

Dr. Harold Aurand Jr.

Associate Teaching Professor
History

Title of your research project.

The Bethlehem Carolers

Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.

The Bethlehem Carolers is the name of a Christmas processional drama performed by the Carpatho-Rusyns and other Eastern Europeans and their immigrant diaspora in America. Processional dramas were once a common part of many people's holiday celebrations, but most are now gone. Our research focuses on why this ritual has persisted. To do that we have examined the meaning of the play, the role it plays in the communities where it is performed, and how the play helps people understand their place in those communities.

Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?

No

If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.

no yet

What problem do you address with your research?

One of the problems facing America today is that fewer people are willing to join voluntary organizations. Groups like the Rotary, Lions Club, volunteer fire companies, fraternal organizations like the Elks and Masons, and even religious groups are struggling to recruit active members. We believe these groups played a vital role in our communities. By examining the Bethlehem Carolers and how they continue to unite their ethnic community, we hope to learn about what might revitalize other voluntary organizations.