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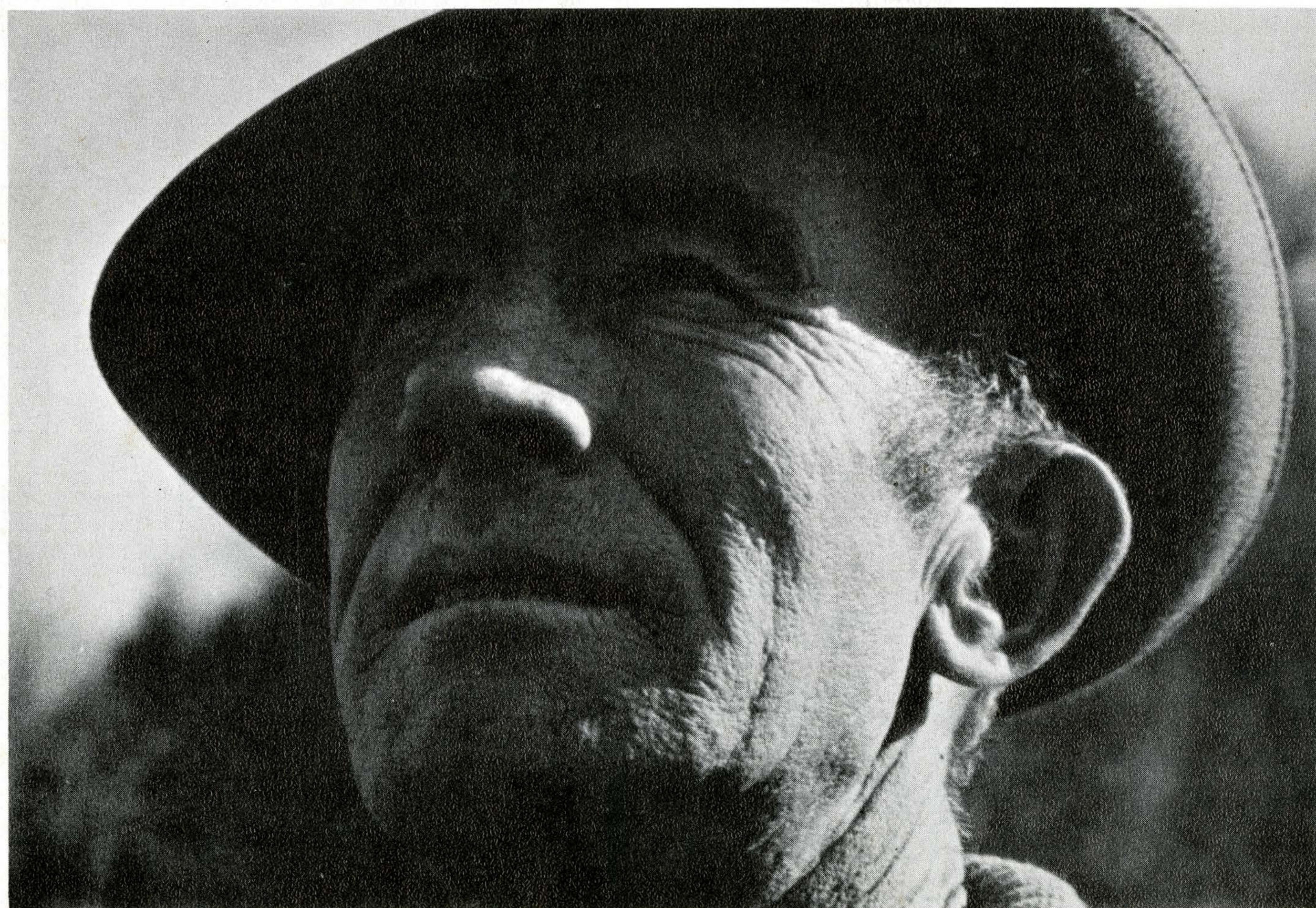
FRANK PROFFITT

Reese, North Carolina



FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. SHARON, CONNECTICUT

FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. FSA-1

FRANK PROFFITT

FRANK PROFFITT is, without question, one of this country's finest traditional singers. Born in Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee, in 1913, he now lives near Reese, North Carolina, a rural postal station which you won't find on a map of that state.

Frank is a tobacco farmer and a part-time carpenter who adds to his family's income by making and selling Fretless Banjos and Mountain Dulcimers. On this record, he accompanies himself with one of his homemade banjos.

Most of Frank's songs have come to him from his father, Wiley Proffitt, and from his aunt, Nancy Prather, although he has been gathering songs from his friends and neighbors for many years, as well. As a young man, Frank contributed eleven songs to The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore—a surprisingly small number, considering that he has given well over one hundred songs to his friend, collector/singer Frank Warner.

The songs on this record range from the great ballads to simple, but lively, banjo tunes. Included is the original *"Tom Dooley"* which Frank Warner collected from him in 1938.

The recordings were made in January, 1962, at Frank's home, and are proudly offered as the first in Folk-Legacy Records' series of authentic field recordings.

side 1:

TRIFLING WOMAN (Proffitt)
CLUCK OLD HEN
MORNING FAIR
BONNIE JAMES CAMPBELL (Child 210)
LORD RANDALL (Child 12)
HANDSOME MOLLY
REUBEN TRAIN
TOM DOOLEY (Lomax, Warner, Proffitt)
I'M GOING BACK TO NORTH CAROLINA

side 2:

MOONSHINE
RYE WHISKEY
I'LL NEVER GET DRUNK NO MORE (Proffitt)
WILD BILL JONES
GYPS OF DAVID (Child 200)
SONG OF A LOST HUNTER (Child 68)
SOURWOOD MOUNTAIN
GOING ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN (Proffitt)

jacket design — al ardelle

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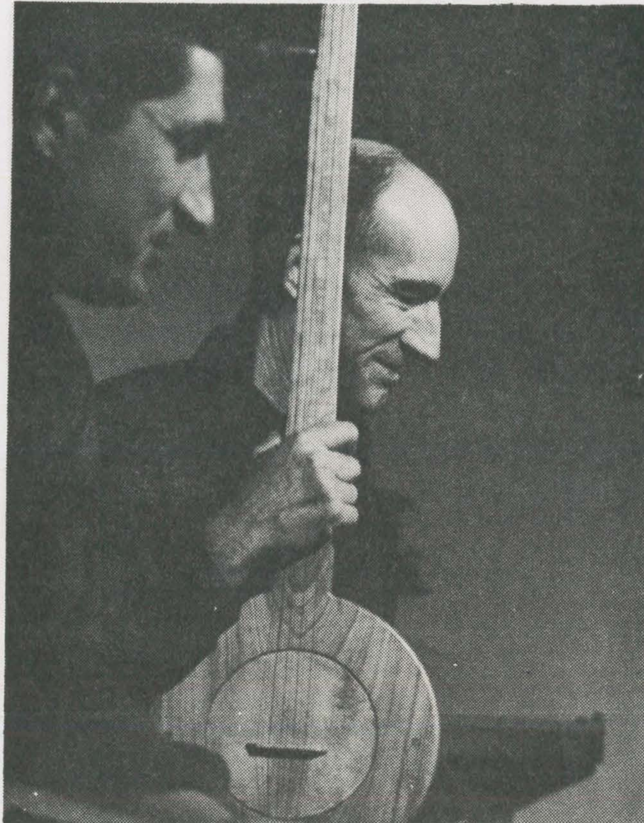
FRANK PROFFITT

of Reese, North Carolina



Recorded and edited by
Sandy Paton

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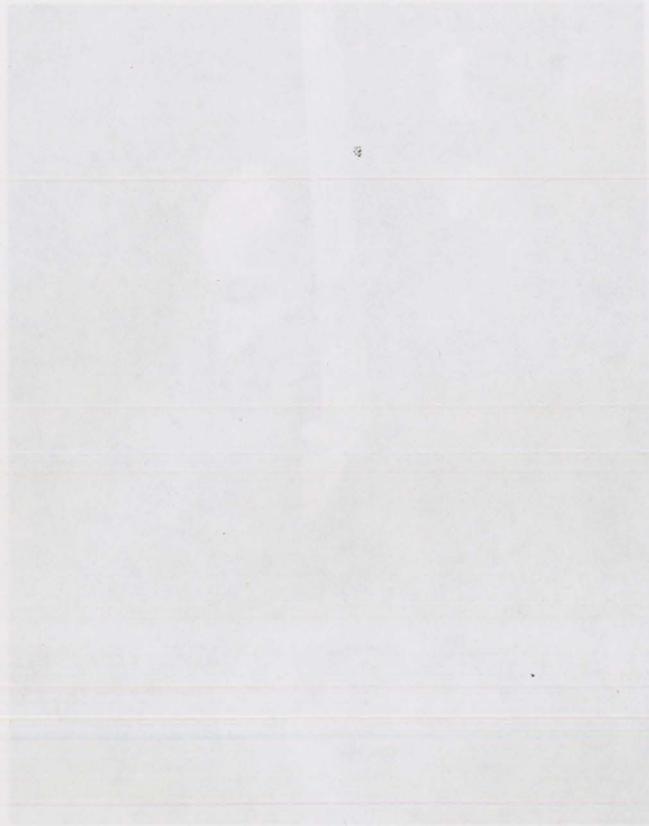
SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069



FRANK PROFFITT

Frank Proffitt, a tobacco farmer and part-time carpenter, lives in the rugged mountains of northwestern North Carolina near Reese, a rural postal station that you won't find on a map. Local residents call the area "the Beaver Dams country" -- Stone Mountain stretches its bulk along one side of the valley and up behind his house is timber-covered "Hoss Ridge" where, during the Civil War, farmers hid their horses to prevent their being commandeered by passing troops or rustled by raiding marauders. ("A man could lose his stock, either way.") His house is situated in a hollow, now called "Mountaindale", but, as Frank says, "It used to be called 'Pickbritches Valley' and I call it that yet." Frank built the house with his own hands -- a small, but comfortable home for his family.

Frank and his wife, Bessie, have six children. Oliver, the eldest, is in the Air Force and Ronald is studying at Kentucky's Berea College, which leaves only Franklin, Eddie, Gerald and Phyllis at home. This is not a large family, by mountain standards, but Frank has had to work hard to keep them all well-fed and in school. The mountains of North Carolina are beautiful and Frank loves them as only a mountain-man can, but they are hard and rough as well. Although tobacco is a good cash crop, the small mountain farm can produce only so much and Frank has sometimes been forced to leave his family to seek work elsewhere. During the war, he worked at Oak Ridge. ("I was just a carpenter, working on the buildings. I didn't have any idea what they were making over there.") For awhile, he worked in a spark-plug factory in Toledo, Ohio. During what he calls "Hoover Times", he built roads with the WPA. ("That was when a pound of fat-back cost three cents and, when you wanted to send a letter, you'd take an egg to the Post Office to swap for a stamp.") Things are much better now, of course. His tobacco crop, some strawberries, and his carpentry work make it possible for him to stay at home with his family. His home-made banjos and dulcimers help out a lot, too. Last year, an important part of his income came from the sale of these handsome instruments, fashioned along the same patterns he learned from his father. Working in the old house (once his father's) on the hill behind his home, it takes Frank nearly a week to hand-carve, fit, and finish an instrument, but the result is well worth the effort. His appearance, with Frank Warner, at the 1961 University of Chicago Folk Music Festival did a lot to stimulate sales in that area. And no wonder -- anyone who hears him coaxing such fine music out of his home-made, fretless banjo will readily understand why Chicago's banjo-pickers were anxious to try their hand at it. (Those who would like further information regarding them may write directly to Frank. The address is simply: Frank Proffitt; Reese, North Carolina.)

Most of Frank's songs have come to him through his family. His father, Wiley Proffitt, used to sing to Frank as they worked together in the fields or up in the woods, cutting timber. Wiley Proffitt was the proud son of a "Southern Yankee" -- a Tennessee man who went "across the mountain to join the boys in blue" during the Civil War. Frank's aunt, Nancy Prather, was another fine ballad singer. Frank took care of her in the months preceding her death and, at that time,

made a conscious effort to learn all her fine songs and ballads -- for Frank was interested in his people and their history. He not only loved the old songs, he was aware of their value and deliberately set out to preserve them.

It was in 1937 that Frank and Anne Warner went to visit Bessie's father, Nathan Hicks, on "the Beech" -- Beech Mountain, North Carolina. They had heard that Nathan made dulcimers and sought him out in their quest for old songs and ballads. When they made plans to return the following year for more song-swapping, Nathan made sure that his son-in-law would be there for the occasion -- a very exciting event in the lives of these isolated mountain folk. This, then, was the first meeting between the two Franks -- Warner and Proffitt -- and the beginning of a lasting friendship. It was during this first meeting that Frank Proffitt sang "Tom Dooley" to Frank Warner, the song which, later, was to sell several million records and become, perhaps, the best known folksong in America.

We, of Folk-Legacy Records, consider Frank Proffitt one of this country's finest traditional artists. We are proud to offer this record as the first in our series of authentic field recordings.

For catalogues, write:
FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.
Huntington, Vermont

Side I. Band 1. TRIFLING WOMAN

Some years ago, Frank was working on a logging job with a fellow who was constantly complaining about the way his wife treated him. In fact, one day he came to Frank, moaning that he was so miserable he would kill himself, if only he had a gun. Frank says, "I was just ornery enough that I wanted to see if he really would, so I went and got him one." The man backed down, but Frank decided to commemorate his misery in song anyway. This is the result.

O Lord, I've been a-working,
Working like a dog all day,
Trying to make another dollar
For you to throw away.

(You trifling woman, you.)

You spend all my money,
You go dressed so fine,
While I wear old clothes
And I don't have a dime.

You won't bake my bread,
You won't cook my beans,
You want to stand by that haul-road
So you can be seen.

Well, I'd rather be a-hanging,
Hanging by an old grape vine,
Than to know I'd have to spend my days
With you all the time.

(You're running me crazy, woman.)

Well, I've been a-working
Ten long hours a day,
Trying to make another dollar
For you to throw away.

Side I. Band 2. CLUCK OLD HEN

Popular as both a fiddle and a banjo tune, Frank says he has known this one all his life. He explains that "every banjo-picker in the mountains around here knew that one." Describing the version which later came out of Nashville as a fiddle tune entitled "Cackling Hen", Frank says, "They put it on a much higher speed, with lots of running up higher. I kind of liked it, but it didn't have much of the old flavor left." Here Frank makes good use of his home-made banjo which has no frets. (See notes for REUBEN TRAIN.)

Cluck, old hen, cluck and squall,
You ain't laid an egg since way last fall.

Cluck, old hen, cluck and sing,
You ain't laid an egg since way last spring.

My old hen, she won't do,
She lays eggs and taters, too.

Oh, I've got a good old hen,
She lays eggs for railroad men.

The old hen cackled, she cackled in the lot,
The next time she cackled, she cackled in the pot.

Side I. Band 3. MORNING FAIR

Not often found in this form, this ballad is widely popular in America as "The Butcher Boy", perhaps because it was widely printed in the early songsters. BROWN points out that it appeared as a stall ballad in both Boston and New York. Frank learned his splendid variant from his aunt, Nancy Prather. The ballad is usually found with the following as the final couplet:

And on my breast place a turtle dove
To show the world that I died for love.

See: BELDEN, BROWN, COX, EDDY, LINSCOTT, GARDNER/CHICKERING, RANDOLPH.

As I woke up one morning fair
To take a walk all in the air,
I thought I heard my true love say,
Oh turn and come my way.

You told me tales, you told me lies,
You courted a girl worth more than I,
But gold will fade and silver will fly,
My love for you will never die.

Oh, tell me, Willie, oh, tell me please,
Do you take her upon your knees
And hug and kiss her all so free
And tell her things you won't tell me?

Is it because that I am poor
That you turn me far from your door
To wander out in a cruel dark world
Because you love a rich man's girl?

She gave me cake, she gave me wine,
I rode out in her carriage fine;
She set herself upon my knee
And begged and kissed me all so free.

Her father gives to me his land
And also of his daughter's hand;
To give it up, a fool I'd be,
To trade it all for love of thee.

She went upstairs, up to her bed;
A aching was all in her head;
A rope she tied around the sill;
They found her hanging, cold and still.

There in her bosom was this note,
All with her pen these words she wrote:
Heap up my grave so very high
So Willie can see as he rides by.

Side I. Band 4. BONNIE JAMES CAMPBELL (Child 210)

One of the most concise and beautiful of all the ballads, this is extremely rare in tradition. In fact, no trace of it has been found recently in either England or Scotland. DAVIS III points out that only six texts have been reported from North America -- three from Canadian sources, two from West Virginia and one from Virginia. A seventh text, as yet unpublished, is indicated in the records of the Federal Writer's Project as having been collected in Kentucky. Child printed only four texts of the ballad, all from Scottish sources. While all of Frank's verses appear in one or another of Child's texts, no single one of them is as complete as his. Indeed, this is the most complete text ever reported. The Virginia text (DAVIS III) contains six of the seven stanzas in the present text and was obtained from a former resident of Watauga County, North Carolina, not far from Frank's home. Frank learned it from the singing of his father, adding that his Aunt Nancy Prather knew it, too. He explains that it was quite widely known in his part of the mountains "as a fiddle tune", although the words were rarely sung, "because it's awfully

hard to fit 'em in when you play it fast as it always was played." Perhaps this explains why BROWN failed to recover the ballad in North Carolina.

See: BARRY, COMBS, DAVIS III.

Booted and spurred
And bridled rode he,
A plume in his saddle
And a sword at his knee.

Back come his saddle
All bloody to see;
Back come his steed,
But never come he.

Riding on the highlands,
Steep was the way;
Riding in the lowlands,
Hard by the Tay.

Out come his old mother
With feet all so bare;
Out come his bonnie bride
Riving of her hair.

The meadows all a-falling
And the sheep all unshorn;
The house is a-leaking
And the baby's unborn,

But Bonnie James Campbell
Nowhere can you see
With a plume in his saddle
And a sword at his knee.

For to home come his saddle
All bloody to see;
Home come the steed,
But never come he.

Side 1. Band 5. LORD RANDALL (Child 12)

Frank sings two versions of this very popular ballad, the present one and a more Americanized one in which the protagonist's name is Jimmy Ransome. Both were learned from his "father and other kinfolk." Asked which he preferred, Frank simply remarked that they were quite different. GEROULD points out that this ballad has been found "as far east as Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary, as far north as Scotland and Sweden, and as far south as Calabria." The verses referring to the death of the dogs are comparatively rare in the "Lord Randall" versions of the ballad which have been recovered in this country, although they are quite common in the "Croodlin' Doo" texts. BRONSON prints 103 tunes and texts from the English language tradition and only four of the American "Lord Randall" versions contain similar references. DAVIS III prints two texts (one with tune) with the dog stanzas, one of which is included in BRONSON.

BROWN prints four texts, none of which make reference to the dogs. Frank's text, therefore, can be compared favorably to any reported in this country.

See: BELDEN, BRONSON, BROWN, COX, DAVIS III, EDDY, FLANDERS, GARDNER/CHICKERING, LINSCOTT, RANDOLPH, SHARP, etc.

Oh, it's where have you been, Lord Randall, my son;
Where have you been, my handsome young one?
I've been a-hunting and a-rambling, Mother, make my bed soon,
I'm a-tuckered and a-wearied and I fain would lie down.

What did you spy while a-hunting, Lord Randall, my son;
What did you spy while a-hunting, my handsome young one?
My bonnie so true, Mother, make my bed soon;
I'm a-tuckered and a-wearied and I fain would lie down.

What did you eat for your supper, Lord Randall, my son;
What did you eat for your supper, my handsome young one?
Fried eels and fried onions, Mother, make my bed soon;
I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

Was there scraps from the table, Lord Randall, my son;
Was there scraps from the table, my handsome young one?
My dogs ate them all, Mother, make my bed soon;
I'm sick to the heart and I fain would lie down.

Where might be your dogs, Lord Randall, my son;
Where might be your dogs, my handsome young one?
They ups and they died, Mother, make my bed soon;
I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

I'm afeared you are poisoned, Lord Randall, my son;
I'm afeared you are poisoned, my handsome young one.
I'm afeared I am poisoned, Mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

What are you leaving to your mother, Lord Randall, my son;
What are you leaving to your mother, my handsome young one?
My cattle and oxen, Mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

What are you a-leaving to your sister, Lord Randall, my son;
What are you a-leaving to your sister, my handsome young one?
My gold and my silver, Mother, make my bed soon;
I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

What are you leaving to your brother, Lord Randall, my son;
What are you leaving to your brother, my handsome young one?
My houses and lands, Mother, make my bed soon;
I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

What do you leave to your bonnie love, Lord Randall, my son;
What are you leaving to your bonnie love, my handsome young one?
Hell-fire and damnation, Mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick unto death and I fain would lie down.

Side I. Band 6. HANDSOME MOLLY

Found masquerading under a variety of names in the American collections, this song has even made the grade with the "hill-billy" performers. Peggy Seeger says she learned it from a program of southern hill-billy music and has included it in her "American Folksongs for Banjo"--(Folk-Lyric FL-114). George Banman Grayson, a blind fiddler who, incidentally, came from Frank Proffitt's neighborhood, recorded it for Victor in 1927. Doc Watson sings the same version Grayson recorded on Folkways FA 2355--"Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's". Frank's song is very similar to Grayson's, not surprisingly, since, as Frank puts it, "that's a well-known song up here". Frank takes it a good deal slower, arranging the verses a bit differently, and there are a few minor textual variations, but, essentially, it is the same song. Frank has his version from his father and his aunt and "from others around here". LOMAX II notes that the song has recently been found in Ireland by Peter Kennedy.

See BROWN ("Lover's Lament"), LOMAX II ("Lovin' Hannah"), SHARP ("The Irish Girl"), plus DAVIS I, McGILL, RANDOLPH, etc.

I wish I was in London
Or some other seaport town;
I'd step my foot in a steam boat,
I'd sail the ocean 'round.

While a-sailing around the ocean,
A-sailing around the sea,
I'd think of handsome Molly
Wherever she might be.

She rode to church a Sunday,
She passed me on by;
I saw her mind was a-changing
By the way she rolled her eye.

Don't you remember, Molly,
When you gave me your right hand?
You said, if you ever married,
That I'd be the man.

Now you've broke your promise,
Go marry who you please;
While my poor heart is aching,
Here lie at your ease.

Her hair was black as a raven,
Her eyes as black as a crow,
Her cheeks were like lilies
That in the morning grow.

If I was in London
Or some seaport town,
I'd step my foot in a steamboat,
I'd sail the ocean 'round.

Side I. Band 7. REUBEN TRAIN

LOMAX II prints a version of this song which has been collated from several "picked up through the years along the song-hunting trail." He states that it was a harmonica blower's tune and a great favorite among country banjo-pickers and fiddlers in the South. He adds that "one occasionally meets a singer who knows a few verses of the song", but that he has "never heard it sung in ballad form". It seems quite likely that Frank Proffitt has done much the same thing in gathering his "ballad form" version from various mountain musicians with whom he has played in the past. BROWN prints two versions, one of which contains seven stanzas; Lomax's collation contains eight stanzas, as does the version recorded here. I have not found the song elsewhere in print, although a four stanza version may be heard on the Folkways album mentioned above (again performed by Doc Watson) and Ralph and Richard Rinzler's excellent notes point out its relationship to both "Train 45" and the familiar "900 Miles". They also add a short discography. This was the first tune Frank Proffitt learned to play on his home-made banjo and here the fretless instrument may be heard in a style not unlike the bottle-neck style favored by a number of Negro guitarists. Sliding the fingers up and down the neck, which produces the slurred notes, Frank says, "You can't hardly do this on a fretted banjer; it takes a lot of clearance on the neck, with nothing to get in the way."

See: BROWN, LOMAX II.

Oh, Reuben's coming down the track
And he's got his throttle back
And the rails are a-carrying him from home.

If the boiler don't bust,
'Cause it's eat up with rust,
I'll soon be a long ways from home.

If you don't believe I'm gone,
Look at the train I'm on;
You can hear the whistle blow a thousand miles.

I'm a-going down the track;
I ain't never coming back
And I'll never get no letter from my home.

Well, the train run so fast
Till I knowed it couldn't last,
For the wheels was a-burning up the rail.

Old Reuben had a wreck
And it broke old Reuben's neck,
And it never hurt a hair on my head.

Now I'm walking up the track,
Hoping, I'll get back;
I'm a thousand miles away from home.

If I ever get back to you,
You can beat me black and blue,
For I'll never leave my shanty home.

Side I. Band 8. TOM DOOLEY (DULA)

Thomas Smith, of Watauga County, North Carolina, wrote to BROWN that this now famous murder ballad "has been sung and played for many years (probably for over forty) in Watauga... There is hardly a fiddler or banjo picker in our country who cannot play 'Tom Dooley.'" The Brown collection contains three distinct ballads based on the murder of Laura Foster by Thomas C. Dula in Wilkes County, North Carolina, in 1866. (See BROWN, Volume II, #'s 302, 303 and 304.) Frank Proffitt's ballad seems, essentially, to be #303, with additional verses, two of which appear in #304. Since the song achieved such wide popularity, much has been written about the murder. Those who want the whole gruesome story may read it in BROWN, Volume II, pp. 703-714. The editors quote at length from the <u>North Carolina Reports</u> and from the telegraphic report of a correspondent of the New York <u>Herald</u> who covered the trial for that paper. Be prepared for real tabloid stuff, however, involving a particularly brutal murder, another woman who may have been an accomplice, and the possibility of both pregnancy and venereal disease. The fanciful tale with which Lomax described the affair in <u>Folksong, USA</u> seems to be based more upon folklore than upon fact. Certainly it makes a much more romantic story than does the sordid truth.

Frank Proffitt recalls this as the first song he ever heard his father pick on the banjo. This, plus the fact that his grandmother had known Laura Foster slightly, always made the song especially meaningful for Frank. It was one of the first songs he sang for Frank Warner in 1938. ("Frank asked me if I knew any songs about hangings -- about gallows and ropes and such -- so I tried to think of some. 'Tom Dooley' came to my mind right off, of course, and I sang it for him, along with 'Hold up your hand, Oh Joshua' and 'John Hardy'.") Warner returned to record the song in 1940. His adapted version, really quite different from those published elsewhere and, indeed, quite different from the version sung here, was published, along with the charming "Yankee Schoolteacher" yarn, by Lomax in 1947. It was this Lomax/Warner adaptation of Frank Proffitt's version of the ballad which became the great hit of a few years ago.

See: BROWN, DAVIS I, HENRY, LOMAX I.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed little Laurie Foster,
Poor boy, you're bound to die.

You met her on the mountain,
There you took her life;
You met her on the hillside,
You stobbed her with a knife.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley;
Oh, hang your head and cry;
You killed little Laurie Foster,
Poor boy, you're bound to die.

This time tomorrow,
Reckon where I'll be--
Down in yonders valley,
A-hanging on a white oak tree.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley;
Oh, hang your head and cry;
You killed little Laurie Foster,
Poor boy, you're bound to die.

This time tomorrow,
Reckon where I'll be--
Hadn't a-been for Grayson,
I'd a-been in Tennessee.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley;
Hang your head and cry;
You killed little Laurie Foster,
Poor boy, you're bound to die.

You met her on the mountain,
It was there, I suppose,
There you went and killed her
And then you hid her clothes.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley;
Oh, hang your head and cry;
You killed little Laurie Foster,
Poor boy, you're bound to die.

I'll take down my banjo,
I'll pick it on my knee,
For this time tomorrow
It'll be no use to me.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley;
Hang your head and cry;
You killed little Laurie Foster,
Poor boy, you're bound to die.

Side 1. Band 9. I'M GOING BACK TO NORTH CAROLINA

The verses sung here may be primarily Frank's creation. Certainly they differ considerably from the two texts published in BROWN, one of which was taken down from the singing of Bascom Lamar Lunsford and entitled "My Home's Across the Smoky Mountains". Peter Seeger combines the two texts in BROWN in his Folkways album, "Nonesuch" (FA2439--with Frank Hamilton). The fact that a simple folk lyric like this often appears with a wide variety of texts would suggest that singers insert, quite freely, verses and phrases common to the tradition in such songs. Clarence Ashley and the Carolina Tar Heels recorded a similar version of the song for Victor in 1928 (Victor 40100). Frank says it would be hard to

say where he first heard this song, or when, but that it was one of the numbers he used to play and sing in the groups with which he "made music in people's homes around here, years ago."

See: BROWN.

I'm a-going back to North Carolina (3 times)
And I never expect to see you any more.

How can I ever keep from crying (3 times)
When I never expect to see you any more?

My home's across the Blue Ridge Mountain (3 times)
I never expect to see you any more.

Yeah, I'm a-going back to North Carolina;
I'm a-going back to North Carolina;
I'm a-going back to North Carolina;
I never expect to see you any more.

Side II. Band 1. MOONSHINE

BROWN reports this "laudation of the potency of the mountaineer's favorite product" from the manuscripts of Obadiah Johnson of Avery County. RICHARDSON prints it, with the tune, in American Mountain Songs. Frank's text and tune are almost identical with those, except that he omits one verse which refers to the Volstead Law and clears up the somewhat confusing final verse, published in both works as:

The moonshiners are gettin' mighty slick
And the bootleggers are gettin' mighty thick;
If they keep on baggin' they better beware,
They'll be selling each other, I declare.

Frank first heard the song at a party he attended near Chilhowie, Virginia, when he was about seventeen years old. He persuaded the daughter of the singer to write out the verses for him and to teach him the tune. I have located the song in no other collections.

See: BROWN, RICHARDSON.

Come all you people, if you want to hear
Of the kind of booze they make around here;
Made away back in the rocks and hills
Where there's plenty of the moonshine stills.

One drop will make a rabbit whip a bulldog;
A taste will make a rat whip a wild hog;
It'll make a mouse bite off a tomcat's tail
And a tadpole raise a fuss with a whale.

A feist will bite off an elephant's snout;
It'll make a poodle dog put a tiger to rout;
It'll make a toad spit in a blacksnake's face
And a hardshell preacher fall from grace.

The lamb will lay down with the lion
After drinking that old moonshine;
Throw back your head and take a little drink,
Then for a week you won't be able to think.

Then you take just another little bit
And get ready for to have a fit;
The first thing you know, you're awfully tight
And out on the street a-trying to raise a fight.

Then you begin to get awfully sick;
You feel worse than the very Old Nick;
You say that you never will drink it any more;
You've said that a hundred times before.

Oh, the bootleggers is a-getting awful thick
And the blockaders is a-getting awful slick;
If they keep on, badges they'll have to wear
To keep from selling to each other, I declare.

Side II. Band 2. RYE WHISKEY

Frank says he has known this as long as he can remember. Certainly it is one of the most widely known drinking songs in America. It is also known as "Clinch Mountain" and "The Drunken Hiccups" and frequently incorporates verses generally associated with other songs. The tune, with slight variations, has been used for a number of other songs, including "Sweet England", "At The Foot of Yonders Mountain", "The Wagoner's Lad" and, in Scotland, the beautiful whaling song, "Fareweel Tae Tarwathie".

See: ALLEN, CHASE, LOMAX I, SANDBURG.

On top of yon mountain
I wandered alone,
Drunk as the devil
And a long ways from home.

Rye whiskey, rye whiskey,
Rye whiskey, I cry;
If I don't get rye whiskey,
I surely will die.

I went on yon mountain;
I set on a log,
My liquor jug beside me
And sicker than a dog.

Poor drunkard, poor drunkard,
How bad I do feel;
Poor drunkard, poor drunkard,
How bad I do feel.

I'm a-going on yon mountain,
I'll build me a still;
I'll make you a gallon
For a two dollar bill.

Poor drunkard, poor drunkard,
How bad I do feel;
Poor drunkard, poor drunkard,
How bad I do feel.

If the ocean was whiskey
And I was a duck,
I'd dive to the bottom
And drink my way up.

Rye whiskey, rye whiskey,
Rye whiskey, I cry;
If I don't get rye whiskey,
I surely will die.

Side II. Band 3. I'LL NEVER GET DRUNK NO MORE

Frank's father, Wiley Proffitt, knew only the chorus of this song, so Frank gave it verses of his own. BROWN prints four texts, each of which has the inebriate laying his head in a different spot--(A) "the barroom door", (B) "my true love's door", (C) "some still-house door" and (D) "some poor man's door." The texts of the four exhibit considerable variation, although the theme is consistent--the singer vows to abstain in the future because he has lost his fortune and/or his sweetheart as a result of his drinking. In one, however, he seems peculiarly undisturbed by the loss, for he sings:

As I go home tonight
I'll smoke my long-stemmed pipe,
I'll have no wife to bother my life,
No children to holler and squall.

The song has been quite widely reported, versions having been found in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Mississippi and Missouri, as well as in North Carolina. Frank's verses are, of course, original with him and, therefore, unique.

I'll never get drunk any more,
I'll never get drunk any more;
Going to lay my poor head in some pretty girl's lap;
I'll never get drunk no more.

Look at that there liquor jug setting yonder;
Last night that jug it was full;
This morning that jug it is empty;
Boys, I've took my last pull.

I'll never get drunk no more;
I'll never get drunk no more;
Going to lay my poor head in some pretty girl's lap;
I'll never get drunk no more.

My dear old mammy, she told me
That drinking was an awful sin--
"If you don't quit your rowdy ways, my boy,
You'll come to some bad end."

I'll never get drunk no more;
I'll never get drunk no more;
Going to lay my poor head in some pretty girl's lap
And never get drunk no more.

I'm down here now in this old jailhouse,
My head all nussed in my hand;
If I had a let that whiskey alone,
I'd a made a mighty good man.

I'll never get drunk no more;
I'll never get drunk no more;
Going to lay my poor head in some pretty girl's lap;
I'll never get drunk no more.

Side II. Band 4. WILD BILL JONES

Generally referred to as a "blues ballad" and considered to be of Negro origin, this story of jealousy and violence appears to be quite popular in the Appalachian South. Frank's text gives to the song more narrative elements than usually found in it, while eschewing the intrusive verses frequently included in the published and recorded versions. His final stanzas, which resemble those commonly found in "goodnight" broadsides, are quite unusual. Indeed they change the nature of the protagonist from that of a wild, defiant young gambler to that of a "hard working man" who, while not necessarily repentant, does warn others not to go "walking out at night". One observes that he seems less disturbed by the fact that he must pay for his crime than he is by the memory of his victim's "awful dying groan". Frank learned his version from "some fellows who went up to West Virginia, a-workin' timber, and brought it back with them."

See: RICHARDSON (reprinted, in part, in LOMAX II), RANDOLPH, SHARP.

One dark night when I was out
Just a-fooling around,
Met up with that wild Bill Jones.

He was a-walking and a-talking
By my true love's side
And I bid him for to leave her alone.

But he looked at me and said
That he'd like to see me dead,
But he would not leave my true love alone.

Oh, it's tell me, if you can,
Who's a-going to be your man,
Is it me or that wild Bill Jones?

But she only turned away
And nothing would she say;
Put her arms around that wild Bill Jones.

Well, I'm a hard working man
And I do the best I can,
But you won't leave my true love alone.

So I fired three shots
Right into his side
And he gave one dying groan.

She begged me to spare her life,
Then she would be my wife,
For she'd never loved that wild Bill Jones.

But I only turned away
And nothing would I say,
For I'd killed that wild Bill Jones.

So I started down the track,
Never aiming to come back,
But the law went and grabbed me right away.

I'm in the jail today;
For my crime I have to pay,
For I shot and killed that wild Bill Jones.

Now take my advice,
Don't go walking out at night,
For you might meet up with that wild Bill Jones.

If you draw your revolver
From your side,
He'll give that dying groan;
Yes, he'll give that awful dying groan.

Side II. Band 5. GYPS OF DAVID (Child 200)

This is another ballad of which Frank knows two versions, the one recorded here and the more common (in America) "Black Jack Davy". The present version was learned from his Aunt Nancy Prather in about 1940, the other was learned from the kids in school with Frank when he was about fourteen years old. Frank describes learning the ballad from his aunt and how he questioned her at some length about the name "Gyps of David". "You mean 'Black Jack Davy', don't you?" "No," she answered, "it's 'Gyps of David'." "Do you mean 'Gypsy David'?" "No," she insisted, "it's 'Gyps of David'!" -- and that is the way Frank has always sung it. BROWN prints seven North Carolina texts, one of which, though not as complete as Frank's, also names the swashbuckling hero "Gyps of David", as does one text in DAVIS III. The ballad is one of the most popular in Anglo-American tradition and may be found in almost every American collection. Frank's final verse is, so far as I have been able to determine, unique. I have not located it in any of the standard collections, nor is it in any of the Child texts.

See: BELDEN, BREWSTER, BROWN, COX, DAVIS II & III, EDDY, HUDSON, LINSCOTT, RANDOLPH, SHARP, etc.

Who's that galloping on the king's highway,
Singing so gay and haley?
It's that dark and handsome lad
Known as the Gyps of David,
Known as the Gyps of David.

Where may the good man be, said he,
My own true fair lady?
He's gone a-searching far and wide,
A-searching for the Gyps of David,
A-searching for the Gyps of David.

Will you come away with me
And give up all you've saved,
And give up all the ones you love
To go with the Gyps of David,
To go with the Gyps of David?

I'll leave the good man of the house,
The baby in the cradle,
And all the gold that's stored away,
To go with the Gyps of David,
To go with the Gyps of David.

So away they rode for many a day,
Across the mirey heather;
They didn't stop for vine* nor briar,
Or any sort of weather,
Or any sort of weather.

The good man, when he returned,
Inquiring for his lady--
She sped away awhile ago,
In the arms of the Gyps of David,
In the arms of the Gyps of David.

Go saddle me up my fleetest steed
And don't fool time a-dawdling;
I'll have his head on the end of my sword,
The head of the Gyps of David,
The head of the Gyps of David.

He rode till he come to the waters wide
And couldn't go any farther;
On the other side he spied his bride
In the arms of the Gyps of David,
In the arms of the Gyps of David.

Will you return to the gold I have;
Will you return to your baby?
No, never will I leave the arms,
The arms of the Gyps of David,
The arms of the Gyps of David.

He jumped into the waters wide,
In madness he was raving,
And floated off down to the sea,
Because of the Gyps of David,
Because of the Gyps of David.

*Frank inadvertently sings "brine" here.

SIDE II. Band 6. SONG OF A LOST HUNTER or LOVE HENRY (Child 68)

Frank recalls hearing his Aunt Nancy Prather singing this most unusual variant of "Young Hunting" when he was just a boy. Later, after he learned from Frank Warner the value of the old traditional songs, he made a conscious effort to learn the ballad from her. She stayed in Frank's house for a time before her death, Frank and his wife, Bessie, caring for her, and it was during that time that Frank deliberately took down all of her old songs. In this respect, Frank has been as much a collector of traditional songs as he has been a singer of them. Frank explains that he had known only a few verses of "Young Hunting" prior to 1940 when he wrote down the text sung here. By that time, Aunt Nancy was quite old, and not strong enough to sing the melody clearly. In fact, when Frank first gave the ballad to Frank Warner he was so unsure of the tune that he was reluctant to sing it for him, choosing, rather, to recite it. In the years that followed, however, Frank has thought of the ballad many times and has tried to reconstruct the melody as he had heard it. It's when he is working on the banjos and dulcimers, alone in his father's old house that these things come back to him best, he says, and it was there that he finally rediscovered the elusive tune in the recesses of his remarkable memory. "I think I have given you, as accurate as I can, the way she sang it to me." Frank mentioned one evening that his Aunt Nancy had a tale to tell about almost all of the ballads she sang and that the tale of the "lost hunter" had to do with a woman who "liked to have a dead man in bed with her". I turned on the tape recorder and asked Frank to tell the tale as he remembered it.

"She told a story of a castle a-bein' near a wooded country. The hunters would go in there to hunt. They (the woman's servants) would fill up the pathways with brush, but leave the path open that come through the lands of this castle. And there was a woman lived in that castle who wasn't what you'd call, at this day and time, you wouldn't call her a very good woman, and not at that time, either, of course. Anyways, she was a-seekin' lovers. I don't think she was so very good-looking, what I remember about the tale, so she had to kindly make some effort to get lovers. So she'd have her servant men to fill up the pathways, the way they went in there, and then make a very good pathway a-leading by her land. And then she'd accuse 'em, to get the subject started, she'd accuse 'em of being on her land--of trespassing. And so she'd try to get 'em to come down and rest up, you know, and she'd killed several that way. And this song of young Henry, the hunter,--why, he come by. She tried to get him to come down and he wouldn't, but she stobbed him anyway--that's according to the song--and hid him away. But I don't recall the tale too clearly. The reason, I guess, that--I guess the tale would have been wonderful, but I wasn't of an age to understand all of these things and I just got little bitty sketches of it, so I don't know too clearly what it was all about."

The ballad is quite well-known in America, but the present text is not at all typical of those reported. The victim is usually an old lover of the murderess who rejects her invitation because he prefers another, more beautiful than she. He is stabbed as he leans from his horse to give her a parting kiss. Ordinarily,

the body is thrown into a well or a river, either by the lady, alone, or with the aid of a serving maid or maids. Occasionally the servant is a man, but the repetition of the seductive invitation is, as far as I have been able to determine, without precedent in other recovered texts. Often the murder is witnessed by a parrot or, in less rationalized versions, a bird which is miraculously endowed with the power of speech. The lady invites the bird to come down, offering, as a reward, a cage "of beaten gold with doors of ivory" or some similar enticement. The bird refuses to come down for the same reasons the servant man in the present version spurns the invitation to take Love Henry's place in the "bed of saftest fleece". In a number of the Child texts, the bird advises those who are searching for the body to seek it at night with a candle which will burn more brightly as it nears the corpse. In at least one text, the murderess is convicted by the fact that the corpse bleeds anew in her presence. In several, she accuses those who have helped her dispose of the corpse, but the punishing fire refuses to burn them, whereupon the murderess is placed in the fire with more reasonable results. One wonders if Frank's line of the chickens crowing "for the blood of poor Henry" is not an echo of some equally ancient belief. From a purely aesthetic point of view, I feel that Frank's most unusual text compares favorably with any previously recovered.

See: ARNOLD, BELDEN, BREWSTER, BROWN, DAVIS II & III, SHARP, RANDOLPH, ETC. See also Wimberly, Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads, New York, 1959, and, of course, CHILD.

Pitch black was the night, as black as could be,
Lost from his hunting was Poor Henery;
His true love is a-waiting, a-tearing her hair,
A-waiting to see her love all so fair,
A-waiting to see her love all so fair.

Who rides on my land at such an hour;
Who is it did? cried she.
Only I ride at such an hour,
So said my love, Henery,
So said my love, Henery.

Come down, come down, my love Henery,
And stay this night with me;
My bed is made of soft and warm
And just for you and me,
And just for you and me.

I cannot come down, I will not come down;
Your words beguile me sore;
I have a true love in old Scotland
I wish to see once more,
I wish to see once more.

I will not let you leave my lands;
From me you'll never part.
Out of her bosom she took her penknife
And stabs him to the heart,
And stabs him to the heart.

Come to me, my servant man,
Come unto me, I pray;
A dead man is in my bed;
Let's hide him well away,
Let's hide him well away.

What is the hour, my servant man?
It is the hour of three;
The chickens are a-crowing for the middle of the night
And the blood of poor Henery,
And the blood of poor Henery.

She took him by his yellow hair;
He took him by his feet;
They throwed him down beneath the ground
In a hole so dark and deep,
In a hole so dark and deep.

Come to my bed, my servant man;
Come sleep this night with me;
My bed is made of the saftest fleece
And it awaits for thee,
And it awaits for thee.

I will not lay upon your bed,
For this can never be;
For I'm afeared my blood will run
Like the blood of poor Henery,
Like the blood of poor Henery.

Side II. Band 7. SOURWOOD MOUNTAIN

Whether as a banjo tune, a play-party song, or a "jig" (as Thomas Smith of Wautauga County, North Carolina, described it to BROWN), this lively song has long been a great favorite in the Southern Appalachians. RICHARDSON notes that Sourwood Mountain is "a spur of Sandy Ridge, six miles long, in Russell County, Virgina," but cautiously adds that there are some other mountains of the same name, "taken from the sourwood bush". Louise Rand Bascom, who contributed two texts to the BROWN collection, suggested that the variations in the refrain lines ("Tink-tank-toodle all the day", "Oh fod da link a day", "Fol-tom-tollie-tum all the day,"etc.) are due to the individual singer's attempt to imitate his banjo. Frank's father picked the song in much the same manner that Frank does here.

See: BROWN, DAVIS I, HENRY, LOMAX I, SANDBURG, SHARP, RANDOLPH, RICHARDSON, ETC.

I've got a gal, she lives up the holler,
Ho de hum a doodle um a day,
She won't come and I ain't a-going to foller,
Ho de hum a doodle um a day.

Chickens crowing on the Sourwood Mountain,
Ho de hum a doodle um a day,
Chickens crowing on the Sourwood Mountain,
Ho de hum a doodle um a day.

The big girl'll court and the little girl'll slight you,
  Ho de hum a doodle um a day;
Big dog'll hunt and the little dog'll bite you,
  Ho de hum a doodle um a day.

Chickens crowing, etc.

Old man, old man, I want your daughter,
  Ho de hum a doodle um a day;
    (What do you want her for?)
To bake my bread and to carry my water,
  Ho de hum a doodle um a day.

Get you a horse and put her up behind you,
  Ho de hum a doodle um a day;
Take her home and whip her till she minds you,
  Ho de hum a doodle um a day.

Chickens crowing, etc.

Side II. Band 8. GOING ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the rugged, independent "mountain man" was faced with a moral dilemma. Scraping a meager living out of the rocky ridges of his land, he had little sympathy for the rich, bottom-land farmers who were the only slave-holders in his part of the country, yet he was a Southerner and a proud citizen of his state. It was this sort of moral conflict, resolved by each individual according to the dictates of his own conscience, that divided families in the border states, causing brother to fight against brother. The easier way must have been to go along with the majority of one's neighbors and friends, but Frank's grandfather, a great admirer of Abe Lincoln, chose to go the hard way--he went "across the mountain to join the boys in blue". (Once, separated from his outfit, he wandered into a camp of Confederate soldiers and found himself face to face with his own brother, who had made the other decision. By feigning insanity, he managed to escape and rejoin his own unit, but one can well imagine the anxious moments experienced by the two brothers in the interim.) Frank learned this song, which describes the farewell of a "Southern Yankee" to his sweetheart, from his father. Frank is not sure, but it seems likely that his father had it, in turn, from <u>his</u> father. I have not found it reported elsewhere. The "Going across the mountain, oh farewell" refrain is known on Beech Mountain, a few miles from Frank's home, but without the verses. As a matter of fact, it was sung for me there by Mrs. Buna Hicks, whose husband was a first cousin once removed of Frank's wife, Bessie, and a man with whom Frank often made music.

Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well;
Going across the mountain,
You can hear my banjo tell.

Got my rations on my back,
My powder it is dry;
I'm a-going across the mountain,
Chrissie, don't you cry.

Going across the mountain
To join the boys in blue;
When this war is over,
I'll come back to you.

Going across the mountain,
If I have to crawl,
To give old Jeff's men
A little of my rifle ball.

Way before it's good daylight,
If nothing happens to me,
I'll be way down yander
In old Tennessee.

I expect you'll miss me when I'm gone,
But I'm going through;
When this war is over,
I'll come back to you.

Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well;
Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well.

Sandy Paton
Huntington, Vermont
March 1962

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