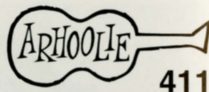


The Carter Family

On Border Radio-1939: Vol. 1



1. XET STATION BREAK, INTRODUCTION, THEME SONG / THE WANDERING BOY
2. I WONDER HOW THE OLD FOLKS ARE AT HOME / IN THE HIGHWAYS
(Helen, June & Anita)
3. ROOM FOR YOU AND ME
4. CUMBERLAND GAP (instrumental) / LONESOME VALLEY
5. JUST ANOTHER BROKEN HEART
6. DARLING WE ARE GROWING OLDER / THE OLD TEXAS TRAIL (Helen, June & Anita)
7. COWBOY'S WILD SONG TO HIS HERD (Jeanette) / MAPLE ON THE HILL
8. NEW RIVER TRAIN (Helen) / LOVER'S LANE
9. MY SWEETHEART IS A POOR WORKING GIRL (A. P.) / WAVES OF THE SEA (instrumental)
10. ON THE SEA OF GALILEE
11. THE CURTAINS OF NIGHT
12. JUST A FEW MORE DAYS OF SORROW
13. THEME OUT & XET STATION BREAK
14. INTRO & THEME / WHEN OUR LORD SHALL COME AGAIN
15. THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF ALL
16. BYE AND BYE (Jeanette) / WE SHALL RISE
17. ENGINE 143 (June) / JEALOUS HEARTED ME
18. UNTITLED (instrumental) / WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR SOUL?

19. BEAUTIFUL BROWN EYES & SWEET FERN
20. I HAVE NO LOVING MOTHER NOW
21. WESTERN HOBO
22. SINGLE GIRL
23. I'M THINKING TONIGHT OF MY BLUE EYES
24. THE SUN'S GONNA SHINE IN MY BACK DOOR SOMEDAY / GIVE ME THE ROSES WHILE I LIVE
(Helen, June & Anita)
25. YOU DENIED YOUR LOVE
26. NO TELEPHONE IN HEAVEN (A. P.)
27. THEME OUT & XET STATION BREAK

The Carter Family: A.P. Carter – vocals, [& guitar on (A.P.)]; Sara Carter – vocals, guitar & autoharp; Maybelle Carter – vocals & guitar; with Jeanette Carter – vocals, guitar, & autoharp; Helen Carter, June Carter, and Anita Carter – vocals, guitar & autoharp.

Spanish language announcer: Benny Medina
Cover by Wayne Pope
Hand tinting by Beth Weil
Produced & edited by Chris Strachwitz
Notes by Ed Kahn

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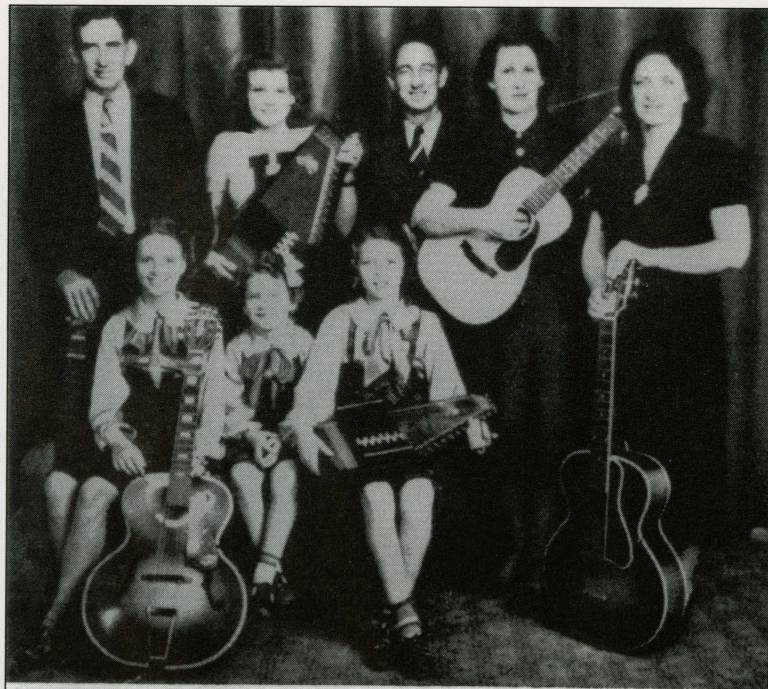
THE CARTER FAMILY

ON
Border
Radio

FROM
RADIO STATION
XET
Monterrey N. L.
Mexico
1939

Vol. 1





THE CARTER FAMILY (Above)
Top Row: A. P. Carter, Janette, Brother Bill, Sara, Maybelle. Children: Helen, Aneta and June.

The Carter Family on Border Radio 1939

Volume I

The Carter Family is one of the most famous recording groups to emerge from the American Country Music scene of the 1920s. Their career lasted for only fourteen years (1927-1941), but included eighteen trips to the recording studios, and left a legacy of over two hundred and fifty recordings. The original Carter Family consisted of A.P. Carter, his wife Sara and her cousin, Maybelle Carter.

By the time the Carter family transcribed these broadcasts in 1937-39, which were aired over border stations that dotted the Mexican-American boundary, the family included A.P., Sara, Maybelle and several young Carter offspring: Jeanette, Helen, June and Anita. The recordings used for this collection are the only documentation we have of the radio shows from this period and it is doubtful that any more recordings of Carter Family broadcasts from this era will be found.

These recordings, contained on 17 transcription discs made in 1939, were discovered in 1963 by my parents, Eleanor and Allan Kahn, working at my request and direction. At that time, my parents were spending a portion of every year in Mexico

and I was working on my doctoral dissertation at UCLA on the Carter Family. I knew of the importance of the border station years in the Carters' career and asked my parents if, on their way back to their home in Indiana, they might take a day or so and check in with the station personnel of XEG in Monterrey, N.L.

The lead paid off handsomely when they located and obtained these historic recordings that May. Their recollections of the quest sound more like a story of high intrigue reminiscent of a Bogart film than a folklore research project. In any case, they presented me with these recordings and soon thereafter I traveled first to Del Rio, home of the first and most powerful of the border stations, and then to Monterrey to see what background information I could learn about XEG and to check out whether there were any additional transcriptions of the Carters. While I found a virtual treasure trove of recorded documents, no more Carter Family disks came to light.

In 1970, I finished my dissertation on the Carter Family and left the United States and the academic world for an extended period. Before

doing so, however, I entrusted these transcriptions to Eugene Earle and authorized the John Edwards Memorial Foundation to utilize this material in any way that seemed appropriate. In 1972, they released a portion of this material as JEMF LP #101. In time, this LP, along with the other records in the JEMF series were turned over to Arhoolie Records for distribution.

Today, long after the original JEMF LP has gone out of print and LP records have gone the way of the 78 RPM discs on which the Carter Family made their debut, the transcription collection is being made available in virtually its entirety by contractual agreement with Jeanette Carter, who represents the family estate. Duplicate performances of selections have been eliminated and some selections which were extremely distorted, have been left out. Also omitted are a number of songs by children of the various members of the original Carter Family but enough of their material has been included to give a clear picture of what these border broadcasts actually sounded like. We have also left in several of the station IDs and announcer's comments.

The story of the evolution of the border stations is one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of American radio. It is the result of diverse forces coming together. International relations

between the United States and her neighbors, public taste, and the opportunity to promote products to an American audience without the restrictions placed on American broadcasters all came together to create the border station phenomenon.

The United States was the first North American country to develop radio broadcasting facilities. Canada followed closely behind and the United States seemed willing to share broadcast frequencies with her. But Mexico and Cuba lagged behind their more industrialized neighbors to the north. Although the United States gave lip service to sharing frequencies with Mexico, no steps were actually taken to redistribute the allocation of frequencies until 1941.

Mexico's answer to the dilemma was simply to broadcast on any frequency she liked. So when John Brinkley, the quack medical doctor whose radio station, KFKB, in Milford, Kansas, failed to receive license renewal from the Federal Radio Commission, he asked Mexico for permission to build a powerful station in Villa Acuña, Coahuila, across from Del Rio, Texas. This suited Mexico's needs to perfection. Here was someone who would really irritate the United States and invest in the equipment. Furthermore, Brinkley would be broadcasting the same kinds of programs that had

caused him to lose his license in the United States.

Now Brinkley was able to operate at arm's length outside United States law. Station XER began experimental broadcasts on October 7, 1931. The station began with a power of perhaps 75,000 watts, half again as much power as the maximum permitted in the United States. Within a year, Brinkley had gained permission from the Mexican government to raise the power to 150,000 watts.

The intrigue between the United States, Mexico, and Brinkley was like a cat and mouse game. At first, Brinkley broadcast directly from the transmitters in Villa Acuña. Soon, however, he found himself barred from crossing the international bridge into Mexico. His response was to make broadcasts from his studio above the J.C. Penney store in Del Rio, Texas, by remote lines that went to the transmitter. Then a new law was passed forbidding Americans from broadcasting, by the use of remote lines from another country.

Brinkley's response to this restriction was to begin using transcription disks, an idea he had stumbled onto in 1932, in the midst of one of his many runs for elective office. Brinkley had found a successful format and transcription discs facilitated its implementation. By as early as 1932, station XER was receiving thousands of pieces of

mail each week. The week of January 11-16, for instance, brought 27,717 responses, representing every state in the Union as well as fourteen foreign countries. As time went on, Brinkley strengthened his position along the border. Not only did sister stations begin broadcasting, but he was able to increase the power of XER, now renamed XERA, to 500,000 watts.

Brinkley began to develop the format he used on the border stations while still broadcasting over KFKB (Kansas First Kansas Best) before he lost his license. A mixture of medical advice, gospel preaching and hillbilly music formed the core of the presentation, although the station offered a wide variety of other music and entertainment. The format became increasingly well defined as the 1930s advanced. By 1937 or 1938, hillbilly and gospel music were nearly the sole musical fare over the station. Advertisers were brought aboard who were interested in the kind of audience this music attracted.

Soon, the advertisers began to supply their own talent for the shows they sponsored. While Brinkley had brought in a group of "real hillbillies"—perhaps some people he had known in North Carolina—the first professional hillbilly musicians came to Del Rio through Consolidated Royal Chemical Corporation, a company located

in Chicago.

Royal Chemical sold two products: Peruna, a tonic to ward off colds, and Kolor Bak, a hair tint. In the early days, the artists would perform all of their shows live. Soon, however, the station began recording these shows directly from the air on a Presto transcription cutter. These shows were then rebroadcast the next morning to save the artists and announcer from having to get up so early.

Although hundreds of these transcriptions were made, none have survived. Don Howard, station manager, remarked to me that "they became very popular in Mexico—We'd get a bunch of them ahead and some Mexican would come by and want to pick them up. They made wonderful shingles if you (were) putting them on a roof because they were this acetate outside and aluminum inside and they'd last forever. They's quite a few roofs over there shingled with them, I imagine."

The transcription discs used for this collection came from station XEG in Monterrey, yet the station identifications heard on them clearly enunciate, in English and Spanish, the call letters XET, and these call letters are hand written on the record labels. XET in Monterrey was perhaps the earliest powerful radio station in Mexico and con-

tinues to operate today under those call letters. However, there is no mention in any literature that XET broadcast in English for an American audience, XEG, on the other hand, utilized this format for many years and is well-documented as a "border station."

While the use of transcriptions at the stations began as an accommodation to the talent, in time transcriptions became a means of syndicating the shows. This is a practice that began on the border stations and spread throughout the broadcasting industry following the Second World War. While the transcriptions in this collection were made exclusively for broadcast over a single radio station, and are direct cuts, thus, one of a kind. A few years later, other transcription disks were made, processed and pressed for distribution to a number of stations where local announcers would read the commercials and fill in the continuity. Only a few of these pressed transcription disks have survived. (Note Copper Creek CD.)

Ralph Peer, the Victor recording executive who had discovered the Carter Family in August, 1927, served as their manager throughout their career. This arrangement continued even after he left Victor and devoted himself exclusively to his growing music publishing empire. By the mid-30s, his publishing business was well established, thus

earning him royalties from each sale of a record that contained a song that he or his artists copyrighted. Exposure for the artists he managed obviously increased his revenue. He conceived of the idea of the Carter Family broadcasting over Dr. Brinkley's border station, reasoning that in this way they would gain great exposure without traveling around the country making personal appearances. This suited the Carter Family who had lived separately since 1932 and allowed the members of the Carter Family to live separately and yet pursue their career via radio work.

By 1938, the Carter Family had moved to Texas for the winter months and began making transcription disks instead of going into the station's studio daily. During this time, they lived in San Antonio and recorded the daily shows in the garage recording studio of Don and Dode Baxter. Don Baxter had earned the reputation as one of the top pitchmen on Brinkley's station and went under the name of Major Kord.

The recordings on this collection are from this San Antonio period. By now, the announcer was Brother Bill Guild, about whom relatively little was known until recently. Brother Bill was born in New York state on May 3, 1896. Early on, he learned to play piano and worked as an entertainer for several years. In 1929, he was miracu-

lously cured from tuberculosis, after which he devoted himself to his ministry.

A minister friend of Rev. Guild took him along to meet Don Baxter, who was looking for an announcer to host the Carter Family and read the commercials. The friend tried out and then Baxter asked Bill to audition. Baxter offered Bill the job, saying he was exactly what he was looking for. Bill refused, explaining that his ministry had to come first. Baxter continued to pursue Brother Bill, finally making a deal to pay him \$6.66 per hour and permitting him to fit his radio work around his church commitments. Baxter also told Bill that he could mention the Lord's name whenever he felt like it, thus accounting for the many Bible references sprinkled throughout his announcing. Brother Bill seems to have been involved with the Baxters from the earliest days of the Monterrey broadcasts. He apparently accompanied Baxter to the Mexican station on at least one occasion before the broadcasts actually began. When Don Baxter died, apparently before 1942, Brother Bill officiated at the funeral service. Bill Guild, himself, died in 1975.

The Carter Family appeared nightly for a one hour segment of the Good Neighbor Get Together, which lasted from 6:00 PM until 10:00 PM and consisted of four one-hour segments. The

Carters were sandwiched between Mainer's Mountaineers, Cowboy Slim Rinehart, and Doc & Karl.

These recordings present a dimension of the Carter Family different from that found on their commercial recordings. In the recording studio, the trio recorded carefully worked-out arrangements of their songs. They prided themselves on having everything worked out and timed to the second.

Day after day of recording transcriptions allowed the Carter Family to present a fuller picture of themselves and their world. These transcriptions which have survived contain 82 Carter Family numbers, most of which are a good deal shorter than their commercial records. There is currently no comprehensive Carter Family discography that includes both recordings and transcriptions, but a cursory examination indicates an interesting mix of material on these transcription recordings. Six of the selections were never recorded by the original Carter aggregate, but were subsequently recorded in the 1950s by an offshoot group consisting of Sara, A.P., and two of their children. Another nineteen selections seem never to have been recorded by the Carters except on these transcriptions. The picture we get is that they continued to incorporate new material into their repertoire. Several of these pieces may have been

collected by the Carters in the same way they obtained material throughout their career. Several of the numbers are songs popularized by other hillbilly recording acts of the period.

In addition to the Family recordings, there are eight recordings by A.P. accompanying himself on guitar. These gems present a side of A.P. that the public never heard through the commercial disks of the Carter Family. Although there are several Carter Family recordings that feature A.P.'s solo singing, on none does he accompany himself. "When the Spring Roses are Blooming" appears to be the only recording A.P. ever made of this selection. In addition to his solos, A.P.'s bass singing with the trio is a good deal stronger on these transcriptions than on many of the commercial recordings. In interviews with various members of the Carter family, a consistent picture emerges of A.P. wandering around the stage or recording studio and singing whenever the mood struck him. On these transcriptions, however, he seems to be more consistently in a mood to sing.

Sara and Maybelle sang and played without A.P. on many of the commercial recordings. On these recordings, however, they also offer eleven instrumental duets in addition to the songs they perform together. There is also one solo instrumental by Maybelle, "I Have No Honey Baby Now."

Besides the musical diversity the radio offered, the Carter Family projected a much more relaxed atmosphere than we got through their commercial recordings. From time to time three of the members of the group speak and have some interchange with their announcer, Brother Bill Guild. The children also often announce their numbers or make comments. While it is clear that the group worked out each show before getting in front of the microphone, it is also apparent that they were relaxed in this format.

A final facet of these recordings that calls for comment is the presence of children of the members of the Carter Family. A.P. and Sara's daughter, Jeanette, sixteen at the time these transcriptions were made, visited her dad in perhaps 1937 or 38 for a short time and remembers singing over XERA in the days when the Carter Family was broadcasting live. In 1939, however, Jeanette came to Texas for the entire season and worked regularly on these recorded shows. She remembers being paid \$20 per week. On most of these pieces, Jeanette accompanies herself on either guitar or autoharp.

Maybelle's children Anita, June, and Helen, were six, ten, and twelve years old and worked as regulars during the year the group made these transcriptions for the Baxters. Their recordings are of additional interest because these are the first

recorded documents of this trio that went on, with their mother, Maybelle, to achieve success in Nashville after the original group disbanded in the spring of 1943. It is interesting to note that according to all of the information I have gathered, the Carter sisters pretty much made their own decisions about their repertoire and worked out their own arrangements. On almost all of these recordings, the girls play their own accompaniment. Several of the pieces included on this collection attest to the instrumental skills of Helen Carter. Of the three Carter sisters, June went on to the greatest commercial success. These recordings show her early talent and love of performing. And Anita's distinctive voice comes across here even at the age of six. These recordings are pretty much as they are presented on the transcription disks. Some editing has been done to eliminate unnecessary repetition of their theme song, "Keep On the Sunny Side," and some of the less interesting comments of Brother Bill have been eliminated. After the final edit was made, all of the material was digitally remastered to remove as much surface noise and distortion as possible. It is our hope that this collection of rare recorded documents will shed light on another dimension of the Carters' career.

(Ed Kahn October 20, 1993)

The sound on this CD is not of contemporary quality. These historic recordings come from one-of-a-kind acetates, direct cut, 16" transcriptions. Unlike pressings, which can be played dozens of times before wear becomes noticeable, soft acetates become noisy and lose the high frequencies after only a few plays, especially with a heavy pick-up. These acetates were played at least a dozen times or more, as evident from the logs on the sleeves. Sound restoration was performed by George Morrow using the No-Noise system, but distortion due to groove wear is impossible to repair.

Right: Broadcast log of Carter Family disc 13 which appears on the upper left corner of the 16" sleeve for the disc.

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PLEASE DATE!		
DATE	TIME	ANN
12/27/39	8:00-8:15	Logano
12/31/39	6:30 A.M.	Reynolds
1/3/40	8:00-10:15	Logano
1-7-40	4:30 A.M.	Reynolds
1/9/40	8:00-8:15	Logano
1-14-40	6:30 A.M.	Reynolds
1-17-40	7:00 P.M.	Reynolds
1/23/40	9:00-9:15	Logano
1-29-40	6:30 A.M.	Reynolds
2-3-40	9:00 P.M.	Reynolds
2-10-40	6:30 A.M.	Reynolds
12/3/40	8:45	Medina
1/6/41	8:00	Medina
2/14/41	8:00	Medina
1/5/42	7:00 P.M.	Donny



Label of 16" acetate disc - #GCF 13A

The Carter Family

On Border Radio-1939: Vol. 1



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2. I WONDER HOW THE OLD FOLKS ARE AT HOME / IN THE HIGHWAYS (*Helen, June & Anita*)
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 25. YOU DENIED YOUR LOVE
 26. NO TELEPHONE IN HEAVEN (*A. P.*)
 27. THEME OUT & XET STATION BREAK
- Total time: 63:35*

The Carter Family: A.P. Carter – vocals, [& guitar on (*A.P.*)]; Sara Carter – vocals, guitar & autoharp; Maybelle Carter – vocals & guitar; with Jeanette Carter – vocals, guitar, & autoharp; Helen Carter, June Carter, and Anita Carter – vocals, guitar & autoharp.

Reissued by contractual arrangement with Jeanette Carter on behalf of the Carter Family estate. All items on this CD are taken from discs identified as #1-A, 1-B, 2-A, 2-B, 2 (no label), 3A, 3B, GCF4A, GCF4B, 5A, & 5B.

Cover by Wayne Pope
Hand tinting by Beth Weil
Produced & edited by Chris Strachwitz
Notes by Ed Kahn

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