FSA-26

SARAH OGAN GUNNING

"Girl of Constant Sorrow"

PHOTO BY ELLEN STEKERT

FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. SHARON, CONNECTICUT

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SARAH OGAN GUNNING

Recorded by Archie Green
with Ellen Stekert and Oscar Paskal

Notes by Archie Green

In the half-decade, 1929-32, a band of northern labor organizers—radical and intellectual—met a number of rural, conservative folk-singers in the Southern Highlands. From this setting came a group of topical songs using old melodies to set off intensely stark and militant texts. Few of the mill hands or coal miners were able to synthesize traditional and modern values into lasting literature, but some managed to compose folk-like songs which fused timeworn melodies with strange, revolutionary lyrics. Prior to 1929, a body of Southern industrial songs had clustered around mine and mill. Such pieces were frequently mock-humorous or sardonic commentaries on hard times, but the "new" songs were overtly hard. Needless to say, with Roosevelt's New Deal the thrust of radicalism in labor was diverted and the main body of left, sectarian songs was forgotten. Almost none entered tradition.

The radical pieces of the Great Depression are not insignificant because they failed to become folksongs. Today, as the nation focuses on poverty in Appalachia and civil rights in the Black Belt, a song which draws attention to the plight of poor or deprived people has utility. When such a song flows from the experience of a traditional folk-singer and is delivered in authentic style, it becomes a poignant statement for the listener—even a potential guide to new values.

Some of the mountain broadside composers remained anonymous in the twenties and thirties. Others died before decent recordings were made of their work. Fortunately, in the present decade a few companies with superb equipment and high standards have recorded traditional performers. Hence, today we can hear laments and battle cries of the thirties sung in the sixties by their composers.

The best of such living bards is Sarah Ogan Gunning, who complements her own journalistic numbers with a songbag of old ballads, love lyrics, comic ditties, and religious pieces. Sarah is important for her dual repertoire—traditional and topical. She adds to the largeness of this gift a magnificent mastery of Appalachian style. The contents of her personal songs stress hardship and sorrow. She does not separate such contents from her delivery, in which pathos and loneliness sound so natural. Frequently, the tension generated by conflict between fundamental religious convictions, highly conservative personal training, and radical political creed is destructive to artistic statement. Sarah has diverted such tension into her songs and in the process has enhanced their emotional and esthetic worth.

Each new listener to Sarah will have to sort out her particular appeal. Our choices while hearing her are many: we can hear her as an excellent exponent of mountain style, we can seek out her rare song variants for comparative purposes, we can be moved by the beauty of her ballads, we can turn her messages into bellows to fan the flames of social action. To the extent that we are able to perceive all these facets, we gain some of her wholeness and integrity for ourselves.

from the notes by Archie Green

Side 1:

I AM A GIRL OF CONSTANT SORROW
LOVING NANCY
OLD JACK FROST
MAY I GO WITH YOU, JOHNNY
THE HAND OF GOD ON THE WALL
DOWN ON THE PICKET LINE
I HATE THE COMPANY BOSSES
I'M GOING TO ORGANIZE
CHRIST WAS A WAYWORN TRAVELER
WHY DO YOU STAND THERE IN THE RAIN

Side 2:

DREADFUL MEMORIES
OLD SOUTHERN TOWN
I HAVE LETTERS FROM MY FATHER
CAPTAIN DEVIN
GEE WHIZ, WHAT THEY DONE TO ME
DAVY CROCKETT
BATTLE OF MILL SPRING
JUST THE SAME TODAY
SALLY
OH DEATH

SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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SARAH OGAN GUNNING

In the half-decade, 1929-32, a band of northern labor organizers — radical and intellectual — met a number of rural, conservative folksingers in the Southern Highlands. From this setting came a group of topical songs using old melodies to set off intensely stark and militant texts. In a sense, Piedmont mill villages and Cumberland mine camps became meeting grounds for the ideologies of Andrew Jackson and Karl Marx, Abraham Lincoln and Mikhail Bakunin. Few of the mill hands or coal miners were able to synthesize traditional and modern values into lasting literature, but some managed to compose folk-like songs which fused timeworn melodies with strange, revolutionary lyrics. Prior to 1929, a body of Southern industrial songs had clustered around mine and mill. Such pieces were frequently mock-humorous or sardonic commentaries on hard-times, but the "new" songs were overtly hard. Needless to say, with Roosevelt's New Deal the thrust of radicalism in labor was diverted and the main body of left, sectarian songs was forgotten. Almost none entered tradition. (However, a few have been retained by students and "revival" singers of folksongs.)

The radical pieces of the Great Depression are not insignificant because they failed to become folksongs. Today, as the nation focuses on poverty in Appalachia and civil rights in the Black Belt, a song which draws attention to the plight of poor or deprived people has utility. When such a song flows from the experience of a traditional folksinger and is delivered in authentic style, it becomes a poignant statement for the listener — even a potential guide to new values.

Some of the mountain broadside composers remained anonymous in the twenties and thirties. Others died before decent recordings were made of their work. Fortunately, in the present decade a few companies with superb equipment and high standards have recorded traditional performers. Hence, today we can hear laments and battle cries of the thirties sung in the sixties by their own composers.

The best of such living bards is Sarah Ogan Gunning, who complements her own journalistic numbers with a songbag of old ballads, love lyrics, comic ditties, and religious pieces. Sarah is important for her dual repertoire — traditional and topical. She adds to the largeness of this gift a magnificent mastery of Appalachian style. The contents of her personal songs stress hardship and sorrow. She does not separate such contents from her delivery, in which pathos and loneliness sound so natural. Yet Sarah's doleful messages denote neither narrowness of vision nor personal alienation. As she moves

from "Dreadful Memories" to "The Hand of God on the Wall," one hears the wholeness in her life and perceives the bridges between her realms. Frequently, the tension generated by conflict between fundamental religious convictions, highly conservative personal training, and radical political creed is destructive to artistic statement. Seemingly, Sarah has diverted such tension into her songs and in the process has enhanced their emotional and esthetic worth.

The steps which carried Sarah Elizabeth Garland (born June 28, 1910) from an Elys Branch, Knox County, Kentucky, coal camp to the Fifth University of Chicago Folk Festival (1965) can be viewed in purely biographical terms, or as a parable on our mid-century urban search for pastoral truth and beauty. My personal interest in scholarship tells me to cleave to biographical facts; my affection for Sarah compels me to probe for the coal dust in the verdant coves of her childhood, and for the apparent paradoxes in her songlore.

At the time of Sarah's birth, southeastern Kentucky was still in transition from an economy of frontier farming to coal mining. Her father, Oliver Perry Garland, was a farmer-minister who turned to the mines while still a young man. He cast his lot with trade unionism as soon as the mountaineers began to organize; Sarah recalls union meetings at her home from earliest childhood. Actually, her father was affiliated with the Knights of Labor before the United Mine Workers of America came into the Cumberlands. After the death of Garland's first wife, he married Sarah Elizabeth Lucas in Little Goose Creek, Clay County. He fathered a large family (four children were born to Deborah Robinson Garland, and eleven to his second wife). All the youngsters shared the frequent moving from one raw camp to another. His children — unaware that industrial life was altering rural folkways — absorbed the stock of traditional lore normal to their culture. One of the daughters, the late Aunt Molly Jackson, made her mark as a folksinger and is still well known. (See Kentucky Folklore Record, October, 1961, for her memorial.) One of his sons, Jim Garland, is also known as a folksinger (and can be heard on Newport Broadside, Vanguard 9144). Jim and Sarah are brother and sister, while Molly and Sarah are half-sisters. Naturally, their repertoires and styles overlap. My focus here is on Sarah because I feel her to be the best singer of the trio, and because she has been overshadowed by her better-known siblings.

Sarah's childhood was no harder than that of other turn-of-the-century coal-camp youngsters. The lack of personal amenities and formal education was compensated by family unity and affection, as well as a seemingly bottomless well of songs, stories, jokes, and games which came from parents

and other close relatives. About 1925, Andrew Ogan (born April 28, 1905) from Clairborn County, Tennessee, came to work in the Fox Ridge Mine, Bell County, Kentucky. He soon fell in love with fifteen-year-old Sarah, and they eloped to Cumberland Gap, across the line, to be married. It was her first trip out-of-state. But before long, Ogan was back in Kentucky and Sarah exchanged the role of a miner's daughter for that of a miner's wife. Four children were born to the Ogans; two died in the depression years and two presently live in Michigan.

During 1931, Kentucky coal fields were at their nadir. Some miners responded to gloom and despair by joining the National Miners Union, a communist-led organization rival to the United Mine Workers. Sarah was active in neither union nor radical affairs, yet she absorbed the exciting new posture of protest from husband Andrew and brother Jim. Eventually, most of the NMU stalwarts returned to the older union, particularly after John L. Lewis revitalized the UMW with the fabulous "Blue Eagle" organizational drive of 1933-4. But some NMU miners, isolated by extreme positions or exhausted by work-induced sickness and injury, journeyed away from their mountain coal fields. The Ogan family made such a trip to New York City about 1935, assisted by the deep kindness of folklorist Mary Elizabeth Barnicle. Slum life on the lower East Side was an inadequate substitute for southeastern Kentucky's poverty. Andrew Ogan's TB worsened, and when he knew that his sickness was fatal, he returned to Brush Creek, Knox County, Kentucky, where he died on August 15, 1938.

Sarah herself was frequently ill during this period but managed to survive New York's privation. On August 7, 1941, she married Joseph Gunning, a skilled metal polisher. During World War II the Gunnings traveled to the Pacific Coast for shipyard defense work at Vancouver, on the Columbia River. After the War they lived in Kentucky briefly, but in time they moved north to Detroit to seek industrial employment. Here they put down new roots in the auto city.

During Sarah's years in New York she had met many of the persons caught up by the folksong "revival": Pete Seeger, Burl Ives, Huddie Ledbetter, Earl Robinson, Will Geer, Woody Guthrie. She learned a few songs ("Joe Hill", "Tom Joad", "Bourgeois Blues") from them, but, perhaps unconsciously, guarded the purity of her style and her repertoire. While physically removed from her mountain home, she retained hill ways, and, in part, worked out some of her sense of geographic separation and personal loss in song composition. By occasional singing before Professor Barnicle's New York University classes, Sarah began to learn that her songs were folksongs. She was precise and articulate about sources for material — family, church, or

personal composition — and was modest in not asserting for her own compositions a greater significance than their intrinsic merit warranted.

Very fortunately, Alan Lomax recorded a dozen of Sarah Ogan's songs in 1937, and Professor Barnicle recorded a group of duets by Sarah Ogan and Jim Garland in 1938 for Library of Congress deposit. The Lomax discs were made in New York, and although the Library of Congress Check-List...(1942) places the Barnicle recordings in Pineville, Sarah told me that they were not made in Kentucky. This discographic confusion may be a simple error, but it seems to symbolize to Sarah a mystery surrounding her field recordings. She is uncertain whether they were originally made with her permission. No one ever presented her with a set of dubs, and she never benefited directly from the project. Indeed, she was quite surprised to find that singers in the sixties were learning her songs from Library of Congress tapes.

As early as June 12, 1940, Woody Guthrie had penned an affectionate portrait of his friend Sarah for the New York Daily Worker. In 1947 he expanded this sketch for his informal American Folksong (Moe Asch: Disc Company; reprinted Oak Publications, 1963). Guthrie liked Sarah's militancy as she recounted a meeting with a coal-camp sheriff. The Oklahoma singer also responded to "her natural voice...dry as (his) own, thin, high...with the old outdoors and down the mountain sound to it." Apparently, Sarah made no formal impact on the academic folklore fraternity beyond her friendship with Professor Barnicle. However, in November, 1940, the popular collection, A Treasury of American Song, was published. It was compiled by New York Times music critic Olin Downes and composer Elie Siegmeister. In their mountain section, "Cripple Creek to Old Smoky," the editors cited four balladeers who were putting new exciting subjects into song: Bascom Lunsford, Jim Garland, Aunt Molly Jackson, Sarie Ogan. Thirteen years passed before Sarah's name reappeared in a hard-cover book. Her composition "I Am a Girl of Constant Sorrow" was printed in John Greenway's American Folksongs of Protest (1953); previously it had appeared in the People's Song Bulletin (April, 1946). The song has also been recorded in the sixties by Peggy Seeger, Tossi Aaron, and Barbara Dane. Needless to say, Sarah was not compensated for its utilization.

Although Sarah was on the periphery of one phase of the pre-Pearl Harbor folksong boom (she had participated at the Kentucky Exhibit during the New York World's Fair, 1939, and also sang at some of the earliest left-oriented hootenannies in the city), she missed out on its post-War development because of her move to Detroit. Here she was isolated and almost forgotten by the New York-based People's Songs partisans. She

continued to sing at church (Liberty Missionary Baptist) but put away ballads and lyric songs for quiet household sessions. In a sense she was "lost" and had to be "rediscovered." There is irony in this formulation, for all Sarah needed was a chance to get before a decent tape recorder or an appreciative audience to prove the worth of her unique songs and stylistic command. I count myself fortunate to have helped her across a recent threshold.

My interest in Sarah was precipitated by my visits to her sister, Aunt Molly Jackson, in Sacramento, California, 1957-9. I was never certain that I could breach Molly's castle of self-aggrandisement and Munchausian rhetoric. To reach the "real" Aunt Molly and in order to gain perspective on her life, I felt that I had to talk to her brother Jim and sister Sarah. Curiously Molly never talked to me about her "baby sister." In retrospect, I do not believe that Molly could concede a second folksinger of importance in the family. Of course, Sarah's field recordings told me otherwise. It was not until October 8, 1963, that I first visited Sarah in Detroit. By that time, her husband had left factory work and had become a caretaker in a low-income apartment house. The Gunnings shared a basement unit that recalled for me the stage sets for social dramas of the thirties. Steampipes notwithstanding, it was in this below-ground dwelling that Sarah opened for me her treasury of folksong. Cecil Sharp was never more richly rewarded in a Sussex cottage or Blue Ridge cabin-in-the-laurels.

Two Wayne State faculty friends, Ellen Stekert and Oscar Paskal, accompanied me on some of my Detroit visits to Sarah. All three of us joined forces to record her on January 2-3, 1964, and March 3, 1964. The selections for her first Folk-Legacy LP were taped in the studios of two educational radio stations: WDET (Wayne) and the United Auto Workers' Solidarity House. A quarter-century had elapsed between Sarah's Library of Congress field recordings and her Detroit sessions. Now, with new friends, she felt encouraged to resume "public" singing before Professor Stekert's Wayne classes and at a Detroit Conference on Poverty (March 11, 1964), where she shared the platform with Walter Reuther and Michael Harrington. She was invited to the Newport Festival in the summer of 1964 but had only a limited opportunity to "open up" in the face of the great number of participants.

The highlight of Sarah's "second career" came in January, 1965, when she appeared at the University of Chicago Folk Festival — a realtively unhurried event. Here she had two half-hour sessions to herself during evening concerts and a panel shared with composer-singer Earl Robinson. For each evening she alternated topical items, traditional ballads, old-time religious folksongs, and humorous tales. Normally, the sophisticated stu-

dent audience reserves its applause for technical dexterity. It was heart-warming (for Sarah) and unexpected (by Festival veterans) to hear the audience break in with spontaneous applause during Sarah's unaccompanied polemical songs.

Each new listener to Sarah — whether in college hall or on LP disc — will have to sort out her particular appeal. Contrary to her album's title song, I do not feel that her life is only constant sorrow. Like other folksingers, her repertoire encompasses a variety of emotions: anger at needless poverty and exploitation, affirmation of self-help as a way of life, pleasure in love, solace in religion, peace in death. Sarah's prodigious talent has permitted her to fuse disparate radical elements with traditional forms to create a handful of significant songs beyond the legacy of well-known material left to her by her family.

Our choices while hearing or meeting Sarah Ogan Gunning are many: we can hear her as an excellent exponent of mountain style, we can seek out her rare song variants for comparative purposes, we can be moved by the beauty of her ballads, we can turn her messages into bellows to fan the flames of social action. To the extent that we are able to perceive all these facets, we gain some of her wholeness and integrity for ourselves.

NOTE

The brochure introduction above and the headnotes on songs below are based on my visits to Sarah Ogan Gunning in Detroit: October 8, 1963; December 30, 1963 - January 3, 1964; March 3, 1964; November 22, 1964; and Chicago: January 29-30, 1965. In addition Ellen Stekert has shared with me her interviews with Mrs. Gunning. I have benefited from the views of friends (Harlan Daniel, Ed Kahn, A. L. Lloyd, Judy McCulloh, Doyle Moore, Ralph Rinzler, Ellen Stekert, D. K. Wilgus) who have listened to a trial tape of this album. Selected discographical references appear below the individual song notes. Three categories are used: 78 rpm discs, Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song field recordings (a few of which have been released for public sale), commercial LP albums. Books which are mentioned within the notes are listed in a single (and highly selective) bibliography following the final song.

Side I; Band 1. I AM A GIRL OF CONSTANT SORROW

In recent years, the Appalachian lament "I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow" has become popular in urban folksong circles, in part through the performances of the Stanley Brothers and

of Mike Seeger. No study of this haunting piece is available; the earliest text I have found was printed about 1913 in a pocket songster hawked by Dick Burnett, a blind singer from Monticello, Kentucky. During 1918, Cecil Sharp collected the song and published it as "In Old Virginny" (Sharp II, 233). Sarah's recomposition of the traditional "Man" into a more personal "Girl" took place about 1936 in New York, where her first husband, Andrew Ogan, was fatally ill. The text was descriptive of loneliness away from home and anticipated her bereavement; the melody she remembered from a 78 rpm hillbilly record (Emry Arthur) she had heard some years before in the mountains. During 1937, Alan Lomax recorded Sarah's "Girl" for the Library of Congress in a six-stanza version which was subsequently transcribed (words and music) in the People's Songs Bulletin (April, 1946) and reprinted in 1961. It was also printed (words only) by Greenway in 1953. Three "revival" singers (below) picked up the song from print; Sarah, herself, recorded it again at the 1964 Newport Festival. Sarah's "Girl" is a unique coal mining song; however, the traditional "Man" has itself been sung from a girl's perspective by Kentucky folksingers and was collected as such by D. K. Wilgus. Urban artists (for example, Collins) have also recorded the "old" feminine form.

Emry Arthur, "I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow," Vocalion 5208.
Sarah Ogan, "I Am a Girl of Constant Sorrow," LC 1945.
Tossi Aaron, Folk Songs and Ballads, Prestige 13027.
Judy Collins, Maid of Constant Sorrow, Elektra 209.
Barbara Dane, When I Was a Young Girl, Horizon 1602.
Sarah Gunning, Traditional Music at Newport 1964-Part I, Vanguard 9182.
Peggy Seeger, A Song for You and Me, Prestige 13058.

I am a girl of constant sorrow,
I've seen trouble all my days.
I bid farewell to old Kentucky,
The state where I was born and raised.

My mother, how I hated to leave her,
Mother dear who now is dead.
But I had to go and leave her
So my children could have bread.

Perhaps, dear friends, you are wondering
What the miners eat and wear.
This question I will try to answer,
For I'm sure that it is fair.

For breakfast we had bulldog gravy,
For supper we had beans and bread.
The miners don't have any dinner,
And a tick of straw they call a bed.

Well, we call this Hell on earth, friends,
I must tell you all good-bye.
Oh, I know you all are hungry,
Oh, my darling friends, don't cry.

Side I; Band 2. LOVING NANCY

Sarah, while very young, learned a number of songs from her mother, Sarah Elizabeth Lucas Garland, from "Lizzie's" sisters, and their children. Such pieces were known to the Lucases for many generations and were brought directly from the British Isles or absorbed from other Anglo-American singers in Kentucky. This particular variant of "Loving Nancy" is not found in standard collections; however the text is transcribed (brochure) by Betty Garland from her own singing in her 1964 Folkways album.

Since Nancy is a most common ballad name, it is difficult to place the "Lucas" variant in a specific ballad family. "Farewell Charming Nancy" (Laws K 14) has the hero steer his boat to the East Indies; Sarah's hero steers his boat to New Alena (Orleans). Jim Garland has suggested to his daughter Betty that Kentucky men who rafted logs out of the mountains sang "Loving Nancy." Perhaps we see here an ocean voyage localized to a trip down the Ohio-Mississippi. Before this piece is placed directly in the "Farewell Charming Nancy" category, one must note that Sarah's song ends with Nancy's death by heartbreak, exactly like many heroines in "William and Nancy II" (Laws P 5). Normally one would assume Sarah's song to be spliced out of these two ballads. However, her intervening stanzas contain commonplaces which appear elsewhere. I cite only the "write a fine hand" reference in Sharp's "Pretty Saro" and the "salmon" reference in Creighton's "Pretty Polly." This latter figure suggests both the theme of animal disguises to escape pursuit in "The Two Magicians" (Child 44), and the imagery of chase and conquest in the amatory "Hares on the Mountain" collected by Sharp and others in England (Dean-Smith).

Betty Garland, American Folk Ballads, Folkways 2307.

I'm going to travel the wilderness through,
Therefore, loving Nancy, I'll bid you adieu.
I'm going to travel a many a long mile,
Therefore, loving Nancy, I'll leave you for awhile.

Down in New Alena my boat I will steer
And the face of many pretty girls I see on the shore.
But the face of a Spaniard I'd never adore,
Go back to Kentucky, try Nancy once more.

I wish I was a clerksman, could write a fine hand,
I'd write my love a letter that she'd understand.
I'd send it on water that'd never o'erflow,
Go back to Kentucky, try Nancy once more.

I wish I was a fishman down by the seaside
And Nancy was a salmon come floating on tide.
I'd throw my net around her and bring her to shore,
Go back to Kentucky, try Nancy once more.

Loving Nancy, loving Nancy, I have returned home,
I always did love you and for your sake mourned.
We're going to get married, I doubt for your sake.
I threw my arms around her, and felt her heart break.

Side I; Band 3. OLD JACK FROST

This children's song, for which Sarah usually acts out motions while singing, came from her mother. When Ellen Stekert suggested that the piece might have originated in a Victorian school book, Sarah indicated that her mother had learned to read and write by studying books brought home from the Civil War by her father, Wilson Lucas. Regardless of origin, "Old Jack Frost" came to Sarah traditionally, and she took great pleasure in teaching it to city children at the Little Red Schoolhouse, Greenwich Village, New York, when Professor Mary Elizabeth Barnicle took her there in the late 1930's. To date I have not found the song in print or disc form.

Old Jack Frost was a jolly little fellow.
When the wintry winds begins to bellow,
He flies like a little bird through the air
And he peeps through the little cracks everywhere.

He pinch little children on their nose,
He pinch little children on their toes,
He pinch little children on their ear,
Draw from their eye a big round tear.

He makes little girls cry, "Oh, Oh, Oh!"
He makes little boys shout, "Ho, Ho, Ho!"
Then we kindle up a great big fire,
Old Jack Frost is bound to retire.

Up through the chimney goes the jolly little fellow.
All the children shouts for joy.
He makes little girls cry, "Oh, Oh, Oh!"
And he makes little boys shout, "Ho, Ho, Ho!"

Side I; Band 4. MAY I GO WITH YOU, JOHNNY

Female warriors and their adventures are abundant in

British and American broadsides. One particular group is categorized as "The Girl Volunteer" (Laws O 33). Sarah's lovely version comes from her mother, who identified it as a Civil War story. Sarah is fond of songs which engage the heroine in struggle — whether in affairs of the heart or on the industrial front.

Louise Foreacre, Old-Time Tunes of the South, Folkways 2315.
Charles Ingenthron, Anglo-American Songs and Ballads, LCAFS L 20.
Pete Steele, Banjo Tunes and Songs, Folkways 3828.
Buna Hicks, The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, North Carolina, Vol. II, Folk-Legacy FSA-23.

The war it is started and Johnny must go.
"May I go with you, Johnny?" "Oh, no, my love, no."
"Oh, no, my love, no, that's what grieves my heart so.
May I go with you, Johnny?" "Oh, no, my love, no."

"Your waist is too slender, your fingers too small,
Your cheeks too red and rosy to face the cannonball."
"To face the cannonball, that's what grieves my heart so.
May I go with you, Johnny?" "Oh, no, my love, no."

"I know my waist is slender, I know my fingers small,
But I don't believe I'd tremble to see ten thousand fall.
To see ten thousand fall, that's what grieves my heart so.
May I go with you, Johnny?" "Oh, no, my love, no."

"I'll pull off my dresses, men clothing I'll put on
And go to the army to stay with my John.
To stay with my John, that would give my heart rest.
May I go with you, Johnny?" "Oh, yes, my love, yes."

"Yes, my love, yes, that's what gives my heart rest.
May I go with you, Johnny?" "Oh, yes, my love, yes."

Side I; Band 5. THE HAND OF GOD ON THE WALL

Although the general theme of handwriting on the wall appears in several collected Negro spirituals (Brown III, 576, and LP below), I have not found Sarah's splendid religious song elsewhere. She credits the composition to Uncle Dan Lucas, who had died before her birth; Sarah actually learned the piece from her mother. Harlan Daniel, formerly of Stone County, Arkansas, places this song or a similar number in his family tradition (Uncle Dave Morrison). At least two alternatives are possible: several persons may independently have composed songs based directly on Belshazzar's Feast in the Book of Daniel, 5: 1-31; or a common song —possibly in print— spread to various sections of the South.

Dock and Henry Reed and Vera Hall, Afro-American Spirituals, Work Songs and Ballads, LCAFS L 3.

At the feast of Belshazzar and a thousand of his lords,
As they drank from golden vessels as the Book of Truth record,
It was night as they revelled through the royal palace hall,
They were seized with fear and trembling with the hand on the wall.

'Twas the hand of God on the wall,
It was the hand of God on the wall.
Will your record be found wanting,
Or will you be found trusting
While the hand is writing on the wall?

They could not read the writing for God they never knew,
And they sent for prophet Daniel to tell them what to do.
He told those naughty monarchs of all their many sins,
And he told old Belshazzar your rule is at an end.

See the brave captain Danile as he stood before the throne
And rebuked the naughty monarchs for their mighty deeds of wrong.
It was night as they revelled through the royal palace hall,
They were seized with condemnation with the hand on the wall.

Side I; Band 6. DOWN ON THE PICKET LINE

Many of Sarah's topical songs were general commentaries on hardship or exploitation and were composed after she reached New York; however, some were labor-radical songs with a specific time-place setting. "Down on the Picket Line" stems from the 1932 National Miners Union strike on the left fork of Straight Creek, Bell County (Cary, Arjay, Glendon, Fox Ridge) where miners and their wives walked the coal-camp railroad track picket line. This is Sarah's first song; she composed it before she left Kentucky, when her own role as a trade union protagonist was vivid. She identified her melodic source as the widespread hymn "As I Went Down in the Valley to Pray" (Brown III, 610; V 348).

Mrs. C. A. Burkett, "Down in the Valley to Pray", LC 839.

Sarah Ogan, "Come on Friends and Let's Go Down," LC 1944

Come on, friends, and let's go down,
Let's go down, let's go down,
Come on, friends, and let's go down,
Down on the picket line.

As we went down on the picket line
To keep the scabs out of the mine,
Who's a-going to win the strike,
Come on, and we'll show you the way.

We went out one morning before daylight
And I was sure we'd have a fight,
But the scabs was cowardly, ran away,
But we went back the very next day.

Come on, friends, and let's go down,
Let's go down, let's go down,
Come on, friends, and let's go down,
Down on the picket line.

As we went down on the picket line
To keep the scabs out of the mine,
Who's a-going to win the fight,
Come on, and we'll show you the way.

We all went out on the railroad track
To meet them scabs and turn them back.
We win that strike I'm glad to say,
Come on, and we'll show you the way.

Side I; Band 7. I HATE THE COMPANY BOSSES

About 1939, Moe Asch — now the proprietor of Folkways records — first heard Sarah sing this piece. He complimented her by commenting that it was the most radical composition he had ever heard in his life. The original title was "I Hate the Capitalist System"; the song was recorded as such for the Library of Congress. Sarah thought of it as autobiographical — a response to the death of her loved ones — and not polemical. Although she stated to me that the music was made up out of her mind, it is clearly related to at least two tunes known in mountain tradition: a Carter Family melody for a broadside usually called "The Sailor Boy" (Laws K 12); a haunting air printed by Combs from his mother's singing on Troublesome Creek, Knott County, Kentucky, about 1889 ("On the Banks of that Lonely River").

The Carter Family, "I Have No One to Love Me (but the Sailor on the Deep Blue Sea)," Victor 40036 and other issues.
Sarah Ogan, "I Hate the Capitalist System," LC 1943.

I hate the company bosses,
I'll tell you the reason why.
They cause me so much suffering
And my dearest friends to die.

Oh yes, I guess you wonder
What they have done to me.
I'm going to tell you, mister,
My husband had T.B.

Brought on by hard work and low wages
And not enough to eat,
Going naked and hungry,
No shoes on his feet.

I guess you'll say he's lazy
And did not want to work.
But I must say you're crazy,
For work he did not shirk.

My husband was a coal miner,
He worked and risked his life
To try to support three children,
Himself, his mother, and wife.

I had a blue-eyed baby,
The darling of my heart.
But from my little darling
Her mother had to part.

These mighty company bosses,
They dress in jewels and silk.
But my darling blue-eyed baby,
She starved to death for milk.

I had a darling mother,
For her I often cry.
But with them rotten conditions
My mother had to die.

Well, what killed your mother?
I heard these bosses say.
Dead of hard work and starvation,
My mother had to pay.

Well, what killed your mother?
Oh tell us, if you please.
Excuse me, it was pellagra,
That starvation disease.

They call this the land of plenty,
To them I guess it's true.
But that's to the company bosses,
Not workers like me and you.

Well, what can I do about it,
To these men of power and might?
I tell you, company bosses,
I'm going to fight, fight, fight.

What can we do about it,
To right this dreadful wrong?
We're all going to join the union,
For the union makes us strong.

Side I; Band 8. I'M GOING TO ORGANIZE

Not all of Sarah's labor material is sombre. "I'm Going to Organize" seemed to appeal particularly to Woody Guthrie, and when he recorded it, he became the first person to "cover" any of her songs after her Library of Congress sessions. Guthrie met Sarah soon after his arrival in New York. When she was in the hospital in the summer of 1941, he recorded (and altered) this song, and titled it "Babe O' Mine." It was released by the small Keynote firm, backed with the Almanac Singers and Pete Seeger's "Song for (Harry) Bridges." In this form the song reached a number of CIO trade unionists during World War II. The Daily Worker (November 10, 1942) printed the first verse and music for a maritime recomposition of Sarah's coal mining song without credit to her.

"I'm Going to Organize" has intrinsic interest as a union song; it is also one recent branch of the "Baby Mine" - "Banjo Girl" family tree. Spaeth and Gilbert trace this popular love song back to the 1880's. The former identifies it as an "idyll of wedded happiness," while the latter places bandit Jesse James in an early parody of the song. In hillbilly tradition the text is usually secondary to the tune, which has become a lively vehicle for a banjo instrumental.

Coon Creek Girls, "Banjo Pickin' Girl," Okeh-Vocalion 04413.
Woody Guthrie, "Babe O' Mine," Keynote 304.
Sarah Ogan, "I'm Goin' to Organize Baby Mine," LC 1952.
Pete Steele, Pete Steele, Folkways 3828.
Stringbean (David Akeman), Way Back in the Hills of Old Kentucky, Starday 260.

Oh you're going to be surprised, babe of mine,
Oh you're going to be surprised, babe of mine,
Oh you're going to be surprised,
For I'm going to organize,
Yes, I'm going around this world, babe of mine.

Oh I'm going to write you a letter, babe of mine,
Oh I'm going to write you a letter, babe of mine,
Oh I'm going to write you a letter
When the living gets better,
But I'm going to organize, babe of mine.

See the workers' children and wives, babe of mine,
See the workers' children and wives, babe of mine,
See the workers' children and wives,
I'm compelled to save their lives,
So I'm going to organize, babe of mine.

Oh, I love the union men, babe of mine,
Oh, I love the union men, babe of mine,
Oh, I love the union men,
The way they're treated is a sin,
So I'm going to get organized, babe of mine.

Side I; Band 9. CHRIST WAS A WAYWORN TRAVELER

On the whole, the sacred numbers in Sarah's repertoire are the oldest both in point of origin and in her manner of delivery. Sarah learned "Christ Was a Wayworn Traveler" from her father, Oliver Perry Garland, a farmer-miner-Baptist minister. It was his favorite sacred number, perhaps because of his own pluralistic values. This hymn, also known as "My Warfare Will Soon Be Ended," is found in Negro and white tradition. I do not know the precise age of Sarah's piece; However, Arthur Palmer Hudson (Brown II, 682; III, 614; V 354) cites Jackson in tracing "the warfare ended" phrase to Sacred Harp booklets of 1844 and 1846.

Wade Mainer and Zeke Morris, "They Said My Lord Was a Devil," Bluebird 6653.
Aunt Molly Jackson, "My Warfare Will Soon Be Ended," LC 2563.

Christ was a wayworn traveler,
He traveled from door to door.
His occupation chiefly was
Administering to the poor.

My warfare'll soon be ended,
My race is almost run.
My warfare'll soon be ended, Lord,
And then I'm going home.

They called my Lord the devil,
They called his saints the same.
But I ain't expecting any more down here
Than burden, abuse, and shame.

My warfare'll soon be ended,
My race is almost run.
My warfare'll soon be ended, Lord,
And then I'm going home.

And when I get to heaven
I want you to be there, too.
And when I say "Amen"
I want you to say so, too.

My warfare'll soon be ended,
My race is almost run.
My warfare'll soon be ended,
And then I'm going home.

God bless the Holiness people,
The Presbyterians, too,
The good old shouting Methodists,
And the praying Baptists, too.

My warfare'll soon be ended,
My race is almost run.
My warfare'll soon be ended, Lord,
And then I'm going home.

Side I; Band 10. WHY DO YOU STAND THERE IN THE RAIN

Of the 20 numbers on this, Sarah's first LP album, all but one are traditional songs or songs of her own composition. The exception is Woody Guthrie's "Why Do You Stand There in the Rain." During the Lincoln's birthday weekend, 1940, the communist-oriented American Youth Congress met in Washington to hold a "Citizenship Institute" and to criticize President Roosevelt for his aid-to-Finland policies in the USSR's war on Finland. When the more-than-4000 delegates met on the White House lawn, the President castigated them for their defense of the Soviet invasion. The dramatic confrontation between Roosevelt and the youthful lobby was very well covered by the press. Life (February 26, 1940) featured 20 pictures of the event.

Woody was in the downpour. Upon his return to Manhattan, he responded to the Presidential spanking with a new song (set to a melody he and his cousin Jack Guthrie were to use later for the Country-Western hit "The Oklahoma Hills"). In mid-April it was published in sheet music form and the Daily Worker (April 18, 1940) also printed words and music. Like many journalistic songs it quickly went out of fashion as soon as its message was changed by new political alignments during World War II. I have not found the song printed in any Guthrie collections.

Jack Guthrie, "The Oklahoma Hills," Capitol 201.

It was raining awful hard on the old Capitol yard
When the young folks gathered at the White House gate.
And the President shook his head and to these young folks said,
"Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?

"Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?
Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?
These are strange carryings on on the White House Capitol lawn.
Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?

"My dear children, don't you know that unless by law you go
That your journey here has all been walked in vain.
You got to make your resolution by the U. S. Constitution
And you won't get left a-standing in the rain.

"Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?
Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?
These are strange carryings on on the White House Capitol lawn.
Tell me, why do you stand there in the rain?"

Side II; Band 1. DREADFUL MEMORIES

In 1952, when John Greenway visited Aunt Molly Jackson at Sacramento, California, she sang for him a poignant song modeled on the familiar hymn "Precious Memories." Molly placed the date of composition as 1935 and the "experience" as 1931. It was an exciting find for the folklorist, since Molly had not given this piece to previous collectors Alan Lomax or Mary Elizabeth Barnicle in the 1930's. Greenway used "Dreadful Memories" in American Folksongs of Protest and recorded it twice. Consequently, I was pleased and surprised to collect it from Sarah in 1963, for she generally eschewed her half-sister's material. Sarah told me that she composed the song in New York about 1938 and that Molly "learned it from her" when the Gunnings visited California during World War II. There is no question in my mind as to the veracity of Sarah's statement (although to document my belief would require an analysis of Aunt Molly Jackson longer than this brochure). Here it can be said that folksong students are in debt to the two sisters for this excellent example of variation within a single family tradition.

John Greenway, American Industrial Folksongs, Riverside 12-607.
John Greenway, The Songs and Stories of Aunt Molly Jackson, Folkways 5457.

Dreadful memories, how they linger,
How they ever flood my soul,
How the workers and their children
Die from hunger and from cold.

Hungry fathers, wearied mothers
Living in those dreadful shacks,
Little children cold and hungry
With no clothing on their backs.

Dreadful gun-thugs and stool-pigeons
Always flock around our door.
What's the crime that we've committed?
Nothing, only that we're poor.

When I think of all the heartaches
And all the things that we've been through,
Then I wonder how much longer
And what a working man can do.

Really, friends, it doesn't matter
Whether you are black or white.
The only way you'll ever change things
Is to fight and fight and fight.

We will have to join the union,
They will help you find a way
How to get a better living
And for your work get better pay.

Side II; Band 2. OLD SOUTHERN TOWN

While she was in New York, Sarah composed this song out of her feelings of loneliness for Kentucky. Yet it is a curious kind of nostalgia that sees heartache and starvation, theft and exploitation in the mind's eye. Sarah calls this a true song; although it narrates no specific event, it does recall her childhood memory of farmers selling their land to coal companies for ten dollars per acre and subsequently going into debt to these same organizations.

During 1940-41, Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie worked together in the Almanac Singers. At that time they compiled a depression song collection titled Hard-Hitting Songs. It has remained in manuscript form for 25 years but is now being readied for print by Irwin Silber of Oak Publications. When Guthrie wrote his headnote for "Southern Town" he identified the melody as a Jimmie Rodgers piece.

Sarah Ogan, "Thinking Tonight of an Old Southern Town," LC 1943.

I'm thinking tonight of an old southern town
And my loved ones that I left behind.
I know they are ragged and hungry, too,
And it sure does worry my mind.

Poor little children so hungry and cold,
The big mighty bosses so big and so bold,
They stole all our land and they stole all our coal.
We get starvation and they get the gold.

I know how it feels to be lonesome,
And I know how it feels to be blue.
I know how it is to be hungry,
And I've sure been ragged, too.

I'm thinking of brother and sister,
From the loved ones whom I had to part.
I'm thinking of their little children
Who is so near to my heart.

I'm thinking of heartaches and starvation
That the bosses has caused me and mine.
I'm thinking of friends and neighbors
And the loved ones that I left behind.

Now if I had these rotten bosses
Where the bosses has got me,
What I wouldn't do to them rascals
Would be a shame to see.

Side II; Band 3. I HAVE LETTERS FROM MY FATHER

The symbolism in most folk spirituals is fairly obvious. "I Have Letters" is a more complicated piece than many in Sarah's songbag. When I pressed her for the story behind the song, she replied only that it was very old in the Garland family. As she sings it she conforms to her father's "dwelling-on-the-words" or lingering style which she contrasts with Holiness or modern style. I have no clue to the spiritual's background except that it is part of the "Captain Kidd"-"Wondrous Love" tune family described by Bertrand Bronson in "Samuel Hall's Family Tree," California Folklore Quarterly, I (January, 1942). Also, it was found once in Floyd County, Kentucky, before 1939, and is printed in the Federal Music Project compilation for the area.

Sarah's association for "I Have Letters" is that of the Biblical concept of universal brotherhood which her father strongly held, not only as a minister but also as a staunch trade unionist. Coal miners were the first southern workers to organize across the color line. Sarah remembers that

tinerant Negro ministers held services in her parent's home Poordo Camp at Cary) because none of their company shacks n the Negro section were big enough to serve as a church. hen Sarah's brother Bill Garland died at Arjay (ca 1954), reacher Mays, a Negro minister from Old Straight Creek, ang "I Have Letters" at Bill's funeral; they had sung it as duet in previous years while they worked and worshipped ogether.

I have letters from my father
In my hand, in my hand.
Written by my elder brother,
They are grand, they are grand.
They were written o'er the sea
And were forward unto me.
I'm as happy as I can be
In this land, in this land.
I'm as happy as I can be
In this land.

Father told me in his letters
That are grand, that are grand,
I could make myself much better
In this land, in this land.
Then I cried, "What shall I do?"
For I had not read them through
And they made me all a-new
In this land, in this land.
And they made me all a-new
In this land.

I am sanctified and happy
In my heart, in my heart,
For the blood of Jesus cleanses
Every part, every part.
I have lost my carnal mind,
Doubts and fears I've left behind,
And a comforter I find
In my heart, in my heart.
And a comforter I find
In my heart.

I am now a new creation
In this land, in this land.
They don't know my situation,
It is grand, it is grand.
All this world is dark as night
But my father's face is bright
And I'm walking in the light
Through this land, through this land.
And I'm walking in the light
Through this land.

I am not afraid of dying
In this land, in this land.
But I often feel like flying,
Oh how grand, oh how grand.
I will sing and shout and pray
And my Master's voice obey,
And my soul can hardly stay
In this land, in this land.
And my soul can hardly stay
In this land.

Death is called a dreadful monster
In this land, in this land.
When he calls I will not answer,
Oh how grand, oh how grand.
I may leave most any day,
All they'll find is empty clay,
And I wonder what they'll say
In this land, in this land.
And I wonder what they'll say
In this land.

Side II; Band 4. CAPTAIN DEVIN

"Whiskey in the Jar" (Laws L 13 A) is popular today among "revival" singers in Ireland, England, and the United States. The good texts generally stem directly from Irish broadsides. Sarah's text is significant because this ballad has been infrequently found in the Southern Highlands. Laws notes only a single recovery from West Virginia in 1908. To my knowledge, Sarah's LP is the first available record to include this item by a southern traditional singer, although Folk-Legacy has a version from the Ozarks on FSA-11 (Max Hunter). Sarah learned "Captain Devin" from her mother and quite naturally believes King's Mountain to be in Clay County, Kentucky. A particularly good footnote on one of Devin's many cousins, "Lovel the Robber' (Laws L 13 B), was written by Phillips Barry for The New Green Mountain Songster.

Patrick Galvin, Irish Street Songs, Riverside 12-613.
Frank Warner, American Folk Songs and Ballads, Elektra 3.
Max Hunter, Ozark Folksongs and Ballads, Folk-Legacy FSA-11.

As I was a-going across King's Mountain
I met Captain Devin, and his money he was counting.
First I pulled my pistol and then I pulled my saber,
Saying, "Stand and deliver, for I am your bold deceiver."

With your musha-ringa-row
And right to my loddy,
Right to my loddy,
Oh there's whiskey in the jar.

I picked up his gold, feeling gay and jolly,
I picked up his gold, took it home to Loddy.
Told her all about it, thought she never would
deceive me,
But the devil's in the women and they never can
be easy.

With their musha-ringa-row
And right to my loddy,
Right to my loddy,
For there's whiskey in the jar.

I went to Molly chamber for to take a slumber,
I went to Molly chamber, cold and hungry.
Laid down to take a nap, not thinking any matter.
She discharged both my pistols and filled them
full of water.

With their musha-ringa-row
And right to my loddy,
Right to my loddy,
For there's whiskey in the jar.

Next morning very early, between six and seven,
There I was surrounded for killing Captain Devin.
Reached for my pistol but found I was mistaken,
For my pistols was discharged and a prisoner I was
taken.

With my musha-ringa-row
And right to my loddy,
Right to my loddy,
For there's whiskey in the jar.

Side II; Band 5. GEE WHIZ WHAT THEY DONE TO ME

Mrs. Frank (Alice) Smith, Sarah's mother's sister, gave this surrealistic item to her niece. Aunt Alice was both a Holiness preacher and moonshine pedlar at Little Goose Creek, Clay County; in fact, she sold whiskey to her congregation. It seemed incongruous to Sarah as a child to hear a preacher sing such a funny song, and she has retained Alice's number until the present. Although the text is written from a man's perspective, I do not know whether Alice and Sarah are hostile or sympathetic to the rambling blade. For anyone who wishes to delve into this tangled song's history, I can only comment that its starting melody resembles "Handsome Molly" and that one fragment of "Gee Whiz" (squirting water) is found on an early Uncle Dave Macon disc.

G. B. Grayson and Henry Whitter, "Handsome Molly," Victor 21189.
Uncle Dave Macon, "Walk Tom Wilson Walk," Vocalion 5154.
Frank Proffitt, Frank Proffitt, Folk-Legacy FSA-1.

When I started out to rambling
I didn't know where to roam.
I got rid all the money I had
And didn't know how to make more.
I stepped into a gambler's hall,
I sat down in the chair.
Policeman took me by the arm,
Said, "You got no business here."
He said, "Go home to your pretty little wife
And work every day you can."
When I got home my wife was gone
Away with another man.

Low, low, what they done to me,
Nothing in the world but trouble for me.
When I got tired living that way
Married me another old maid.
You better bet she loved on me
And kept me in the shade.
You better bet she patted my hand
And paid no attention to no other man.
When she got tired of working for me
She called me a lazy scamp.
I said, "Good wife, take a friend's advice
And pay no attention to a tramp."
Then I wrote a letter to my mother at home
And told her I was coming back.
First old freight train come along
You bet I ball the jack.

Gee Whiz, what they done to me,
They squirted hot water all over me.
When I got home knocked at the door
And Mama said, "Come in.
You son-of-a-gun, I'm glad you come
And I want to know where you been."
I told her all of my ups and downs.
She called me a lazy shirk,
Said, "You'd better stay at home and be a man
And help your pappy work."
Then I wrote a letter to my maiden back there
And I bid her my farewell.
I was at home a-eating backbones
And she could go to hell!

Side II; Band 6. DAVY CROCKETT

"Davy Crockett" is a fine example of the compression into a single song of characters from diverse sources: the minstrel figures of Pompey Smash and Old Zip Coon (Jim Crow), and the historical as well as legendary Colonel Crockett. Laws does

not place this item in his ballad canon. Nevertheless it is a wide-spread and long-lived folksong worthy of study, if only to contrast its life in tradition with that of the Walt Disney "ballad." Sarah learned "this funny little song" as a youngster from her mother's singing and "connected" it with the sheep sorrel plant which her mother gathered in the woods for cooking. Good versions (and additional references) are found in Owens, Cox, and Botkin. The song is tied to a hilarious group of windies (folk tales) by Randolph in Ozark Mountain Folks.

Hermes Nye, Ballads of the Civil War, Folkways 5004.
Mrs. Melton, A Treasury of Field Recordings, Candid 8026.

I'll tell you of a fight that I had with Davy
Crockett,
He was half man and half horse and half kill-rocket.
I met him a-going out a-cooning,
Said I, "Where's your gun?"
Said he, "I have none."
Just then I said,
"How you going to kill a coon?"
Said he, "Pompey Smash, come and go along with Davy
And I'll show you mighty quick how to grin a coon
crazy."
We hadn't went very far until we saw a squirrel
Sitting on a pine log, eating sheep sorrel.
He backed both ears and he brayed like a sinner,
And Colonel Davy Crockett was a-grinning for his
dinner.
"Take care of black calf,
And don't you laugh,
I'll back both ears,
And I'll bite you in half."

I took off my coat and laid down my ammunition.
Said I, "Davy Crockett, I'll cool your ambition."
We fought about a half a day and then agreed to
drop it,
For I was badly whipped and so was Davy Crockett.

Side II; Band 7. BATTLE OF MILL SPRING

Sarah learned this Civil War ballad (Laws A 13) from her mother and believes that she, in turn, got it from her father, Wilson Lucas — like many mountain boys — a Union Army soldier. Sarah's retention of the piece stems in large part from her identification with the "little sister" who was told not to weep for her dying soldier brother. As a child, Sarah felt that she was the little girl in the song; seemingly the narrative elements did not impress Sarah as deeply. She never

associated the song with this particular battlefield less than sixty miles from her birthplace.

The "Mill Spring" tune is important in Lucas-Garland family tradition and is commonly used for "The Texas Rangers" (Laws A 8). An examination of Sarah's text shows that her song begins with the Texas march of Indian fighters to the Rio Grande but ends at Mill Springs, Wayne County, Kentucky. Such ballad splicing is not uncommon. Unfortunately, we lack clues today to tell us when or how these two pieces coalesced. Although good texts are found in print for "Mill Spring" we have no music for the song except Sarah's. I plan a case study on this Civil War song (also called the Battle of Logan's Cross Road, Fishing Creek, Somerset, and Beech Grove); for the present the listener may find useful an aural comparison of Sarah's piece to related items by her brother and sister. Molly sings the traditional Indian-fight ballad, while Jim modeled the "Death of Harry Simms" after the "Battle of Mill Spring."

Aunt Molly Jackson, "The Texas Rangers," LC 2556.
Jim Garland, Newport Broadside, Vanguard 9144.

My age was but about sixteen
When I joined the jolly band
To march from San Antonio
Unto the Rio Grande.
My Captain he commanded,
Although he thought it right,
"Before we reach that station
My boys will have to fight."

I saw the jumping glances,
I heard them give their yell.
My feelings at that moment
No human tongue could tell.
I thought of my old mother,
Who with tears to me did say,
"They all to you are strangers,
You'd better stay away."

Perhaps you have a mother,
Likewise a sister, too,
And maybe so a sweetheart
To grieve and mourn for you.
If this be your condition,
Although you like to roam,
I tell you by experience
You'd better stay at home.

Go tell my little sister
To not weep for me.
Never again by the fireside
Will I rock her on my knee.
And never again will I sing to her
Those songs I used to sing.
Her brother's lying bleeding
At the Battle of Mill Spring.

Go tell my aged father
'Twas in death I prayed for him.
I prayed that I might meet him
In a world that had no end.
I am my father's only son,
My mother's only joy.
She wept with tears of anger
O'er her dying soldier boy.

Side II; Band 8. JUST THE SAME TODAY

Three pieces on this disc (I,5,9;II,3) illustrate the oldest singing style known to Sarah, that derived from her father's treatment of hymns. In all my sessions with her, Sarah sang much modern church material which she labeled as "Holiness" or "Gospel." She enjoyed taking a given song that had gone from the old way (Baptist) to the new (Holiness), singing it both ways without pause between sections. "Just the Same Today" — a series of Biblical vignettes — is one of the longest songs Sarah remembers from her father's repertoire. Here she sings a portion of it in the new up-tempo style.

Branch Higgins, "Just the Same Today," LC 1571.
Sarah Ogan and Huddie Ledbetter, "He's Just the Same Today," LC 2020.
Buell Kazee, Buell Kazee Sings and Plays, Folkways 3810.

When Moses and the Israelites
From Egypt land did flee,
Behind them was proud Pharaoh's host,
In front of them the sea.
God raised the water like a wall
And He opened up the way.
And the God that lived in Moses' time
Is just the same today.

CHORUS: Now this old time religion
Is good enough for me.
It makes me happy when I'm at home,
And I'm happy now, you see.
It makes me leap and jump and shout
And fills my heart with joy (glee).
And that's the kind you have to have
When you come down to die.

When Daniel, faithful to his God,
Would not bow down to men,
And by his enemies
He was hurled into a lions' den,
God locked the lions' mouth, we read,
And robbed them of their prey.
And the God that lived in Daniel's time
Is just the same today.

When David and Goliath met,
The wrong against the right,
Goliath with all human power
And David with God's might,
When little David flung the stone
That God did delay,
And the God that lived in David's time
Is just the same today.

The rich man he was wealthy,
While Lazarus he was poor,
And Lazarus begged for the crumbs that fell
From the table to the floor.
But the rich man turned poor Lazarus away
And thought his soul was well,
But when that rich man came to die
His soul was cast in hell.

Side II; Band 9. SALLY

"A Rich Irish Lady" (Laws P 9) under many titles is widely collected in America and has been extensively commented on by scholars, perhaps because of its association with "The Brown Girl" (Child 295). Sarah learned "Sally" at the age of five from her mother. When I expressed surprise that she retained so many songs from childhood, she indicated that before she learned to read she could learn a piece at church or at home after just one or two hearings. When she grew older and was exposed to musical notation (square and round) at the singing schools conducted by wandering teachers, she lost her power to learn a song "at once"; that is, it might take her a period of days or weeks to learn something she liked. "Sally" is one of the few ballads that Sarah clearly identified as coming from

England, unlike "Loving Nancy" and "May I Go With You Johnny," which she localized, respectively, to Kentucky and the Civil War.

Aunt Molly Jackson, "The Rich Irish Lady," LC 2584.
Peggy Seeger, American Folk Songs, Folkways 2005.
Cass Wallin, Old Love Songs and Ballads, Folkways 2309.

There was a young lady
From London she came.
She was a fair beauty
And Sally was her name.
Her riches was more
Than a king could possess.
But her beauty was more
Than her wealth at its best.

There was a young gentleman,
A rich merchant's son.
And ten thousand dollars
Was his income.
He was wounded in love
And he knew not for why.
And on this fair lady
He first cast his eye.

"Sally, oh, Sally,
Pretty Sally," said he,
"I know you despise me
Because I am poor."
"Oh no, I don't hate you
Or any other man,
But for as to love you
Is more than I can."

Six months over
And six months past,
This fair lady
Took sick at the last.
She was wounded in love
And she knew not for why.
She sent for this young man
She once did deny.

Off of her fingers
Gold rings she pulled three,
Said, "Take these and wear them
While dancing over me."
"Your rings I'll deny
And your body I'll disdain.
And now I will leave you
In sorrow and pain."

Side II; Band 10. OH DEATH

"Oh Death" is found in white and Negro tradition from Texas to the Georgis Sea Islands and is available in widely contrasting settings: unaccompanied vocal solo, hillbilly duet (with guitars), bluegrass band. This stark conversational piece has attracted a number of short stylized "explanations" which place the song on the lips of a dying slave beaten by a cruel plantation mistress (Bales), or on the lips of a Kentucky hill-preacher stricken by the Lord for ignoring His call (Thomas). Sarah adds an excellent narrative of her own: Elizabeth, her mother, used to sing this sad song while gathering herbs in the woods. One day she wandered near a concealed underground still. The moonshiners took "Aunt Lizzie" to be a ghost and in terrible fright abandoned the still (but only temporarily).

A number of versions of "Oh Death" appear in folksong collections. Randolph (IV, 98) surmises that the Arkansas form he gathered in 1941 is a Holy Roller piece. Below, I list eight versions comparable to Sarah's (an array that speaks favorably of the phonograph record's function as a document of American folksong).

Anglin Brothers, "Money Cannot Buy Your Soul," Vocalion 04589.
Rich Amerson, Negro Folk Music of Alabama - IV, Folkways 4472.
Dock Boggs, Dock Boggs, Folkways 2351.
Dock Boggs, Old Time Music at Newport, Vanguard 9147.
Bessie Jones, Southern Journey: Georgia Sea Islands, Prestige 25001.
Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward, Negro Folk Music of Alabama - V, Folkways 4473.
John Reedy and the Stone Mountain Trio, Tragic Songs of Death and Sorrow, Starday 168.
Burzil Wallin, Old Love Songs and Ballads, Folkways 2309.

What is this that I can see
With icy hands taking hold of me?
I am death and none can tell,
I open the door to heaven and hell.

Oh death, oh death,
Please spare me over till another year.

Death, oh death, consider my age,
Please don't take me in this stage.
My wealth is all at your command
If you would move your icy hand.

Oh death, oh death,
Please spare me over till another year.

No wealth, no land, no silver nor gold,
Nothing satisfies me but your soul.

Oh death, oh death,
Please spare me over till another year.

Mother, come now to my bed,
Put a cold towel upon my head.
My head is warm, my feet is cold,
Death putting his shackles on my soul.

Oh death, oh death,
Please spare me over till another year.

Death, oh death, please let me see
If Christ has turned his back on me.
God's children prayed, his preachers preach
The time of hope is out of reach.

Oh death, oh death,
Please spare me over till another year.

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CREDITS:

Elsewhere, in this brochure, I named colleagues who helped gather data on Sarah Gunning's songs. Here, I wish to thank the radio station staffs of WDET, Wayne State University, and of the United Auto Workers' Solidarity House for courtesies extended to me while recording Mrs. Gunning. Finally, John Schmidt prepared this album's edited tape and I am in his debt, not only for skill beyond my level, but for shared enthusiasm and friendship.

Archie Green
Urbana, Illinois
June 9, 1965