 243-257). A place that later became significant in Glassport was Ziemianski's Bar and Restaurant (S- ). The bar has rooms to rent above the restaurant; when foreign employers came from Italy and Britain to Glassport to try and establish new manufacturing businesses at the former Copperweld site, they stayed at Ziemianski's (counter number 854-874). Finally, employee-employer relations were not usually discussed once the workers returned home according to the people whom I interviewed. None of the interviewees recalled any major disputes between labor and management besides the types of complaints that most people have upon returning from a long day's work; most people were just happy to be working.

The relationship between the former companies and the towns appears to be complex; in the section concerning problems of fieldwork, the intricacy of the relationship was suggested. Certain aspects of the relationship seem to be symbiotic while other aspects appear to be parasitic. Some people feel that the steel mills depleted the towns of everything. Other people, while not advocating that the actions of the steel companies were just, feel that the workers' demands drove away the industry. Another factor that was mentioned in every interview with community members and by the people in the Department of Community Development of McKeesport was the influence the shopping malls have had on the decline of the areas. The malls were too much competition for the local shops and as a result many were forced out of business. The combination of the two factors, the closing of the mills and the advent of the malls, worked together to put McKeesport and Glassport in their current economic circumstances.

## **RELIGION**

The churches in McKeesport, especially, have attempted to reach out to the families who were

gravely hurt by the closing of the mills. In addition, religion appears to have been an essential characteristic of past culture in both McKeesport and Glassport, but its influence is declining among younger people. Raymond J. Smith connoted the significance of religion in the lives of people in McKeesport when he said to me during a discussion about the old shops in McKeesport, "Nothing was open then; everything closed up. A religious town." (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 910-912).

"It is like being part of a parade; when you are part of it, you cannot see everything else that is going on;" that was the first statement Pastor William Erving of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church (established- 13 October 1912) said to me when we began our dialogue about McKeesport. Pastor Erving was my key informant on the religious social system, expressive culture, and issues and concerns. The information that I received from him was verified informally by other people, both those who were interviewed and those who remained anonymous, in McKeesport.

According to Pastor Erving, in McKeesport, many religious denominations were active in the past- Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, the major Protestant religions, and Judaism and all of them are still active today (see Appendix D); from Pastor Erving's point of view, there has been no change. The difference, however, is that in the 1970's and the 1980's when the mills closed, the families of the area were devastated: "You could see grown men crying." The challenge for all the churches was to help the families maintain a sense of togetherness, which is not an easy task considering what had happened and considering the future prospective. McKeesport is not the center of Western Pennsylvania; what could be the outcome for McKeesport?

In the 1930s, 1940s, and into the 1950s a lot of people would walk to the churches, but now almost everybody drives and only one or two will walk. Every church has a parking lot or wants one, but none of the churches when they were built had parking lots. Maria DePalatis also conveyed to me that when she came to the United States in 1958, she lived close enough to St. Cecilia's Church (established in 1901) in Glassport, so they walked to the church; Anna DePalatis added to her mother's statement that most people drive to the churches even when they could walk (Accession #ES92-SL5-

C, counter number 629-635).

The organization of the churches, whether they were centralized or decentralized, does not seem to have transformed immensely through time. Pastor Erving told me that the Lutheran church is decentralized; however, there are indications that people want more centralization. The Catholic churches are definitely centralized. All the churches, Catholic or Protestant, in the area own their own relative buildings. In the Catholic Church, the bishops have a lot of power, but there are limitations. A bishop cannot just walk into a church and ". . . start running things." A bishop can only come by invitation to the respective Catholic churches. For the Catholic church system, the assignment of clergy people was based in the past and is still based in the present on a call system which ". . . operates like a school board searching for a superintendent." The call is valid until it is somehow broken by the priest or bishop or if the priest or bishop is ". . . proven to be a scoundrel." Pastor Erving also added that sometimes priests are assigned to a parish and then are forgotten. The Protestant pastors or other clergy people have more autonomy in designating where they will go.

Who belongs to the churches? Pastor Erving's response was that the churches are definitely important to the older people. All of the churches are trying to reach out to the younger generation, but often even the newer members are older people. None of the people with whom I spoke could offer reasons why the younger people are "dropping out" of the church system. A good number of the people are retired. Anna DePalatis said that it is possible that the younger people do not feel that the churches can offer them anything; the issues that concern the younger generation are not being addressed by the churches (counter number 638-647). A lot of the churches did have a large percentage of steel workers, but after the closing of the mills the number of steel workers in the congregations declined. Most of the people who were part of the churches worked for other people; in other words, they were not empowered with control over their own work. Today, there are some steel workers in the congregations who are still active. Pastor Erving told me that one person in his congregation was called back to the mills last year. The majority of the churches have predominantly more women, because, as general rule, women live longer than men. Other accounts, such as that of the

DePalatise in Glassport, reflect that there are an even number of males and females in the congregation (counter number 635-637). In the past, women's roles in the churches usually involved only work in the kitchen. With the liberal movement in the 1960s the gender roles in the churches reached an equal capacity. Pastor Erving told me of a male who at one point in the recent past took over the kitchen duties. In some of the older, more conservative Catholic churches there is still a division of roles along gender lines, but for most churches that division has disintegrated.

The main activities of the churches in the area usually center around the liturgical calendar. Some of the churches are involved not only in religious rituals, but also in social activities. For example, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran had an agency that located children without health insurance and the church would then help support the families to pay for the health insurance. When the mills closed, a needy fund was established by some of the churches for the unemployed workers; people would donate money to the churches and the churches would then donate food certificates to the families. Food certificates were used instead of money so no one could take advantage of the system. Other churches also have social activities for recreation, such as bingo, dances, choir concerts, et cetera.

Some of the ethnic churches still hold festivals throughout the year, but Pastor Erving was not certain of which churches. Pastor Erving did know some of the ethnic affiliations. For instance, Sacred Heart Catholic (S-31) was historically associated with the Croatians. Several St. Mary's churches were founded with different affiliations- German, Polish (St. Mary Czestochowa) (S-35; S-36), Romanian (St. Mary's Romanian Byzantine Rite Catholic Church; established in 1918) (S-43; S-44). The Irish had St. Pius (S-33). St. Mary Czestochowa, which today has a congregation that is about forty percent Polish, was identified as the "Polish church" and St. Pius was identified as the "Irish church" by Ralph Pater (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 072-077 and 126-135). Pastor Erving also mentioned St. Sava Serbian Orthodox church (S-46) having a type of "shrine" to their heritage in the area. In Glassport, some ethnic affiliation still persists. Holy Cross (originally established in August 1902, but was destroyed by a fire on January 21, 1907; the second church was reopened on October 20, 1907) (S-7; S-8; S-9) is important for maintaining the Polish traditions; for example, the church has

polka masses (Anna DePalatis, Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 652-660). "Holy Cross is the Polish church and St. Cecilia's is the Irish church, but we don't refer to them any longer as the Irish church or the Polish church" (Ralph and Betty Pater, Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 404-406). Pastor Erving commented that in the present most of the churches have mixed congregations; they are no longer predominantly associated with one ethnic group. For example, in Glassport, the DePalatises, who are Italian, also belong to St. Cecilia's church (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 313-320; S-12) which was designated by the Paters as historically being an Irish church. Anna DePalatis said during the interview that Holy Cross makes an effort to preserve the Polish traditions, but the other churches, St. Cecilia for instance, does not endeavor to preserve other ethnic traditions (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 622-629).

All of the churches have life-cycle religious customs. The customs include baptism, whether it is full submergence in water or being sprinkled with water, naming of godparents, first communion, and confirmation. Each branch of the Christian churches may have their own little variation, but each is essentially doing the same thing for the same reasons. What occurs with each is not a big secret and almost everyone knows what occurs with each custom according to Pastor Erving.

As far as religious education is concerned, all the churches have Sunday Schools and many have bible study groups. The Sunday Schools are usually attended by children who are from about four years old to adolescence. Some of the Catholic churches have or have had elementary schools. A couple of the churches were St. Mary's Polish, St. Pius (S-34), Sacred Heart (S-31), and St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic. He was not sure exactly which schools are still active. He believed that St. Mary's School and St. Nicholas may still be active. McKeesport Central Catholic Elementary School is also still functioning. To the best of his knowledge, none of the churches still had Catholic high schools.

Symbolic or significant religious places do not seem to prevail in McKeesport or Glassport; however, Pastor Erving disclosed secular places such as the lodges and the ethnic clubs which have counterparts in Glassport. He said also that the annual International Village festival, a time in August where different ethnic groups set up booths to sell traditional foods, perform traditional dances, etc.,

was important, because it was "progressive." The International Village was not a yearning for the old country, but instead a way of learning how the old way contributed to the present. Concerning religious places, Pastor Erving said that there were not any baptismal streams in the past or in the present or special houses of worship outside of the church. When I asked about cemeteries, he replied that St. John's does not own a cemetery; some of the ethnic churches did though. McKeesport-Versailles cemetery is the most significant cemetery for the area primarily because it is the largest cemetery in the area.

Uncommon expressive cultural practices are not evident in McKeesport today. The churches, according to Pastor Erving, sing the standard religious songs. The services are not performed in the native languages. Performing services or mass in the native tongue is "out of touch" with current congregations. In contrast to the information acquired from Pastor Erving, Holy Cross church in Glassport still has a mass in Polish (Anna DePalatis, Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 622-629). As far as preaching styles are concerned, Pastor Erving feels that the priests and pastors assert that the challenge for all concerned is to be fresh and new. Pastor Erving did not say whether or not the priests in the churches are developing "new and fresh" preaching styles.

All the churches appear to be sharing the same concerns and issues. Mergers have not affected the Lutheran churches as much as the Catholic. Due to the way that the Catholic system is structured, mergers and closing affect the Catholic churches more than the Protestant churches. Every parish has to have so many families and as the population ages and as people leave the area to search for work in other places, the congregation decreases in size. Soon there are churches with only twenty-five members. Pastor Erving, however, says that he does not advocate that the churches be closed due to declining congregations because he is

" . . . not a bishop or the Holy Spirit." The Protestant churches, in contrast, do not have specific parishes affiliated with the church, so mergers and closing do not seem to affect them as often.

Intermarriage is " . . . not even a subject for discussion." Pastor Erving told me of a letter that he recently received from the Catholic Dioceses inviting his single people to a dance at a Catholic church.

Intermarriage may be a concern for some of the older people. He told me a story about a German Lutheran girl who married a Swedish boy not of the same denomination upon which the grandmother (I am not sure on which side) frowned. Pastor Erving considers the biggest problem with intermarriage is that it can cause churches to lose members, but there are other gains such as happiness for the couple. All of the churches are trying to get children to participate actively through different means. Pastor Erving said, "You don't know what is going to work until you try it; you have to be willing to try."

Finally, I asked Pastor Erving about the McKeesport Ministerial Association of which he is head. He said that he is not necessarily the head of the Ministerial Association, but the convener. In fact, he is the convener more by default. The purpose of the association to meet for the discussion of community issues. Basically, twelve to fifteen church leaders of various denominations meet for dinner and discuss their concerns for the town and possible solutions. The association has more of a social interest. The philosophy of the association is that if the town does not grow, then no new members enter the community for the churches.

## **ETHNICITY**

McKeesport and Glassport are towns with very strong ethnic backgrounds. The ethnicity is manifested in various ways. One way that ethnicity is exhibited is in the religious system as previously illustrated. Other ways in which the ethnicity of a community can reveal itself are in settlement patterns and through expressive culture.

Ralph Pater provided a general pattern of the settlements of the ethnic groups in McKeesport (See Appendix C.1).

The Poles, they located right around the church so that the area from Fifth Avenue out to about Stewart Street, between Hamilton and Park Street . . . The Irish lived from Hamilton all the way up to Grandview and they also lived in the lower section of town down Walnut, Market, and Locust Street. There were two factions . . . The Italians had a small group . . . located in area from about Eleventh Street all the way down out to Forty-Eighth. The Slavish [a term which may refer to any ethnic group of Eastern European descent; for example, Russians, Slovaks, in

some instances Polish, and on some occasions even Hungarians although Hungarians usually view themselves as separate from people of Slavic backgrounds] they were mixed all the way around. The Slavish, a lot of them lived in Port Vue and they travelled to McKeesport. Jewish people located down close to the river. From the river up to about Fifth Avenue in the First ward area which was the area where the bridge, the Lysle Bridge there, was. That place is now occupied by National Tube down around Second Avenue . . . but they were there. And I can remember the Jewish Synagogue was down in that area, too . . . The Norwegian group it was and I think it was a Scottish group, too, they lived out in the Dailie Avenue area . . . The Germans had a church on Olive Street and I would say they lived mostly in the area that the Italians occupied also . . . They lived in that area from about Tenth Street all the way to about Thirtieth or Thirty-Fifth Street (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 640-731).

Another much smaller ethnic group also was present in McKeesport- the Romanians. The Romanians settled in a small area between approximately Twenty-fourth and Thirtieth Streets shortly after the turn of the century. They established their church, St. Mary's Romanian Byzantine Rite Catholic church on Twenty-sixth Street in 1918 and it is still active. Interestingly, the group of Romanians in McKeesport is " . . . one of the largest Romanian settlements in Western Pennsylvania" (Informant B).

Betty Pater, in turn, supplied information about the types of groups that settled in Glassport and where they settled in the area "The whole hill was Polish. Indiana, Delaware, and Vermont was just one Polish family after another. They all kind of did stick together" (counter number 450-480). Mrs. Pater primarily pointed to the areas on a map that I showed to her (See Appendix C.2).

Two related reasons explain why the different groups came to the area. First, many of the people who came to McKeesport and Glassport already had family members here. Second, the people came to the area for employment. Often, people from abroad were seeking employment in the United States and they happened to have relatives in certain areas, so they chose to come to the areas where their relatives and people of their own ethnic background resided and seek employment in those areas (Anna DePalatis, Accession #ES92-SL5-C).

Interaction between ethnic groups has changed through time. Shortly after I began my interview

with Ralph Pater, he brought up the fact that during the 1930s and 1940s there were a lot of ethnic biases. To illustrate his point, Mr. Pater related to me a story about his father seeking work during the Depression. During that period, McKeesport was a Republican-controlled town, one of the few in the entire country. Mr. Pater's father owed his allegiance to the Republican Party, because the mayor of McKeesport at that time, Mayor Lysle, helped him to find work. Before going on an interview, Mr. Pater's father was told " . . . when it came down to saying what church he belonged to, to say St. Mary's [the German church], because if he said St. Mary's Polish he probably wouldn't get the job" (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 095-099). Moreover, Mrs. Pater told me that there was a lot of prejudice from their parents, such as from the Polish towards the Italians. For instance, Mrs. Pater's father " . . . didn't like the `dagos;' he referred to them as the `dagos.'" Due to her father's prejudice towards Italians, Mrs. Pater was not allowed to date Italian men as she was growing up (counter number 160-163).

The relationship among the ethnic groups appears to be changing today. Anna DePalatis summarized the evolution of the changing ethnic conditions in Glassport:

[There was not much interaction before], but it's getting better now. Before there was a strict line. There was a Polish church and an Italian church. (Maria DePalatis interjects: `No Italian church!' and said in Italian that they did not sing in Italian at St. Cecilia's.) Yeah, they didn't sing Italian songs or ever, but all the Italians were there at St. Cecilia and all the Polish people go to Holy Cross. At Holy Cross there's more, even now they sing Polish songs on Sundays and stuff like that. (Maria DePalatis says in broken English, `But now they're merged.') Well, they haven't merged, but there's more interaction . . . It's the same priest for both. But there used to be a Catholic school. All the Italian kids used to go to St. Cecilia and all the Polish kids went to Holy Cross, but then they merged so that's probably where it started to break down a little bit (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 304-317).

When the different ethnic groups came to McKeesport and Glassport, they often formed their own organizations such as the churches and social clubs. Unfortunately, data lacks for the ethnic clubs in McKeesport. Both Ralph Pater and the DePalatises demarcated the ethnic organizations in

Glassport. Two principal ethnic clubs endure in Glassport: the Sons of Italy (established in August 1918) (S-17) and the Polish National Alliance- Lodge 750 (established December 15, 1905 by Mr. John Piotrkowski) (S-11). Anna and Maria DePalatis stated that the Sons of Italy is not open only to people of Italian descent; all people are welcome at the club. Every summer, usually in July, the Sons of Italy hold a festival in Glassport down by the bank of the Monongahela River.

Several places in Glassport were distinguished by interviewees as having some kind of symbolic or sentimental significance to the people of Glassport. Fuzzy's Confectionery located on Sixth Street (S-10); this has been an important gathering place for people of both Polish and Italian descent. The Glassport Dari Delite (S-13) which has been especially important to the younger people of both ethnic groups through the years (Anna DePalatis, Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 377-390). The Glassport Senior Citizens Center (S-6) sponsors events for the older people of all ethnic backgrounds (Ralph Pater, Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 769-778). Ziemianski's Inn (S-5) has been a popular gathering place for dinner, again, for people of differing backgrounds. In the 1980s, when people from foreign corporations would come into the area to look at the sites of the industries, they would stay at Ziemianski's Inn (counter number 854-874). Finally, the American Legion (S-1; S-2) and a war memorial across the street from the American Legion (S-3 and S-4) were identified by Ralph Pater and others with whom I spoke while surveying Glassport as an important place for all people, regardless of their ethnic background.

Although not relevant to ethnic heritage, several places in McKeesport not necessarily associated with one ethnic group or another were mentioned by Raymond Smith and Ralph Pater as being important gathering places for people. Mr. Smith mentioned a variety of places that he feels are noteworthy- the Masonic temples and the lodges, Community College of Allegheny County branch in McKeesport, a music club that meets at churches, the high school auditorium where symphony concerts are held, and especially the McKeesport Little Theater (S-32)(Accession #ES92-SL2-C, counter number 368-393). Another place of historical significance that was mentioned in a post-interview discussion was the White's Opera House (S-28) located where the boarded up Cox's Department store

is situated today. The White's Opera House did not have only opera performances, but also was the place where the high school graduations were held. Still located in the basement are stone engravings of Shakespeare and other great playwrights. Mr. Pater contributed to the inventory by adding such places as the Elks (S-23), the American Legion, the Palisade, and St. Peter's social hall (S-30). "Informant C" mentioned the war memorial in front of St. Pius Church (S-47). Although a lot of people do not visit the memorial regularly, the memorial was special to him. Finally, while not mentioned specifically in interviews, the McKeesport campus of Pennsylvania State University located between East McKeesport and McKeesport is an important place of gathering for the younger people of the area.

Regarding expressive culture, Maria DePalatis is an important figure in the preservation of traditions in Glassport. First, she is known for a special pastry that she makes for family and friends during the holidays; Anna DePalatis said that, to the best of her knowledge, her mother is the only person in the area who makes these types of pastries (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 171-185). Second, Maria DePalatis is also knowledgeable in the areas of traditional domestic crafts such as knitting, sewing, and cooking. Her daughter Anna has learned the cooking from her mother and is able to knit, but she admits not as quickly as her mother (counter number 430-460). Next, Maria DePalatis brought over positive values from Italy that her children are maintaining. When I questioned Maria DePalatis about the expectations of her as she was growing up in Italy, she replied that she was expected to do everything- work in the fields, housework, watch the children, et cetera. Anna DePalatis said that the values associated with the expectations of her mother have had a positive influence, because Anna and her brothers learned how to be self-sufficient (counter number 115-123). Lastly, Maria DePalatis brought to Glassport many stories about a person named Fortunato in her hometown in Italy. Often, tales about Fortunato were used by Maria DePalatis to illustrate a point to her children.

Anna DePalatis recalled one incident:

Sometimes she'll say to me when sometimes I want to go to the mall to get something little, she'll say . . . (in Italian) 'You're going to go all the way up there for just to spend two cents,' because this guy Fortunato, anytime he got money he would walk to another town just to buy shoelaces . . . And then another time . . . like [her mother] said, he was

illiterate and he was in church and the missal was upside down and he was, he knew the mass off by heart though, it was in Latin, and he was looking at the book . . . so my grandfather said, 'Do you know, hey, can't you see that the book is upside down?' and he said, 'Well, the really smart people can read right-side-up and upside down!' (Counter number 460-481).

The level of concern about the preservation of ethnic traditions varies. In Glassport, the sense of identity is being maintained. For example, Anna DePalatis said that she is proud to be an American and an Italian at the same time. The ethnic pride is beginning to resurface for all the different ethnic groups. In contrast to the old days, as both Ralph and Betty Pater pointed out, when ethnic pride led to divisions within the community, the ethnic pride of the present is reemerging more constructively; there is more of an emphasis on learning rather than dividing (Anna DePalatis, counter number 483-510). Some concern was voiced by the DePalatises that some of the ethnic crafts and foods may be lost as the older generation passes away, but with the rising ethnic pride there may be a receptive body of people who are interested in learning about the traditional ways. In McKeesport, the situation is somewhat different. A brief case study will illustrate the point. I attended mass at St. Mary's Romanian Byzantine Rite Catholic church on 30 August 1992. Mass started at 11:00 a.m. The majority of the people who attended the mass were older women. Some older males and some younger females with children were there also, but they were definitely in the minority. The mass was in English.

I tried speaking with some of the people after mass. Many of the people were not able to spend time because they had prior engagements. The people who would spend a little time did not understand exactly what I was doing there. When they thought that they did understand, they said essentially that many of the Romanian traditions were not preserved in their original form. Most of the women said that they were getting to be too old to spend all the time in the kitchen. In addition, some said that there were not reasons to continue the traditions because there were not people to whom they could pass on the traditions. When the mills closed, they did not just put people out of work, but they also broke up families. As one older woman said to me, "Family is very important to us; without family many things disappear." Some women still did some knitting and sewing, but they said a lot of women

did that and in essence there was nothing Romanian about it. There was one exception that was brought to my attention; one family who lived next to the church was a younger family in their thirties or forties continued to speak the native language. I did not learn the family's name or the history of the family.

I asked about traditional foods. "Informant B" laughed and said that for food to be Romanian, sour cream has to be added to everything. I asked her for an example. She said one popular Romanian dish was a soup that everyone knows about- Lettuce Soup or Ciorba de Salata. All that is needed is a head of lettuce, some bacon (I asked specifically how much and she said about six strips), a garlic clove which you chop into very small pieces, about two tablespoons of a green garlic top, about six cups of water, about a half of a teaspoon of sugar, salt, and, the most important ingredient, sour cream. She said the measurements were rough, because you do not have a specific formula; you cook by taste and by smell. She continued by saying that the bacon is cooked slowly and when it is almost done, you remove it. The chopped garlic is then added to the bacon fat and is cooked until it is brown. The garlic then sits for about a minute. The sugar, water and the bacon which is broken up into bits is added. Simmer the mixture for somewhere between twenty and twenty-five minutes. Add a little more water and some salt; add the lettuce. When the lettuce is kind of "droopy," then you remove the mixture and let it cool. The sour cream is then placed in a larger container and the broth is added a little at a time. While the broth is being added, stir the sour cream very quickly until it is all mixed together and is creamy; add it slowly to the soup and let it simmer for about five minutes. After giving me the recipe, she said that she had to "get going." I thanked her for the recipe and asked her if it would be possible for me to interview her at another time; she declined the offer.

Outside of the church is a bulletin stating the time of the mass, the name of the priest, Father Matthew, and the times of the liturgy during the week. I asked about the liturgical masses. I was told that the church stopped doing the liturgies during the week. I asked when Father Matthew decided to stop doing the liturgies and I was told this year. When I asked why, I learned that it was due to a declining congregation; however, Father Matthew would perform a liturgy upon request.

A more recent phenomenon concerning new migration to the community is affecting Glassport. After the closing of the steel mills and the decline of McKeesport, some people from the African-American community began moving from McKeesport to Glassport. As a result, some people in Glassport feel that the town will begin degenerating. People fear also that the members of the African-American community will take the jobs away from the people already residing in the area. Ralph Pater, who related to me the concerns of some of the people of Glassport in relation to the preceding issue, does not believe that is necessarily true. Mr. Pater holds the opinion that ". . . when people are not working, things can go wrong;" the people want someone to blame and that it is easier to blame the "blacks" rather than the system (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 882-981).

#### **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

McKeesport and Glassport are towns where a lot of emphasis is placed on the maintenance of family. The closing of the steel mills had adverse effects on the families of the two areas; families were fractured as members had to look to other areas of the nation for employment. Although a lot of devastation has affected the families of McKeesport and Glassport, the families who have remained are enduring.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the size of the family was somewhat larger than the families today, but the immediate family of mother, father, and children was still the functioning unit. Ralph Pater mentioned in his interview that his family was rather large; he had four other brothers and sisters (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 108-112). Raymond Smith had five other brothers and sisters (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 332-333). The average size of the families within the past fifteen years has declined to two or three children.

Even though the immediate family was the functioning unit of the household, relatives such as cousins often lived in a nearby neighborhood or at least a nearby town. For example, Anna DePalatis told me about having cousins in Pittsburgh, some other relatives in Duquesne (Accession #ES92-SL5-C). Too, many people with whom I spoke told me that when the children married, they frequently

would remain in the area (Informants D, E, and F). As a consequence, communities became very tight-knit not only through ethnic ties, but through sanguineous ties as well.

The majority of people to whom I spoke said that there were several times during the year when the entire family was brought together. The main holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and New Year's were the most cited days of the year. The people with whom I talked emphasized that the people of the area are like families everywhere else; they have their "good days and they have their bad days;" they get together for the holidays like families everywhere else all over the country; they want the best possible life for their children. In the previous sense, McKeesport and Glassport families are not anything special; the closeness of the family is what makes them special (Informants D, E, and F).

The traditional division of labor within the home has diminished through the years. Traditionally, the men worked at their jobs during the day while the wives stayed home and took care of the house. Cleaning, cooking, watching the children, et cetera were the traditional roles for women in the household. While the men were at home, their primary activity was leisure; however, the men would do repair work that was needed on the home and engage in other duties such as mow the grass. Today, although women still do the majority of housework, men are also participating in the everyday home maintenance chores (Accession #ES92-SL5-C; Informants D and F).

One important facet of family life that has not changed is the expectations that the parents have of their children. The fundamental expectation of children in the past was that they get an education and then try to get a good job; that expectation has not changed at all. (e.g., counter number 140-159). The problem that today's younger generation faces is a higher risk of uncertainty in regards to finding employment, especially in McKeesport or Glassport. In the "old days, there was . . . no requirement to go to college from high school, because there was a job waiting for the guys at the steel mill" (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 185-188). People would get married right out of high school, buy homes immediately, and then go to work at Copperweld, the National Tube, or The Foundry; all the male members of Betty Pater's family followed that pattern (counter number 188-198). Now, no mills, for all practical purposes, are left at which the youth can seek employment. Moreover, the competition

for jobs has forced the educational requirements to increase; a person can no longer find a good job with only a high school diploma. Conceivably, the current socioeconomic conditions of McKeesport and Glassport do not contribute to a conducive learning environment; Anna DePalatis explicitly stated that there ". . . is no motivation for a lot of children" (Accession #E592-SL5-C, counter number 158-159).

The crises of the youth have caused a lot of the younger people to leave the area. Those who go to college do not return to their former hometown of McKeesport or Glassport, because there are better opportunities elsewhere. The departure of the youth threatens both McKeesport and Glassport with excessively elderly populations. The concerns of the people of the community are not necessarily that the elderly will become a major burden, but instead that there will be no tax base in the communities to pay for social services. The people of the areas do not want to leave, but most feel that they are left without a choice because of the lack of jobs. Many would return if the potential for employment existed (Anna and Maria DePalatis, Accession #E592-SL5-C, counter number 223-258).

One very evident difference between McKeesport and Glassport is that Glassport has somehow retained a sense of pride in the community. "Glassport's a pretty nice looking town; it is not desperate-looking like McKeesport or some of the other surrounding areas" (Betty Pater, Accession #E592-SL3-C, counter number 507-510). Both the DePalatises and the Paters recognized that Glassport has a pride that McKeesport lacks in certain ways, but they were not sure why that would be true. Both speculated that it might be due to the fact that Glassport is a smaller community and there have been historically fewer ethnic groups in Glassport, which could lead to stronger community cohesion, but neither could provide a definite answer. Although certain distinctions are visible between McKeesport and Glassport in regards to the community as a whole, the family unit is working equally hard in both places to uphold their standard of living and their previous patterns of everyday life.

In the past, interaction between the people of the communities occurred frequently. Both the Paters and the DePalatises told me that McKeesport ". . . was the place to go;" due to the number of department stores, such as Cox's, McKeesport was the shopping place for the area (Accession #E592-

SL3-C, counter number 504-510; Accession #E592-SI5-C). People from McKeesport did not need to travel to Glassport for consumer goods; Glassport mainly had small businesses including Ralph Pater's drugstore, a hardware store, et cetera, that sold necessary products for everyday living. In the present, more people are moving from McKeesport to Glassport for reasons, which include general economic circumstances of McKeesport, safety, and education (Informant G).

Like other aspects of life in McKeesport and Glassport, economic conditions threaten the continuation of traditional family and community life. The families are unable to maintain the traditions to which they once adhered because of family members leaving the area in search of better economic opportunities. It may be that the economic changes have caused changes in the structure and the function of families. The decline in family size in both communities since the closing of the mills may be related to the economic difficulty of supporting a larger family. Even though an ongoing trend has occurred in the United States where family size has become smaller, my observations and interviews suggest that up to the closing of the mills, family size and structure in McKeesport had remained relatively stable for many years. The function of the family, or more simply, the roles of family members along gender lines have begun to evolve because of economic decline. Males are starting to take on some of the roles originally delegated to women both because they have more free time due to being unemployed or being engaged in part-time work and because women have had to try to seek employment to help support the family. Also, although the following point was not mentioned by interviewees, some steel workers may be reluctant to seek employment just in case the mills should call them back to work and for the fear of losing union benefits supplied to unemployed workers. (I have known of former steel workers from elsewhere in the region who have held back from job seeking because of the previous reasons). As a result, the women confront more pressure to find employment because the men intentionally do not search for work. The transformations in family, ethnic, religious, and occupational systems in McKeesport and Glassport cannot be understood without recognizing the importance of lack of employment since the closing of the mills.

## **CASE STUDY: AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE IN MCKEESPORT**

Alverna Murray was my key informant on issues regarding African-American culture in McKeesport. She was extremely knowledgeable in all areas in which the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation is interested in researching. The data that I received from Ms. Murray was obtained during two different interview sessions: the first interview session took place in her home; the second interview took place over the telephone when she called me the following day to give to me information that she did not recall or have the preceding evening.

Ms. Murray has lived her entire life in McKeesport. Her family came to the area from South Carolina shortly after the beginning of the century in the 1910's and 1920's. Like other ethnic groups the primary motivating factor for coming to the area was the job potential (Accession #ES92-SL4-C, counter number 000-028). Also like the "white" ethnic groups, the family unit consisted of the nuclear family (parents and their children). The African-American families all used a similar strategy to bring other family members into the area. First, the people already residing in the area would bring up their relatives. The relatives would usually stay with them until they were able to "get on their feet." Then, once the relatives who had been brought to the area were able to get their own home, they began the cycle again by bringing up to the area other family members (counter number 028-043). In the present, the family structure has changed slightly. The family unit now consists typically of the one set of grandparents and the grandchildren; the parents of those children often live elsewhere. The reason for this restructuring is probably that the local economic decline has affected the parental generation most severely (counter number 043-077).

Many of the family members who were brought to McKeesport in the preceding way have remained relatively close geographically. The location of Alverna Murray's relatives exemplifies the geographical relation between families.

There are a few [related families] in McKeesport, a few in Duquesne; I think I have a big majority of them in New York. Most of them have their own homes now and families, but we're sort of close together because we always keep in contact as much as possible (counter

number 077-086).

Since most of the family members own their own homes, I asked Alverna Murray about the spatial organization of the homes. The living room historically has been and remains the key gathering place for events that may take place in the home. In the larger homes, a den may be used in addition to or instead of the living room. Although the living room or the den were the main gathering spots in the home, people were not limited from going to other spots of the house. "Our houses were always rather open; you went wherever you wanted" (counter number 103-104). The kitchen was not off limits, either, during family gatherings (counter number 086-113).

The frequency of family gatherings within the African-American community is not drastically different from other ethnic groups. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Fourth of July and Labor Day are the major holidays when the most of the family gets together. In the past, the gatherings took place at Ms. Murray's mother's home, but since her mother passed away, the gatherings customarily take place at her home (counter number 113-123).

Also during the holidays, a lot of families . . . the women usually had whist games. There were quite a few women that played whist and they were very good at it. . . because I know my mother always had whist or card games, this was like their main thing when they weren't in church . . . Easter time, they had the Easter egg hunts. They're trying to bring that back, because it had went down for a few years. I know St. Paul [AME] is now starting that with the little kids again . . . It was sponsored by each church and they had community egg hunts during the time I was going to school and it was usually held out at Olympia Park which is no longer there . . . That was out there where the Olympia Shopping Center is now. That park had to be closed down, because of the underground mine that was there and that was, the fumes and things in the ground was giving way, so that's why that park finally had to close . . .

The division of labor within the home, whether it was for special occasions or for everyday care of the home, is identical to the other ethnic groups that have historically occupied McKeesport. The women did the cooking, the cleaning, and the mending. The men did the repairing and general upkeep

of the home; housework was not part of the agenda. Presently, some change has occurred, but not too much. Alverna Murray mentioned a brother who can cook very well; in fact, all three of her brothers cook to some degree. Her son is also knowledgeable about cooking and engages in housework. In general, however, the division of labor has persisted through time (counter number 123-149).

In the past, parents expected their children to "finish school" (high school). Once the children had finished school, then they were expected to get a job to help support the family. The expectations have not changed substantially through time, but the emphasis weighs more heavily now on finishing school. The parents still expect their children to get a job, but due to the change in the economic conditions of McKeesport, they do not think that those jobs will be in McKeesport (counter number 149-177).

In the domain of expressive culture, Alverna Murray provided a lot of information, especially concerning games, both children and adults'. Alverna Murray recalled doing winter activities such as ice skating and sledding. She laughed as she recollected sledding down some of the streets: "we could have gotten killed, but we never thought about that" (counter number, 201-202). When the weather became warmer, the children made their own "dinghies" (a type of cart) and scooters. During World War II, "tin-can movies" were also popular: the children would gather as many cans as possible for themselves, their brothers and their sisters and then would take them to the movie theaters as a non-cash admission fee. Organizations, such as the "Y-teens" and the "K-boys" club (which is still active; it is located on Centre Avenue or Wylie Avenue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) functioned to provide social activities for the children of families in McKeesport. For example, the K-boys club used to take carloads of children to Pittsburgh to go dancing.

In our church we had another young people's group that did a lot with the children. It was called B.Y.P.U. It was like, I don't know how to describe it . . . we went there on Sunday evenings. What they did was have plays, set up groups, they had . . . they tried to have recreation for all the kids. Usually, they sponsored skating parties or they sponsored extra Halloween parties after church in addition to the kids going around. They sponsored the Christmas parties. They made baskets and things to take around to the

different families for Thanksgiving. In the summer time they helped with setting up or getting extra food or money to some of the families that were real poor during the time of the school picnics when school was out in June; this was what this organization was for . . . The children . . . the other recreation that we had, at that time was a public swimming pool down between Thirteenth and Railroad Street (S-40) which is now where the filtration plant is located. And this where most of the kids went during the summer for recreation.

The children today, though, do not play anything similar to what was played in the past. From Ms. Murray's perspective, the children sit in front of the television which does not teach them to learn how to move (counter number 177-216).

The basic concern among African-Americans regarding family and community life in McKeesport is that there is nothing for the people to do. Before, McKeesport had the movie theaters and sponsored outings such as picnics. Ms. Murray observes that the children today do not seem to be interested in doing anything and that no one is taking an interest in the children. She would rather see the children go somewhere where they could get into some kind of "structural play" rather than hanging out on street corners, which is definitely not motivating them; essentially, she feels that there is nothing in McKeesport to stimulate them (counter number 220-275).

On a broader scale, the African-American people came to McKeesport from South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina. Ms. Murray did not know exactly when the first African-Americans came into the area, but the greatest influx began in the earlier part of this century. As with Ms. Murray's family, the jobs at the mills were the main attraction (counter number 275-297).

The biggest families for the McKeesport area . . . were the Michaels, the Gadsons, the Jenkins. I think the Jenkins is, like, the biggest family in McKeesport. The Grimble and, I think, the Waits, which was our family and we were all, the Michaels, we were all, like, related.

After coming into the area, the African-Americans did associate with the other ethnic groups. Animosity did not exist between the ethnic groups, but often the places of gathering did not coincide so

the interaction with other groups was minimal by default; this may also be a result of the different types of organizations that the different groups established. The African-Americans established mainly churches: St. Paul's A M E; Bethel A M E which later became Christ Temple A M E; Calvary A M E in Braddock (the congregation split; some remained at Calvary A M E while others went to "United Methodist"); Zion Baptist; and Bethlehem Baptist (see Appendix D). All of the churches that were built when the African-Americans came to McKeesport are still active today. Moreover, an Elks Club also was established by the African-Americans. Finally, the places of gathering for African-Americans historically were at the homes of different people (counter number 297-352), which would have also decreased the interaction with other ethnic groups; now, meetings are held at the churches or halls.

Since churches were the main establishments, religious songs have become the traditional songs for the African-Americans. "We Shall Overcome" is very popular in the churches when a serious meeting takes place. In the past, the "Black National Anthem" (which I learned later from a friend is titled "Lift Every Voice and Sing") used to be sung, but in recent years, it has been replaced by "We Shall Overcome" (counter number 352-373) (perhaps because of the economic situation in McKeesport).

Other traditional aspects of cultures in the African-American community are in danger of being lost, because they are not being widely passed onto the younger generation. In the past, a lot of the women were engaged in traditional domestic crafts such as quilting, crocheting, knitting and sewing. Very few women are still doing the activities; those who do are doing crocheting and knitting rather than sewing because the materials cost less. The foods served during the holidays, however, are still being prepared. For Thanksgiving, the traditional meal consisted of turkey, stuffing and dressing, sweet potato pies, apple pies, and a lot of fruit. For Christmas, turkey and ham, candied yams, sweet potato and apple pies, fruitcakes, fruits, nuts and candy, and homemade bread were served. New Year's Day dinner included "Hoppin' John" which is peas and rice cooked together, chitterlings, hog maws, greens and rutabaga, and pies and cakes. Alverna Murray described the ritual associated with preparing the dinners:

The cooking is always done . . . a couple days before . . . Cleaning . . . everything has to be spotless. The people still make like the cakes and things, they're still made from scratch (counter number 375-430).

Some members of the African-American community have taken on a folk-hero status. Ms. Murray told me some tales of people who have become folk heroes within the community. First, she related to me during our telephone interview a story about two men who were known throughout the community for their checker and chess playing skills.

. . . [T]here were two men - Mr. Herbert Tilton and a Mr. Fred Burrows - who were apparently the great chess players and they, everyday, everyday that I can remember, they sat in front of one of these barber shops (Hope's Barber Shop; Lonnie's Barber Shop; Mr. Price's and unnamed barber shop) and there was always a crowd around them and they played chess or checkers, they were, you know, both of them. Every day, because apparently no one could beat them and this went on for years and years, in fact, I think it went on until Mr. Tilton died approximately six years ago. And Mr. Burrows . . . he's still around; he's now 92 years old. This is what finally broke up the checker games.

Second, within the family, an uncle was known as "Professor Knock" because whenever he was needed for whatever the situation, he made himself available (counter number 467-473). Third, if anyone needed a person to come and pray for them or a family member, a Mr. Eugene Grimble was called. Mr. Grimble would come to the person's home and ". . . pray up a storm" (counter number 476-485). Fourth, Ms. Murray told me about several singers within the African-American community, these people ". . . at the snap of a finger could start a song". For example, a Mrs. Moore was a well-known singer who was a ". . . big, heavy lady . . . it was like a boom when she started singing" (counter number 485-492). Fifth, there was a Dr. Hadley: "That was the doctor to call on. He was one of the heroes, when anybody, it they talked about a doctor, it was Dr. Hadley" (counter number 496-504). Finally, she told about a "Mr. Michael" who had a job in the cleaners rather than in the mills; he was remembered for that because usually everyone who came from down south worked in one mill or the

other (counter number 461-467).

Mr. Michael, undoubtedly, was the exception and not the rule. As with other ethnic groups, the African-Americans were largely employed by the mills, including the Tin Plate mill to which Raymond Smith had referred, the National Tube Works, and the mills in Duquesne. The positions that the African-American workers held usually were lower in status and very frequently the positions were the ". . . real, real hot jobs," such as at the blast furnace. For instance, Ms. Murray's father worked originally at the Tin Plate Mill as a laborer; then, he obtained a higher paying job at the National Tube Works, but it was at the blast furnace, which undoubtedly was the hottest job at the mill. Alverna Murray recalled seeing where the heat constantly burned her father (counter number 504-549).

Not all of the African-American workers were assigned to the lower positions. Ms. Murray's uncle worked as a water-tender at the National Tube Works, which was a "good position." Her uncle was never laid off because that part of the mill could not be shut down when the mills closed, just in case the mills should become active again. It would have been too lengthy and costly to start the water-cooling system again (counter number 549-555).

. . . There were more jobs than just the mill . . . There were construction jobs and also the railroads. The railroad employed quite a large number of people and also the construction company. The main railroad was the B. & O. Of course at that time, there was tracks that went right through the heart of McKeesport. This was where a lot of both blacks and whites were employed. Construction was real good pay, but there wasn't too much benefits as I can remember with the construction jobs and apparently the blacks only were able to get the real heavy jobs like what they called 'hod-carriers'; they had to carry all these bricks up and down whatever they were building or mixing the cement, things like that which was real heavy. But I know, because, we had some living at our house, one of the family members we had bought from South Carolina and this was the only type he was able to get was with the construction industry, because he wasn't able to read or write, so . . . but he was able to get steady work with the construction and he always said that it was real heavy, but it did pay good.

Additionally, Mr. Pater remembered during our interview that another type of employment open to the African-American men during the 1930s and 1940s was as "garbage men". According to Mr.

Pater, the men were just happy to be working during those years. (Accession #ES92-SL3-C, counter number 882-861)

The primary field in which African-American women worked was housekeeping. During World War II, however, women filled different positions. As stated earlier, Alverna Murray's mother worked at the Christy Park Mills when the mill was making bombs. Ms. Murray's mother swept the chips that fell to the floor as the bombs were being made (Accession #ES92-SL4-C, counter number 560-571).

Unionization among African-American workers took place beginning in the 1940s.

There were unions at that time, but the unions apparently were for the whites, but a Mr. Lonnie Wilson ran the union for the construction jobs for back men and this is where they would go . . . when they got laid off one job, they would go there and he would get them jobs; this was their union, so there was two separate unions at that time . . . from the early forties up 'til Mr. Wilson's death which was like the beginning of the seventies and then the unions, the big unions apparently came out . . .

When the workers at the mills finished their shifts, they went to various gathering places. Bars, including the Walnut Inn and others that were once located in McKeesport's First Ward, were some of the after-work spots (counter number 601-606); however, other gathering places took on more historical significance for the African-American workers.

. . . [T]he men, when they left work, after they got off work, there were like four of these barber shops right on Walnut Street from Tenth to I'd say Fourteenth Street (S-38; S-39; S-41; S-42) was like the hubbub of the city and the barber shops were located in this area . . . [O]ne was Hope's Barber Shop; one was Lonnie's Barber Shop; one was Mr. Pierce; and the other one, it was just a barber shop, it didn't really have a name. It was run by Mr. Michael. Usually the men, after they got off work, they usually, this is where they usually gathered. They sat around out in front of the barbershops during nice weather and they would play cards . . . Also, there was two pool rooms between Eleventh and Thirteenth Streets (S-38; S-39; S-41; S-

42). There wasn't any name to the poolrooms, but a lot of men went in there also and shot pool. The main games played, card games played, was whist and pinochle . . . There was another club where the men gathered which was the American Legion. That's in fact, this is where most of the, after they started tearing down the lower part of Walnut Street, the men started going there; this is where they had their card games. It was set up like an apartment, One part of it, and there was a great big, porch and they sat there and this is where the card games and things usually went on.

Like their white counterparts, the workers, both male and female, upon returning home did not discuss work in great detail. Ms. Murray informed me that her father did not necessarily like his position of employment, but was content with the fact that he was working; her mother's attitude towards her employers was the same. Regarding relations with fellow employees, Mr. Murray's father had good relationships with both African-American and "white" co-workers. Alverna Murray's mother, in contrast, predominately was involved in activities associated with the church; consequently, she did not interact with other workers in the related field except at the church (counter number 613-628).

African-American concerns about occupational issues reflect those of other ethnic groups. The main issue is the lack of jobs and its effect on the community. (Excerpts of Alverna Murray's beliefs are expounded in the section titled "OCCUPATION.") The people, both African-Americans and people of other ethnic backgrounds, are ready and willing to work, but there is not a factory or other place where mass employment can be sought located in McKeesport (counter number 628-639).

The majority of African-Americans belong to the African Methodist Episcopalian faith, although, as inferred earlier in the case study, some are members of Baptist and Methodist churches as well. The main beliefs correlated with the A M E churches are unity and helping each other, which I personally perceive to be essential values for helping the community to overcome the current socioeconomic problems (counter number 789-795). Historically, the beliefs of unity and helping each other also could have been beneficial to the African-Americans who faced perpetuating social and economic disparity due formal and informal policies made within the larger integrated social, political, and economic system.

Sunday school and Wednesday night prayer classes constitute the religious education for African-American children and adults (counter number 808-816). The main concern with which the church had to deal is trying to get children to stay involved and active. Like the Catholic and the Lutheran youth, when the African-American children reach about fifteen, for unspecified reasons they end their participation in the church activities (counter number 878-895).

Several differences from white Protestant practices are evident in the African Methodist Episcopalian religion. First, the songs that are sung during services are African-American gospel songs (counter number 841-848); the song style is distinctive, although the message of the words is similar to that of songs of Catholic and closely related Protestant religions. Second, the African-American preaching style is more vocally "fire and brimstone" (counter number 857-861) as compared to the sedate preaching style of the Catholics and the Lutherans.

Although the African-American culture has been selected for a special case study the point to be emphasized is that the case study is meant to educate people about the similarities between African-American culture and the cultures of other ethnic groups. Every culture "has its own ways of doing things," but in general, the resemblances outweigh the differences. Even though my research has revealed the similarities between African-Americans and other ethnic groups, racial tensions have grown through the years. Alverna Murray related to me:

I think it's because of the fact, after they tore out like the First Ward, what we call the first Ward where they built the mills, put some industries down there, and then they tore out a lot of houses up in the third Ward and a lot of people had to move out. They moved up into the better areas and then this is when it seems like racial tensions started, because they didn't you know, because they had such a hard time getting places up there and because they didn't seem like they wanted the blacks to move into the better areas. Although I don't think the poor whites were really that much better off, but they were able to get a little bit better places than the blacks. And after they put in the projects, they put one set in Crawford Village, and one down on Market Street, Harrison Village. And it seems like . . . the

powers that be that put them in, they're the ones that divided them up and said that all the blacks have to live in Harrison Village and all the whites have to live in Crawford Village and I think this is when it started getting bad. Also, it seems like the schools, after the schools started closing down, it seems like something started . . . it just started breaking down . . . It seems like the older people didn't want [the blacks] going to the school and so they actually had to fight for everything they wanted and just to get into a school, this is what really started the tension. then they didn't want to give the kids that graduated school good jobs and the white ones came out of school at the same time and they would get the good jobs. Well, you could see right there it was a division. So, right now, there are a lot of jobs that blacks could have, even though there aren't that many around, but it seems like they always find an excuse or some reason why they can't hire them . . . One thing that could change this, they need to change the administration for one thing . . . At the local and national level . . . Anyone with two eyes can see that McKeesport is going down so bad. I mean nothing but boarded up buildings, how can [the mayor] say look at all the new business I've brought in, where is it at?

## **THE FUTURE**

What lies ahead for McKeesport and Glassport? What is the worst possible outcome for the areas? What is the best possible future for McKeesport and Glassport? Based on the current conditions, what is the most likely outcome for McKeesport and Glassport? I addressed the preceding questions to the people whom I interviewed. The responses of people from McKeesport and Glassport were, for all practical purposes for analysis, identical.

The best future for the areas would be an influx of factories or small industries to the areas which would provide employment for the people (e.g., Alverna Murray, Accession #ES92-SL4-C, counter number 905-916). The interviewees were not sure about what kind of industry would be most suitable for the areas, but they feel something is needed to change the current socioeconomic conditions.

Anna DePalatis regarded programs for the young people and the retraining of workers to develop their skills to be beneficial outcomes (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 720-746). Bringing employment into the area would not only revitalize the communities economically, but also would rejuvenate the pride within the communities that either lacks altogether (e.g., McKeesport) or has diminished greatly (e.g., Glassport) since the decline of the steel industry. The development along the Monongahela River and Youghiogheny River could enhance a better future for the areas; unfortunately, specific types of development projects were not denoted. The most concrete concept was proposed by Mr. Raymond Smith. Mr. Smith suggested that a Steel and Coal Hall of Fame be constructed in McKeesport's Tenth Ward along the Youghiogheny River. Items to be placed in the Hall of Fame would include memorabilia relating to the founders of the steel industry as well as actual machinery that was used in the mills. He believed that people would come from all over to see the Hall of Fame, because the steel that built the world was manufactured in McKeesport. The area has the resources, such as the rivers and the entire downtown area which would be conducive to hotel sites, to make it a viable area in which to locate the Hall of Fame. The benefits would include total economic revitalization not only for McKeesport, but also for the surrounding areas, because people would be required to run the hotels, the stores for the tourists, and the attractions along the river. After suggesting the Steel and Coal Hall of Fame, Mr. Smith read articles out loud to me to support his idea; his most persuasive argument was that there is a hall of fame for everything else, including a Chocolate Hall of Fame in Hershey, so why not have a Steel and Coal Hall of Fame and situate it in McKeesport (Accession #ES92-SL1-C, counter number 935-085 and post-interview discussion)?

Regarding the worst possible outcome for McKeesport and Glassport, the people whom I interviewed in the two different areas had varying foresight relative to their communities. Anna and Maria DePalatis in Glassport believed that the worst possible outcome would be for Glassport to end up like McKeesport or Clairton- " . . . being all run down"- which they fear will occur if the population keeps aging and no youth come into the vicinity (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 709-720). Concerning McKeesport, Alverna Murray stated that she did not feel the situation in McKeesport

could get worse; something needs to be done very soon (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 918-924).

The most plausible outcome for McKeesport and Glassport is unpredictable. Alverna Murray admitted that "right now, it's hard to say" (counter number 929-931). If a change in administration does not occur which will bring new people into the government with new ideas to bring new jobs, McKeesport conceivably may become a "ghost town" (counter number 931-937). Anna and Maria DePalatis presumed that Glassport, on the other hand, would stay "pretty even," since the town has not sunk into extreme depression or risen to extreme prosperity. Hopefully, an industry will be established in Glassport or in a relatively close area, but the promise of such an event is uncertain. Possibly, the government and community leaders will work on developing the skills of the youth, because it is too late for the elderly (Accession #ES92-SL5-C, counter number 746-775). In general, then, the future for McKeesport and Glassport is very ambiguous.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

McKeesport and Glassport both have potential for future revitalization if the opportunity for development should come into existence. The combination of geography, work ethic, cultural diversity, and desire for change not only makes the communities significant from a historical-based research perspective, but the previous factors also are essential assets of the communities to set the basis for future development. However, due to the negative effects resulting from the current problems that the areas are facing, immediate solutions are required to prevent destruction of intangible and material cultural resources as well as desolation of the locales.

In order for a cultural preservation project to be fully effective and receive widespread support from the residents of McKeesport and Glassport, **something** must be done first to return to the people the lost pride. Pride is tied in with work identity. For many people, bringing industry to the area would be the ideal catalyst. Conceivably, though, investing financial and human resources into renovating important sites would be extremely worthwhile; a "snowball effect" then could follow. The building of

the former Cox's Department Store, for example, where graduations used to be held is now vacant and could be restored relatively easily. The building brought people together in the past and could be used to bring people together again in the future. After the people of the areas see the difference that a few people can make, more people would want to share in the pride of seeing their own ideas "put to work." Unfortunately, a "snowball effect" as previously described takes time to develop; for many people in McKeesport, immediate results are needed.

A major concern shared with me, specifically by Anna DePalatis and Alverna Murray, is that the youth of the areas have nothing in which they can be interested and nothing to motivate them. Community youth centers, an idea recommended but not fully developed in full by Anna DePalatis, is a potential solution. The centers could provide social activities as well as have workshops in which the older members of the community could tell stories of past life in McKeesport or Glassport to the younger people and could teach them traditional crafts and cultural practices. The result would be extensive: the children would have activities to do in their free time; the older people also would have something beneficial to occupy their time; the traditions would be passed on to a younger generation; an appreciation for cultural diversity would be instigated; community interaction would be enhanced; finally, pride would be revived, because the older people would feel their contribution to McKeesport's and Glassport's past has been relevant and the younger people would recognize the important role the communities have played in western Pennsylvanian and, as Mr. Raymond Smith implied, world history. A large number of vacant buildings, such as the previously mentioned Cox's Department Store building, are available in both McKeesport and Glassport in which the youth centers could be founded with minimal renovation done to the buildings. Lastly, the renovations, general maintenance, and administration of the centers could provide employment opportunities for the local residents. Although the youth centers could not provide large-scale employment, they could at least be "stepping stones" towards a more positive future environment. The renovation of culturally and historically buildings or districts can be implemented concurrently with continued attempts to bring new industry to the areas.

**APPENDIX D****SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS****CHURCHES****McKeesport****Contacted**

St. Paul A M E Church

1350 Locust Street

(412) 672-3303

St. Mary's Romanian Byzantine Rite Catholic Church

318 26th Street

(412) 673-5552

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

328 Ninth Avenue

(412) 673-5647

**Attempted to Contact**

St. Mary's German Church

414 Olive Street

(412) 672-0240

St. Michael's Orthodox Church

424 Ninth Avenue

(412) 678-0517

S.S. Cyril and Methodius Slovak National Catholic Church

2117 Jenny Lind

(412) 678-3328

Hungarian Reformed Church

101 University Drive

(412) 672-7298

St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church Hall

901 Hartman Drive

(412) 664-0820

Temple B'nai Israel

536 Shaw Avenue

(412) 678-6181

Recommend to Contact

Christ Temple A M E Church

937 Rose Street

(412) 672-7946

Bethlehem Baptist Church

716 Walnut Street

(412) 664-7272

First Baptist Church

409 Olive Street

(412) 672-2760

Riverview Baptist Church- General Conference

1911 Soles

(412) 672-8215

Zion Baptist Church

1300 Locust Street

(412) 664-9832

Holy Trinity Church (Catholic- Latin Rite)

120 Seventh Avenue

(412) 672-2220

Sacred Heart Church (HISTORICALLY CROATIAN)

705 Shaw Avenue

(412) 672-1040

St. Mary Czestochowa (HISTORICALLY POLISH)

2515 Versailles Avenue

(412) 672-0765

St. Peter Church- Rectory (HISTORICALLY IRISH)

704 Market Street

(412) 672-9763

St. Pius V Church (HISTORICALLY IRISH)

2911 Versailles Avenue

(412) 673-8878

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

220 Eight Avenue

(412) 664-9379

McKeesport Church of God- Pentecostal

1301 Soles Street

(412) 672-8822

Central Presbyterian Church

Union and Versailles Avenues

(412) 678-2000

Holy Family Polish National Catholic Church

1921 Eden Park Boulevard

(412) 678-0566

St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church

330 Shaw Avenue

(412) 672-3444

Belulah Park United Methodist Church

1515 Grandview Avenue

(412) 672-2785

Christy Park Methodist Church

29th and Beale Streets

(412) 678-3110

First United Methodist Church of McKeesport

Versailles Avenue and Cornell

(412) 664-9349

Highland Grove United Methodist Church

2909 Highland Avenue

(412) 678-3047

Hope United Methodist Church

2401 Jenny Lind

(412) 678-1395

**Glassport**

Attempted to Contact

St. Cecilia Church

8th Street and Ohio Avenue

(412) 673-9580

St. John's Lutheran Church

509 7th Street

(412) 678-2627

Recommend to Contact

Glassport Assembly of God Church

5th and Ohio Avenue

(412) 672-9002

Holy Cross Church

6th Street and Michigan

(412) 672-7910

Glassport United Methodist Church

5th Street and Ohio Avenue

(412) 672-2866

**Churches of Importance Outside of McKeesport and Glassport**

Calvary A M E Church

441 6th Street

Braddock, PA

(412) 271-8933

**ETHNIC CLUBS**

**McKeesport**

Swedish Singing Society

430 Shaw Avenue

(412) 664-9591

Croatian Hall, Lodge 146  
4400 3rd Street, (Versailles)  
(412) 751-6261

## **MISCELLANEOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

### **McKeesport**

American Legion Burt Foster, Post 361  
619 Market Street  
(412) 664-9694

American Legion of McKeesport, Post No. 361  
619 Market Street  
(412) 672-6549

Community College of Allegheny County, McKeesport Center  
524 Walnut Street  
(412) 673-7220

Elks Club, 136  
500 Market Street  
(412) 673-3557

Garden Club of McKeesport  
Renziehausen Park  
(412) 672-1050

Knights of Columbus

McKeesport Council No. 955

539 Shaw Avenue

(412) 672-1690

Kosciuszko Thaddeus Society

2622 5th Avenue

(412) 664-4812

Masonic Temple Auditorium

Masonic Temple

(412) 672-7928

McKeesport Turners

2701 Walnut Street

(412) 664-9639

National Steelworkers Oldtimers Foundation

Union National Bank Building

Administrative Offices- (412) 678-0159

Senior Citizen Center- (412) 664-1976

New Chestnut Inn

408 5th Avenue

(412) 672-2093

Palisades

100 5th Avenue

(412) 672-9946

Pennsylvania State University- McKeesport Campus

University Drive

(412) 675-9000

Veterans of Foreign Wars of U.S.

120 5th Avenue

(412) 672-7851

Booker T. Washington, Lodge No. 218

1127 Walnut Street

(412) 664-4852

**Glassport**

American Legion Post, No. 443

411 Monongahela Avenue

(412) 678-6621

Fuzzy's Confectionery

426 6th Street

(412) 678-8233

Glassport Dari Delite

800 Monongahela Avenue

(412) 664-4090

Glassport Public Library

5th Street and Monongahela Avenue

(412) 672-7400

(Hours of Operation: Tuesday through Thursday 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

Glassport Senior Citizens Center

544 Monongahela Avenue

(412) 672-8848

South Allegheny School District

2743 Washington Boulevard

(412) 675-5460

The Ziemianski Inn

500 Monongahela Avenue

(412) 672-7986

## **APPENDIX E**

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- Many of the individual churches have festivals that follow the liturgical calendar.

#### **ANNUAL EVENTS**

- The International Village takes place in McKeesport in the middle of August. In 1992, the festival

occurred between August 18 and August 20.

- High School Homecoming in Glassport. Homecoming occurred on the 23rd of October in 1992; it included a parade along with other community activities.

- Sons of Italy festival in Glassport which occurs at some point in July. The Sons of Italy can be contacted for further information regarding the festival.

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Daniel G. Bates and Fred Plog. *Human Adaptive Strategies*. New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.

Glassport Bicentennial Committee, 1991.

Glassport Bicentennial Committee. *Glassport, PA: "It Happened Here,"* on file at the Glassport Public Library. Glassport, PA: McKeesport Chamber of Commerce, 1976.

**History of McKeesport** (Much of the information has been derived from the history of McKeesport published by the McKeesport American Revolution Bicentennial Committee in 1976). McKeesport, PA: McKeesport Chamber of Commerce, 1990.

McKeesport High School Alumni & Friends Association. High School. McKeesport Past. City. McKeesport Area School District. Public School. The latter site contains much of the history of Glassport, some of which is also relative to McKeesport. I'm sure that people visiting the McKeesport Memories site, may also want to post stories and pictures about old Glassport, just as the Glassport people, who are members of the Glassport site post on McKeesport. Please feel free to join. Glassport Unofficial Website. McKeesport is a city in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, United States; it is situated at the confluence of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny rivers and within the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. The population was 19,731 at the 2010 census, and is Allegheny County's second-largest city, after Pittsburgh. David McKee emigrated from Scotland and was the first permanent white settler at the forks of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Rivers, the site of present-day McKeesport, in 1755. Around the time of the 902 results for mckeesport. Save mckeesport to get e-mail alerts and updates on your eBay Feed. Unfollow mckeesport to stop getting updates on your eBay Feed. You'll receive email and Feed alerts when new items arrive. Turn off email alerts. Save this search. Zillow has 98 homes for sale in McKeesport PA. View listing photos, review sales history, and use our detailed real estate filters to find the perfect place. BedsAny1+2+3+4+5+ Use exact match Bathrooms Any1+1.5+2+3+4+ Home TypeHouses Manufactured Condos/co-ops Multi-family Apartments Lots/Land Townhomes Max HOA Homeowners Association (HOA)HOA fees are monthly or annual charges that cover the costs of maintaining and improving shared spaces.