

SNUFFY JENKINS

With Homer "Pappy" Sherrill - fiddle

Pioneer of the Bluegrass Banjo

1. WATERMELON HANGIN' ON A VINE (Ira - vocal)
2. STEP IT UP AND GO ("Greasy" - vocal)
3. POSSUM UP A GUM STUMP
4. SPANISH FANDANGO
5. LONG JOURNEY HOME (trio vocal)
6. CHARMIN' BETSY (trio - vocal)
7. DIXIE, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME
8. TELEVISION (Ira - vocal)
9. BIG-EARED MULE
10. THE COVERED WAGON ROLLED RIGHT ALONG (Ira - vocal)
11. BOGGY ROAD TO TEXAS
12. TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR
13. MILLER'S REEL
14. GONNA CATCH THAT TRAIN AN' RIDE (trio - vocal)
15. BORN IN HARD LUCK ("Greasy" - vocal)
16. THE SWEETEST GIFT, A MOTHER'S SMILE (Ira & Bill - vocal) (Rea & Dimmery)
17. LONG TIME GONE (trio - vocal)
18. SNUFFY'S TALKING BLUES (Snuffy - vocal)

DeWitt "Snuffy" Jenkins - banjo, vocals, guitar & washboard

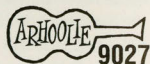
Homer "Pappy" Sherrill - fiddle

Julian "Greasy" Medlin - lead guitar & vocals

Bill Rea - second guitar & vocals

Ira Dimmery - bass

© & © 1998 by ARHOOIE PRODUCTIONS INC.



Recorded at WIS studios in Columbia, S.C.;
October, 1962

Original recording produced by Harry Oster

Original issue: Folklyric LP 123 & Arhoolie
LP 5011

Re-issue produced by Chris Strachwitz

Cover design by Wayne Pope & Morgan Dodge

Booklet and tray card layout by Morgan Dodge

SNUFFY JENKINS

Pioneer of the Bluegrass Banjo

With Homer "Pappy" Sherrill - Fiddle



SNUFFY JENKINS With Homer "Pappy" Sherrill - fiddle

Pioneer of the Bluegrass Banjo

Snuffy Jenkins - Pioneer of the Bluegrass Banjo:

This 1962 album marks the first extended sampling of the exciting and forceful music of DeWitt "Snuffy" Jenkins, a man who might rightfully be considered one of the wellsprings (or pioneers) of the bluegrass style. The outfit is, on the basis of its impressive performances here, patently one of the finest and most tradition-rooted bluegrass bands currently operative.

The Jenkins banjo style, it will be noted, is a rougher version of the sleek Scruggs approach. Snuffy—while having updated his own natural three-finger picking style somewhat, in line with current instrumental practices within the idiom—still retains, however, a measure of the older, less regularized banjo approach of the original cornshucking and breakdown hill country styles. His, then, is a wholly personal style compounded of both the archaic (with its strong, jagged, pronounced syncopations) and the contemporary (subtle, infectious, and somewhat stylized).

Snuffy Jenkins was born in October, 1908, in Harris, North Carolina, a small town in the

western part of the state. The youngest in a family of ten, all of whom (save the parents) were musical, Snuffy started out playing the fiddle while very young. "Being too small to use the bow," he recalled, "I picked it like a mandolin. Soon after that, I took up playing the guitar with my brother. In 1927 we started playing with two fellows who both played a three-finger style of banjo. Their names were Smith Hammett and Rex Brooks. This is where I got started playing my style of banjo. It was Cleveland, North Carolina."

Until 1936, Snuffy played for square dances around the western part of the state, bringing to perfection the basic style of banjo that is heard on this recording. During these years, he came in contact with Earl Scruggs, then a youngster, and helped him in his studies of the instrument. With the curious pride of the teacher who has been outstripped by the pupil, Snuffy states simply, "I feel like Earl Scruggs has done more to promote this style of playing than anyone else. Earl and I are the best of friends, since I first met him when he was learning to play the banjo."

Settling in Columbia, South Carolina, in April, 1937, Snuffy soon joined a small string

band that was being formed to play over radio station WIS there. The band was successful from the start, and has continued—though with personnel changes (Snuffy is the only one of the original group left)—to this day. The group was not given the name "the Hired Hands" until 1948, upon the death of the radio program's announcer, Byron Parker, who was generally known as "the old hired hand."

Fiddler Homer "Pappy" Sherrill, born in Sherrills Ford, North Carolina, in 1915, joined the Hired Hands in 1939, bringing with him a widespread and variegated background in country music. Taking up the fiddle at the age of seven, Sherrill was early drawn to country music, and in the years prior to his joining the present group, worked with a number of the leading country musicians, was a member of the famous Blue Sky Boys, recorded for Bluebird, Deluxe and Capitol records, and broadcast on numerous southern radio stations specializing in old time country music. His dancing, quicksilver tradition-grounded fiddle lines may be heard on the reels and breakdowns he performs so excitingly here: "Boggy Road to Texas," "Possum Up a Gum Stump," and "Big-Eared Mule," as well as on his various solos throughout the other numbers, especially on the bright, exuberant "Miller's Reel."

Lead guitarist Julian "Greasy" Medlin joined the Hired Hands in 1947. Born in Columbia,

South Carolina, in 1910, "Greasy" bought his first guitar at the age of eight and played for local dances until he was thirteen, when he joined a medicine show. He remained with this for several years, leaving to become a member of a vaudeville show, in which he appeared as a single, accompanying his singing with guitar. He later worked in tent shows, and with various country bands. He was working with a tent show when he first heard a radio broadcast of the Hired Hands and determined to join them, which he did shortly after.

Bassist Ira Dimmery also joined the group in 1947. He was born in 1921 in Conway, South Carolina, and first took up music at the age of sixteen. Three years later he won a statewide amateur contest on his instrument, and embarked on a professional career shortly afterwards. He has written a number of songs and has recorded with both Tex Ritter and Old Shorty for Capitol records. He acts as the Hired Hands' M.C.

Youngest and most recent member of the group is second guitarist Bill Rea, who was born in Spruce Pine, Alabama, in 1931. From a musical family, Bill took up the mandolin when nine years old, and after mastering this moved on to guitar, piano, tenor banjo, and accordion. Prior to his joining the Hired Hands, he played with various country and western outfits, including those of Autry Inman, the Alabama Blue Boys, Speed

McNutt, and Rusty & Dusty. He became a Hired Hand in 1955.

The eighteen songs that make up this appealing program are, for the most part, representative of the kind of material performed by most contemporary bluegrass groups—songs of somewhat recent composition, though based on traditional models. Among these are the quasi-comic pieces "The Covered Wagon Rolled Right Along," "Television" (a song which the Hired Hands have adapted by including references to themselves), and "Charmin' Betsy," an interesting updated variant of the traditional "rich gal—poor gal" theme. Also of recent vintage are "The Sweetest Gift," the creation of Rea and Dimmery, which borrows heavily from Gospel music for its harmonization and form; "Long Time Gone," a widely recorded composed country piece; "Gonna Catch That Train and Ride," "Long Journey Home" and "Watermelon Hangin' on the Vine," all three of which are fairly popular bluegrass standards.

In addition to these more or less routine songs, there are a number of tunes more closely allied with the older hill country styles. Not surprisingly, the bulk of these pieces are instrumentals. Among the most exciting of these are the jabbing, rolling

fiddle pieces, "Boggy Road to Texas," "Miller's Reel" (which also contains a fine banjo solo), "Possum Up a Gum Stump," and "Big-Eared Mule," on all of which Pappy Sherrill plays with the proper slashing drive and thrusting sinuosity. Snuffy is himself heard as banjo soloist on "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star;" on "Spanish Fandango," which is played in an older banjo style, with the melody line hammered home forcefully against arpeggiated figures; and the medley combination "Dixie" and "No Place Like Home," both of which also draw on the more archaic instrumental approaches.

Several examples of talking blues have likewise been included, a form all too seldom heard nowadays. Greasy Medlin is featured on two of them, the humorous "Born in Hard Luck," and a number borrowed from the hardy African American traditions, Blind Boy Fuller's "Step It Up And Go," which is performed in a half-song, half-recitative manner over stinging guitar picking. Finally, Snuffy is heard in this vein also, in "Snuffy's Talking Blues," on which he switches to guitar, which he plays in a quietly effective, dulcet manner.

PETER J. WELDING - October 1962

Re-issue editor's comments:

Arhoolie Records purchased the Folklyric catalog from Dr. Harry Oster in May 1970. In April of 1972 Arhoolie released this 1962 recording as Arhoolie LP 5011: "Carolina Bluegrass." In June 1971 Snuffy Jenkins and Pappy Sherrill recorded an LP for Rounder Records (LP 0005) and that November they appeared along with many other Bluegrass legends at the 2nd Annual South Carolina State Bluegrass Music Festival in Myrtle Beach, S.C. In February 1972 they played the Chicago Folk Festival and that summer they performed at the

Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. where they again appeared in March of 1976. They recorded a second LP for Rounder (LP 0059) and in 1989 they made an LP (#90193) for Old Homestead Records. Snuffy Jenkins died in 1990 but Homer "Pappy" Sherrill lives today in retirement in Chapin, S.C. A more complete story and history of these two legends of Bluegrass music can be found in the 30 page booklet by Pat J. Ahrens: *A History of the Musical Careers of Snuffy Jenkins and Pappy Sherrill* © 1970.

Chris Strachwitz - May 1998

Arhoolie Records

Down Home Music Since 1960

Blues • Cajun • Tex-Mex • Zydeco • Country • Jazz
Regional & World Music

For our Complete illustrated catalog of CD's, Cassettes,
Videos, & more, send \$3.00 to:

Arhoolie Catalog, 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530

To order by phone, call toll free: **1.888.ARHOOLIE (1.888.274.6654)**

or visit our website at: www.arhoolie.com

e-mail: mail@arhoolie.com

SNUFFY JENKINS

With Homer "Pappy" Sherrill - fiddle

Pioneer of the Bluegrass Banjo

Snuffy Jenkins was a pioneer of the three-finger banjo style and influenced many of the early Bluegrass banjo players, including Earl Scruggs and Don Reno. The music performed by Snuffy Jenkins, "Pappy" Sherrill and the Hired Hands on this album is a direct link between Old Time music and Bluegrass.

1. WATERMELON HANGIN' ON A VINE (Ira - vocal)
2. STEP IT UP AND GO ("Greasy" - vocal)
3. POSSUM UP A GUM STUMP
4. SPANISH FANDANGO
5. LONG JOURNEY HOME (trio vocal)
6. CHARMIN' BETSY (trio - vocal)
7. DIXIE, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME
8. TELEVISION (Ira - vocal)
9. BIG-EARED MULE
10. THE COVERED WAGON ROLLED RIGHT ALONG (Ira - vocal)
11. BOGGY ROAD TO TEXAS
12. TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR
13. MILLER'S REEL
14. GONNA CATCH THAT TRAIN AN' RIDE (trio - vocal)
15. BORN IN HARD LUCK ("Greasy" - vocal)
16. THE SWEETEST GIFT, A MOTHER'S SMILE (Ira & Bill - vocal) (Rea & Dimmery)
17. LONG TIME GONE (trio - vocal)
18. SNUFFY'S TALKING BLUES (Snuffy - vocal)



DeWitt "Snuffy" Jenkins - banjo, vocals, guitar & washboard, **Homer "Pappy" Sherrill** - fiddle, **Julian "Greasy" Medlin** - lead guitar & vocals, **Bill Rea** - second guitar & vocals, **Ira Dimmery** - bass

Recorded at WIS studios in Columbia, S.C.; October, 1962. Original recording produced by Harry Oster.
Original issue: Folklyric LP 123 & Arhoolie LP 5011. Re-issue produced by Chris Strachwitz.
Cover design by Wayne Pope, & Morgan Dodge
Booklet and tray card layout by Morgan Dodge

