

DX
GYPPISTES (ROMANIES)
AND Travelers



Who are these groups and their members?

Gypsies (Romanies) and Travelers are only a vague part of the public consciousness. Although a long time subject category of academic library collections, their ethnic and culture group identities remain an enigma to everybody, even to themselves - not to mention those many scholars who have attempted to study them. We invite our patrons to explore this question for themselves. Explore these selected Gypsies (Romanies) and Travelers materials displayed from our Carlson Library.

"Gypsies (Romanies) and Travelers" are introduced under the umbrella term "Gypsies" even though there is continuing, even heated, controversy over what to call them without appearing to be disrespectful or ignorant.

There are problems with books and other information sources on Gypsies. The body of literature is large, but the truth content there is small and spurious. There are indeed few reliable facts about Gypsies, and instead many popular stereotypes are endlessly repeated.

It is a continuing challenge to scholarship that The Gypsy is still an "unknown object of

study" and has never been clearly defined. For this reason, enumerations of Gypsies have been impossible. Estimates of Gypsies in North America, for example, range from 50,000 to over 2,000,000 -- depending on how one defines "Gypsy".

In general, there is a proliferation of short articles about Gypsies and relatively few major book-length studies. Most published writings on the topic of "Gypsies" are not suitable for the shelves of a research library or even a public library. There is an overwhelming uncritical repetition of "standard" sources on Gypsies from the past. These reproduce error, contain lies and fabrications (sometimes intentional), are full of internal contradictions, harbor negative prejudices, and are notorious for their omissions and weak assumptions.

This display demonstrates a superficial richness and color in books and other sources of information about Gypsies. This richness in part satisfies the public craving for Gypsy Romance, if not Gypsy Knowledge. Indeed, what often passes for "Gypsy Knowledge" might easily be dismissed as mere "Gypsy Romance," which might be just grounds for sorting out the "fiction" and "pulp" about Gypsies. There are no reliable means or guidelines available to university librarians for sorting out the non-fiction from the fiction, and the useful from the useless.



Most books in university research libraries related to the "subject" of Gypsies are shelved as "DX" according to the Library of Congress classification system. The Category "D" represents "Histories of the Peoples of the World" - a remnant of a "Eurocentric" view of Peoples of the world.

The Carlson collection is strong on Gypsies (Romanies) and Travelers in Anglo-America. Based on the taxonomy by Dr. Matt T. Salo, President of the Gypsy Lore Society, the Gypsy populations in the USA and Canada include:



Rom, and Roma: Gypsies of East Europe arriving after 1880 are scattered across the entire country. One of the larger mostly urban groups in the USA, possibly in the 55-60,000.

Ludar: Gypsies from the Banat area arriving after 1880 are also called "Rumanian" Gypsies. May equal Rom; exact numbers are unknown.

Romnichels: English Gypsies arriving about 1850. These rural families are scattered, and now assimilated; estimation of numbers depends on criteria used.

English Travelers: Possibly formed along same lines as Roaders (see below), but took shape already in England. Coming to the US starting in early 1880s, they associate with Romnichels, but their boundaries and numbers are uncertain.

Irish Travelers: A peripatetic group ethnically Irish but does not identify itself as "Gypsy." Sometimes called "Irish Gypsies," they are widely scattered, but are somewhat concentrated in S. Carolina, Georgia, Texas - Dr. Salo estimates their numbers at 10,000.

Scottish Travelers: Ethnically Scottish, but separated for centuries from mainstream society in Scotland. Originally known as Tinkers and Tinklers, some came to Canada after 1850 and to the US in appreciable numbers after 1880. Over 100 distinct clans have been identified but the total number of individuals is not known.

Hungarian-Slovak Gypsies: Several thousands of these mainly sedentary Gypsy musicians reside in old northeastern industrial cities performing in cafes, nightclubs and restaurants.

Cale: Spanish Gypsies, or Gitanos, who are found primarily in the metropolitan centers of the East and West coasts. They are a small community of only a few families.

Roaders or Roadies: Native born Americans who have led a traveling life similar to that of the Gypsies and Travelers, but who were not originally descended from those groups. Their numbers are unknown as systematic research among them has only recently begun.

Sinti: A little-studied early group of German Gypsies in the United States consisting of a few families that have been heavily assimilated into both non-Gypsy and Romnichel populations. No figures are available.

Yenisch: A mostly-assimilated and therefore uncountable group of ethnic Germans, misidentified as Gypsies, who once formed an occupational caste of basket makers. They founded an entire community in Pennsylvania after their initial immigrations began in 1840.

Additional Gypsy ethnic groups, mostly Roma from Eastern Europe, have immigrated to North America after 1970, due to the increased unrest and renewed persecutions after the collapse of Communism—numbers are increasing in spite of reports of close scrutiny and harsh treatment by some immigration authorities.

In addition to these ethnic categories, some Gypsy studies scholars and writers might also include a variety of small “g” (non-ethnic) “gypsies” in their researches. These include “snow birds,” migrant workers, footloose and/or unlicensed cab drivers, dancers, lumberjacks, and even boat peoples who dwell on various mobile watercraft and barges. Beyond these, anyone who self-ascribes as a “Gypsy” is free to do so in our presently fluid

multicultural society of constantly shifting identities.

To discover more about the richness of Gypsy (Romany) and Traveler lifestyles, *follow this patrin* symbol from these display cases to our DX book display shelved with the New Books.



A **Patrin**, which means “leaf” in the Romani language, is an innocuous marker or sign or message, often made of twigs, flowers and other natural materials found at the roadside, sometimes tied with a thin ribbon or cloth, and used by traveling Gypsies to give directions and advice to other Gypsies.

GYPSTES (ROMANIES) AND Travelers in Film

Snatch reveals the world of English boxing promoters involved in fixing matches with a traveling gypsy. When a diamond heist is pulled off, all characters are exposed.

Black Cat, White Cat set in a Gypsy settlement along the banks of the Danube shows 3 generations of characters in frenetic displays of charm, confusion, and chaos.

Angelo My Love follows 12 yr. old Angelo as he tries to recover an ancestral ring. Real gypsies portray fictional versions of themselves as we witness rites, myths, music and tribal customs hidden within New York society.

Traveller is Bokky, a legendary con-artist among Travellers who teams up with a young drifter. Follow their path of riotous larceny and trouble-bound romance as a deadly scam tests both their loyalties, loves and lives.

GYPSTES (ROMANIES) AND Travelers on the Web

www.gypsyloresociety.org/

The Gypsy Lore Society, founded in Great Britain in 1888, promotes the study of Gypsy, Traveler, and analogous peripatetic cultures worldwide; disseminates accurate information aimed at increasing understanding of these cultures in their diverse forms; and establishes closer contacts among scholars studying any aspects of these cultures.

foclar.tripod.com/gypsy/roma.html

This brief, but concise introduction to Gypsy Studies contains over 20 links to various websites containing literature, film, history, and burial and cemetery information.

www.gcocities.com/Paris/5121/patrin.htm

This thorough website is dedicated to Romani (Gypsy) culture and history and to extending awareness of the continuous Roma struggle to achieve and maintain dignity and freedom. **Patrin** is a learning resource and information centre about Romani culture, social issues, and current events

www.travellersrest.org/

Fact and fiction about Irish Travellers in the USA are found on Richard J. Waters's home page. Numerous links to narratives and literature reveal a glimpse of the Tinkers, in olden days called, “The Walking People.”

sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/index.html

The Never-ending Road of American Roma (Gypsy) & Travellers is detailed here with numerous links containing histories and oral traditions. Also contains links for the Free Moors & Turks of SC and Melungeons.