Introduction

THEY CALL THEMSELVES NEW YEAR'S SHOOTERS—AFTER THE SWEDISH AND German settlers who fired off muskets to celebrate the new year—but most know them as Mummers, the 10,000 costumed Philadelphians who parade through the streets at the south end of the city each New Year's Day pretty much as they have for more than 300 years. For those who fill the ranks of the comics, fancies, and string bands, mumming is a grand family tradition handed down from generation to generation.

Francis "Frannie" McIntyre's father was a Mummer, his brother is a Mummer, his sons are Mummers, his grandkids are Mummers, and for 73 of his 78 years Frannie has been a Mummer. Frannie explains the hold that mumming has on its adherents: "You have your religion; we've got ours. You go to your church. We go to church, too, but we also go to our clubhouses. That's part of our religion. That's our culture."

And it is a culture. A very New World culture—a blend of disparate immigrant traditions that, just like Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Carnival in Brazil, has evolved into something unique, shaped by the histories of their respective people. For New Orleans, it was the religious traditions of the French and the Spanish. For Brazil, it was the Portuguese and Africans. For Philadelphia, it was the Swedes, Irish, English, and Germans who settled along the Delaware River in the earliest days of the city's history.

However, when McIntyre and other New Year's Shooters talk about Mummers as a culture, they are not referring just to the parade for which they are most well known and its history, but also to how each club is a center of mutual support for its members and their families and how the clubs together form a basis of support for the communities from which they arose. Acting as fraternal and beneficial organizations, the clubs become second families for their members. As any Mummer is quick to explain, mumming is about both "family and tradition."

The focal point for the Mummers is the parade. The Mummers Parade is nothing like other large parades in the United States. Unlike the Tournament of Roses Parade and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the Mummers Parade is not organized by a single entity. Rather, it is a collaborative production by the clubs and the City of Philadelphia.

The Mummers Parade is also unlike the parades of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, even though there is evidence that Philadelphians played important roles in the formation of the Mardi Gras Parades. The principal Mardi Gras clubs, known as krewes, organize the individual parades in New Orleans, and their members are among the city's social and business elite. Mummers, on the other hand, tend to be working-class people, or their descendants, who spend a great deal of their off time raising money and making the costumes and props needed to produce the parade. In this regard, the Mummers Parade has more in common with Carnival in Brazil where individual "schools" based in the *favelas*, the hillside shantytowns of Brazil, work year round to compete in the annual Carnival.

The Mummers Parade offers different rewards for the different divisions of Mummers. For the string bands and the fancies, the parade is about competition. But for the comics, and the wenches in particular, it is the biggest party of the year. While both aspects are equally a part of the Mummer tradition, they are not always compatible with one another and have at times been the cause of some of the greatest conflicts between the Mummers themselves and the Mummers and the

city. However, all Mummers, whether comics, fancies, or string bands, agree that expressing themselves in the time-honored fashion of parading through the streets of Philadelphia is their right.

HISTORY OF MUMMING

"2 Street": A one-mile section of South Philadelphia that stretches south on South 2nd Street from Washington Avenue to Mifflin Street, where South 2nd Street turns into South 3rd Street, and then continues down to Wolf Street, where it ends at the steps of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. This is Mummers Row. It is here that you will find 21 of the Mummer clubs', associations', and brigades' houses among the modest row houses that line the street. And while there are other clubhouses scattered about Philadelphia, this is where the modern-day Mummers call home.

Colonial Days

Before 2 Street or the City of Philadelphia were established, the peninsula formed by the convergence of the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, now known as South Philadelphia, was divided into Passyunk and Moyamensing, two large tracts of mostly marshland and bottomland. The 500 Swedes and Finns who settled the area in 1643 tended the land and conducted trade with the local indians.

According to folklore and the Mummers, the Mummer tradition in Philadelphia is traced back to these Swedish settlers. They celebrated the time between Christmas and New Year's Day by traveling from house to house, visiting with their neighbors, and firing off muskets.

Along with these Swedish Christmas celebration rituals, the Mummers also trace their origin to the English, Irish, and Welsh traditions of mummer and plough plays, which were performed between Christmas and New Year's Day, and the similar German celebration of Belsnickel. The melding of these heritages is directly related to the history of Philadelphia.

In 1682, William Penn began a meticulous layout for the City of Philadelphia, which he planned along the narrowest stretch between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. He intended the city to expand westward from the Delaware to the Schuylkill River along a grid of streets between High Street (now Market Street) to the north and Cedar Street (now South Street) to the south. However, within four years, Philadelphia exceeded New York City in both size and significance, becoming the most important port on the eastern seaboard. As a result, the city did not develop as Penn envisioned. Tradesmen and merchants built their businesses along the Delaware River, and mariners, dockworkers, and shipbuilders who chose to live close to their work eschewed Penn's idea of western development in favor of moving north of High Street into what would become Northern Liberties and south of Cedar Street into Fort Wicaco, which was renamed Southwark.

The Swedes' settlement at Fort Wicaco consisted of nothing more than a log blockhouse that served as a central defensive position for the neighboring farms. In 1677, the Swedes renovated the fort and established Gloria Dei, the Old Swedes' Church, which today lies no more than 600 yards from the top of Mummers Row at Washington Avenue. As Germans, English, Irish Protestants, and a small group of Irish Catholics sought land close to the river below the city limits, they moved into the Swedish area surrounding the church. Southwark grew to be the city's first suburb, but, unlike the suburbs of the 20th century, it was a haven of the semiskilled and the poor.

The new arrivals to Southwark brought their own traditions. The earliest known account of English mumming in Philadelphia is a young Englishman's diary entry from December 1686, wherein he describes a "party of mummers alle decked out in a most fantastick manner." The English mummer plays were performed by groups of costumed men. Their rhymed skits involved a fight between Saint George and a Turkish knight, one of whom was killed, and a doctor who revived the dead character. Once the play was completed, the mummers asked for an offering before moving on to the next home.

The Irish, both Protestants and Catholics, who settled in Southwark would have been familiar with the English mumming tradition and had their own versions as well. The Germans are credited with adding a Belsnickel celebration, where groups of disguised revelers travel from house to house with a Christmas character. Like the Swedes, the Germans ended the event by firing muskets. The accounts of Belsnickeling during this period were described as an activity of the "lower classes."

Bans on Masquerading

The revelry was not welcomed by the Quakers and political and social leaders who envisioned Philadelphia to be a place of pious religious life. One of the first actions by the new city's assembly was passing an ordinance in 1682 outlawing "stage plays, masks, and

revels." Again, in 1700, the Quaker political leaders found it necessary "to guard against whatever could tempt the people to frivolity, wantonness, insolence, audacity, ungodliness, and scandalous living" and, in Law Number 6, reiterated the ban on all worldly plays, comedies, games of cards, and masking.

In 1702, John Smith and Edward James were arrested for "being maskt or disguised in women's apparel; stalking openly through the streets of this city from house to house on or about the 26th of the 10th month it being against the Law of God, the law of this province and the law of nature, to the staining of the holy province and the law of nature, to the staining of the holy profession and incoridigine of wickedness in this place." The arrests of Smith and James did little to damper the Christmas and New Year's celebrations, as unruly parades and the firing of muskets continued throughout the remainder of the 18th century. In a series of letters from 1798 through 1805, Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, the wife of a prominent Quaker merchant, lamented that the city did little to restrain the street carnivals on New Year's. Accounts from 1751 of slaves and servants "shooting out the old year" credited the event to customs introduced by the Germans.

In 1808, the legislature enacted the Anti-Masquerade Act, the most stringent law to date. The act declared that anyone who knowingly permitted a masquerade or masked ball or who gave their house for such use and every person who was present at a masquerade would be found guilty and imprisoned for up to three months and fined up to $1,000. This law was enacted in the city that 32 years earlier saw Thomas Jefferson pen the words "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" and only eleven years later would be the home of the nation's Constitution and First Amendment.

Following the act's passage, mumming and its variants disappeared from both public and private records until the mid-19th century. The Anti-Masquerade Act was not repealed until 1859, but not one arrest was recorded under it.

Industrialization of Philadelphia

As Philadelphia entered the 19th century, widespread economic changes were underway that would have serious implications for the working class who overwhelmingly lived in Southwark and Moyamensing. This period in Philadelphia's history marked the dawn of industrialization and spelled the decline in the prominence of highly skilled craftsmen within the city's economy and society.

This 1890s shot of the Golden Crown Club is one of the oldest photographs of Mummers known to exist.

Philadelphia had risen to prominence during the 18th century due in part to the manufacture and trade of finished consumer goods. Cotton, wool, and animal hides brought in to the port were processed into textiles, shoes, and clothing for domestic and out-of-state consumption. These products were made by master craftsmen who employed journeymen and apprentices and who sold their products or their labor directly to their customers.

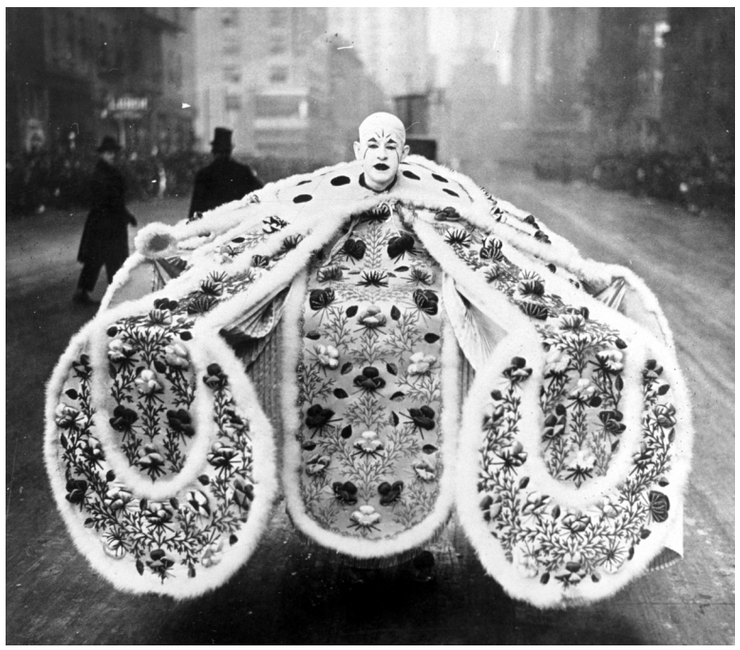
For a significant period of time, Philadelphia's craftsmen and their guilds and unions were able to resist the growth of industrialization and mechanization. But continued immigration of low-skilled Irish Catholics, the migration of newly freed and runaway slaves, and, more significantly, increasing numbers of low-skilled native-born Americans provided too tempting a source of cheap labor to be ignored for long. As a result, the highly structured relationship between master, journeyman, and apprentice was, for the most part, destroyed. In the ensuing economic competition, a series of race and ethnic riots shook the city from 1834 to 1844. South Philadelphia and the Kensington section turned into a number of warring camps based upon race, ethnicity, and class, as unskilled Irish Catholic immigrants attacked their

black competitors and threatened native Protestants, who in turn victimized the unskilled Irish Catholics.

During the colonial period, the fire companies were the purview of the landed gentry and merchant classes. There were few "gentlemen" in south Philadelphia, and there was an increasing need for the upper classes to attend to the duties of commerce during Philadelphia's industrialization, so the burden for fire fighting fell to the working men of the area. Working men across Philadelphia, and particularly in Kensington to the north and Southwark and Moyamensing to the south, joined the system of volunteer fire departments that had been established to provide fire protection in the city. The volunteer fire companies became social organizations for men who had lost their social esteem as a result of the city's industrialization. Funded by the dues paid by their members, local businesses, and money provided by the city, the companies spent lavishly on carriages and equipment in order to give their company the finest appearance when seen on the street. For the companies, fighting fires became a form of competition.

Lacking a central authority to oversee their development, fire companies were organized around ethnic and occupational lines with several fire companies being established within blocks of each other. In 1850, Southwark had five fire companies within the same number of blocks between Fitzwater and Christian and Front and 4th Streets. Because there were no clear demarcations as to jurisdiction, the race to be the first company to a fire became an integral part of the competition. Often these races would turn ugly: Competing companies sabotaged their competitors' wagons and fights broke out between arriving companies, even as houses continued to burn. The intensity of the competition became so great that neighborhood gangs that were organized around the same ethnic lines as the companies were recruited into the battles. Two companies in particular, the Irish Catholic Moyamensing Hose and the Irish Protestant Franklin Hose, were renown for the ferocity of their competition characterized by violent clashes.

What had begun as public organizations evolved into private clubs that required prospective members to be nominated by a member and voted on by the entire membership. Those who were elected as officers were bestowed exalted places within the community at large, not unlike the prestige that was given to captains of the nascent mummer clubs. However, the volunteer fire companies lost their influence in 1854 when the city consolidated the entire county, including Southwark, Moyamensing, Passyunk, and all of the suburbs to the north, into the City of Philadelphia proper. Concerned that the volunteer fire companies were not providing adequate protection, the city established full-time professional fire departments.



A 1921 Fancy division member.

The first Mummer clubs surfaced along with the volunteer fire departments around the time that Philadelphia sensed that it had lost control over the city. As the volunteer fire departments faded away, the emerging Mummer clubs assumed their role of providing social and fraternal associations for Philadelphia's working classes.One volunteer fire company, the Shiffler Hose Company, became Santa Anna's Calvary, one of the first Mummer clubs organized for the purpose of celebrating the New Year. The establishment in the 1840s of Santa Anna's Calvary and the Chain Gang, another early Mummer club, before the 1859 repeal of the Anti-Masquerade Act of 1808 seems to indicate that either the mumming traditions of the 17th and 18th centuries went underground or the law was not enforced by the locally elected constables.

In New Orleans, a similar prohibition on partying in masks threatened the continuance of the Mardi Gras celebration. However, in 1857, Michael Krafft, a Philadelphia cotton trader, helped form what would

become one of New Orlean's most venerable parades, the Mystick Krewe of Comus, an offshoot of a group that he had formed in Mobile, Alabama, in 1830 to celebrate the New Year. Unfortunately, the ties between New Orleans and Philadelphia were violently severed with the onset of the Civil War, and the evolution of New Year's Shooting and Mardi Gras was put on hold during the war's four-year period. The ties were reconnected in 1872 when Philadelphians E. C. Hancock and C. T. Howard became founding members of the Krewe of Rex.

HISTORY OF ORGANIZED PARADES

With the legal prohibition against the right to party in public removed after more than 150 years and the end of the Civil War, New Year's Shooting began to finally come into its own. But being legally permissible is not the same as being socially accepted. An editorial in the January 3, 1876, *Public Ledger* remarked that "the bands of fantastically dressed men and boys [are] much more numerous and gaily dressed than usual. . . . it would perhaps be well if, like the grand expression of public sentiment which was the great feature of the celebration, they become Century plants, blooming but once in a 100 years."

However, the Mummers were a part of the centennial celebrations in Philadelphia. By 1889, there were more than 211 Mummer clubs parading through the streets of the city. While mainly concentrated along the southern end of Philadelphia, clubs began to emerge in other areas of the city, particularly in the working-class communities of Northern Liberties, Kensington, Bridesburg, and Port Richmond.

Despite legalizing masking and masquerade, the city struggled to control the antics of the Mummers. In 1868, Philadelphia banned the shooting of firearms, and hundreds were arrested for the practice. The fights that typified the rivalries between the volunteer fire companies and their allied street gangs were replicated between the Mummer clubs. Finally, in 1890, the city began requiring the clubs to obtain permits with the understanding that each club would march orderly and enforce good behavior or it would be denied a permit for the following year.

As the turn of the century approached, Philadelphia was looking for a way to mark the millennium. H. Bart McHugh—a theatrical agent, Vaudeville promoter, and reporter—suggested to Philadelphia Mayor Samuel Ashbridge that the Mummers be included in the millennium celebration. An organized parade of Mummers would solve two of the city's pressing problems. First, it would provide readily available local entertainment. The Mummers were well appreciated by the crowds who watched them meander through the city, and their costumes were befitting any pageant. Second, and more importantly, it offered the city an opportunity to control the Mummers' celebration.

To entice the Mummers to participate, McHugh and Ashbridge had to provide incentive. In the years following the Civil War, competition for prizes supplanted the casual visiting of years past. What started as free drink and food from local bars evolved into free merchandise, as local businesses tried to entice the Shooters to perform in front of their establishments. As the awards increased, so did the competition, both between the Mummers themselves and between the merchants vying for the Mummers' attention. In 1888, the McGowan Political Club awarded $25 to the Thomas Clements Association, the first-known cash prize ever awarded. In the waning days of the 19th century, merchants along Girard Avenue were offering $500 in prize money.

Given the prize money the Mummers had been receiving from the city's businesses, the Mummers were unimpressed with the city's offer of a prominent spot in Philadelphia's planned millennium celebration. Abe Einstein, the society editor for the *Philadelphia Evening Item*, was sent by Jacob J. Seeds, city council finance chairman, to negotiate with the Mummers. Einstein told the Mummers that Seeds offered to turn the celebration into an annual display that would be "highly popular, so popular, in fact, that it would be a yearly feature like the New Orleans Mardi Gras."

Einstein reported back to the mayor and the city council that while some of the Shooters were willing to parade for free, "there are others who will not think of such a thing." He emphasized that the city would need to offer cash prizes. After much negotiation, the City of Philadelphia agreed to offer $2,500 dollars in prize money—exactly half of the total budget the city had allotted for the entire celebration, of which the parade was but one part.

With the issue of prize money settled, at 10:00 a.m. on January 1, 1901, the first organized Mummers Parade got underway from the corner of Reed and Broad Streets, with the newly established Fancy Division leading off. The comics followed. The Mummers proceeded up Broad Street to the new City Hall, where the judging took place, and then north to

Girard Avenue and east to 2nd Street for their return to South Philadelphia. The parade was hailed by all as a great success.

In the ensuing years, the parade lived up to the city's vision of producing a parade to rival Mardi Gras. New clubs sought entry into the parade, and clubs that had declined earlier offers were enticed to join. Rivalries between clubs like Klein, The Lobsters, and Furnival sustained the competition for years. In 1916, the string bands were added as a separate division, and new rivalries were born.

The New Year's parades progressed smoothly through the early years, although there were occasional complaints about judging that caused clubs to pull out of the parade altogether. Other clubs fell away for unknown reasons, but they were replaced by new clubs.

Tensions between Mummers and the City

Unfortunately, the Mummers Parade caused new tensions and conflicts between the Mummers and between the city and the Mummers, as the Mummers' attempts to remain true to the spirit of New Year's Shooting was shoehorned into a parade geared to control that spirit of self-expression. The Mummers and the city struggled to make their marriage of convenience work.

The first test the marriage faced was in 1918 when the United States became fully committed to the war in Europe. Money set aside for the parade and its prizes had been given over to the war effort. As January 1, 1919, approached, the city announced that it had no money and that the official parade was canceled. Undaunted, the Mummers took their depleted ranks—many were serving overseas—and returned to the streets of South Philadelphia. The Klein Club and the Point Breeze Businessmen's Association offered more than $1,000 in prizes.

The second test for the parade was the passage of the Volstead Act. Prohibition struck at the heart of a tradition that had begun by traveling from tavern to tavern. The Mummers, especially the comics, wasted little time in lampooning the Volstead Act's passage. A mock funeral for John Barleycorn was the predominate theme for the 1920 parade, and one string band was named Aqua, poking fun of the ban on alcohol.

In 1923, the unthinkable happened: The parade was postponed due to bad weather. In the 22 years of the parade, only the war and resulting lack of prize money had kept the parade from being held on the appointed day. Despite McHugh's entreaties to reason, an unmollified Camden club captain, George Kessler, ordered the 500-member East Side Comic Club and its two brass bands to parade. They progressed only two blocks before the wet and cold demonstrated the wisdom of heeding McHugh's advice to postpone the parade. Five days later, the Mummers finally made it up the street.

The Great Depression

The real tests for the Mummers, the Mummers' tradition, and the parade were still to come. On Tuesday, October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed, signaling the onset of the Great Depression. The Mummers were already close to completing their arrangements for the annual parade, and both the city and businesses believed that the financial crisis would be short lived. The 1930 parade went on without a hitch, other than the normal recriminations about judging. By 1931, however, the Depression was in full swing, and Philadelphia, like every other part of the country, was hard hit. Raising money for costumes had never been easy for the working-class Mummers and was almost impossible during the Depression.

Numerous clubs went under and others were forced to merge. Joseph A. Ferko, a well-off pharmacist and the first captain of the Fralinger String Band who now headed his own band, was forced to seek a $5,000 loan to keep his band in uniform. Peter Broomall mortgaged his home to help start a band named in his honor. In a way, Philadelphia needed the Mummers more than ever. The parade route was full of spectators who came to see the Mummers and, for at least a day, forget their troubles.

As the Depression deepened, so did the dissention among the Mummers. The city announced that there was no money in its coffers for a 1932 New Year's parade. Some of the Mummers threatened to pull out of the parade unless prize money could be found. At the last minute, the Philadelphia business community contributed $11,000 and the parade went on.

The situation was the same as 1933 approached: The city announced that there would be no money for the parade. George McClernand, a long-time Mummer who openly feuded with McHugh over the running of the parade, thought the parade should be generating more money for the Mummers. McClernand advanced the first of many ideas that he thought would "fix" the parade.

McClernand's idea was to charge the public for a show they had seen for free for more than 30 years. He proposed that the Broad Street parade be abolished and

the clubs perform in the municipal stadium, charging 25 cents for admission. The reaction of the Mummers was akin to the shots fired on Fort Sumpter. Sides were quickly drawn. Some endorsed McClernand's scheme, while others decried it as a betrayal not only of the Mummer tradition but also of the people who had supported the Mummers over the years. While loyalties had run along club lines in the past, they did not necessarily do so on this issue, and many clubs split.

Raising an objection to McClernand's plan was Dr. Louis Samuels, a former bandmate, and Joseph Ferko, founder of the Ferko String Band. Samuels and Ferko vowed to keep the parade on Broad Street. Ferko's band alone picked up an additional 29 musicians opposed to the idea of performing in the stadium. The two factions vied for the support of the Mummers and even launched public relations campaigns to win the support of the public.

A wench and minstrel dude of the Silver Crown Club in 1920.

But the market was the final arbiter. Few had 25 cents to spare for a Mummers show, and advance ticket sales reflected that reality. McClernand moved the time of the stadium show so that it would not directly compete with the parade, but even this did not salvage the show, as only 100 spectators attended.

The next year was no better. Philadelphia not only did not have funds to award prize money, it did not have money for police or other city services needed for the parade. As a result, the parade was cancelled. As they had done in 1919, the Mummers returned to their neighborhoods and celebrated the New Year as they had before their alliance with the city.

By 1935, the effects of the National Recovery Act were being felt, and more Philadelphians were getting back to work. The city was able to fund the cost of a parade and to offer $12,000 in prize money. Although the parade was delayed for four hours, it was the first full parade since 1931. The crisis of 1934 was the last time the parade would be threatened by a lack of city funds. But other long-dormant problems were on the horizon that would be brought to the fore with the death of Bart McHugh three weeks after the 1935 parade.

Leadership Crises

Bart McHugh had been the parade's only director. During his leadership, he tolerated no interference from either the Mummers or the City of Philadelphia. Replacing McHugh was Charles Pommer. One of Pommer's first acts was to prohibit political satire, the comics' lifeblood. Pommer stated, "I don't believe the Mummers parade is designed to hurt anybody's feelings. I also think that satirizing well-known political figures also would be in poor taste. I'm against 'kidding' anybody in the last election."

In the 1936 parade, in response to the new edict, several comics ridiculed Philadelphia's City Council, the John DeNero Club lampooned the U.S. Supreme Court, and the Charles Spinelli Club carried coffins bearing the names of democratic figures from the last local elections. Despite the ban on mentioning the Italian-Ethopian wars, the John DeNero Club added a group called "El Sassie and His Bodyguards."

The Quaker String Band strumming along Broad Street in 1921.

By 1939, Pommer was replaced by George McClernand. Despite his having risen from the ranks of the Trilby String Band and having headed his own comic club, McClernand attempted to impose even more restrictive rules on the parade than Pommer. Bowing to pressure from the city council, McClernand ordered an end to several comic traditions—kissing spectators, smearing makeup on bystanders' faces, large floats, and political satire. The comics paid no more attention to McClernand's edicts than they had to Pommer's. Political satire remained a staple of the comics' routines.

Having survived the Great Depression, the Mummers looked toward the 1940s with optimism. But in December 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and Mummers were again called to war. Those who stayed behind manned the factories and the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in support of the war effort. Materials used by the Mummers became rationed items, and those materials that could be found were far more expensive than in the past. With so many men in the military and others working around the clock in support of the war, there was doubt that many clubs would have enough men to march in the parade.

But the biggest challenge faced by the Mummers during this time was the city's continuing effort to wrest control of the parade from them. The issue came to a head in 1942 when newly elected city councilman Joe Milligan informed McClernand that McClernand was being replaced as director of the parade by Jack Shields, a Milligan supporter who was also a member of the Klein Club. McHugh, and to a lesser extent McClernand, ran the parade as their own fiefdom. Milligan, like administrations to come, argued that the City of Philadelphia should have the last say because it paid the bills. The decision to make Shields the parade's director did not sit well with either McClernand or the Mummers.

Caught between the city council and his South Philadelphia roots, Mayor Barney Samuel informed McClernand that he could not be removed because he was an appointee of Mayor Robert Lamberton. Samuel asked McClernand to wait while a political compromise was found. The compromise was suggested by James Durning—Mayor Samuel's driver, founder of the Durning String Band, and future Mummers Association president. Durning suggested that Shields and McClernand serve as co-directors of the parade. The idea seemed to be agreeable to all parties until McClernand concluded that the solution was unworkable: The parade had operated with only one director for more than 40 years, and there was no reason to change. McClernand stepped down and returned to the street.

Advent of Televised Parades

With the leadership issue resolved for the time being, the parade went on as usual until 1947, when WPTV,

a local television station, broadcasted the parade live for the first time. Although snow was forecasted, recently appointed parade director Shields ordered the parade up the street.

In the past, McHugh and McClernand often postponed the parade due to inclement weather, fully appreciating the possible losses that the fancy and string band divisions would incur if their suits were ruined by rain or snow. The comics were as always ready to go regardless of the weather, but the fancies, who wear old suits or reuse them to make new ones, and the string bands, who need theirs for performances throughout the year, could ill afford their suits being damaged. Whether Shields' decision was pressured by the presence of the television cameras or the city's desire to avoid the expense of an additional day of police and sanitation services isn't known. Either way, the parade proceeded up the street, the weather prediction was correct, the snow fell, and the fancy and string band divisions' suits were ruined.

The following year was no better. Rain was forecasted for the afternoon of the scheduled 1948 parade. With the last year's debacle in mind, the discussion between the divisions lasted through the morning until the various divisions decided to go ahead with the parade. The weather forecasters were right; what began as a drizzle turned into a downpour. The string bands had not yet taken their positions in the parade before the downpour began, and after further discussion the string bands announced that they would not parade. Once again, the fancies lost their suits, but this time the string bands saved theirs. They paraded on the following Saturday.

The next year, everyone had learned the lesson. With another unfavorable forecast and the memory of the last two years, the parade was postponed. However, the Quaker City String Band decided to parade on 2 Street, without their costumes, in front of their club. They were soon joined by the comics, and, by the afternoon, a 2nd Street parade was in full swing. Freed from the strictures of the city and without the pressure of competition, the Mummers returned to their roots and had a grand time.

The year 1950 would begin as the last three years had, but it would have a very different ending. The morning was overcast, and rain was predicted. There was no discussion this time; the parade was postponed. Unfortunately, the inclement weather broke shortly after the announcement, and the day ended with sunny skies. The city and the thousands of spectators who came out to see the parade were upset. Worse yet, the rain date saw some of the strongest winds to ever hit the parade. Fancies wearing large backpieces were injured, and suits were destroyed. The only positive aspect of the year's parade was the debut of the parade's newest division. For years, groups of fancies paraded in identical costumes and competed in the special mention category. In 1949, it was decided that they deserved their own category, and the fancy brigades were born.

By 1951, the Mummers had wrestled some control back from the city by winning the right to participate in the selection of the judges. Previously, the parade judges were appointed, and many suspected that politics played a heavy hand in the decisions. One of the prominent proponents of the new arrangement was Ferko, who argued successfully that judges should be hired based upon some level of expertise and that separate judges should be hired for the different categories. Instead of politicians, city clerks, and friends of the well-connected, professionals in the arts and music were hired, removing complaints that the judging was based upon political favoritism. The first judge selected under the new system was Ted Mack, host of the *Original Amateur Hour*. In 1953, Elias Myers—a South Philadelphian, member of the Hegemen String Band, and magistrate—was appointed director of the parade.

Many consider the 1950s the golden era of the parade. With five mother clubs for the comics, five mother clubs for the fancies, which now included the rapidly growing brigades, and an all-time high of 27 string bands, the parade could not have been in better shape. The string bands in particular were in their full glory. In 1948, the Uptown String Band's rendition of "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover" was on *Billboard Magazine's Top 20*, reaching as high as 11th. This was followed in 1955 by the Joseph Ferko String Band's recording of George Cobb's "Alabama Jubilee," which not only became a national hit but also put the band on the cover of *Billboard Magazine*.

In 1957, the preeminence of the string bands became apparent to everyone when, once again, the weather threatened to play havoc with the parade. While the weather held long enough for the comics and fancies to finish the parade route, Myers decided to postpone the string bands until the following Saturday. On January 3, an estimated crowd of 1.2 million, the largest ever for a Mummers Parade, lined Broad Street for the two-hour pageant. The huge crowd prompted parade director Myers to wonder out loud if the parade should be permanently broken into a two-day event.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the string bands brought respectability to the parade and to Mummers in general. The bands were invited to participate in other states' parades. The Ferko String Band made appearances at the Virginia Tobacco Festival and on nationally televised broadcasts of the *Jackie Gleason Show* and Gary Moore's top-rated *I've Got a Secret*. Quaker City String Band played in New Orleans in 1960, Spain in 1961, and Ireland in 1962. The string bands, with their massive plumed backpieces, became icons in the heady post-war years when everything looked bright and promising. The marriage between the Mummers and the City of Philadelphia couldn't seem more secure, but soon old wounds would rise to the surface.

Banning of Black Face

From the late 1700s to the mid 1800s, Philadelphia was home to the largest population of free blacks in the north, and Philadelphia would become one of the centers for African American culture, politics, and economic prosperity. Philadelphia was one of the main hubs in the Underground Railroad and a major force in the movement to abolish slavery. But throughout that time, the City of Brotherly Love was neither loving nor brotherly when it came to the issue of race. Discrimination loomed large in Philadelphia, and racial tensions consistently ran high, especially in South Philadelphia where black communities sprang up alongside those of Irish immigrants, and where both groups found themselves locked in fierce economic competition for the meager jobs that were available. From time to time, those tensions broke out into violence, as it did in 1834 when Irish mobs attacked black citizens just before being attacked themselves by anti-immigrant rioters. Over the next 100 years, all groups would initiate violent racial attacks, firmly establishing a history of racial antagonism.

By 1950, Philadelphia's population reached its peak at 2.4 million people. African Americans constituted 18 percent of the city's population. By 1963, that number had grown to 25 percent, as more whites left the city for Southern New Jersey and the outlying suburbs. The civil rights movement was building a steady head of steam, and African American pride and self-image were critical elements in that movement. Since the 1930s, the African American community had taken justified offense over the Mummers' historic use of the blackfaced minstrel as a theme for disguise because no other depiction of African Americans had been more deleterious by popularizing the mythical 18th century stereotypes that demeaned African Americans, stereotypes that were used first to defend slavery and later racial segregation and discrimination.

Mummers costumed as blackfaced minstrels dates as far back as the 19th century. Minstrel shows emerged as the most popular form of entertainment in the 1840s, and Philadelphia was home to a number of theaters devoted to minstrel performances and to a number of the most famous minstrel companies. Comedic mime was as much a part of the minstrel performance as was the music. Blackface was the signature disguise of the minstrel shows, which in the beginning excluded African American performers. There is strong evidence that the use of lamp black in Europe predated minstrelry, and it was natural for the Mummers to adopt its use. Both McHugh, who established the parade, and Frank DuMont, who was instrumental in the formation of the first string bands, were influential in the development of minstrelry in Philadelphia.

African Americans' opposition to the Mummers' use of blackface was raised again in 1954 by black civil rights activists but with little success. In the closing days of 1963, with a fresh victory against Trailways Bus Lines, Philadelphia's civil rights movement felt it was time for the issue to be revisited, this time with a vengeance. Led by Cecil B. Moore, a prominent attorney and head of the NAACP, and Louis Smith of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the civil rights organizations demanded that the City of Philadelphia ban the use of blackface by Mummers.

For African Americans, blackface was clearly about racist depictions and historical and lingering racial antagonisms that played out in South Philadelphia well into the 1970s, and even today, some would say. For the Mummers, many of whom had little idea of where the tradition originated or demonstrated no consciousness of its overtly racist character, it was an issue of control—control by those outside their tradition attempting to restrict, yet again, their right of expression.

The blackface issue was another manifestation of the conflict between the Mummers' adherence to tradition and the City of Philadelphia's 64-year attempt to mold the Mummers into a vehicle for civic promotion. From its inception, the parade was an attempt to bring the Mummers' New Year's celebrations in line with the city's self image, and racist depictions of African Americans following Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic march on Washington, D.C., in August 1963 and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy only one month earlier was not in the city's best image.

As New Year 1964 approached, tensions between the Mummers and the African American community were running high. CORE led a successful sit-in at WCAU-TV, winning a pledge from the television station to not air any Mummers in blackface. From the pulpit of black churches across the city, ministers called for a boycott of the parade by African Americans. In the face of this strong opposition, Myers unilaterally banned the use of blackface in late December 1963. His actions were met by a protest of 200 blackfaced comics outside his South Philadelphia home. Faced with the counter-protest by the comics, Myers rescinded his decision, which set up a series of court battles that would ultimately decide the issue.

The court decisions first sided with the Mummers' First Amendment right to wear blackface and then with the city, which was faced with mounting threats of racial violence and protest. The court issued an injunction against both the protesters and the Mummers: no human chain across the parade and no blackface. But on New Year's Day, despite the ban, members of the Hammond Comic Club staged a sit-down strike in the middle of Broad Street, holding up the parade for 20 minutes. Fred Calandra, president of the Mummers Association, pointed out at the time that the association had steadily worked to remove blackface from the parade in response to the complaints lodged in 1954. The string bands had long abandoned the practice as their commercial success increased, and, Calandra claimed, by 1963, no more than 20 comics continued with the practice.

Interestingly, the O. V. Catto brass band, comprised of all black musicians, defied the call to boycott, citing contractual obligations. The Catto band had played accompaniment for the comic clubs for decades and had in fact been one of at least two African American string bands that paraded as late as 1929. Additionally, the Catto band was a part of the Elks Club and was named after Octavius V. Catto, who was murdered in South Philadelphia in one of the earliest attempts to win African Americans the right to vote in Pennsylvania.

Mayoral Influence on the Parade

The positive image of the Mummers was a casualty of the blackface issue. Another casualty was parade director Myers, who resigned in 1964 directly as a result of turmoil caused by the controversy and despite a rally by 200 Mummers who gathered in front of his home to show support. And yet a third casualty was the position that Myers had held. From that point on, the role of parade director would be assumed by the City of Philadelphia's commissioner of the Department of Recreation. The city was now fully in control of the parade for the first time, and while the Philadelphia New Year's Shooters and Mummers Association still acted as the Mummers' representative to the city, there was no guarantee that the director of the parade would be a Mummer, as had been the case in the past. In addition, while the Mummers still determined the rules of the competition, the parade itself was now more dependent on who occupied the Mayor's Office.

From the Mummers' perspective, the next man to sit in the Mayor's Office was one of their own. Mayor Frank Rizzo hailed from the same ethnic working-class neighborhoods of South Philadelphia as the vast majority of Mummers, and, as far as the Mummers were concerned,

The Lewis brothers of the League Island Club in 1925.

Rizzo understood the mumming tradition. Rizzo significantly raised the prize money provided by the city. Whether Rizzo's support was based upon that understanding or was a purely political calculation is not known. But under his administration, the Mummers were treated well and left to their own devices.

Rizzo was followed by a succession of mayors who the Mummers felt did not share Rizzo's understanding of the nature of the parade or its traditions. By 1992, parade attendance was a fraction of what it had been in earlier times. Where people had lined the entire length of Broad Street in past years, whole blocks along the route were completely devoid of people. Edward Rendell, who served from 1992 through 1999 as the 121st mayor of the City of Philadelphia, was born and raised in New York and rose to power from his position as the city's district attorney. When Rendell was elected mayor, the changing demographics within the city and the inexorable change in Philadelphia's economic base, from a manufacturing to a service sector, worked to further reduce the number of ethnic white, blue-collar workers who formed the base of the Mummers membership and those who supported them.

Under Rendell, the city was making every effort to turn Philadelphia into a destination city. The Mummers were to be just one of the attractions to boost tourism. In order to attain that goal, Rendell's administration felt that the parade needed to be made less of a competition and more of a spectator event. The Rendell administration considered shortening the parade route, mixing the divisions to reduce the length of the parade, and making the parade more intimate than was possible on Broad Street.

In 1994, Rendell got a chance to experiment with the parade during a $15 million renovation of South Broad Street, which had resulted in heavy construction along the street. In a series of meetings with the Mummers Association, Rendell explained his plan, citing safety issues and other possible advantages of moving the parade to Market Street. For the most part, the Mummers were skeptical. Some were suspicious of Rendell's motives, and others were simply hostile to the idea. Despite the reservations of the Mummers, Rendell decided that the 1995 parade would proceed up Market Street from 5th Street to City Hall.

On New Year's Day 1995, for the first time in 93 years, the parade started on Market Street. While the fancies and the string bands made no public display of their feelings about the changed route, the comics and South Philadelphians were quick to make their sentiments known. The residents of South Philadelphia posted signs along South Broad Street that read "Fast Eddie Stole Our Parade" and "The City Rained on Our Parade." One group even sat along the old parade route in protest. The comics satirized the new route with themes titled "Broad Street Blues" and "The Lost Soles of Broad Street." Froggy Carr and other comic clubs simply ignored the fact that there wasn't a parade on Broad Street and either paraded from South Philadelphia to Market or back down Broad Street on their way back to South Philadelphia. For many Mummers and their supporters, this was another affront to *their* tradition—not the city's tradition, but South Philadelphia's tradition.

When Rendell made the decision to reroute the parade, he promised the Mummers that if they did not like the idea, they could return to Broad Street. The Mummers didn't like Market Street and so returned to Broad Street for the 1996 parade.

The failure of the Mummers to accept the Market Street parade was due in no small part to the continual attempts by the City of Philadelphia to meld the Mummers' "tradition" into essentially something that it is not. The Mummers are a product of South Philadelphia, and while there are a number of clubs that exist in other parts of the metropolitan area, most being string bands, the core of mummery remains in South Philadelphia. The majority of Mummers either reside or maintain strong familial relationships in the neighborhoods south of Washington Avenue. It is where its most loyal supporters reside as well. For the parade to abandon South Philadelphia would have been to abandon the tradition itself.

Rendell, however, was not ready to throw in the towel. The city was spending several million dollars in prize money and police and sanitation expenses. The parade was notorious for running late with large gaps between clubs and divisions. As the props for the brigades and string bands increased in size and complexity, so did the time it took to carry or push them up the street. The return to Broad Street after the completion of the Avenue of the Arts renovation of South Broad Street attracted no more people to the parade than before. In 1999, Rendell decided, with the tacit approval of the Mummers, that the parade would once again be moved to Market Street. The sole dissenting vote came from the comic division. The parade would remain on Market Street for the next four years. Although Richard Porco, president of the Murray Comic Club, was correct when he said in 1999, "I don't

think they are going to like it," he was wrong when he predicted, "they are going to live with it." In 2003, with Rendell in the Governor's Mansion and Mayor John Street in a tough battle for re-election, the Mummers extracted promises from both the mayor and his challenger to move the parade back to Broad Street. So, in 2004, the parade returned to its original route along Broad. Under the banner of "Back on Broad," the parade has gone forward as it did in 1901, with the Mummers lining up in South Philadelphia before "going up the street" in a grand procession to the judging stands at City Hall.

On New Year's Day 2007, the parade was delayed due to rain. However, the fancy brigades performed to packed audiences in the Convention Center, and on 2nd Street, the comics, fancies, and string bands celebrated the New Year with an impromptu parade by a scattering of wenches. Come rain or come shine, whether on Broad Street or South 2nd, underneath the feathers and sequins, there lies a rich community tradition that continues to be an integral part of Philadelphia.