Penn state: Symbol and myth

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Abstract
This thesis will focus on the popular culture iconography of the Pennsylvania State University: the Nittany Lion-as a symbol and apolitical mascot; Happy Valley, the geographic area in which the university is located, as a kind of sacred place and utopia in the Keystone State; football-its hallowed shrines, legendary coaches, and heroic players; regional foods and delicacies-from the unique offerings of the area’s diners to the University Creamery (where patrons yearly consume more than 750,000 ice cream cones); and Lion Shrine and the adjacent Nittany Lion Inn-where the faithful have made pilgrimages since the early-twentieth century. The sum of these parts contributes to the pastoral image of Happy Valley-an image that is a constant reality in the mind of the Penn Stater.

The Happy Valley myth is perpetuated by socio-cultural activities indigenous to “Lion Country.” Certain activities are mandatory to be a real Penn Stater: sitting on the Nittany Lion Statue, going to a football game, buying a sticky bun at the College Diner, eating an ice cream cone from the University Creamery, and staying the night at the Nittany Lion Inn. Sociological texts, such as Emile Durkheim’s Elementary Forms of Religion, are central to the theme of the thesis. Durkheim’s work explains how symbols or totems represent the force of the group, thereby giving religious meaning to secular institutions. Moreover, anthropological theories of Clifford Geertz-taken from Interpretations of Culture-are indispensable in realizing how integral the use of signs and symbols are to that of the group’s fundamental understanding of its own worldview. These cultural phenomena occupy a large part in the mindset and mentality of students, alumni, locals, and fans alike.

Furthermore, the sacred iconic image of the Nittany Lion permeates the local psyche, media, and overall reality of the area. Ultimately, this constant reinforcement of local cultural values contributes to the bucolic image of Happy Valley as a kind of utopia, where the problems of urban life dissipate into the mountain air.

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Penn State Myths. Myth: The word “Nittany” is derived from Princess Nita-nee, a member of the Native American tribes who once lived in central Pennsylvania. Fact: Princess Nita-nee was “invented” by author and publisher Henry W. Shoemaker and has no basis whatever in fact. Shoemaker’s mention of the princess first appeared in print in 1903. At that time he attributed the tale to “an aged Seneca Indian named Isaac Steele.” Shoemaker, a well known Pennsylvania folklorist, later admitted that both Steele and Nita-nee
were “purely fictitious.” To learn the Pennsylvania information resource links to state homepage, symbols, flags, maps, constitutions, representatives, songs, birds, flowers, trees. Named in honor of Admiral William Penn, father of the state’s founder, William Penn. Population (2013): 12,773,801; Rank: 6 of 50 | Population Quick Facts. Pennsylvania State logo meaning and history. The Nittany Lion was chosen as the mascot for the athletic program of Pennsylvania State University in the early 1990s. A Nittany Lion is not a real animal, this is how one could call lions living nearby Mount Nittany. This animal was “invented” by the school’s senior H. D. Mason in 1907. Symbol Penn State. None of the first 15 versions created by Parcels seemed to satisfy his clients. The second series of designs, which was presented in about three months, was more successful. Originally, the name of the teams was placed below the logo, yet in the course of time it was removed as the logo itself became recognizable even without the text. Font of the Penn State Logo. The current logotype features a minimalistic sans serif font with flattened vertexes.