Olive Furnace

By

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In Partial Fulfillment For

Cultural Inquiry in Diversity

Folknographic Research Method.

Narrative #1
As our caravan meanders through State Route 93 towards our destination of Blackfork, the lead vehicle, led by the ever intrepid Dr. Lucas, veers off to the left and into shoulder on the side of the road. As I pull in my car behind those of my classmates, I peer over to my left and I see a brick archway no more than one thousand feet from where I park my car. As I turn the key back in the ignition to shut off the engine, I unbuckle my belt and reach for my camera. After ensuring that I have everything I need I open my door, place my left foot into the soft, muddy ground, and proceed to exit my vehicle. As I shut the car door, I hear Dr. Lucas explaining the structure in front of us and what its uses once were, I catch snippets of the conversation as I pull my camera from right pants pocket and I take a snapshot of the archway.

As I hold my camera in hand, I walk slowly towards the north and behind my classmates in order to get a better snapshot of the old furnace. Dr. Lucas is still explaining the purpose of the structure as I hear him something about how the archway is reminiscent of Roman architecture, I raise my camera and take another snapshot of the furnace. I glance around the area in front of us
and I see a man on his tractor clearing out some of the brush and debris a little off to the left of the structure, he passes a curious glance out in our general direction before he sets the tractor back into motion and begins to clear off some more of the debris.

As Dr. Lucas finishes his explanation, I walk over to him and ask as I point to the ridge that rises just over top of the furnace, “Dr. Lucas, what is on top of that ridge that overlooks the furnace?” Dr. Lucas turns over to my direction and states, “I don’t know what lies over there.” I inquire, “Would you care if I go on top and take a look around?” Dr. Lucas nods his head and says, “Sure.” I thank Dr. Lucas and begin to walk towards the structure, as I take a few steps I notice a stream in front of me. I look down into the moderately fast moving stream of water and decide that to wade through the water would be quite wet and unnecessary. I start off the to my left and walk along the side of the stream, my feet make squishing noises as each step I take pushes a little bit further into the mud, I turn my head to look behind me as I notice my footprints in the mud leading back towards where my classmates stand.

As I reach the gravel road that crosses over the stream, I veer off to my right and I began to trudge through the mud, leaves, and branches that litter ground before me. “Craig, wait up for me!” I hear Candice shout at me as she walks fast towards my direction, I turn to look at her as she approaches me she says, “Wait up a seconds and I’ll go with you.” Candice walks up beside me and we begin to walk towards the furnace, I glance at the man on the tractor and I raise my hand towards him in a half salute, half wave. The man on the tractor smiles at me and raises his hand in return before he sets his mind back to his task at hand. I reach a muddy incline as I look around to find the best way to climb up to the top; I place my camera back into my right pants’ pocket and grab hold of a tree trunk that is set off on an angle on the hillside.
The trunk of the branch is smooth and wet from the previous day’s rain, I decide to sling my arm around the branch and heave myself towards the back part of the tree. As I rest my back on the tree trunk, I feel the cool, wet water seep through my shirt and onto my back. Candice calls to me from below and says. “I think I’ll stay down here.” I smile and nod at her and turn my attention towards climbing the ridge. I notice a few branches that jut out of the ground, I grab a hold of a couple and test their strength and begin my ascent of the ridge slope. As I near the top of the ridge, I begin to push back the brush, thorns, limbs, and briars that impede my path. I feel the thorns bite into the palm of my left hand as I begin to push them from my view; one of the branches breaks free from my hand and slaps me in the face, just above my left eye. I place my hand to my face and look at the drops of crimson on my fingertips, I flick the blood from my hand onto the mud and leaves that litter the slope of the ridge, and the bright crimson red of the blood is lost in the dark brown of the mud and of the old, dead, wet leaves.

I reach the summit of the ridge and look down on the road and my classmates as they begin to mill around the ground surrounding the furnace, taking snapshots and feeling the brick that make up the structure. I look off to my right and I can just make out the top of the archway, I notice pieces of medal that rest on top of the structure and I wonder to myself if perhaps that is some sort of remnants of an old railway line. I take my camera from my right pants pocket and walk towards the structure, I stop just behind it and peer down through the backside of the open archway to the brick littered ground below. The ridge does not gracefully slope towards the back of the furnace as much as it falls away in a steep angle; I tell myself that I need to remember this as I will make my descent this way later.
I take my camera and setup my shot through the backside of the open archway, I glance around the area and see off to my left a litter of brick just off from the furnace proper. I begin to walk towards the bricks I kneel down and attempt to read the words that are etched in them, I can make out “cotton” however, that is all I can read. I clean and set the brick away from the rest of the pile onto the leaves, mud, and branches that cover the ground; I level my camera and take the shot.
I place the camera back into my pants pocket and begin to walk towards the top of the archway, I notice more piles of bricks as I carefully pick my way through the branches and briars that my path to the furnace. I reach the top of the archway and look at the bricks that form together that make up the furnace, each brick is neatly laid and well fused with one another forming an almost flawless row of bricks over the archway. I peer over at the pieces of medal that rest on top of the archway but, I cannot make out what is laying on top as tree branches, leaves, and moss prevent a clear view of the object in question.

I decide to test the top of the archway; I think to myself that if it sturdy enough to hold my weight, I will walk across the archway over to the pieces of medal. As I begin to step towards the archway, I feel a sharp, stabbing pain on my right shin; I look down and see barbed wire cutting through my pants and into my skin. I step back and look at the barbed wire, it hangs almost two feet off the ground and in two layers, I decide not to tempt fate anymore than necessary and step back away from the archway.
I walk back towards the backside of the furnace when I hear my classmates calling my name, as I reach the back of the archway, I look down and decide that if I can control the slide of my descent, I won’t injury myself as I make my decent. I set my right foot into the mud of the drop off and begin to slide towards the back of the furnace, I stop my slide just a few inches from the brick lined wall. I walk through the archway and see my classmates as they wave at me and I raise my hand in return. “Give me just one second!” I cry to my classmates as I walk towards my right and into the furnace proper. I pull out my camera from my pants pocket and take a snapshot and the interior of the furnace.

I step back out into the sun as I see my classmates opening their car doors and begin enter their vehicles. I begin to walk to my right back towards the gravel road and towards my car. I pass by the man on the tractor and raise my hand in another half salute, half wave and he says to me, “Kinda of muddy out here today, ain’t it?” I smile and reply, “Yes sir, it sure is.” The man on the tractor smiles back at me and then turns his attention back to clearing the land in front of
him. I continue to walk towards the gravel road and veer off to my left toward my car; I unlock the door, take out my camera and place in it the passenger’s seat, and mount my vehicle. I take out my keys and slide the key into the ignition, turn over the engine, and I and my classmates, to steal a quote from Rawhide, head ‘em up, and move ‘em out towards our destination of Blackfork, Ohio.