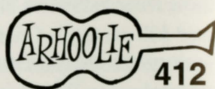


# The Carter Family

## On Border Radio-1939: Vol. 2



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3. CORINA (Carter Sisters)
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(Sara & Maybelle)
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Announcer: Brother Bill Guild  
Spanish language announcer: Benny Medina  
Cover by Wayne Pope & Craig Millman  
Hand tinting by Beth Weil  
Produced & edited by Chris Strachwitz  
Notes by Ed Kahn

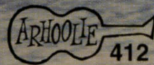
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# THE CARTER FAMILY

ON  
Border  
Radio  
RADIO STATION  
XET

Monterrey N. L.  
Mexico  
1939

VOL. 2





**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 2

The following notes are abridged. For full commentary see Vol. 1.

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. 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 May of 1963. The 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 minimized and some selections which were extremely distorted, have been left out. Also omitted are some 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. The United States was the first North American country to develop radio broadcasting facilities. Canada followed closely behind, 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



*The story of the evolution of the border stations is one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of American radio.*

were actually taken to redistribute the allocation of frequencies until 1941.

When John Brinkley, the quack medical doctor owner of 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. Station XER began experimental broadcasts on October 7, 1931 with a power of perhaps 75,000 watts. Within a year, Brinkley had gained permission from the Mexican government to raise the power to 150,000 watts.

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.

Brinkley implemented the format he used on the border stations while still broadcasting over KFKB. 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. By 1937 or 1938, hillbilly and gospel music were nearly the sole musical fare provided by the station. Advertisers then came aboard.

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. 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.

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 continues 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."

Ralph Peer served as the Carter's manager throughout their career. He reasoned that by broadcasting over Dr. Brinkley's border station, the Carter Family would gain great exposure without traveling around the country making personal appearances. By 1938, the Carter

Family had moved to Texas for the winter months and began making transcription disks. During this time, they lived in San Antonio and recorded the daily shows in the garage recording studio of Don and Dode Baxter. The announcer was Brother Bill Guild, a minister



*Label of 16" acetate disc - #GCF 13A*

and former entertainer.

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 transcriptions present a fuller picture of the Carter Family and their world than those developed in the recording studio where the trio recorded carefully worked-out arrangements of their songs to the second. They contain 82 Carter Family numbers, most of which are a good deal shorter than their commercial records. 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. Some 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 on commercial disks. Although there are several Carter Family recordings that feature A.P.'s solo singing, on none does he accompany himself. In addition to his solos, A.P.'s bass singing with the trio is a good deal stronger than on many of the commercial recordings.

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.

The presence of children of the members of the Carter Family calls for comment. A.P. and Sara's daughter, Jeanette, sixteen at the time of the transcriptions, visited her dad in perhaps 1937 or 38 for a short time. She 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. 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.

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.

The recordings have been edited 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.*

**Also Available:**  
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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 & Craig Millman  
Hand tinting by Beth Weil, Produced & edited by Chris Strachwitz  
Notes by Ed Kahn

**File Under: Country/Bluegrass**



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