



3-5-2013

## Interpreting Different Cheesesteaks

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Rudy, John M., "Interpreting Different Cheesesteaks" (2013). *Interpreting the Civil War: Connecting the Civil War to the American Public*. 69.

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# Interpreting Different Cheesesteaks

## Abstract

I wandered around Philadelphia last week on travel for work, which meant I had the opportunity to indulge in my favorite Philly pleasure. Besides Rocky, Comcast and Benjamin "Macho Man" Franklin, the City of Brotherly Love has given us all one other joyous invention: the cheesesteak.

## Keywords

CW150, Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Civil War Era Studies, Philadelphia

## Disciplines

History | United States History

## Comments

*Interpreting the Civil War: Connecting the Civil War to the American Public* is written by alum and adjunct professor, John Rudy. Each post is his own opinions, musings, discussions, and questions about the Civil War era, public history, historical interpretation, and the future of history. In his own words, it is "a blog talking about how we talk about a war where over 600,000 died, 4 million were freed and a nation forever changed. Meditating on interpretation, both theory and practice, at no charge to you."

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# Interpreting the Civil War

Connecting the Civil War to the American Public

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## Interpreting Different Cheesesteaks

**TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2013**

I wandered around Philadelphia last week on travel for work, which meant I had the opportunity to indulge in my favorite Philly pleasure. Besides Rocky, Comcast and Benjamin "Macho Man" Franklin, the City of Brotherly Love has given us all one other joyous invention: the cheesesteak.



I'm a Pat's King of Steaks partisan.

My order is, "wiz wit," and is usually served up with a side of pickled peppers. I

love the dingy picnic tables. I love the greasy grill. I love the surly staff that mans the window. Going to Philadelphia means an inevitable pilgrimage down to Passyunk & 9th for a taste of true sandwich perfection.

Except I didn't go to Passyunk this time. I could have. I had the time, Pat's is open 24-hours and the steak is always hot. Still, I didn't make my usual trek.

Instead, I had a steak at a street cart just outside Independence Hall. There was no wiz. The cheese was provolone. It still had onions, but they were crisp and moist, not stringy and caramelized. And the view wasn't a South Philly baseball diamond, it was the brick-and-mortar cradle of liberty.

The sandwich was nothing like what I expected.

It wasn't bad, it was just different. I enjoyed the different experience. I liked this different steak.



Wednesday's Metaphorical Cheesesteak, dirty and on the street. Just like it should be.

It's not what I went to Philadelphia seeking, but it game me a new appreciation for the form. It was a new sandwich experience. I found a new way to see cheesesteak.

Sometimes, interpreters are afraid of changing their stories. The inertia in many interpretive environments can be indomitable. You hear phrases like, "our audience doesn't come here to hear *those* types of stories," or, "if we change what we talk about, our audience won't come anymore."

But I'm going to keep eating cheesesteaks. In fact, this new cheesesteak experience might open me up to trying other takes on the sandwich. I'll still love the Pat's experience. But I'm not so dead-set against trying other offerings in the city of Brotherly Love.

Maybe our sites are the same. We can offer up new sandwiches alongside the old, different meanings along with the ones we've been sharing for generations. Trying new cheesesteaks doesn't diminish my love of Pat's. Nor does it mean I can never eat a Pat's steak again. It just means I've found other steaks that I enjoy as well.

And in Philly, variations on cheesesteaks are inexhaustible. I can keep finding sandwiches that mean something to me.

Thank god.