

# **A LIVING TRADITION**

**SELECTIONS FROM  
FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS**

**FLG 02001**



**FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.**

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## TRACK LIST

1. Bright Morning Star - Peter and Mary Alice Amidon
2. Angeline the Baker - Sara Grey, John Dildine, Howie Mitchell, Lynn Hickerson, Joe Hickerson (Stephen Foster)
3. The Lamoille River Song - Sandy and Caroline Paton  
(John Nutting/Folk Legacy Records, BMI)
4. Wings to Fly (Crow) - Cindy Kallet  
(Cindy Kallet/Folk Legacy Records, BMI)
5. Sundown - Rick Lee and Lorraine Lee Hammond
6. Barbara Allen - Hedy West
7. Poor Elijah - Jerry Rasmussen  
(Jerry Rasmussen/Crystal Springs Music Company, BMI)
8. Little Birdie - Frank Proffitt
9. Turning Toward the Morning - Bok, Muir, and Trickett  
(Gordon Bok/Timberhead Music, BMI)
10. Reel du Poteau Blanc/The Woodchopper/The Golden Wedding/The Green Meadows Reel - Skip Gorman
11. Music from Brittany - David Paton
12. Oak, Ash, and Thorn - John Roberts and Tony Barrand  
(Peter Bellamay - Rudyard Kipling)
13. The Alabama - The Boarding Party
14. All the Good People - Sandy Paton, Caroline Paton, Dave Para, Cathy Barton, Ed Trickett, Harry Tuft (Ken Hicks)
15. Precious Memories - Margie Harmon, R.L. Harmon, Oattie "Coot" Greene

## FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS

by Jeff Place

Folk-Legacy Records is a unique American record label started in 1961 by Sandy and Caroline Paton and their friend Lee Haggerty. At that time, folk music was undergoing a distinct boom worldwide. Much of it was stylized and presented as pop arrangements of folk material. The Patons and Haggerty, though, were more partial to traditional ballads and songs, and they wanted Folk-Legacy to be a platform for releasing the music they loved. To quote Sandy, "It isn't that the songs are good because they're traditional; they are traditional because they are good. They were preserved by generations of traditional singers because they reflected real feelings. If the songs were not good, they wouldn't have been saved" (Paton in Alarik).

Sandy and Caroline were folk singers and song collectors. Caroline had been singing since age seven at church. Introduced to folk music as a summer camp counselor, she became increasingly interested in folklore throughout her college years at Oberlin and the University of Chicago as she studied anthropology. She met Sandy at an open-mic concert at the University of California in Berkeley in 1957, when she asked for the lyrics to a song he had just performed. Not only did they discover that they shared passion for folk music, but when they sang together, their voices blended and harmonized especially well. Caroline had a beautiful, clear voice, frequently backed by Appalachian dulcimer or autoharp. Sandy Paton had recorded a solo album of folk songs for Elektra in 1958.

Sandy and Caroline traveled extensively across the United States, hearing music and making friends along the way. They spent a year in the British Isles, performing at coffee houses and pubs. While there, they met and studied with noted folk song scholars Hamish Henderson and Jeannie Robertson. They fell in love with the songs they were hearing. Sandy, who also collected traditional song lyrics, started making field recordings of traditional performers. On a trip to the Appalachians, he recorded the blind balladeer Horton Barker and banjo player Frank Proffitt. He took the tapes to Folkways, and Moses Asch released the album *Traditional Singer* (Folkways 2362) by Barker.

In 1960, Sandy Paton was working in a record department at a store in Chicago, building up the folk music section. It was there that he met Lee Haggerty, who also was passionate about folk songs. Both the Patons and Haggerty moved to New England and with Haggerty's encouragement and financial support started the Folk-Legacy label in Huntington, Vermont. The Patons decided to launch the label with a release of the Proffitt material. The album included the song that had earlier been collected from Proffitt, the local murder ballad "Tom Dooley" or "Tom Dula"—a song often credited with kicking off the folk song revival of the 1950s. Other early releases included Appalachian singers Joseph Abel Trivette, Sarah Ogan Gunning, Edna Ritchie, jack tales from Ray Hicks, and the wonderful two-record series of music from Beech Mountain, North Carolina. There were records of singers from Ireland and England (Peg Clancy, Bob and Ron Copper, and Norman Kennedy); balladeers from the Northeast (Grant Rogers, Larry Older, Sara Grey, and Sara Cleveland); and Canadian singers (Marie Hare, Tom Brandon, and Ian Robb). There was even Bruce Jackson's recordings of blues musician Eugene Rhodes. These performers began to appear at folk festivals nationwide representing the traditional side of the music.

The Folk-Legacy albums had a distinctive, readily recognizable look—thick black covers with a picture of the artist—and included a dedicated booklet with song lyrics and the history of the songs. George Armstrong designed the "green man" logo, which graced all their releases. The Patons established a cataloguing system: PSA- Folk Songs Authentic; FTA- Folk Tales Authentic; PSI- Folk Songs Interpreters; and FSE- Folk Songs England.

Haggerty helped run the business office. They added to their income by performing concerts and by selling dulcimers and Appalachian limberjacks.

In 1967, the Patons moved to what was to be their long-term headquarters in Sharon, Connecticut—a remodeled barn and carriage house built on a hill-top in the 1830s. On one end was a large room and concert hall, which had been a music school called Fiddlestyx that opened in 1939. The rest of the house had rooms that could work as offices, a recording studio, and tape storage. The basement was the stock room. There were also guest rooms for visitors, perhaps to record an album or just share songs and visit among friends. Community and friends is what Folk-Legacy was about. Musicians would come, stay, and sing together. The big room was a joyous place to make music. This spirit was captured on many of the Folk-Legacy releases, especially the gathering which resulted in the record *Sharon Mountain Harmony*.

Even though the Patons started recording traditional singers, they were not averse to change, and songs themselves evolve over time. For much of its history, the label released newer artists who composed new songs in the tradition or interpreted old songs in their own way. The Patons referred to it as the “continuing tradition.” Sandy said, “We knew Folk-Legacy would have to earn its own way, and we knew it was not going to do that with just traditional albums. So, very early on, we branched out into interpreters, people who drew from tradition for their material, but who were like us, people who sang folk songs because they discovered them and learned to love them, but were not the sources of them” (ibid.). The Folk-Legacy artist roster we now know includes “interpreters” such as Anne Mayo Muir, Ed Trickett, Cindy Kallet, Joan Sprung, Kendall Morris, Bob Zentz, Art Thieme, Barton and Para, Larry Kaplan, and the Boarding Party, to name a few. One of the important singers and best-selling artists on Folk-Legacy was Gordon Bok. He has written lovely songs about life on the Maine coast, and his music is perfectly suited to the vision of the label.

The Patons saw Folk-Legacy as intertwined with their lives. Sandy remarked, “If it became just a business, we wouldn’t be in it. When I first was drawn to folk music, I saw it as music you could do rather than just buy. It was not a commodity that you purchased; it was something you really shared with others and enjoyed. I never met a traditional singer who was possessive of a song. They were so delighted to find someone who was interested and eager to save the songs by sharing them with someone else. Sara Cleveland’s grandchildren now sing her songs, Frank Proffitt Jr. sings professionally, using our recordings of his father as a resource. I am so happy to see a continuing family tradition there, just as I am to see it in my own family. It really is a continuing tradition” (ibid.). The Paton Family all were involved in various parts of the label, releasing albums of their own music in various combinations with friends along. Sons Rob and David were involved as recording artists and helped with the business affairs. As time passed, the granddaughters also became involved. It was truly a family business.

In 1993, Sandy and Caroline were named Connecticut's Official State Troubadours. They performed locally, pulling from the vast song bag they had amassed. The artists on Folk-Legacy could often be found at regional folk festivals that catered to traditional songs, like the Old Songs Festival in New York State. In addition, they performed at regional coffee houses and in house concerts throughout the country organized by fellow musicians and fans or local folk music societies. For several years a Folk-Legacy festival attracted the greater Folk-Legacy family from near and far. In 2018 granddaughter Linnea put on a Folk-Legacy retreat in Sharon for a gathering of Folk-Legacy artists and friends. As Caroline Paton fell into ill health, the Folk-Legacy community were a strong force rallying to her aid.

Artists Kathy Westra and George Stephens approached the Smithsonian about the possibility of adding the Folk-Legacy label to its family of labels under the Smithsonian Folklways umbrella. Conversations went on for a number of years about what the long-term plan for the label would be before Caroline agreed that it should come to the Smithsonian, where the "legacy" could be kept alive and available in perpetuity. Sadly, Caroline Paton left us in 2019. The Paton Family and Kathy, George, Lee Townsend, Bob Zentz, and Jeanne McDougal have been instrumental in making the transition smooth, so that the Folk-Legacy family will rest assured that their music will live on.

### A Living Tradition: Selections from Folk-Legacy Records

#### SONG LIST

##### 1. Bright Morning Star

Peter and Mary Alice Amidon

From *Sharon Mountain Harmony* CD-86, 1982

The spirit of community and harmony was captured at the Sharon Mountain headquarters with this beautiful album of friends and family harmonizing together.

"Bright Morning Star" is an Appalachian hymn. The lead is Mary Alice. She remembers learning it from an album called *I'm on My Journey Home*, performed by Lola and Walter Caldwell.

##### 2. Angeline the Baker

Sara Grey, John Dildine, Howie Mitchell, Lynn Hickerson, Joe Hickerson

From *The New Golden Ring: Five Days Singing, Volume II* CD-42, 1971

The original Golden Ring was made up of a group of friends from Chicago. Folk-Legacy released two records of a new, larger group of participants

singing over five days.

"Angeline the Baker" ("Angelina Baker") comes from the Stephen Foster Collins songbook. Foster was one of the most prolific composers of the mid-19th century (e.g., "Oh! Susanna"). This song was published in 1850 for the original Christy Minstrels.

### 3. The Lamoille River Song

Sandy and Caroline Paton

From *Sandy and Caroline Paton Folksongs and Ballads* CD-30, 1966

It took years of urging by Lee Haggerty to get the Patons to release an album of their own music.

The Lamoille River runs through Vermont and into Lake Champlain. In reaction to pollution in the river, John Nutting penned this song, which appears on his album *Songs of Lamoille County*. In the notes to the Patons' album, Sandy recalls singing the song to the Vermont state legislators, hoping they'd listen.

### 4. Wings to Fly (Crow)

Cindy Kallet

From *Working on Wings to Fly* CD-83, 1981

This is an original by Cindy Kallet from the album of the same name. A New Englander, her songs were about New England and Martha's Vineyard. She made two albums for Folk-Legacy, this being the first in 1981.

### 5. Sundown

Rick Lee and Lorraine Lee Hammond

From *Living in the Trees* CD-55, 1975

This is a tune that comes from Bascom Lamar Lunsford and appears on his *Minstrel of the Appalachians* album.

The Lees were a group from New England who took older songs and reinterpreted them for new instrumentation, especially the Appalachian dulcimer. Rick Lee had at one time been head of the Pioneer Valley Folklore Society. Like the Patons, Rick Lee was a song collector and folk music archivist.

### 6. Barbara Allen

Hedy West

From *Old Times and Hard Times* CD-32, 1968

Hedy West's songs come from her upbringing in Appalachia; she was born in Georgia and lived in West Virginia. Her father Don was an important labor organizer among the miners and co-founder of the Highlander Folk School. She is best known for her song "500 Miles," but she was also a folklorist

and gathered songs over the years. This recording was made by Topic Records in London.

Folk song scholar Francis James Child undertook a project in the late 19th century to catalog a large body of English and Scottish ballads. He combined variants of the same song, assigned each a number, and researched the origins of the lyrics. In this case, Child found and published a version as early as 1740. He also found a version of "Barbry Allen" in Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) (Logsdon and Place 2009). Of all the ballads Child collected, "Barbara Allen" may be the most popular and frequently recorded, especially during the folk song revival of the 1950s and 60s.

#### 7. Poor Elijah

Jerry Rasmussen

From *Get Down Home* CD-77, 1980

Connecticut folk singer Jerry Rasmussen was originally from Wisconsin, and many of his songs tell of life in the Midwest.

Rasmussen was inspired to write this song after reading the novel *Giants in the Earth* and the story of Per Hansa, who was lost on the prairies in a blizzard (notes to Folk-Legacy 77).

#### 8. Little Birdie

Frank Proffitt

From *Frank Proffitt Memorial Album* CD-36, 1968

This is the debut album on Folk-Legacy, which came from Sandy Paton's early field recordings of Frank Proffitt in Reese, North Carolina. Proffitt came from the Hicks Family, noted singers and storytellers from that region (see *Ray Hicks Telling Jack Tales*, Folk-Legacy 14). Frank Warner collected the song "Tom Dooley" from Proffitt, thereby introducing it to the music mainstream.

"Little Birdie" is a standard in both old-time music and bluegrass that has been recorded countless times.

#### 9. Turning Toward the Morning

Bok, Muir, and Trickett (Gordon Bok, Ann Mayo Muir, and Ed Trickett)

From *Turning Toward the Morning* CD-56, 1975

Bok, Muir, and Trickett were the supergroup of the Folk-Legacy catalog. All three also have solo recordings on the label. The Folk-Legacy website listed this album as the catalog's best seller.

10. Reel du Poteau Blanc/The Woodchopper/The Golden Wedding/The Green Meadows Reel

Skip Gorman

From *New Englander's Choice* CD-95, 1983

Skip Gorman recorded three albums for Polk-Legacy. The first two were cowboy and western songs, the music for which he is best known. He turned to his New England roots for this album of New England fiddle tunes. In this medley he tackles fiddle tunes from New England and Quebec.

11. Music from Brittany

David Paton

From *All Hands Around* CD-127, 1999

David Paton and his group (Roger Burridge, Michael Shorrocks, and Deirdre Murtha) recorded this album in 1999. Here David takes on a set of tunes from Brittany on hammered dulcimer.

12. Oak, Ash, and Thorn

John Roberts and Tony Barrant

From *Dark Ships in the Forest* CD-65, 1977

This song is a poem, "A Tree Song," from Rudyard Kipling's book *Puck of Pook's Hill*. British folk singer Peter Bellamy put it to music and gave it its current name. Bellamy recorded an entire album of songs put to Kipling's words, performing along with his old bandmates from the English folk group, the Young Tradition.

Roberts and Barrant specialize in traditional English folk songs and shanties. They have recorded almost a dozen albums for various labels. This is their one entry in the Polk-Legacy catalog, and they fit right in. The album is subtitled "Ballads of the Supernatural."

13. The Alabama

The Boarding Party (Jonathan Eberhart, Dave Diamond, Bob Hitchcock, Tom McHenry, and K.C. King)

From *Tis Our Sailing Time* CD-97, 1983

The Boarding Party are a group from the Washington, D.C., area who specialize in sea shanties and maritime songs. What sets them apart is their scholarship of this music. They recorded three albums for Polk-Legacy.

The *Alabama* was a warship that was part of the fleet of the Confederate States of America. She made a career attacking Union ships at sea over a two-year period and was sunk off the coast of Cherbourg. The song is a halyard shanty used for hauling rope.



14. All the Good People

Sandy Paton, Caroline Paton, Dave Para, Cathy Barton, Ed Trickett,  
Harry Tuft  
From *For All the Good People* CD-121, 1992

According to the Folk-Legacy website, the Golden Ring was not really a group but “more of a concept of friends sharing music together.” Here the Patons invited friends and family into the old Sharon Mountain barn for a musical gathering.

Written by Ken Hicks of Virginia Beach, this is a fun song for singing, and many singers have added new verses.

15. Precious Memories

Margie Harmon, R.L. Harmon, Oattie “Coot” Greene  
From *Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, North Carolina, Volume II* CD-23, 1965

Over several years the Patons traveled a number of times to Beech Mountain in northwestern North Carolina, near the Tennessee line, and sought out some of the wonderful ballad singers in the area. From their tapes they made two albums; the second included more recent songs and hymns. The singers here were recorded in the Harmon household singing some of their favorite hymns.

“Precious Memories” became popular with early country groups who played on the radio. It was written by J.B.F. Wright in 1925.

WORK CITED

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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In this way, we continue the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding among peoples through the production, documentation, preservation, and dissemination of sound.

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