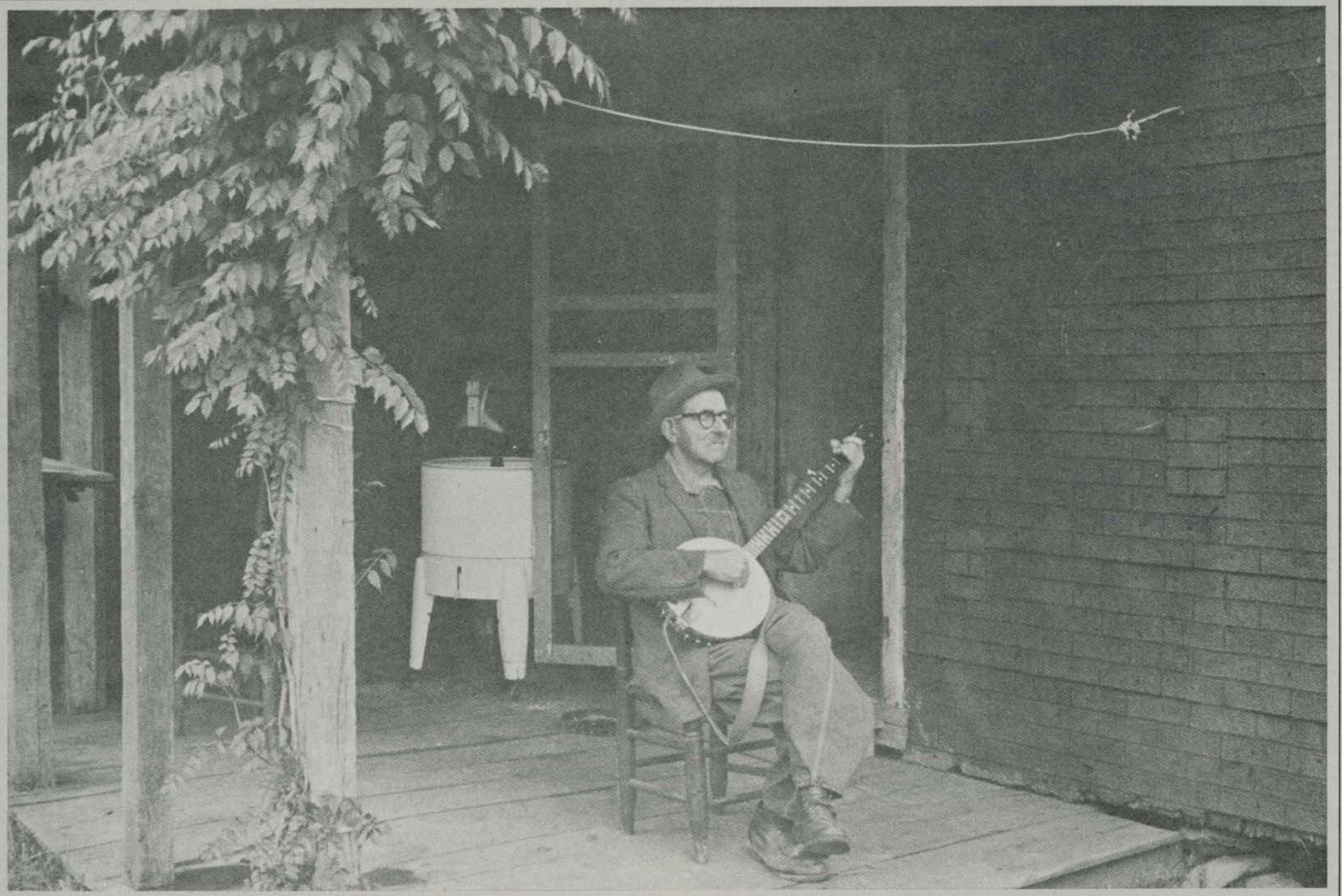
BRI 002

Virginia Traditions

Ballads from British Tradition



No state can boast of longer lasting and more varied folk traditions than Virginia. Many of her material traditions — such as barns, houses and plows — remain as permanent, unchanged documents of her early settlers' life style. Her performance traditions — songs, tales and fiddle tunes — also help us understand something of the everyday social life and beliefs of Virginia's people. These performance traditions, however, because they have been continually changing and developing from the moment of their creation, are difficult to identify and document accurately. THE BLUE RIDGE INSTITUTE of FERRUM COLLEGE exists to seek out and document both the material and performance traditions found in Virginia.

This record of traditional British ballads sung in southwestern Virginia is only one of a series of LP's produced by the Blue Ridge Institute documenting Virginia's varied and complex performance traditions. The LP concentrates on only one section of the state in order to demonstrate the vast range of singing styles and performance possibilities found in one relatively small section of the country. This range runs from very archaic unaccompanied solo singing styles, through examples sung with one instrument accompaniment, to full treatment by stringbands. All of these examples were recorded within approximately a forty year span and all styles presented here have existed side by side at the same time and place. By emphasizing the ever changing nature of folksong tradition, the ballads on this LP are presented as continually developing works of art and not simply as static texts, historical documents, or frivolous diversions. These songs have lasted many hundreds of years because they are important to the people who sing them and to the people who listen to them.

★ A BOOKLET OF FULL DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTIC NOTES IS ENCLOSED ★

***Front cover — Texas Gladden, ca. 1932. Photo by Alfreda Peel, courtesy Virginia Folklore Society and Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

***Back cover — Dan Tate, 1970. Photo by Blanton Owen.

***This record produced under a grant from the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities.

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(NR16549)

VIRGINIA TRADITIONS

BRI-002

BALLADS FROM BRITISH TRADITION

MISS ALFREDA PEEL (Right) VISITING A BALLAD SINGER. MISS PEEL LABELED THIS PHOTO, "MISS FANNIE GRUBB. I AM IN HERE BY ACCIDENT." APRIL 1933.

(Photo courtesy University of Virginia Library, Manuscript Division)

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY DIVISION

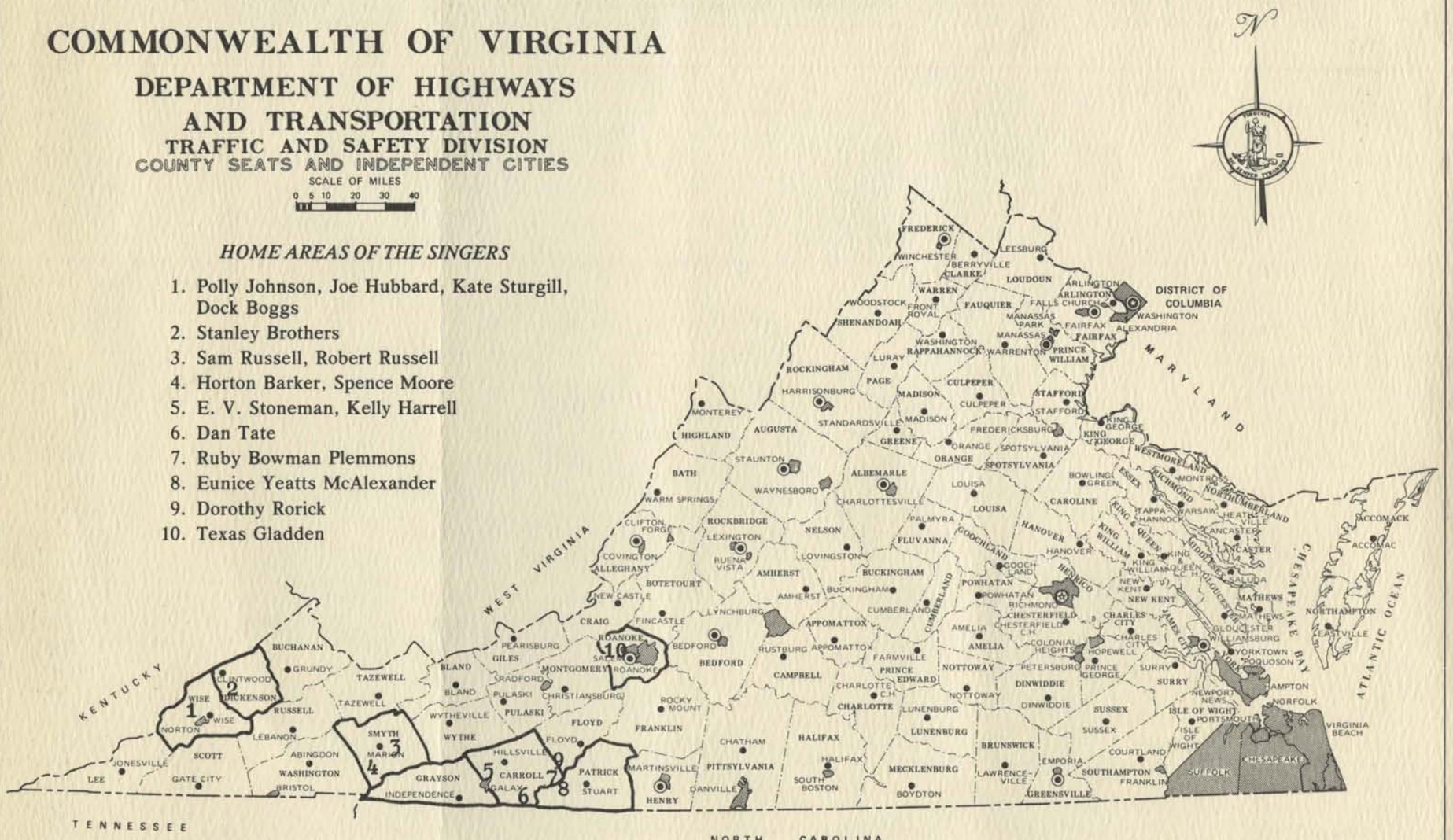
COUNTY SEATS AND INDEPENDENT CITIES

SCALE OF MILES

0 5 10 20 30 40

HOME AREAS OF THE SINGERS

1. Polly Johnson, Joe Hubbard, Kate Sturgill, Dock Boggs
2. Stanley Brothers
3. Sam Russell, Robert Russell
4. Horton Barker, Spence Moore
5. E. V. Stoneman, Kelly Harrell
6. Dan Tate
7. Ruby Bowman Plemmons
8. Eunice Yeatts McAlexander
9. Dorothy Rorick
10. Texas Gladden



REV. JAN. 1976
T & S-178C
DR. NO. TA-1418C

"I DON'T THINK THE LAST WORDS OF THAT SONG CAN BE BEAT."

The singing of the old traditional ballads harkens back to another time in our history. The art flourished in this country in the 18th and 19th centuries when time passed more slowly and people—especially rural people—had time to reflect on their heritage and themselves. The cultural distance between them and their ancestors was short—only a memory away. Balladry flourished in close-knit, fairly homogeneous familial and social groups because the members of these groups shared a common sense of history and valued that history highly. Change, though ever-present, was not valued for its own sake. When outside influences—new songs, new styles—were brought into a group, there was time to fully digest and adapt them until they fit comfortably into the old, familiar patterns. If the transition could not be made satisfactorily, the new was often discarded in favor of the old and familiar.

By the beginning of the 20th century our cultural landscape began to change ever more rapidly. The increased industrialization and drawing power of cities, the coming of automobiles and paved roads, radio and commercial recordings becoming more and more available—all of these and more ushered in a new sense of history; the history of "now" and of the future. Conservative, homogeneous societies were often flooded with newness and the people in them no longer had time to deal with change in the old ways. The once common homogeneous group became increasingly rare. As modernity accelerated, more and more people chose it in preference to the old ways. Traditional lifestyles took on the stigma of "old fashioned" and "behind the times." Those who chose to retain the old ways did so less and less because it was the "natural" thing to do; to elect the traditional over the new required extra effort and thought. It is a tribute to the Virginian's love of tradition and history that so much material reflective of the old life-ways remained a valued part of his life. The music on this album demonstrates the ability of many Virginians to hold on to the past, for all of the songs heard here can be traced back in time to the British Isles. These songs, presenting the complete gamut of performance possibilities, are all ballads—they tell a story.

The range of folk music in Virginia can be staggering. From Old World ballads brought by the original settlers, to current compositions by modern bards about today's events, Virginia has it all. While the same can be said of other states, few other states have received the same amount of attention in the study and collection of traditional music. From the early 20th century when the Englishman Cecil Sharp wandered over Virginia collecting Old World songs and the Virginia Folklore Society was doing the same, through the continued documentation of Virginia's folk music by the federally-funded WPA Writer's Project in the 1930s,to the present day, collectors, enthusiasts, and scholars have documented the extent and abundance of Virginia's folksong.

What Is A Ballad?

The ballad as a distinct form of song probably emerged sometime around 1200-1300 A.D. in northern Europe. The traditional ballad differs from other song forms in that it is a stanzaic, narrative folksong; it is constructed of lines which are grouped together in some recognizable scheme, and tells a story that has been perpetuated and changed in oral tradition over time. The schematic or stanzaic structure suggests that the form is newer than other, non-stanzaic songs, such as the epic and the romance. Additionally, each story can be told in any number of ways; thus, each ballad idea has a number of "versions" (certain key elements are restructured, but the story is still recognizable), and "variants" (only verbal or minor changes, such as a king becoming a squire).

A ballad is further distinguished from other stanzaic songs by three primary characteristics and it is classically thought that a song which lacks any one of the three elements cannot properly be called a ballad. First, the song concentrates on one single episode that is composed of scenes and ususally begins in the middle of the action, then moves from scene to scene with little or no transition. Second, the story is told dramatically, usually through the means of dialogue. Third, the narrative approach is impersonal; there is little or no intrusion of the narrator's point of view. One may sympathize with the character's plight, but during the performance such sympathy is not explicitly stated by the singer. In addition to these three primary characteristics, there are a number of secondary elements found in most ballads, but not necessarily in all ballads. Foremost among these secondary characteristics are repetition, which runs rampant through balladry, and the occurrence of refrains which are usually lyrical in function and do not advance the story.

The subject matter of a ballad is partly what determines whether or not it will remain popular over time or lose favor with the singers of a later era. It is somewhat surprising that very few ballads have the same themes as medieval literature, even though they were products of the same time period. For example, although the number of stories in medieval literature dealing with lives of the saints is overwhelming, fewer than a dozen or so ballads from the same period concern themselves with religious events. Likewise, historical chronicles of major events, while popular in literature, were apparently too broad in scope to be handled successfully in ballad form. Traditional ballads deal with those subjects which were of general concern to everyday people—people who lived in primarily homogeneous, semi-isolated groups. Because the ballad-stories were of interest to many different types of people, they could be carried from place to place and understood immediately by the new audience. That such migration occurred is evident from the fact that many ballads, including most on this record, have been found all over northern Europe as well as in the United States and the British Isles. Common subjects include historical and political events which could easily be localized and personalized (i.e., those dealing with immediate personal problems rather than with state or clan affairs), and beliefs and practices held in common (such as riddles and supernatural tales). The most common themes, of course, are the personal dramatic situations, especially those filled with "tragic pathos." Fully three-quarters of the 305 ballads found in Francis James Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* are love stories of one sort or another. In fact, traditional singers call these ballads "old love songs" and refer only to the written texts as "ballets."

Ballads have often been studied as examples of "primitive" poetry and their meter closely scrutinized in order to shed light upon such broad concerns as the origin of poetry itself. Although ballad study of this sort never proved anything conclusive about the broad question, in the process ballad meter itself was amply documented. The most frequently found meter in balladry ("Classic" ballad meter) is "common meter," a quatrain rhyming ABCB with a stress pattern of 4, 3, 4, 3. Almost as prevalent is the seven stressed, rhymed couplet form. Long meter, four stresses per line, is also found but less often than either of the four/three stress patterns above. Short meter, three stresses per line, is the least encountered of all forms. Some scholars feel that the couplet in long meter is the oldest form, but this assertion cannot be verified.

Ballad Scholarship In Virginia

In 1898, publication was completed of Francis James Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballad*. This work assembled, with extensive headnotes about the ancestry of each item, different ballad stories—versions and variants—judged to be the product of oral tradition rather than of more sophisticated literary tradition. Although Child did include three ballads collected from oral traditions in Loudon County, Virginia, in his collection, he considered the actual singing of these folk-ballads in a truly traditional context to be a practice of the remote past and no longer done. It remained for other scholars to seek these songs not in yellowed manuscripts, but from actual singers.

Immediately following Professor Child's work and possibly inspired by it, a handful of dedicated

ballad enthusiasts ushered in the first era of modern ballad and folksong collecting in the United States. Field collecting in the United States was pioneered, perhaps, by W. W. Newell, but he was soon followed by such people as Phillips Barry in New England, Josiah Combs in Kentucky, H. M. Belden in Missouri, John Lomax in Texas, Frank C. Brown in North Carolina, the aforementioned Cecil Sharp throughout the South, and Professor Alphonso Smith then at the University of Virginia. Smith founded the Virginia Folklore Society in 1913 and set as its first purpose the tracking down of all Virginia versions of the old Child ballads.

Smith set out to accomplish this task by initiating a systematic search, conducted by classroom teachers, throughout Virginia's public school system. The results pleased Smith: "that Virginia has found more of these [Child ballads] than any other state is due . . . to the interest and perseverance and intelligence of the teachers than to any or to all other causes." (Davis, *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, p. 29).

The culmination of these initial years of ballad hunting in Virginia finally took book form in 1929, after Professor Smith's death. Of the 305 distinct ballad stories given by Child, 51 were recovered in Virginia by 1929. Edited by Arthur Kyle Davis, *Traditional Ballads of Virginia* gives 440 versions and variants of these 51 narrative songs. Great attention was given to the large number of versions and variants because, to the scholar, every version of a ballad story has as much authority as any other, although aesthetically he may prefer one version over another.

In 1949, Dr. Davis published *Folksongs of Virginia*, a checklist of titles including Child ballads and other folksongs collected by the Virginia Folklore Society to that date. In 1960 he edited *More Traditional Ballads of Virginia* wherein he gives additional important versions, variants and tunes of 46 Child ballads including eight entirely new ballads found in Virginia since 1929. In both ballad collections, Dr. Davis explained his editorial practice of including only Child ballads and not the reams of other folksongs that have been submitted. He felt that because Child ballads are the "aristocrats of the folksong field" and are becoming harder to locate with every passing year, they deserve priority treatment. He acknowledged that the other folksong material needs publication and such seems the case, for of the 974 distinct songs collected by the Virginia Folklore Society (not including versions or variants), only 61 are from the Child canon. Davis was certainly aware that among traditional singers there is little or no distinction made between Child ballads and other equally favored "old love songs." Just like anyone else, folk singers prefer songs not for their historical pedigree, but for their story and tune.

Between 1938 and 1942, folklore collectors sponsored by the Federal Writer's Project (part of the Works Progress—later Projects— Administration) roamed over Virginia in search of traditional material. Like Virginia Folklore Society members, these WPA collectors were mostly enthusiastic amateurs devoted to the documentation of Virginia's folk culture in all its diversity. The guidance these collectors received from Herbert Halpert, Director of the National Folklore Project, and Mariam H. Sizer, Virginia's Folklore Consultant, was professional. Collectors were instructed to transcribe items verbatim—exactly as heard—and to take extensive field notes as to the history, source and use of the folklore, and the experience of the people who keep the lore alive as well as for the folklore item itself. With these guidelines in mind, collectors gave chase, often in their own backyards. Raymond Sloan of Ferrum, Virginia, for example, once interviewed himself and, incidentally, did a good job of it. Emory L. Hamilton of Wise visited his relatives and friends looking for the old ballads and had extraordinarily good results. All of the material collected under the auspices of the National Folklore Project was to have been housed in a national archive for the use of students, educators, and writers, but this national archive never materialized (although the Archive of Folk Song in the Library of Congress is the national folksong depository). Consequently, almost all of the Virginia material collected was deposited in Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. In 1967 this material was rediscovered and the folksong segment was organized by title with the final list of folksong holdings published in 1969 as *The Folksongs of Virginia: A Checklist*, compiled by Bruce Rosenberg. Dr. Charles L. Perdue, Jr., folklorist at the University of Virginia, is currently preparing an indexed listing of all Virginia folklore material in the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress.

Photo by Miss Fauntleroy, courtesy University of Virginia Library, Manuscript Division.

DR. ARTHUR KYLE DAVIS, JR. August 1932.

In addition to these major, organized collecting efforts, there have been numerous smaller scale, private ventures. The Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song used a sound truck in the 1940s to collect material in the southern Blue Ridge. Alan Lomax and others have made repeated collecting trips throughout the state over the past thirty or forty years and much of their material is now available on commercial recordings. Other folksong scholars, such as George Foss, Tom Carter, and this writer, continue to find excellent singers of the old songs.

The string of folksong collectors and enthusiasts who have reaped the wealth of Virginia material has gone almost unbroken since those first initial steps made by Alphonso Smith in the early 1900s. Although it is true that traditional singers of the old Child ballads become increasingly hard to find, the dire predictions made every decade or so that all the ballad singers would die out in a few years have so far not materialized. Furthermore, the number of native American and native Virginia folksongs based in form on the older models remains impressive and actually seems to grow. Even though taste in songs has changed over the years, many Virginians still cherish the old songs and continue to sing them. Styles and items within the folksong tradition have changed, but the tradition itself remains vital and healthy.

The Songs

All of the songs on this album are ballads recorded in Virginia by Virginia singers over a period of more than 40 years. It is important to note, however, that when dealing with culturally determined matters such as folk singing, arbitrary political boundaries—such as state lines—have no meaning. Unlike much "normal" history that

concerns itself with political events and units (such as "Virginia" history), the study of folklore demonstrates that people share cultural traits of a regional nature and not of a political nature. The performers on this record, for example, though all Virginians, illustrate regional differences in singing style. Singers from the far western reaches of the state sing differently from those of the southern Blue Ridge section. Consequently, singers from Wise County share more in common with eastern Kentucky singers than they do with singers from Patrick County.

The songs on this record are roughly organized to indicate progressively modern musical and performance concepts, going from most archaic to most modern. It will be noticed that these concepts—old or new—do not follow chronological progression; some examples of an older musical concept are recently recorded and some examples of modern ideas are, in fact, very early recordings. The headnotes to the songs do not cite all the examples, nor do they footnote every statement. For more complete information on the songs, refer to the collections and other books listed in the selected, annotated bibliography found at the end of these notes, and to the recordings given for the songs. As many of the songs were taken from old recordings (both commercial and field discs), the sound quality varies greatly, though in no case does it obscure the vocal performance.

SIDE 1

1. OLD IRELAND [William Hall, Laws N 30]—Polly Johnson, vocal. Recorded in Wise [Wise County], Virginia, March 24, 1939, by Herbert Halpert, Emory L. Hamilton, and an unidentified woman. 2:35.

Polly Branum Johnson, 74 at the time of this recording, has one of the most ornate, subtly embellished singing styles I've ever heard. Her voice is clear and pure and her phrasing and meter flow like oil. Her repertoire includes at least 12 ballads from the Child canon as well as a number of broadside and native American products. Mrs. Johnson was born and raised in Letcher County, Kentucky, was married when she was 14, and moved to Wise probably in the late 1880s. Her grandfather Henry played the fiddle and Polly played the banjo with her brother Malcolm, a guitar player, until she was about 40. Her daughter, Lela Hyden, now in her 70's, says that although Polly played the banjo she never sang at the same time. The banjo was used strictly for dances and "frolics" while the unaccompanied singing of the old love songs was a more private activity and remained a personal pleasure and family pastime.

"Ole Ireland," also called "My Fair Damsel" by Mrs. Johnson and "Old Harlen" by her daughter, is entitled "William Hall" in folksong collections. Originally from English broadside tradition, this version is very similar to a Boston broadside printed in about 1820. A broadside is a poem or song text printed on a long sheet of paper and intended for sale. Their publication was prolific in the 18th and 19th centuries both in this country and in England. This song, widely collected in the upper South, is obviously referring to the French-English wars, perhaps those of the late 1700s.

The two key features of this song that demonstrate its archaic style are the loose, rather than rigid, conception of time or meter, and the modal tune. This modal effect can be created in a number of ways and is done in this tune by omitting the 4th tone of the "normal" scale, and dwelling more than usual on the 6th tone. When one tone is omitted, the scale is called hexatonic and when two are left out, also a common practice, the scale is pentatonic.

"Well, Polly Johnson, Wise, Virginia, 'Old Ireland.' "

As I were a-walkin' up old Ireland,
There my mind were on my girl,
Cold drops of rain fell just as it happened,
Me and my true love were here fer to meet.

"Good morning, good morning, my pretty little fair one,
How do you think you could fancy me?"
"Oh, my fancy's placed on a brisk young farmer,
Who's just late-a-ly crossed the sea."

"Oh, now describe your true love to me,
Now describe him unto me.
Perhaps I've saw some sword run through him,
On the ground your love may fall."

"He is tall, both neat and tiny,
His eyes is of a very deep blue,
Oh, his hair is black and he wears it curly,
And his name is William Hall."

"Oh, yes, I've seed him and I knowed him,
And his name was William Hall,
I saw a French cannon ball shot through him,
On the ground your love did fall."

She wrung her hands and tore her hair,
Said, "Lord have mercy, what shall I do?
Oh, now we're parted brokenhearted,
Oh, my heart is broke in two."

"Cheer up, cheer up, my pretty little fair one,
Cheer up, cheer up, I say again,
Oh, now to convince you of the story,
Here's the ring that you give me."

They joined their lovely right hands together,
And to the church they both did go,
Saying, "Here is a couple and they'll get married,
Whether their parents is willing or no."

Woman: Isn't that nice!

Man: Is that one you learned way back?

P.J.: That's all I . . . yes, honey, way back, too, when I's nothing but a child.

Woman: Did that really happen?

P.J.: Well, yes, I guess it did.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Hattie Presnell. "William Hall." *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, Vol. I.* Folk-Legacy FSA-22.

2. THE THREE MAIDS [The Cruel Brother, Child 11]—Polly Johnson, vocal. Recorded in Wise [Wise County], Virginia, March 24, 1939, by Herbert Halpert, Emory L. Hamilton, and an unidentified woman. 3:36.

Mrs. Johnson learned this song when she was seventeen from her nephew in Johnson County, Kentucky, fifteen miles below Paintville on Big Sandy. Professor Child says this song was once one of the most popular of Scottish ballads and he has found the same story in Scandanavian and German ballads as well. The bride's bequest of good things to her friends but ill things to the author of her death is highly characteristic of ballad poetry. Perhaps because the crime seems motiveless by today's standards, this ballad survives only weakly in tradition. Davis, for example, gives no versions of it in either of his collections. Emory Hamilton recorded three variants of the song, two from Mrs. Johnson and the third from a neighbor. It has not been reported elsewhere in the state.

This ballad is a perfect example of what is termed "incremental repetition." The story progresses in clear increments or by regular consecutive additions: "What do you will your sister Ann?"; "What do you will your true love?"; "What do you will your mother dear?", etc. The seemingly meaningless refrain of this version has probably always been so for a version of the ballad collected in Scotland in 1800 (from Mrs. Brown of Falkland) is similar:

There was three ladies play'd at the ba,
With a hey ho and a lillie gay
There came a knight and played o'er them a',
As the primrose spreads so sweetly.
(Kittredge and Sargent, p. 20)

It seems this ballad, as Mrs. Johnson sings it, "degenerated" little over the 139 year span between the versions.

Another version of this song attributed to Mrs. Johnson goes:

What do you will your brother John? I lily-O
What do you will your brother John?
A rope and a gallows for to hang him on,
For the rose is sweet I know.

It is likely there was simply not enough room on the disc for this last verse and it was consequently omitted.

There was three maids a-playing ball, I lily-O
There was three maids a-playing ball, I lily-O
They some three lords for to court them all,
For the rose is sweet I know.

The foremost one was dressed in red, I lily-O
The foremost one was dressed in red,
And this is the one I make my wed,
For the rose is sweet I know.

The middle one was dressed in green, I lily-O
The middle one was dressed in green,
And this is the one I'll make my queen,
For the rose is sweet I know.

The foremost one was dressed in white, I lily-O
The foremost one was dressed in white,
Oh this is the one I'll make my wife,
For the rose is sweet I know.

Her brother John was standing by, I lily-O
Her brother John was standing by,
He wounded his sister with a knife
For the rose is sweet I know.

Ride on, ride on, to yonder's hill, I lily-O
Ride on, ride on, to yonder's hill,
Till I get down and bleed a while,
For the rose is sweet I know.

Ride on, ride on, to yonder's hill, I lily-O
Ride on, ride on, to yonder's hill,
Till I get down and make my will,
For the rose is sweet I know.

What do you will your sister Ann? I lily-O
What do you will your sister Ann?
My trunk of gold and silver pan,
For the rose is sweet I know.

What do you will your true love dear? I lily-O
What do you will your true love dear?
This snow white horse that I rode here,
For the rose is sweet I know.

What do you will your mother dear? I lily-O
What do you will your mother dear?
My snow white dress what I wore here,
For the rose is sweet I know.

Tell her to wash it nice and clean, I lily-O
Tell her to wash it nice and clean,
So my heart's blood can never be seen,
For the rose is sweet I know.

3. THE FARMER'S CURST WIFE [Child 278]—Joe Hubbard, vocal. Recorded in Wise [Wise County], Virginia, April 6, 1939, by Herbert Halpert and Emory L. Hamilton. :48.

Joe Hubbard was in his 70's at the time of this recording and his singing style still exuberant. He was born, raised, and lived most of his life around Pound, Virginia, but moved to Washington state soon after this recording session, where he lived with his daughter's family until his death. He knew many old songs and ballads—about which he apparently had strong feelings—and sang them all in his own unique style. I am familiar with no other performer who so nearly chants or recites his songs rather than "sings" them.

The curst wife—terror to demons—circulates as a humorous tale throughout the world, including the Orient, Europe, and Russia. Most American versions of the song are highly consistent in both storyline and detail; the devil comes and carries away the farmer's shrewish wife, but finds her so unbearable even in Hell that he returns her to the unfortunate farmer. The wide popularity of the song is well documented. Davis, for example, turned up fifteen texts and tunes for his 1929 *Traditional Ballads of Virginia* and eight additional ones for his *More Traditional Ballads of Virginia.*

Mr. Hubbard's version is unique not only because of his singing style, but also because his song lacks the usual "hi fi diddle li day" type refrain. After being almost badgered by one of the collectors to "put the fa la in it," Mr. Hubbard patiently explains, "I can't sing it that way, old fella." Cecil Sharp and others argued that a whistling refrain was once very common, for whistling was supposed to keep Satan at a distance, but field collecting has not born out this assumption. Only one of the seven versions in Sharp's *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians* (none from Virginia) and one of the twenty-three versions printed in both of Davis' works indicate whistling refrains.

Emory Hamilton, in his unpublished typescript "Folk Songs of the Cumberlands," gives another final verse attributed to Mr. Hubbard, but not sung by him in this example.

Now there's one advantage
That women have over men,
They can go to hell,
And come back again.

I hooked up a hog and went out to plow,
And how I got along I don't know how
I seed Mr. Devil come skipping through the field,
Says, "One in your family I wish to steal.

"It's neither your daughter,
No neither your son,
It's the old woman,
For the crime she's done."

He picked her up all on his back
He looked like a peddler with a pack on his back
He took her on to the forks of the road,
And he says, "Old woman, you're a terrible load."

Picked her up . . . you see he . . .

Took her on to the Devil's den,
Out run the Devil's nine or ten,
Two little devils come a-running up the wall,
Says, "Take her back Daddy she's a-going to kill us all."

Seven years there,
And seven years back,
She looked for the bread crust
She left in the crack.

"And what he musta had a terrible time, wasn't he?"

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Hobart Smith. "The Devil and the Farmer's Wife." Folk-Legacy FSA 17.
Andrew Rowan Summers. *Seeds of Love.* Folkways FA 2021.
Horton Barker. *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 1.
Carrie Grover. *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States [II].* Library of Congress L 58.
Lena Armstrong and Etta Jones. *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, Vol. I.* Folk-Legacy FSA-22.
Jean Ritchie. "Little Devils." *British Traditional Ballads in the Southern Mountains, Vol. II.* Folkways FA 2302.

4. AS I WALKED OVER LONDON'S BRIDGE [Geordie, Child 209]—S. F. "Sam" Russell, vocal. Recorded in Marion [Smyth County], Virginia, November 13, 1936, by Sidney Robertson. 3:46.

"London's Bridge," often called "Geordie" or "Georgie" in folksong collections, has been collected in many sections of North America, but only sporadically in each locality. Davis, in both of his books, lists five examples, including one collected from Mr. Russell in 1932 and, except for minor verbal variations, sung exactly as it is sung here. All of Child's fourteen versions were collected in Scotland, including two broadside texts slightly different from the oral ones. All American versions are very similar and seem to be an amalgamation of both oral and printed versions. This joining is most evident in the ending; Child's oral versions spare Geordie's life, whereas in his broadside ones, he is hung despite his lover's attempts to buy his freedom. Some scholars feel that the "Georgie" of this song could actually be George Gordon, fourth Earl of Huntly, who was involved in a somewhat similar situation in 1554.

This ballad perfectly demonstrates the highly stylized language characteristic of ballad poetry. In much ballad poetry a white horse is a "milk white steed"; blond hair becomes "long yellow locks"; and a lover is one's "own true love." The ballad tune is also an excellent example of a very early tune type. It is pentatonic, rhythmically loose, and—as described by E. C. Mead in *More Traditional Ballads of Virginia*—has a "beautiful flowing melodic line whose beauty lies largely in the 'non-harmonic notes of real melodic significance.' "

Sam Russell died in 1946 when he was about 89 years old. He worked as a carpenter and cabinetmaker, but is most well known among folklorists for his dulcimer making. Although he did play with a band made up of his son Joe on fiddle, grandson Robert on guitar, and Joe's brother-in-law Worley Rolling on banjo, he more often played and sang by himself. He played at many festivals in the 1930s, most notably at the Yorktown Centennial and for Eleanor Roosevelt at

Unknown photographer. Courtesy Virginia State Library.

S. F. "SAM" RUSSELL WITH ONE OF HIS DULCIMERS AT THE WHITE TOP FESTIVAL, CA. 1931-1939.

the White Top festival where, incidentally, he got most of the orders for his dulcimers. He was born in Grayson County, but moved to the Marion area as a young man shortly after his marriage. He learned much of his music from his mother and father and, in addition to the dulcimer, played the fiddle and fife.

As I walked over London's bridge
So early in the morning,
I overheard some fair one say
Lord, spare me the life of Georgie.
I overheard some fair one say
Lord, spare me the life of Georgie.

Go saddle and bridle my milk-white steed
Go saddle and bridle him quickly,
I ride away to the lone castle there
And pleading for the life of Georgie.
I ride away to the lone castle there
And pleading for the life of Georgie.

She rode all day and she rode all night
Till taken wet and weary,
A-combing back her long yellow locks
A-pleading for the life of Georgie.
A-combing back her long yellow locks
A-pleading for the life of Georgie.

And out of her pockets drew a purse of gold
The like I never saw any,
Saying "lawyers, lawyers come see yourselves
And spare me the life of Georgie."
Saying "lawyers, lawyers come see yourselves
And spare me the life of Georgie."

Georgie was a-standing by
Saying "I never killed anybody,
But I stole sixteen of the king's white steeds
And sold them in Gowandy.
But I stole sixteen of the king's white steeds
And sold them in Gowandy."

The oldest lawyer at the bar
Saying "George, I'm sorry for you,
That your own confession has condemned you to die
May the Lord have mercy on you.
That your own confession has condemned you to die
May the Lord have mercy on you."

As George was walking up through the streets
He bid farewell to many,
He bid farewell to his own true love
Which grieved him worse than any.
He bid farewell to his own true love
Which grieved him worse than any.

George was hung with a golden chain
The like I never saw any,
Because he came of a royal race
And courted a virtuous lady.
Because he came of a royal race
And courted a virtuous lady.

I wish I was on yonder's hill
Where kisses I've had many,
My sword and pistol all on my side
And fight for the life of Georgie.
My sword and pistol all on my side
And fight for the life of Georgie.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Paul Joines. "The Hanging of Georgie." *Ballads and Songs of the Blue Ridge Mountains.* Ashe Records AH 3831.
Andrew Rowan Summers. "Geordie." *The Unquiet Grave and other American Tragic Ballads.* Folkways FA 2364.

5.LITTLE MASSIE GROVE [Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard, Child 81] — Ruby Bowman Plemmons, vocal. Recorded in Meadows of Dan [Patrick County], Virginia, October 25, 1976, by Kip Lornell. 4:23.

In 1932, at the urging of the indefatigable ballad hunter Miss Alfreda Peel, Dr. A. K. Davis, Jr., recorded on an aluminum disc the singing of two friends and schoolmates, Miss Ruby Bowman and Miss Eunice Yeatts. These two young women, still close friends, supplied him with a number of songs, most of which were learned from parents and friends, although both readily admit refreshing their memory by going through the ballads in Davis' first book, *Traditional Ballads of Virginia.* Ruby's version of Little Massie Grove is printed in *More Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, pp. 172-175. The variant printed here and the one which appeared there are almost identical, the only difference being in verse six where Davis' "a-laughin' and a-talkin'" has become "huggin' and a-kissin'." This remarkable similarity of texts over a forty-five year span points out important characteristics of ballad singing, composing and learning. Although for the scholar there is no one "correct" version of any one ballad idea, for the ballad singer the "correct" version is usually the one they have learned. Furthermore, when singers are learning their version, they attempt to learn it exactly as sung and not to "add anything or to take anything

Photo by Miss Alfreda Peel, Courtesy University of Virginia Library, Manuscript Division.

MISS RUBY BOWMAN, August 1932.

away," as one man explained it to me. A song is learned when it is securely memorized; the practice of adding variation or changing the sequence of events was seldom deliberately done in this tradition.

My high, my high, my high holiday
And the very first day in the year,
Little Massie Grove to the church did go,
The gospel for to hear, hear,
The gospel for to hear.

The first one in was a fair lady,
And the next one was a girl,
And the next one was Lord Darnold's wife,
And the fairest of them all, all,
And the fairest of them all.

Little Massie Grove was standing by
To him she cast an eye,
Saying, "You must go home with me today
All night in my arms to lie, lie,
All night in my arms to lie."

"Oh no, Oh no," said little Massie Grove,
"I daresn't for my life,
For I can tell by the ring that you wear on your hand,
That you are Lord Darnold's wife, wife,
That you are Lord Darnold's wife."

"Why should we hold such vows sacred,
When he's so far away,
He's gone on top of the King's mountain,
Prince Henry for to see, see
Prince Henry for to see."

So they went home, huggin' and a-kissin',
And then they fell asleep,
But when they awoke on the next day's morn,
Lord Darnold stood at their feet, feet
Lord Darnold stood at their feet.

Saying, "How do you like my new coverlet,
And how do you like my sheets?
How do you like my fair young wife
Who lies in your arms and sleeps, sleeps
Who lies in your arms and sleeps?"

"Pretty well do I like your new coverlet,
Pretty well do I like your sheet,
But much better do I like your fair young wife,
Who lies in my arms and sleeps, sleeps
Who lies in my arms and sleeps."

"Rise up, rise up little Massie Grove,
Put on your clothes just as quick as you can,
It shall never be said in this wide world,
That I slayed a naked man, man
That I slayed a naked man."

"Oh, no, Oh, no," said the little Massie Grove,
"I daresn't for my life,
For around your waist you have two swords
And me not as much as a knife, knife
And me not as much as a knife."

"If around my waist I have two swords,
And you not as much as a knife,
Then you may take the best of them,
And then I'll take your life, life
And then I'll take your life."

"And you may strike the first blow,
Now strike it like a man,
And I will strike the next blow,
And I'll kill you if I can, can
And I'll kill you if I can."

So little Massie Grove struck the first blow,
It wounded deep and sore,
But Lord Darnold struck the next blow,
Little Massie couldn't fight no more, more
Little Massie couldn't fight no more.

Then he took his lady by the hand,
And he set her on his knee,
Saying, "Which one do you love the best,
Little Massie Grove or me, me
Little Massie Grove or me?"

"Pretty well do I like your deep blue eyes,
Pretty well do I like your chin,
But much better did I love the little Massie Grove
Than you and all your kin, kin
Than you and all your kin."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Paul Clayton. "Lord Darnell." *Folksongs and Ballads of Virginia.* Folkways FA 2110 (10").
Jean Ritchie. "Little Musgrave." *British Traditional Ballads in the Southern Mountains, Vol I.* Folkways FA 2301.
Joseph Able Trivett. "Mathey Grove." Folk-Legacy FSA 2.
Dillard Chandler. "Mathie Grove." *Old Love Songs and Ballads from the Big Laurel, North Carolina.* Folkways FA 2309.

6. WILD HOG IN THE WOODS [Sir Lionel, Child 18] — Eunice Yeatts McAlexander, vocal. Recorded in Meadows of Dan [Patrick County], Virginia, October 25, 1976, by Kip Lornell. 2:23.

Eunice Yeatts, along with Ruby Bowman, was recorded on aluminum disc by Dr. Davis in 1932 while both were students at Radford Teachers College. Eunice, whose father was a well-known area banjoman, remembers that in her family this song and "Little Massie Grove" were not considered proper for singing in mixed company. Still, Eunice did know the song and, at the urging of Alfreda Peel, relearned the words for Dr. Davis' visit. Eunice, unlike her friend Ruby Bowman, participated in the region's ballad tradition more as a listener than as a singer and became familiar with the ballads in a somewhat less active manner. Eunice is a wonderful lady; she is fun to visit with and, in her very modest fashion, passes on a wealth of information to anyone interested enough to listen.

Photo by Blanton Owen.

MRS. EUNICE YEATTS McALEXANDER, March 1978.

"Wild Hog in the Woods," also called "Bangum," or "Old Bangum," or "Bangum and the Boar," remains more strongly in Virginia's ballad tradition than in that of any other state in the upper South. There are no texts of it printed in the monumental *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, Volume II, Folk Ballads*, nor did John Harrington Cox print any version of it in his *Folk Songs of the South.* Sharp printed only four fragmented versions, the longest (four verses) being from Kentucky. Davis, however, was blessed with an abundance of versions; seven are printed in *Traditional Ballads* and an additional four are found in *More Traditional Ballads.* In the latter volume is a version sung by Mrs. Edna Ethel McAlexander which is almost identical to Eunice's version. Eunice's unusual second verse, however, is not in Enda's version and is seldom found elsewhere.

The song itself has "run the gamut from 'Arthurian romance to semi-burlesqued melodrama in homespun.'" (Davis, *More Traditional Ballads*, p. 72). None of the Virginia versions are similar to the four Child versions; gone are the knight, giants and "wild woman." What remains is a fanciful flight with a hog, although—in

keeping with Child—it is with a wooden knife. Some scholars feel the song's popularity on the 19th century minstrel stage may account in part for its development away from knights and toward "Old Bangum." The nonsense refrain is common to all collected versions and, although Edna McAlexander attempted to give it some sense by singing "Come out Kate, cut him down, kill him if you can," Eunice clearly does not sing it that way.

The tune of this ballad is slightly unusual in that it has been carried over into the instrumental music tradition of the Meadows of Dan/Laurel Fork region. A number of local fiddle players and bands play the piece, usually without singing the words, as dance music.

There is a wild hog in the woods
Diddle O Down, diddle O day,
There is a wild hog in the woods,
Diddle O
There is a wild hog in the woods,
Kills a man and drinks his blood,
Cam O Kay, Cut him down, kill him if you can.

I wish I could that wild hog see
Diddle O Down, diddle O day,
I wish I could that wild hog see
Diddle O
I wish I could that wild hog see,
And see if he'd take a fight with me,
Cam O Kay, Cut him down, kill him if you can.

There he comes through yonder's marsh
Diddle O Down, diddle O
There he comes through yonder's marsh
Diddle O
There he comes through yonder's marsh,
He splits his way through oak and ash,
Cam O Kay, Cut him down, kill him if you can.

Bangum drew his wooden knife
Diddle O Down, diddle O day,
Bangum drew his wooden knife
Diddle O
Bangum drew his wooden knife,
To rob that wild hog of his life,
Cam O Kay, Cut him down, kill him if you can.

They fought four hours of the day
Diddle O Down, diddle O day,
They fought four hours of the day
Diddle O
They fought four hours of the day,
At length that wild hog stole away,
Cam O Kay, Cut him down, Kill him if you can.

They followed that wild hog to his den
Diddle O Down, diddle O day,
They followed that wild hog to his den
Diddle O
They followed that wild hog to his den,
And there they found the bones of a thousand men,
Cam O Kay, Cut him down, Kill him if you can.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Jean Ritchie. "Old Bangum." *British Traditional Ballads in the Southern Mountains, Vol. I.* Folkways FA 2301.
Samuel Harmon. "Wild Boar." *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States (I).* Library of Congress L 57.
G. D. Vowell. "Bangum and the Boar." *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States (I).* Library of Congress L 57.
The Kimble Family. "Wild Hog in the Woods." *Blue Ridge Barn Dance.* County 746. (instrumental version).
Buna Hicks. "Sir Lionel." *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, Vol I.* Folk-Legacy FSA-22.

7. BARBARA ALLEN [Bonnie Barbara Allen, Child 84] — Dan Tate, vocal. Recorded in Fancy Gap [Carroll County], Virginia, July 10, 1962, by George Foss. 2:46.

Barbara Allen is the most widely known Child ballad in America. To list the places where it has been collected and the number of versions collected in each place would try the endurance of even the most avid ballad fan. Its existence in Virginia has been well documented; the Virginia Folklore Society alone has collected over 115 examples of the song. It has been noted, however, that the song is sometimes hard to find in the North, leading some to conclude the ballad owes at least some of its popularity to its publication in a number of popular mid-nineteenth century southern song books such as *The Charleston Warbler* and *The Virginia Warbler*. Scholars have so far been unable to find any Continental analogues to this ballad; it seems to be an entirely British, Scottish, and American product. Its antiquity, however, cannot be questioned. Pepys in 1666 praised the "little Scotch song of Barbary Allen" and Goldsmith, a century later, did the same in more flowery language. The last verse of this ballad, the "rose wrapped 'round the briar" normally associated with Barbara Allen and so admired by Dan, has, in fact, been lifted from another ballad, probably "Fair Margaret and Sweet William," for Child did not print it in any of his versions.

Dan Tate, well known for his large repertoire of old songs and tunes among folksong enthusiasts, sings in the same smooth, controlled style as do Ruby Bowman and Eunice McAlexander. He is also a fine banjo player and proves the exception to Cecil Sharp's contention that banjo music and ballad singing are incompatible.

It was early, early in the fall
When the yellow leaves were falling,
When sweet Willie on his death bed lay,
For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his servant through the town
To the place where she was dwelling,
"Alas my master calls for you
If your name be Barbara Allen."

They hadn't got more than half through town
When she heard the death bells ringing
And every one it seemed to say,
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

"Oh yes I'm sick, I'm sick indeed
And death on me is dwelling,
And never better will I be,
If I can't get Barbara Allen."

"Oh yes you're sick, and sick indeed,
And death on you is dwelling,
And never better will you be,
For you can't get Barbara Allen."

She hadn't got more than a mile from town,
Till she saw the corpse a-coming,
"Please set him down here by my side,
That I may look upon him."

The more she looked the more she wept,
When she fell to the ground a-crying,
Saying, "Take me up and carry me home,
For I think that I am dying."

They buried her in the old church yard,
They buried sweet Willie nigh her,
And out of his bosom sprang a red, red rose,
And out of hers a briar.

They grew till they came to the top of the church,
And they could not grow any higher,
They locked, they tied in a true lover's knot,
And the rose wrapped round the briar.

"I don't think the last words of that song can be beat."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

George Tucker. "Barbara Ellen." Rounder 0064.
Glen Neaves and the Virginia Mountain Boys. Folkways FS 3830.
J. B. Cornett. *Mountain Music of Kentucky.* Folkways FA 2317.
Roscoe Holcomb. "Barbara Allen Blues." *High Lonesome Sound.* Folkways FA 2368.
The Lilly Brothers and Don Stover. Folkways FA 2433.
Rebecca Tarwater. *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 1.
Versions and Variants of Barbara Allen. Thirty artists. Library of Congress L 54.

8. WIND AND RAIN [The Two Sisters, Child 10]—Dan Tate, vocal. Recorded in Fancy Gap [Carroll County], Virginia, July 10, 1962, by George Foss. 1:50.

"Wind and Rain," otherwise known as "The Two Sisters," "The Old Woman Down by the Seashore," or "Bow and Balance to Me," has wide currency throughout America. Dan's version, however, is fairly unique to American examples in a number of ways. Whereas most examples omit the surreal image of making music out of the dead girl's "long finger bones" and "long black hair," Dan's version actually pivots on that very point. His version does not, however, contain the part in which these gruesome instruments then name the murderer, a twist found in some older British versions. Also, Dan's "dreadful wind and rain" refrain is unusual; the more common idea is "Bow and balance to me" or "Bow down, bow down." In keeping with general tendencies of the ballad's history, however, Dan's version omits much detail, especially as to why one sister (usually the eldest) pushed the other into the water (either the sea or the river), what the miller did with the girl, and what became of the miller.

The tune, as sung by Dan, is given an unique twist by his almost random repetition of words in unlikely places. Although Kilby Snow, a neighbor of Dan's, sings the song to the same tune, he has been forced to regularize the melodic twists more than Dan because he accompanies his singing with an instrument, the autoharp. Perhaps for this reason, Dan has elected to sing the ballad unaccompanied rather than to sing with the banjo as he does with most other songs.

Two loving sisters was a-walking side by side
Oh, the wind and rain,
One pushed the other off in the waters, waters deep
And she cried a dreadful wind and rain.

She swum down, down to the miller's pond
Oh, the wind and rain,
She swum down, down to the miller's, miller's pond,
And she cried a dreadful wind and rain.

Out run the miller with his long hook and line
Oh, the wind and rain,
Out run the miller with his long hook and line
And he cried a dreadful wind and rain.

He hooked her up by the tail of the gown
Oh, the wind and rain,
He hooked her up by the tail of the gown
And he cried a dreadful wind and rain.

They made fiddle strings of her long black hair
Oh, the wind and rain,
They made fiddle strings of her long black hair
And she cried a dreadful wind and rain.

They made fiddle screws of her long finger bones
Oh, the wind and rain,
They made fiddle screws of her long finger bones,
And she cried a dreadful wind and rain.

The only tune that my fiddle would play,
Was oh, the wind and rain.
The only tune that my fiddle would play,
And he cried—he cried—a dreadful wind and rain.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Bascom Lamar Lunsford. "The Old Man from the North Country." *Minstrel of the Appalachians.* Riverside Folklore Series RLP 12-65.
Lula Curry. "The Squire's Daughter." *American Folk Song Festival.* Folkways FA 2358.
Horton Barker. "The Two Sisters." *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 7.
Jean Ritchie. "The Two Sisters." *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States (1).* Library of Congress L 57. Also, Folkways FA 2302.
Kilby Snow. *Country Songs and Tunes with Autoharp.* Folkways FA 3902.
Lee Monroe Presnell. "The Two Sisters." *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, Vol I.* Folk-Legacy FSA-22.

MRS. TEXAS GLADDEN. Miss Peel wrote: "Actually teaching a ballad to the next generation. Texas and her baby." July 1937.

Photo by Miss Alfreda Peel, courtesy University of Virginia Library, Manuscript Division.

9. THE DEVIL'S NINE QUESTIONS [Riddles Wisely Expounded, Child 1] — Texas Gladden, vocal. Recorded in Salem [Roanoke County], Virginia, 1941, by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax. 2:26.

Texas Smith Gladden, born in 1895, could trace her family back to an 18th century fiddle-playing Irish immigrant, James Smith. Her brother, Hobart Smith, kept the family's instrumental tradition alive while Texas maintained the old ballad tradition. She is an incredible singer of a large number of ballads, and has been recorded as much as any other ballad singer in Virginia. This includes recordings by various members of the Virginia Folklore Society (most notably and continually by Alfreda Peel and A. K. Davis) as well as by the Library of Congress and private collectors. Some of her songs, including this one and the one following, have appeared on either commercial recordings or on Library of Congress releases. Texas' performance of this ballad demonstrates a phenomenon that often occurs, but which is seldom noted by scholars and folksong collectors—the question of how the collector himself affects the tradition he is studying. Alfreda Peel, the renowned collector,

and Texas Gladden, the superb singer, were close neighbors and friends. According to Dr. Davis, Texas learned "The Devil and Nine Questions" from Miss Peel, who in turn collected and learned it from a Mrs. Rill Martin of Giles County in 1922.

Photo and caption by Miss Alfreda Peel, courtesy of University of Virginia Library, Manuscript Division.

"MRS. RILL MARTIN. SINGER OF 'THE DEVIL AND NINE QUESTIONS'." June 1934.

In fact, Miss Peel put the song on disc for Dr. Davis on August 9, 1932. In 1932 "The Devil and Nine Questions" was not in Texas' repertoire, but by the time of the Lomax's recording in 1941, it was. Davis goes on to say that "according to Miss Peel, Mrs. Gladden, a gifted singer, learned the song from her, Miss Peel, as seems corroborated by the texts and tunes, despite some interesting variation. The present editor [Davis] who recorded Mrs. Gladden's songs during the 1930s, did not find this ballad in her repertory at that time" (Davis, p. 4, *More Traditional Ballads*).

"The Devil and Nine Questions" is extremely rare in both America and Britain. Of collections from the upper South, it only appears in Davis' works and all have the same sources—Mrs. Rill Martin. Texas' version, like the earliest Martin text, begins immediately with the riddling and leaves out any part in which we are told for certain that the riddler is, in fact, the Devil. The observant listener will also notice that there are only eight riddles.

The Virginia version has details common to all of Child's versions, but is not like any one in particular. Child notes that riddles in stories and tales are traceable to "remote times" (Kittredge and Sargent, p. 2) but that the first printed example comes from about 1450.

Oh, you must answer my questions nine
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
Or you're not God's, you're one of mine
And you were the weaver's bonny.

What is whiter than the milk?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And what is softer than the silk?
And you were the weaver's bonny.

Snow is whiter than the milk
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And down is softer than the silk,
And I am the weaver's bonny.

Oh, what is higher than a tree?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety
And what is deeper than the sea?
And you were the weaver's bonny.

Heaven's higher than a tree
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And hell is deeper than the sea
And I am the weaver's bonny.

What is louder than a horn?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And what is sharper than a thorn?
And you were the weaver's bonny.

Thunder's louder than a horn
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And death is sharper than a thorn
And I am the weaver's bonny.

What's more innocent than a lamb?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And what is meaner than woman-kind?
And you were the weaver's bonny.

A babe's more innocent than a lamb
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And the devil is meaner than woman-kind
And I am the weaver's bonny.

Oh you have answered my questions nine
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And you were God's, you're none of mine
And you were the weaver's bonny.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Texas Gladden. *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 1.
Frank Proffitt. "Ninety and Nine." Folkways FA 2360.

10. THE BAD GIRL [The Bad Girl's Lament, Laws Q 26] — Texas Gladden, vocal. Recorded in Salem [Roanoke County], Virginia, by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax in 1941. 3:16.

"The Bad Girl," sometimes called "One Morning in May," is evidently a distant variant of the British (or Irish) broadside ballad "The Unfortunate Rake," and its melodic and textual relationship with "The Cowboy's Lament" is also evident. The title, "One Morning in May," is a floating one and is often a variant title of the "The Nightengale" (no relation to this song), or of "The Cowboy's Lament." "The Unfortunate Rake" was rewritten as "The Bad Girl's Lament" (also called "St. James Hospital") and this in turn was remade as "The Cowboy's Lament." The crucial difference between Texas' version of "The Unfortunate Rake" and the way it was printed in broadside form, is that the Rake was clearly dying of syphilis; except for deliberately bawdy versions, there is only a hint of that in American examples. Apparently, a "salivated body" resulted from the salts of mercury used in the treatment of veneral disease in the early days.

Texas' text is somewhat similar to the version collected by Cecil Sharp from Mrs. Laura Donald of Dewey, Virginia, in 1918, especially verses two and three, but this is unusual in that it omits the common "beat your drum slowly" line. As usual, Texas sings in her deliberate, clear, sweet style.

When I was a young girl, I used to see pleasure,
When I was a young girl, I used to drink ale,
Out of the ale house and into a jailhouse,
Right out of a barroom and down to my grave.

Come Papa, come Mama, and sit you down by me,
Come sit you down by me, and pity my case,
My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking,
My body's salivated and I'm bound to die.

Oh send for the preacher, he'll come and pray for me,
And send for the doctor to heal up my wounds,
My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking,
My body's salivated, and Hell is my doom.

I want three young ladies to bear off my coffin,
I want four young ladies to carry me on,
And each of them carry a bunch of wild roses,
To lay on my coffin, as I pass along.

One morning, one morning, one morning in May,
I spied this young lady all wrapped in white linen,
All wrapped in white linen and cold as the clay.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

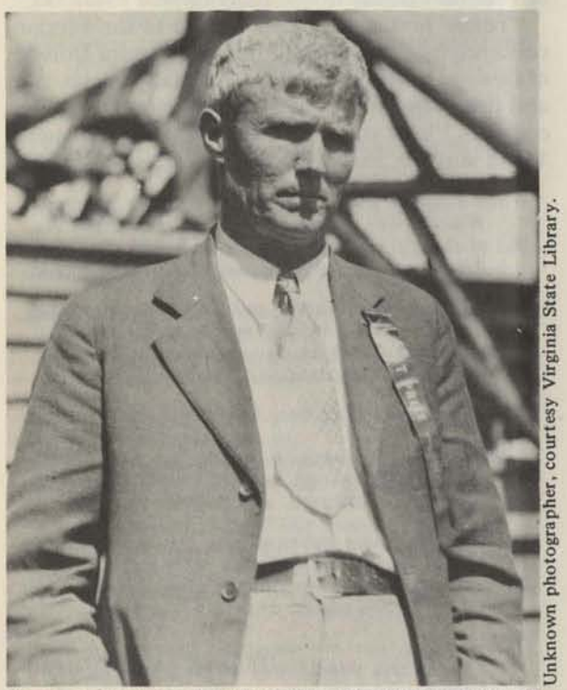
Texas Gladden. "One Morning in May." *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 1.
Dick Devall. "The Dying Cowboy." *Anglo-American Songs and Ballads.* Library of Congress L 20.

SIDE 2

1. THE TURKISH REBELEE [The Sweet Trinity, Child 286], Horton Barker, vocal. Recorded near Chilhowie [Smyth County], Virginia, April 19, 1939, by Herbert Halpert. 3:37.

This ballad has been oft recorded from Maine to Mississippi and goes by many names including "The Golden Vanity," "The Lowlands Low," "The Green Willow Tree," and a number of similar titles. All of the Virginia examples are most similar to Child's C version. Like most

southern texts—and unlike most from New England—the version here ends with the cabin boy, after being turned away by his captain, drowning himself rather than sink his comrades into the sea. In fact, in all the versions of the song collected everywhere, the ending is the most variable element of the story. The song originated in England and, unlike many English ballads, has not spread to non-English speaking countries. The earliest example of the song is a broadside, "Sir Walter Raleigh Sailing in the Lowlands," printed in the early 1680s. Mr. Barker sang a shorter version of this ballad for A. K. Davis in 1932 and it was printed in *More Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, pp. 342-43.



Unknown photographer, courtesy Virginia State Library.

HORTON BARKER AFTER RECEIVING FIRST PRIZE AT ONE OF THE WHITE TOP FESTIVALS, CA 1931-1939.

Horton Barker was born in Laurel Bloomery, upper east Tennessee, in 1889, and was blinded by a childhood accident. While still living in Tennessee, he attended the School for the Blind in Nashville where, from other students and teachers, he learned a number of his songs, including "The Turkish Rebelee." After his mother remarried and the family moved to Virginia, he transferred to the School for the Blind in Staunton. During the 1930s, Horton was visited and recorded by a number of ballad-hunters and performed at all of the White Top festivals, as well as in Washington, D. C., and other regional festivals. Like most singers, Horton was ever alert for a new song or a new version of an old song. He particularly liked the singing of Texas Gladden and Sailor Dad Hunt, also regular performers at the White Top festival. Horton's version of "The Turkish Rebelee" is a classic, both textually and melodically.

There was a little ship and she sailed on the sea
And the name of this ship was the Turkish Rebelee,
She sailed on the lonely, lonesome water,
She sailed on the lonesome sea.

Up stepped a little sailor, saying "what'll you give to me
To sink that ship to the bottom of the sea?
If I'll sink her in the lonely, lonesome water,
If I'll sink her in the lonesome sea."

"I have a house, and I have lands
And I have a daughter that shall be at your command,
If you'll sink her in the lonely, lonesome water,
If you'll sink her in the lonesome sea."

He bowed on his breast, and away swam he,
He swam till he came to the Turkish Rebelee,
He sank her in the lonely, lonesome water,
He sank her in the lonesome sea.

Some had hats, and some had caps
A-trying to stop the salt water gaps,
But she sank in the lonely, lonesome water,
She sank in the lonesome sea.

Some were playing cards, and some were shooting dice
And others stood around a-giving good advice,
As she sank in the lonely, lonesome water,
As she sank in the lonesome sea.

He bowed on his breast, and away swam he
He swam till he came to the Golden Willow Tree,
"I've sunk her in the lonely, lonesome water,
I've sunk her in the lonesome sea.

Now Captain, will you be as good as your word,
Or either will you take me in on board?
I've sunk her in the lonely, lonesome water,
I've sunk her in the lonesome sea."

"No, I won't be as good as my word
And neither will I take you on board,
Though you've sunk her in the lonely, lonesome water,
Though you've sunk her in the lonesome sea."

"If it were not for the love I have for your men
I'd do unto you just as I've done unto them,
I'd sink you in the lonely, lonesome water,
I'd sink you in the lonesome sea."

He bowed on his breast, and down sunk he
A-bidding farewell to the Golden Willow Tree,
He sank in the lonely, lonesome water,
He sank in the lonesome sea.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Bascom Lamar Lunsford. "The Merry Golden Tree." *Minstrel of the Appalachians.* Riverside Folklore Series RLP 12-645.
Horton Barker. *Traditional Singer.* Folkways FA 2362.
Justus Begley. "The Golden Willow Tree." *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 7.
Jean Ritchie. "The Merry Golden Tree." *British Traditional Ballads in the Southern Mountains.* Folkways FA 2301.
Joseph Able Trivett. "The Golden Willow Tree." Folk-Legacy FSA 2.
The Phipps Family. "Sinking of the Merry Golden Tree." Folkways FA 2375.
Ollie Jacobs. "A Ship Set Sail for North America," and Jimmy Morris, "The Golden Willow Tree." *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States (II).* Library of Congress L 58.

2. THE HOUSE CARPENTER [James Harris, The Daemon Lover, Child 243]—Dorothy Rorick, vocal and banjo. Recorded in Galax [Grayson County], Virginia, August 11, 1972, by Joe Wilson. 2:28.

When the banjo came into the upper South sometime in the second half of the 1800s, it entered already strong instrumental and vocal traditions. As a consequence, it was made to fit into these traditions as best it could. One pecularity of any picked instrument, including the banjo played in any style, is the necessity to adhere to a strict rhythm in order to play it comfortably and easily. This is especially true in the clawhammer style, in which the strings are struck in a downward motion of the index fingernail, followed by a brush stroke and noting of the fifth string with the thumb. Therefore, when people began to experiment with singing and playing the instrument at the same time, it often required some adjustment of the song's rhythm. "The House Carpenter," perhaps next to "Barbara Allen" in popularity, seems to be one of the more common Child ballads to be "instrumentalized." Dorothy's highly animated style of singing and playing give the song an unusually high energy level and her performance is an excellent example of breakdown banjo playing being successfully used to accompany a narrative song. Her version is most like Child's B version and is an excellent example of how compressed a highly involved narrative can become. In the short space of eight verses we learn of how two lovers met after a long separation, what each has been up to since their parting, the heartbreak of the woman's decision to leave her house carpenter husband and babes, and finally the outcome of the whole mess. This same story has been traced to at least 1685, but in American versions the name James Harris, the woman's cloven-footed lover (the Devil), and other similar details have disappeared. This performance is two verses longer than the one by Dorothy on Rounder #0058, probably because she plays no instrumental "breaks" between some of the verses. In keeping with general old-time Anglo-American tendencies, the banjo accompaniment demonstrated here is the song's melody; the use of harmony and improvisation is not found. In this style of accompaniment, the use of chords and chording is also not evident. That practice probably was introduced into the upper South either with the guitar or by the traveling minstrel show sometime around the turn of the 20th century.

Mrs. Rorick learned much of her music, including "House Carpenter," from her father Buck Quesinberry. She lived in Ohio for many years but kept up with her music by playing fiddle and banjo with such groups as "The Golden State Cowgirls" and returned to her Virginia home in

Photo by Blanton Owen

MRS. DOROTHY RORICK WITH WADE WARD AT THE UNION GROVE, N.C. FIDDLERS' CONVENTION, APRIL 1969.

Dugspur in the late sixties. Many of her songs and tunes reflect West Virginia and Kentucky traits, for her father worked in those states for many years and brought some of the area's music home with him.

This song was recorded during a jam session at the annual Galax Fiddlers' Convention and, to say the least, this kind of audience is strikingly different from the old "fireside" situation one normally associates with ballad singing. Although this public performance setting is relatively unusual, it is still found occasionally.

"We met, we met," cried an old true love,
"We met, we met," cried she
"I'm just returning from the salt, salt sea
And it's all for the sake of thee."

I once could have married to a king's daughter dear,
And I'm sure she'd a-married me,
But I refused her crown of gold,
And it's all for the sake of thee.

Now if you could have married to a king's daughter dear,
I am sure you were much to blame,
For I am married to a house carpenter
And I think he's a nice young man.

But if you will leave your house carpenter,
And come and go with me,
I'll take you where the grass grows green
On the banks of the deep blue sea.

Well, she called her three little babes to her knee,
And she gave them kisses three,
Saying, "Stay at home my three little babes
And keep your Papa company."

They hadn't been gone but about two weeks,
And I'm sure it was not three,
Till that gay lady began to weep
And she wept most bitterly.

It's neither for your gold I leave,
And it's neither for your store,
But it is for my three little babes,
That I never shall see anymore.

Now they hadn't been gone but about three weeks
And I'm sure that it was not four,
Till they sprang a leak in that old ship
And it sank to rise no more.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

The Watson Family. Folkways FA 2366.
Tom Ashley. *Tom Ashley and Tex Isley.* Folkways FA 2350.
Jean Ritchie. *British Traditional Ballads in the Southern Mountains, Vol I.* Folkways FA 2301.
Andrew Rowan Summers. *The Unquiet Grave and Other American Tragic Ballads.* Folkways FA 2364.
Texas Gladden. *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 1.
Lena Armstrong. *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, Vol. I.* Folk-Legacy FSA-22.

3. OH DEATH — Dock Boggs, vocal and banjo. Recorded in Norton [Wise County], Virginia, June 26, 1963, by Mike Seeger. 3:17.

Moran Lee (Dock) Boggs was born in 1898 in West Norton and lived near there most of his life. His renown as a singer and unique-style banjo player is widespread partly because of his "rediscovery" in the 1960s by Mike Seeger and his subsequent albums. In addition, his early commercial releases from the 1920s are classics.

Like many other country musicians who recorded commercially in the early days of recording, Dock Boggs' music career demonstrates the complexity of musical expression and influence during the 1920s and 1930s. His first music was strictly informal and was learned as any traditional musician learns it—from family and friends. Then, when record companies decided there was a market for country music, they sent people into the country to record it, and his music began to shift emphasis. Discovered and recorded by Brunswick Records, Dock then entered a professional music phase, traveling and playing shows at schoolhouses, dance halls, and the like, and selling his records. With the advent of records, the degree of outside musical influence on Dock's music and that of most other rural musicians increased tremendously. Dock especially was enamored by the blues, as seems obvious when listening to "Oh, Death." For more complete information on Dock's life and music, I suggest Folkways FH 5458, *Excerpts from Interviews with Dock Boggs.*

The song "Oh, Death," sometimes called "Conversations with Death," has appeared in a number of southern song and hymn books. It is—at best—only marginally a ballad. Although the story is told "straight" (the singer does not interject his own views directly), and it unfolds strictly through the use of dialogue, the narrative itself actually deals with an abstract condition

Courtesy Folkways Records

FOLKWAYS LP OF DOCK BOGGS. PHOTO CA. 1927.

rather than with a specific event. It is included here partly to illustrate just how far a song can drift toward lyric and still maintain the semblance of being a ballad. In oral tradition "Oh Death" is most often found in far southwestern Virginia and western North Carolina. Polly Johnson recorded ten verses of the song in 1939 for Emory

Hamilton and it has been recorded by John Cohen from a number of western North Carolina singers. For a full tracing of the song back to its British antecedents, see "Death and a Lady: Echoes of a Mortal Conversation in English and American Folksong Tradition," an unpublished M.A. thesis done at the University of North Carolina in 1966 by Katherine Susan Barks. Dock learned his version of "Oh, Death" from his friend Lee Hunsucker in the 1930s and fit it to Homer Crawford's unusual D tuning of f#CGAD, starting with the fifth string.

What is this that I can see
With icy hands taking hold on me,
I am death and none can excel
I'll open the doors to heaven or hell.

CHORUS:

Oh, death, oh, death, can't you spare me over till another year?
Oh, death, oh, death, please spare me over till another year.

Oh, death, someone would pray,
Couldn't you call some other day,
God's children prayed, the preacher's preached,
The time of mercy is out of your reach.

I'll fix your feet so you can't walk,
I'll lock your jaws so you can't talk,
Close your eyes so you can't see
This very hour come go with me.

Death, I come to take the soul
Leave the body and leave it cold,
To drop the flesh off of the frame
The earth and worms both have a claim.

CHORUS

My mother come to my bed
Place a cold towel upon my head,
My head is warm, my feet is cold
Death is moving upon my soul.

Oh, death, how you treating me
Close my eyes so I can't see,
You hurt my body, you make me cold,
You're ruling my life right out of my soul.

CHORUS

Oh, death, please consider my age
Please don't take me at this stage,
My wealth is all at your command
If you will move your icy hand.

The old, the young, the rich or poor,
Are all alike with me, you know,
No wealth, no land, no silver, no gold
Nothing satisfies me but your soul.

CHORUS

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Lloyd Chandler. "Conversations with Death." *High Atmosphere.* Rounder 0028.
Burzil Wallin. "Conversation with Death." *Old Love Songs and Ballads from the Big Laurel, North Carolina.* Folkways FA 2309.
Dock Boggs. Folkways FA 2351.

SPENCE MOORE AT THE BLUE RIDGE FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL, FERRUM, VIRGINIA, OCTOBER 1977.

4. THE THREE BABES [The Wife of Usher's Well, Child 79] — Spence Moore, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Chilhowie [Smyth County], Virginia, March 28, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 2:50.

Many old time musicians can remember when the first guitar came into their home area, usually sometime between the turn of the century and about 1915. Its entry into local, traditional music, therefore, was late; fiddle, banjo, and vocal styles were already firmly entrenched. With the guitar came some new musical ideas, some of which changed the old music forever. Primary among these changes was the introduction of chords and with them the concept of tunes not as a series of melody notes but rather as a "chord progression." With the instruction book provided with his mail-order guitar, a would-be player learned the basic chords needed to accompany a song or a fiddle tune. He simply strummed (or picked with his fingers) the proper chord and sang the song; he did not play the melody on the instrument as he was singing, as had been the practice with either fiddle or banjo accompaniment. That this practice put strains on the old music is evident in Spence's version of "The Three Babes" or "The Lady Gay," especially at the end of the third line in the verses. Here Spence, in an attempt to maintain the old modal flavor of the tune, uses a C chord in an otherwise D tune, making the chord progression D, G, D, G, C, D, A, D. This does not mean that the tune is worse for the effort; on the contrary, it has simply been transposed to another medium.

Spence's version, like most American ones, has neutered the children—often sons in the older versions—to "babes." The story also emphasizes the religious bent, especially in the last verse. Furthermore, it preaches to the listener of the sinfulness of pride; the babes insisting that the "golden spread" be taken off the bed, for example. Davis prints several similar Virginia versions, all like Child's D version, including one by Eunice Yeatts McAlexander. The title, "Wife of Usher's Well," incidentally, is not found in Virginia tradition.

There was a bride, most beautiful bride,
Three little babes had she,
She sent them away to a northern college,
To learn their grammeree.

They hadn't been away but a little while,
About three months and a day,
Till death spread wide all over the land,
And took her babes away.

"Oh, saviour dear," cried the beautiful bride,
"Who used to wear a crown,
Send to me my three little babes,
Tonight or in a morning soon."

By it being close to Christmas time,
And the nights being long and cold,
Down came running those three little babes,
Into their mother's home.

She fixed them a table in the back side room,
Spread over with bread and wine,
Come eat and drink my three little babes,
Come and eat and drink of mine.

"We can't eat your bread, sweet mother dear,
Neither can we drink your wine,
For yonder stands my sweet saviour,
From this we must resign."

She fixed them a bed in the back side room,
Spread over with a nice clean sheet,
On top of that was a golden spread,
She fixed them a place to sleep.

"Take it off, take it off, sweet mother dear,
Take it off and again," said he,
"How can we stay in this wide wicked world,
When there's a better place for me."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Almeda Riddle. "Lady Gay." *Songs and Ballads of the Ozarks.* Vanguard VRS 9158.
Jean Ritchie. "Wife of Usher's Well." *British Traditional Ballads in the Southern Mountains, vol. II.* Folkways FA 2302.
I. G. Greer. *Anglo-American Ballads.* Library of Congress L 7.
Texas Gladden. *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States (II).* Library of Congress L 58. Also, Prestige/International 25004.

5. QUEEN SALLY [The Brown Girl, Child 295] — Kate Peters Sturgill, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Norton [Wise County], Virginia, December 31, 1968, by Mike Seeger. 2:25.

Kate Sturgill, 61 at the time of this recording, was born and raised in Wise County. Music has obviously been an important part of her life, for she learned to play the parlor organ when only seven, picked up the guitar from her brothers while in her teens, played fiddlers' contests and radio shows with "The Lonesome Pine Trailers" when in her early twenties, helped A. P. Carter collect songs in the thirties, taught guitar and gave performances in local schools during the depression as part of her WPA job, recorded one song for the Library of Congress Archive of Folksong, performed on the radio in Norton from 1947-1954, and in the early fifties helped with a Sunday morning hymn program on Norton radio station WNVA. In the early 1970s she found time to record an album for Mountain Empire Community College Records (#002), from which the preceding biographical information was taken. Throughout this semi-professional music career, and perhaps because of it, Kate maintained a healthy respect for the traditional songs learned from her family and friends.

Kate's rendition of "Queen Sally" is highly unusual; she has grappled with the problem of fitting ordinary guitar chord accompaniment to a rhythmically complex song. Her solution has been to simply (but uniquely) alter the time from 3/4 to 2/4 as needed and not to attempt to adhere to any one strict time signature. She has subtly subjugated the instrumental accompaniment to the maintenance of the tune's odd twists and quirks.

The song itself has an interesting and complex history. Not only is it very similar to some versions of "The Brown Girl" (see Sharp variant J, pp. 303-304), it is also very much like some texts of "The Death of Queen Jane" (Child 170; Sharp 32, pp. 230-232). The main difference between the two ballads has to do with why Queen Jane (or Sally) is sick. In "The Death of Queen Jane," King Henry cuts a baby—his—from her dying body. In "The Brown Girl," there is none of that; we can only assume that she (in this case Queen Sally) is bearing an illegitimate child. Consequently, the overall emotion of the song is not one of sorrow on the part of the doctor (or King Henry), but rather of scorn. Kate's version is also unique in that the man called for is King Henry; he is usually a "young squire" or a "wealthy merchant." The name is evidently borrowed from "The Death of Queen Jane." Cox mentions a number of variant titles including "Sally and her True Love Billy," "The Bold Sailor," and "The (Young) Sailor from Dover" and says it has been in print since the late 18th century.

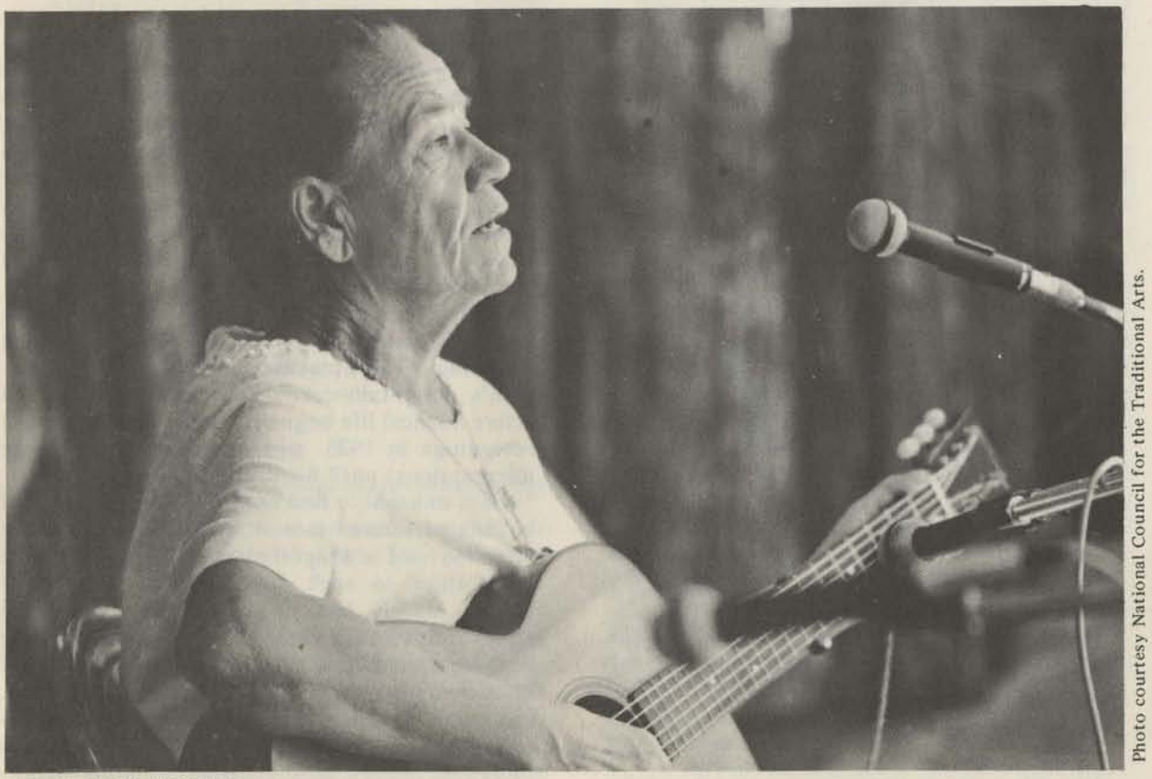


Photo courtesy National Council for the Traditional Arts.

KATE PETERS STURGILL

Queen Sally, Queen Sally
Taken sick down in bed,
No one knew the reason
To relieve her from bed.

King Henry was sent for
On horseback full speed,
To relieve Queen Sally,
Queen Sally his maid.

"I am no doctor,
Why did you send for me here?"
"Yes, you're the doctor
Who can kill or can cure.

"I courted you in honor,
You slighted me in scorn,
I'm now going to remind you
Of things past and gone.

"Of days past and gone, love,
Let's forget and forgive,
Spare me one hour,
Please Lord let me live."

"I'll spare you no hour,
No moment or day,
I'll dance on your grave love
When you're 'neath the cold clay."

Off of her fingers
Diamond rings she drew three,
"Wear these loving Henry,
When you're dancing o'er me.

"When you're dancing o'er me love,
On the banks of my grave,
Think of Queen Sally,
Queen Sally, your maid."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Andrew Rowan Summers. "Pretty Sally." *The Unquiet Grave and other American Tragic Ballads.* Folkways FA 2364.
Bascom Lamar Lunsford. "Death of Queen Jane." *Anglo-American Songs and Ballads.* Library of Congress L 21.
Cass Wallin. "Fine Sally." *Old Love Songs and Ballads from the Big Laurel, North Carolina.* Folkways FA 2309.

Unknown photographer, courtesy W. W. Russell.

RUSSELL FAMILY BAND. SAM, WORLEY ROLLING (SAM'S SON-IN-LAW), JOE, AND ROBERT. CA. 1935.

6. FROGGIE WENT A-COURTIN' — Robert Russel, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Marion [Smyth County], Virginia, November 14, 1936, by Sidney Robertson. 1:34.

"Froggie Went a-Courtin'," also called "The Frog's Courtship," and "The Frog's Wooing" in folksong collections, has been collected all over the South and remains one of the most popular children's folk songs. Brown gives 27 versions from North Carolina, Sharp found at least 11 (one from Virginia), and Cox lists 7 texts from West Virginia. One of the main differences among the many versions is the refrain. Most are similar to the version here—an "uh huh" following the first and third lines—but many versions have a more elaborate refrain, usually similar to "rain down bonny mish ki-me-oh." It is possible that this longer refrain became attached to the song after its reworking as a blackface minstrel song in about 1850. One version of this minstrel variation collected in oral tradition begins:

Way down South where the niggers grow
Sing song kitchie kitchie ki-me-O.

This minstrel variation has, in turn, reentered oral tradition as a children's song. Modern parodies of the song and tune abound; the tune is currently being used as an advertising jingle for a popular pancake syrup, replete with the "uh huh" refrain.

Perhaps because this song was used in blackface minstrel shows, it had at one time at least limited currency in Black music tradition; of the 36 versions collected by the Virginia Folklore Society and listed in *Folk-Songs of Virginia*, at least two were learned by whites from "Negro mammies." For more complete references to the history and range of this song in both England and America, see *Brown*, Vol III, p. 154.

Robert, Sam Russell's grandson, performs in a very natural, understated style. His father, Joe Russell, was a well known fiddle player in the Marion area and, together with Sam (playing dulcimer or fife), Robert, and Worley Rolling (playing banjo), he performed as a member of a string band. Robert worked in one of the local furniture factories and died in about 1972. Throughout the years he played with many groups and performed over several radio stations in the area.

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride, uh huh,
Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride, uh huh,
Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Sword and pistol by his side, uh huh.

Froggie says "Mousie will you marry me," uh huh,
Froggie says "Mousie will you marry me," uh huh,
Froggie says "Mousie will you marry me
Way down yonder in the hollow tree," uh huh.

Not without Mr. Rat's consent, uh huh,
Not without Mr. Rat's consent, uh huh,
Not without Mr. Rat's consent
I wouldn't marry the president, uh huh.

Where will the wedding supper be, uh huh,
Where will the wedding supper be, uh huh,
Where will the wedding supper be
Way down yonder in a holler tree, uh huh.

What will the wedding supper be, uh huh,
What will the wedding supper be, uh huh,
What will the wedding supper be
Two big beans and a black-eyed pea, uh huh.

Little piece of corn bread laying on a shelf, uh huh,
Little piece of corn bread laying on a shelf, uh huh,
Little piece of corn bread laying on a shelf
If you want any more Lord you'll sing it for yourself.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Almeda Riddle. *Songs and Ballads of the Ozarks.* Vanguard VRS 9158 and *American Folk Songs for Children*. Atlantic 1350.
Pleaz Mobley. *Anglo-American Songs and Ballads.* Library of Congress L 12.

7. THE RAGING SEA, HOW IT ROARS [The Mermaid, Child 289] — Ernest V. Stoneman and the Blue Ridge Corn Shuckers, [E. V. Stoneman, vocal, guitar and harmonica; Uncle Eck Dunford, fiddle; George Stoneman, banjo; Irma Frost, vocal]. Recorded in Atlanta, Georgia, February 22, 1928, by Victor Record Company [Victor 21648]. 3:20.

The string band as we know it today was born when the first fiddler and banjoman decided to play together. This fiddle/banjo combination, in fact, provided the only ensemble music heard in many places until they were joined by the guitar, harmonica (or mouth harp), mandolin, autoharp, and other instruments as they became available. With the growth of the recording industry, so grew the development and formality of string bands. Groups of musicians who once played together informally at local dances and other social get-togethers, elevated themselves when recording for record companies by giving themselves a name and a somewhat restricted membership. Stoneman's bands, for example, have always included family members and friends but have gone by a number of different names including "The Stoneman Family" and "Stoneman's Mountaineers." Pop Stoneman led an active musical life beginning with his commercial recordings in 1925, and continuing (with some interruptions) until his death in 1968.

It is unusual to find examples of the old Child ballads performed in a string band format. It is often too hard to adapt their rhythmic and melodic pecularities to such a rigid form, and many ballads simply lost popular flavor as musical styles and tastes changed. "The Raging Sea, How it Roars," a Victor release, probably survived because of the catchy tune, semi-burlesque story, easily followed incremental repetition, and interesting chorus. John Harrington Cox gives a thorough history of the ballad from its supernatural state (connected with the mermaid),

through its appearance in broadside form, to the many parodies and burlesque versions printed in popular songsters and college song books. First seeing print in 1765, "The Mermaid" remained popular as a broadside until the 20th century.

As in most versions, the mermaid has disappeared from this one, along with the supernatural elements of the story. It is believed that the refrain about "the landlord sleeping down below" is a corruption of the original "the landsmen are lying down below." This performance was Stoneman's second recording of the song; he first recorded it solo in 1925 as "The Sailor's Song" on the Okeh label. The ballad's currency in the upper South is high to moderate; Davis, for example, lists sixteen Virginia versions in both collections.

(instrumental introduction)

"It's nine times around," said the captain of the ship.
"It's nine times around," said he.
"Oh, it's nine times around, or we're sinking in the deep
"While the landlord lies dreaming down below."

CHORUS:

Oh the raging sea how it roars
And the cold chilly winds, how they blow,
While tonight us poor sailors are sinking in the deep
And the landlord lies dreaming down below.

(instrumental)

The first on deck was the captain of the ship
A fine-looking fellow was he,
Says, "I have a wife in old Mexico
"And tonight she is looking for me."

Chorus

(instrumental)

The next on deck was the lady of the ship
A fine-looking lady was she,
Says, "I have a husband in New Mexico
"And tonight he is looking for me."

Chorus

(instrumental)

The next on the deck was the sassy little cook
A sassy little cook was he,
He cared no more for his wife and child
Than he does for the fish in the sea.

Chorus

(instrumental)

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Ernest V. Stoneman and the Blue Ridge Corn Shuckers. Rounder 1008.
Emma Dusenberry. "The Mermaid." *Child Ballads Traditional in the United States (II).* Library of Congress L 58.

8. THE JEALOUS LOVER [Laws F 1] — The Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys. [Carter Stanley, lead vocal and guitar; Ralph Stanley, tenor vocal and banjo; other members probably Chubby Anthony, fiddle; Curly Lambert, mandolin; Lindy Clear, bass]. Recorded at the Silver Creek Ranch near Manassas [Prince William County], Virginia, August 8, 1956, by Mike Seeger. 2:13.

The Stanley Brothers, Ralph and Carter, were born and raised in the Clinch Mountains of Virginia. From the first they were surrounded with traditional music, learning much of their music from their mother. Shortly after World War II, they organized their first semi-professional band, similar in format, style, and repertoire to other regional string bands. As a result of listening to Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, then a new group broadcasting over WSM's Grand Old Opry, the Stanleys soon shifted their music toward this newer, smoother music. By the late forties they had firmly established their own musical identity and began broadcasting over a number of radio stations, including those in Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia, and Raleigh, North Carolina. Especially in their initial efforts to acquire the new sound introduced by Monroe, the Stanleys drew heavily on the old, familiar songs and reworked them into their own image. "The Jealous Lover" is a perfect example of this effort.

Courtesy Ralph Rinzler

FLYER ADVERTISING A NEW YORK PERFORMANCE BY THE STANLEY BROTHERS, CA. 1964.

"The Jealous Lover," sometimes called "The Low Green Valley" by the Stanleys, is by all accounts one of the most widely known ballads of its kind in America. Both G. Malcolm Laws (*Native American Balladry*, p. 60) and Phillips Barry (*American Speech III*, no. 6, August 1929, pp. 441-447) agree that the ballad derives from British broadsides of the sentimental type including "She Never Blamed Him" printed in the 1820s, and "The Murder of Betsy Smith" of the same era. A number of native American ballads have borrowed heavily from both the tune and story of "The Jealous Lover," probably the best known being "Pearl Bryan," the celebrated song of two Kentucky dental students doing in poor Pearl.

This rendition of "The Jealous Lover" by the Stanleys was made before bluegrass music had gained much urban—particularly Northern—respectability. Like other bands, they were barely scratching out a living playing schoolhouses, VFW halls, and bars. Partly because of pressure exerted by the record producers at the time, it is interesting to what ends the Stanleys went in order to entertain their often string-music-ignorant audiences. The recording made during this live performance at Silver Creek Ranch, for example, includes the then popular rock-and-roll number, "Shake, Rattle, and Roll." The Stanleys, although they might have become rusty on the old material, as indicated when Ralph forgot the words to this song, never lost sight of it. Now that the rest of the world has caught up with old-time country music, Ralph, today, increasingly emphasizes the old styles and songs. It is unfortunate that Carter, due to his death, never got to enjoy the current degree of acceptability that his music has attained.

This recording of the song is two verses shorter than the commercial recording the Stanleys made of it less than a decade earlier. The omitted verses read (following the second verse):

One night when the moon was shining,
And the stars shone brightly too,
Down to her lonely cottage,
Her jealous lover drew.

and following the sixth verse:

Farewell my loving parents,
I'll never see you any more,
But long you'll wait my coming,
At the little cottage door.

(mandolin introduction)

Down in the low green valley
Where the violets bloom and fade,
There sleeps sweet blue-eyed Ellen
In a cold and silent grave.

She died not brokenhearted,
Nor by disease she fell,
But in one moment parted,
From the one she loved so well.

(fiddle)

Come love and we will wander
Out in the woods so gay,
And as we stroll together,
We'll name our wedding day.

The way grows dark and dreary
And I do not wish to stay,
Of wandering I am so weary,
So let's retrace our way.

(mandolin)

Carter (spoken): Do you know it? . . . Retrace?
Ralph: . . . Ha! Ha! . . . yea.

Retrace your steps, no never,
You have no wings to fly,
And in this lonely mountain,
Fair Ellen you must die.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Stanley Brothers. *Original Recordings.* Melodeon MLP 7322.
Burnette and Rutherford. "Pearl Bryan." *Old Time Ballads from the Southern Mountains.* County 522.
The Phipps Family. "Pearl Bryan." Folkways FA 2375.

9. THE BUTCHER'S BOY [Laws P 24] — Kelly Harrell, vocal; unidentified violin and guitar. Recorded in New York, January 7, 1925, by the Victor Record Company [Victor 20242]. 3:16.

Kelly Harrell's concept of what music is—as expressed by his rendering of "The Butcher's Boy" here—is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the musical concept expressed by Polly Johnson earlier on this record. Kelly very much disliked being called a "country singer." To him that term conjured up images of everthing he considered bad about country singing—nasality, undignified ornamentation, and flat notes—everything that was traditional and loved by many rural singers. He did, however, have a great respect for the old songs. His first four recordings, made in 1925 for Victor, were all American and British ballads that had age and respect. The fact that his modern musical expressions were recorded fourteen years before Polly Johnson's "archaic" ideas, shows that music traditions cannot be viewed simply as "evolving" or "degenerating" in strict chronological order. Traditions are complex; they undulate and weave around in time in unexpected ways. To simplify them too much is to do them great injustice.

Crockett Kelly Harrell was born in Draper's Valley, Wythe County, Virginia, in 1889, and remained there until he moved over the mountain to Fries, Virginia, in the early 1900s to work in the textile mill there. While at Fries he became acquainted with a fellow worker, Henry Whitter, one of the earliest country singers to record commercially. Although Kelly initially did not share Whitter's desire to make phonograph records, after he heard Whitter's first discs, he decided that he could not do any worse. In 1925 he left Fieldale, Virginia, where he had moved the previous year, and trekked alone to New York for an audition. The Victor people apparently liked what they heard, or were simply ignorant of what they were "supposed" to hear, for they recorded four songs, including "The Butcher's Boy." As Kelly did not play an instrument, the studio provided back-up musicians. Thus began a long career. After this initial session, Kelly recorded for Okeh in 1925, but he soon returned to Victor, this time with the traditionally oriented Virginia String Band. His recording career ended with the depression and he died in 1942. Fortunately, much of the music of Kelly Harrell and the Virginia String Band has been reissued by County Records (#408), Floyd, Virginia.

British antecedents of "The Butcher's Boy" are given in detail in H. M. Belden's *Ballads and Songs Collected by the Missouri Folklore Society.* It can be traced back to at least four British broadsides of the late 18th or early 19th centuries and has been printed on American broadsides as well. The uniformity of the American versions suggests that the song's entrance into oral tradition was partly the result of its publication in popular pre-Civil War songsters as well as in at least five songsters published between 1869-1914. Its strength in Virginia oral tradition is evident. Davis lists 26 versions in his *Folksongs of Virginia.*

(violin introduction)

In London city where I did dwell,
A butcher's boy I loved so well,
He courted me my life away,
And with me then he would stay.

There is a strange house in this town,
Where he goes up and sits right down,
He takes another girl on his knee
He tells her things that he won't tell me.

I have to grieve, I'll tell you why,
Because she has more gold than I,
Her gold will melt and silver fly,
In time of need she'll be as poor as I.

I went upstairs to go to bed,
And nothing to my mother said,
Oh mother, she did seem to say,
What is the trouble my daughter dear?

Oh mother dear, you need not know,
The pain and sorrow, grief that flows,
Give me a chair and sit me down,
With pen and ink to write words down.

(violin)

Go dig my grave both wide and deep,
Place a marble stone at my head and feet,
Upon my breast, a snow white dove,
To show to the world that I died for love.

And when her father first came home,
"Where is my daughter, where has she gone?"
He went upstairs and the door he broke,
He found her hanging to a rope.

He took his knife and cut her down,
And in her bosom these words he found,
A silly girl I am you know
To hang myself for the butcher's boy.
Must I go bound while he goes free,
Must I love a boy that don't love me?
Alas, alas, will never be,
Till oranges grow on apple trees.

(violin)

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

The Lilly Brothers. *Country Songs.* Rounder Special Series 02.
The Blue Sky Boys. RCA AXM 2-5525.
Buell Kazee. *Sings and Plays.* Folkways FS 3810.
Monroe Presnell. "In Dublin City." *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, Vol. II.* Folk-Legacy FSA-23.
Almeda Riddle. *Ballads and Hymns from the Ozarks.* Rounder 0017.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Belden, Henry M., and Arthur Palmer Hudson. *Folk Ballads from North Carolina, Vol. II* of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, and *Folk-Songs from North Carolina, Vol. III*, of the same series. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952.

A very large collection of ballads and songs, mostly from the western half of North Carolina. The notes are generally good, but sometimes spotty.

Burton, Thomas G. *Some Ballad Folks.* Johnson City: East Tennessee State University Research Development Committee, 1978.

Good personal accounts by five Beech Mountain, North Carolina, ballad singers (all female) about their songs. Includes a cassette tape with many of their ballads.

Child, Francis James. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 volumes. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1862-1898. Reprint edition, Dover Publications, 1965.

The definitive collection of English language ballads. A must for serious ballad students. Contains 305 distinct ballads, each with numerous variants.

Coffin, Tristram P. *The British Traditional Ballad in North America.* Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series, Vol. II, 1950; revised, 1963.

A basic bibliographical too, this book lists most Child ballads found in America, describes their story types, and gives references for each item.

Cox, John Harrington. *Folk-Songs of the South.* Boston: Harvard University Press, 1925. Reprint edition, Dover Publications, 1967.

A good collection of ballads and songs all from West Virginia. The notes to the songs are often good, especially considering the date of publication.

Davis, Arthur Kyle, Jr. *Folk-Songs of Virginia: A Descriptive Index and Classification.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1949.

More Traditional Ballads of Virginia. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960.

Traditional Ballads of Virginia. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929. Reprint edition, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1969.

The first of these books is especially useful for title variants. The other two are the most complete Virginia collections of ballads available. A must for Virginia folksong students. The notes to the songs are good.

Laws, G. Malcolm, Jr. *American Balladry from British Broadsides.* Philadelphia: Publications of the American Folklore Society, 1957.

A useful bibliographical tool, it includes story summaries and references for each item listed.

Native American Balladry. Philadelphia: Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series, Vol. I, 1950; revised, 1964.

This does for American ballads what the previous book does for American ballads from British broadsides.

Rosenberg, Bruce A. *The Folksongs of Virginia: A Checklist of the WPA Holdings, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.* Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1969.

A useful, though incomplete, listing of the folksongs collected by the WPA in the 1930s.

Sargent, Helen Child, and George Lyman Kittredge. *English and Scottish Popular Ballads.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, Students Cambridge Edition, 1904.

This book, a standard text, contains at least one text of all but seven of the ballads found in Child's larger collection. Known as the "one volume Child," it is a standard text. The notes are abridged and revised.

Sharp, Cecil J. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians.* 2 Volumes. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. Reprint edition, 1960.

This is one of the earliest complete editions of songs from a given area. Child ballads are in Volume 1, other folksongs in Volume 2. The notes are often thin.

Shinhan, Jan Philip. *The Music of the Ballads,* Vol. IV of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1957.

Contains the music to most of the ballads and songs found in Volumes II and III.

Wilgus, D. K. *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1959.

A careful examination of ballad scholarship since Child. Concise and easily readable.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

The following LPs offer a good introduction to several forms and styles of traditional music heard in the upland South. Most feature several traditional performers and all have informative booklets about the music and the performers.

American Fiddle Tunes. Library of Congress L 62.

Ballads and Songs of the Blue Ridge Mountains: Persistence and Change. Asch AH 3831.

Bluegrass from the Blue Ridge: Country Band Music of Virginia. Folkways FS 3832.

Emmett W. Lundy: Fiddle Tunes from Grayson County, Virginia. String STR 802.

The Hammons Family: A Study of a West Virginia Family's Traditions. Library of Congress L 65 and L 66.

High Atmosphere: Ballads and Banjo Tunes from Virginia and North Carolina. Rounder 0028.

Old Originals: Instrumental Music Recently Recorded in Virginia and North Carolina. 2 vols. Rounder 0057 and 0058.

The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, North Carolina, Vol. I: The Older Ballads and Sacred Songs. Folk-Legacy FSA-22.

Traditional Music from Grayson and Carroll Counties: Songs, Tunes, with Fiddle, Banjo, and Band. Folkways FS 3811.

The Watson Family Tradition. Topic 12TS336.

The records listed above and in the notes can be ordered from one of the mail-order houses given below. County and Rounder carry the most extensive old-time music catalogues.

Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. [only AFS records]

County Records, Floyd, Virginia.

Folkways Records, 43 W. 61st. N, New York, New York 10023. [only Folkways and Asch Records]

Rounder Records, 186 Willow Ave., Somerville, Mass. 02144.

"THE BEAR HUNTER; MR. DOW HELVEY."

Photo and caption by Alfreda Peel.
Courtesy University of Virginia Library, Manuscripts Division.

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"ROSA TICKLE. BLAND, [VIRGINIA]," CA. 1933.
(Photo by Alfreda Peel, courtesy Univ. of Va. Library, Manuscripts Division)