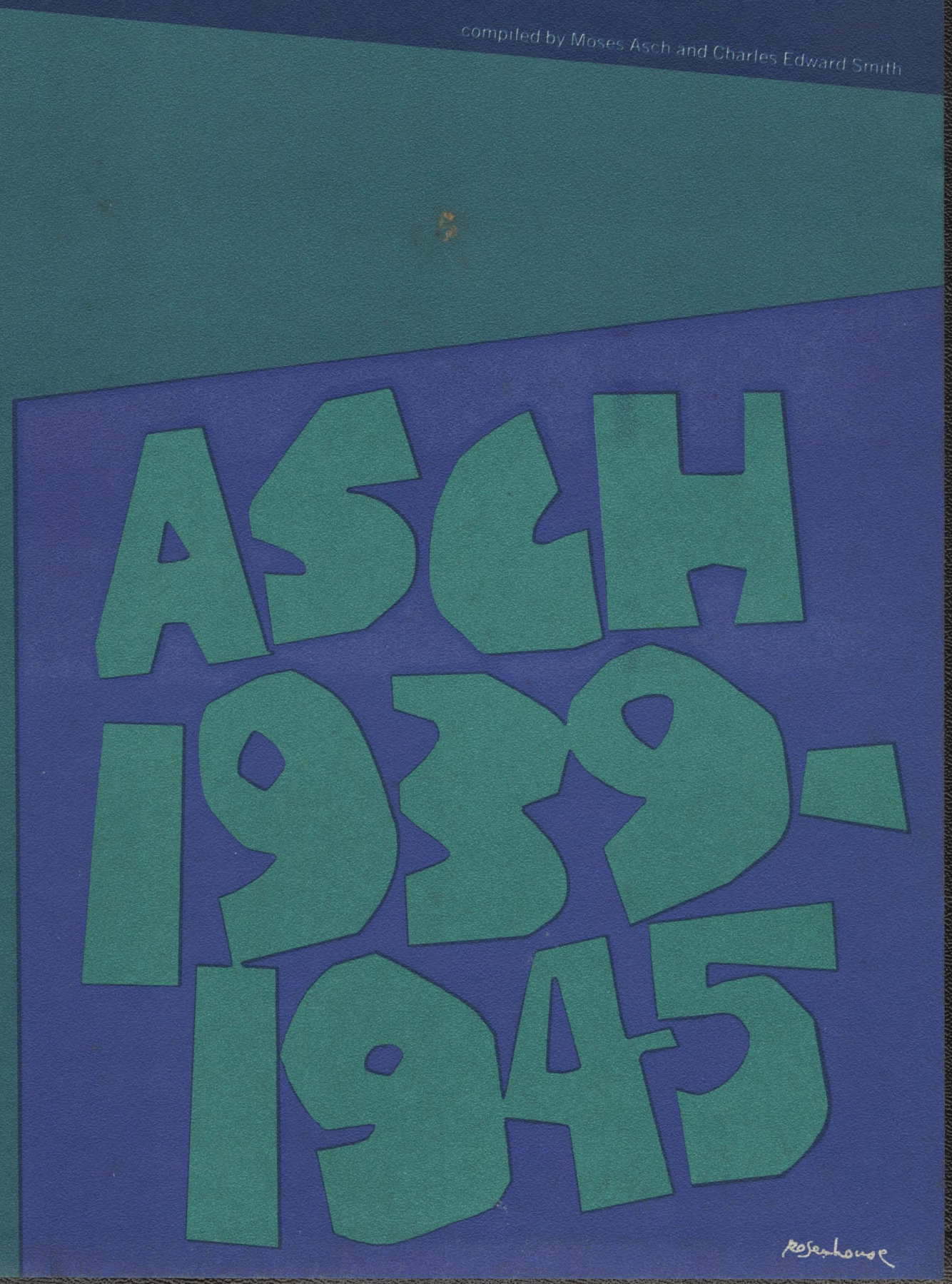
ASCH RECORDINGS/1939-1945 VOLUME 2

ASCH AA 4

compiled by Moses Asch and Charles Edward Smith

RICHARD DYER-BENNET
ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS
JOHN JACOB NILES
CRATIS WILLIAMS
TEXAS GLADDEN
HOBART SMITH
BASCOM LUNSFORD
GEORGE EDWARDS
DOCK REESE
CHAMPION JACK DUPREE
SONNY TERRY
REV. GARY DAVIS
BABY DODDS



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Descriptive Notes are Inside Pocket

ASCH AA 4

Art Ballads & Songs
RICHARD DYER-BENNET - guitar
Two Traders Went Walking
ANONYMOUS (1939) - with chorus
The Ballyman's Free
JOHN JACOB NILES - self-tre
Little Matty Groves
CHARLIE WILLIAMS - unaccompanied
The Wife of Usher's Well
Frankie and Johnny
TEXAS GUBBS & ROBERT SMITH - guitar
In the Willow Garden
ROBERT LAMAR LUNSFORD - banjo
Springfield Mountain
MOSES EDWARDS - unaccompanied
Sam - short no. 1
DOCK REESE - unaccompanied
Careless Love
Instrumentals
ROBERT SMITH - piano
Cindy
CHARLIE JACKSON - piano
The Dance
SONNY TERRY - harmonica
Fox Chase
WOODY GUTHRIE, CISCO HOUSTON
fiddle and guitar
900 Miles
WOODY, CISCO, SONNY
harmonica and 2 guitars
Pitt Bines
BUDDY CARTER DAVIS - guitar
Civil War Parade
MAY DEBUS - drums
Tom Tom Workout

ASCH AA 4

ASCH RECORD ALBUM Vol. 2 AA3/4

ASCH RECORDINGS/1939-1945 VOLUME 2

MOE ASCH AND FOLK MUSIC, U.S.A.

by

Charles Edward Smith

"It is not down on any map; true places never are." - Herman Melville's "Moby Dick"

At an old railroad station -- soon to be demolished or saved as a "museum" -- in the northwestern part of Connecticut the stationmaster, Stanley Hoostowski, shared reminiscences with Ralph Blumenthal of the New York Times (11/19/66). The trains, it was recalled, carried honeymooners towards Niagara Falls, picnickers out of Hartford and iron ore into East Canaan." I don't like to see it go," Hoostowski said, "But what can you do? Progress is getting ahead of everybody."

Progress was apparently getting ahead of everybody in the music field, as well, back in the days when Tin Pan Alley's country cousin -- usually identified as from Nashville -- tried to supply everyone with authentic store-bought country sounds. This was hardly tradition, even though much that belonged to tradition -- such as Uncle Dave Macon's songs and banjo music on "Grand Old Opry" -- reached urban audiences by way of records and radio.

In the hungry days of the depression -- when enough people were hungry so that you didn't have to feel lonely about it -- not everyone settled for handouts in the way of pop songs. Folk songs and sounds rumbling in the musical underground affected all American music, through show music (which jazz and folk music helped to make characteristically American even if Broadway belting was a long way from its blues source), to folk and topically-influenced music such as Earl Robinson's Ballad For Americans and folk sounds scored with sensitiveness and taste, as in Aaron Copland's use of harmonica for the sound track of "Of Mice And Men". Though popular music felt this sap stirring in old roots, it tended to follow, rather than inaugurate, revolutions. Meanwhile, American folk music slowly began to mean something in an industrialized, urban society.

Perhaps the miracle of the loaves and fishes was that people knew their hunger for what it was. Suffering sharpens the senses and this is as true of cultures as of individuals. The hunger for things of their own -- jobs, bread, freedoms -- that sometimes motivated people in the depression years, extended to the arts and one heard, quite appropriately, terms such as "people's" songs, art, theatre, dance, and so on. As regards folk music, had it not been for a new identity of collectors-- Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, Ben Botkin, Joanna Colcord, Alan Lomax and many others -- with audiences, this hunger might have been poorly served. There was also, during the depression, a people-to-people relationship, with night vision for underground, that had existed from the days of Joe Hill and before and that helped to sustain the down-to-earth basics necessary to any folk music come to town and hoping to stay in strength.

They were a small band in those days, the folksingers and their followers, singing as much to keep warm as to warm others. The term authentic, as to singing style, became at least as important as the Child ballad number to which it might (or might not) be attached. If there were schismatic rumblings in the folk field, and there were, it was partly because -- aside from human nature -- folk styles of singing found acceptance less readily than refinements of those styles. Many listeners, having missed them the first time around, will hear singers such as Texas Gladden, Dock Reese and George Edwards for the first time in this album, though Richard Dyer-Bennet, who perfected an art of ballad singing, and John Jacob Niles, who combined folk heritage with his own unique gifts, may be quite well known or, of course, with Burl Ives (he sings a "relative" of (Child No. 7), whose singing voice is as American as the mid-West from which he came. The first mentioned learned their art in an environment in which folk singing was much more in an oral tradition. Texture of voice (timbre) and other non-notatable elements, tonal and rhythmic, were transmitted from person to person. (Sometimes, in contemporary folk music, such heritage is transferred by electronic means, but this does not invalidate the process.) You can, of course, read the notes of Down In The Willow Garden but the peculiarly wailing quality that gives it such intensity in Texas Gladden's singing, will not be there.

Moe Asch was one of those who, while having respect for scholarship, wished to help rescue folk music from the class of an esthetic esoterica -- which often coincided with popular denigration of it -- and to lend a hand in bringing the potential audiences and the living folk music together. It was in keeping with the times that Simon Rady, manager of the union-sponsored "Pins And Needles", a musical revue that brought topical audacity to Broadway, should introduce Moe to Huddie Ledbetter, known as Leadbelly, and that the first album produced by Moe Asch in the category of Folk Music, U.S.A., would present the unforgettable voice of this great singer and the inimitable sound of his twelve-string guitar. In this period, Leadbelly was often presented as a convict, freed of his prison, who sang folk songs. Yet when Leadbelly sang, "Take these stripes, stripes from around my shoulders," he still seemed to mean it. And why not? The stripes were still there, literally, in the costuming of a "March of Time" film and, unseen, in the latest fashions of prejudice. Even in the music world there tended to be an emphasis on

Huddie's sensational background. Moe wanted to put the singer and the human being first, let the rest sort itself out (with a few nudges), and began with an album that included songs for children. "Whoever heard of a murderer singing play party songs?" he asked wryly.

In Asch albums, some of which were later on Disc, there were signs of the direction Moe would take, not only in folk but in other areas of recording. Orson Welles narrated the documentary set on the Liberation of Paris, Tom Glazer and others did the "Ballad of Franklin D." There were two-part inventions of Bach, Flamenco dances and guitar music recorded by Carlos and Trianita Montoya and there were Songs of the Lincoln Battalion introduced by Norman Corwin. A contribution that began with a Brooklyn concern run by Moses Asch and Associates, Radio Laboratories, was beginning to be talked about.

In the late 1930's Moe's brother, Nathan Asch, the writer, introduced him to Alan Lomax, who probably already knew more good folk singers than most of his elders. (Alan headed the Archive of American Folk Songs, Library of Congress, and represented the new wave of musicologists who were also participants in folk activity.) In his recording of performers, Moe was as enthusiastic about new and untried singers as he was of accepted ones, and was keenly interested in what one might call the Americanization of folk material. (When listening to these performances on tape, he remarked, and this was characteristic of his interest, "We're getting away from Anglo-Saxon and coming into American locales and American situations.") Once in an informal talk to music librarians (Music Library Assoc. Notes, 12/56), using musical illustrations remote from each other geographically and stylistically, his thesis could be found in the talk itself, e.g. "...the differences in a people's cultural symbols should not dim our awareness that their response to some stage of the life cycle is essentially very much like our own." It's probable Marian Distler (who was with Folkways until her death) helped put those notes in order for Moe's talk. As his assistant at Asch and Disc she was the one everyone bothered about everything. She put her energy and capability into many phases of the operation, from appointments for singers -- though they were rarely fancy enough to be called appointments in the early days -- to the printing job, and she would even supply a few Notes when needed, in leiu of a booklet.

When Moe created the Disc label, Time wrote of him (1946): "The nation's No. 1 recorder of out-of-the-way jazz, cowboy music, and such exotic items as Paris streets noises during the Liberation, and little-heard Russian operas. . . Asch calls his albums 'basic music' to distinguish them from popular swing or the Gene Autry-Bob Wills kind of folk music. Said he: 'Ours get down to the musical roots. Very often a basic song like Buffalo Gals becomes a hit, but I'm not interested in individual hits. To me a catalogue of folk expression is the most important thing.'" It wasn't a big operation, just big enough to get into difficulties in the post-war slump, but when it went out of business it had achieved a prestige unusual among "little" record companies.

No one dreamed then of something that would be called the folk explosion, but some of the seeds were planted in an unimposing suite of rooms in an unimposing office building on West 46th Street in New York City, that blossomed during Disc's tenancy, that in turn nurtured the soil and seed for the Folkways label that was to achieve an enduring reputation in the folk field. Recalling the early days of Asch records, Pete Seeger said recently, "Moe in '39 had the great talent of letting us musicians feel our way, and not being cocksure about what should be cut and what not." Writing of one of many of his sessions in the Asch studio, this one with Sonny Terry and Cisco Huston, Woody put it this way (in "American Folksong: Woody Guthrie" Oak): "We tried hilltop and sunny mountain harmonies and wilder yells and whoops of the dead sea deserts, and all of the swampy southland and buggy and bottom sounds that we could make. We sung to the mossy trees and to the standing moon, and Moe Asch and Marian Distler worked through their plate glass there in the recording studio."

Moses Asch was born in Warsaw, Poland, December 2, 1905, and came to this country when still quite young. His father, Sholem Asch, renowned for his stories with biblical settings, went to Germany where Reinhardt put on his plays, then to the United States, 1912-13, as correspondent of the Jewish Daily Forward. In the way of many immigrants before him, Sholem Asch established a home here and the children joined him in this country during the winter of 1914.

Moe can trace a specific interest in American folk music to a period when he was growing up, when paperbacks such as "Dead-Eye Dick" printed songs at the beginning of the text, to set the scene. This was his first acquaintance, for example, with the "dirty little coward, he shot Mister Howard" (Jesse James). To be sure, at that time ethnic music, though it was not familiarly known as that, was an everyday fact of life in New York's numerous neighborhoods. Perhaps this environmental internationalism made it stick in his memory that it was an Italian-American, in the Brooklyn neighborhood he lived in then, who first sang him the lilting bawdy Americanized verses of Our Good Man (Child No. 74). (The good man was assured by his spouse that that was just a cabbage head where his head ought to be, varying this idea amusingly -- as many humorous songs do -- in this ubiquitous ditty of more respectable lineage than line.)

A more compelling interest gradually developed as he was studying electrical engineering at Bingen, in the French-occupied Rhineland (1922-26). This is where the Rhine turns in swift currents towards the low countries and where the famous "Mouse Tower" of a nobleman stands in the middle of the swirling waters. Entrance to this round fortress, where grain was kept, was denied the hungry peasants, but enterprising mice, so the story goes, bored holes in the walls and peasants sneaked out in boats to collect grain at night. This part of the Rhine was also the setting of Heine's Lorelei. But the episode that contributed to his growing interest in American folk music occurred when Moe was browsing among the Left Bank bookstalls of Paris. He came across (and bought) a copy of that now historic work, John

A. Lomax's book on American cowboy songs (first published in 1910 and a groundbreaker in the folk field). Moe remembers being impressed -- indeed, he still is -- by Theodore Roosevelt's Introduction to the book.

In the late 1920's, Moe Asch and associates set up a firm called Radio Laboratories, in Brooklyn. They developed the first electric condenser microphone and an amplifier was made through condenser microphone techniques, using direct contact, non-magnetic sources. Their projects were, in those early days of the electronic breakthrough, (to say the least of it) diverse. Moe smiled to himself, then came out with it and revealed that one of the more exotic items was a homing device for sea-borne bootleggers. During Prohibition the latter, often on pick-up missions down the Bay, plied the waters near New York -- the homing device was geared to New York radio stations! More relevant to our text, it was while helping run Radio Laboratories that Moe met Les Paul, the man who pioneered multiple recording -- wearing earphones, he'd add parts in stages. "Les Paul," he said, "was first to understand electronic things in music." When Les, as "Red" Paul, sang cowboy songs for Columbia, Les played an amplified Gibson and Jimmy Smith a special electronic guitar made by Radio Laboratories. It was partly in co-memoration of those early days that the song by Les included in this set, was recorded in the 1950's.

"It was scarcely conceivable a very short while ago," wrote Paul Oliver in the English publication, Jazz Monthly (Oct., 1966) "that the whole of the Child ballads, with all their notes, would be published in paperback form, but such is now the case, and it is indicative of the widespread interest in folk music that a major firm /Oak/ can consider this a practical proposition." It was, indeed, remarkable, especially since, as Oliver pointed out, the Child collection is not for casual interest. At the time when Moe first recorded such ballads, this collection -- a scholarly study of song sources and variants -- was regarded as the Debrett's of the folk-art-ballad world -- particularly by knowing audiences -- and a song's lineage might receive more attention than the singing of it. Only the young dared to poke fun at those who took all this "attributing" too seriously -- as hilariously brought home to the folk audience of the 1950's when Pete Seeger "delivered" Greensleeves at a Carnegie Hall concert of The Weavers, recorded by Vanguard.

Springfield Mountain is in various of Cecil J. Sharp's collections of songs from the Southern Highlands, and is one of hundreds of folk songs from the British Isles and Europe found in American versions. An amusing sidelight on its dissemination is that it was picked up in New England by a vaudeville comic and its sombre details of rattlesnake bite (poison) transformed into the sort of twisted humor that, to cite another example, gives us the other side of the ballad coin in the woefully-witty song of two maidens who went milking (as sung by Richard Dyer-Bennet). One wonders if the humor in Springfield Mountain might not have been what it seems, an adaptation of the native Yankee product. Be that as it may, one can see how it may have utilized vaudeville, among other means of getting around in the 19th century -- from Poli's circuit to Pantages and thence, again back to the folk hinterlands. Equally of interest is the song as Alan Lomax collected it in New England ("Folk Songs of North America" Doubleday) contrasted to one from the South, recorded by that old master of tradition, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, as part of his own heritage -- with spirited rhythm, a five-string banjo and an inspired nonsense refrain.

In this set we have garnished standard ballads with humor and with songs related to ballads. This gives a truer picture of what was happening to folk song in America than would a more restricted presentation. Bonnie Labouring Boy, whatever its original source, was a Dublin street song and appeared in various ballad sheets, i.e. sheets of lyrics. It came to America, at least in the version George Edwards sang, in an oral tradition. In "Folk Songs of North America" Alan suggests that American balladry was selective in its heritage that included songs of love and menace, violence and pregnancies, even a touch of witchcraft (which is what "grammaree" also means in, as you might guess, Scotland).: "Because these songs are passively accepted as favoured fantasies by whole human families over long periods of time, they can be taken as the signposts of persistent patterns of community feeling and can throw light into many dark corners of our past and present." (As you listen to The Wife Of Usher's Well you will perhaps agree that the suggestion of the eldritch in it does not depend on one's knowing the specialized meaning of "grammaree".) Ballad singing as a fine art is based on folk singing, not on the Art Song, and even in its most interpretive aspect, respects that heritage. Thus, John Jacob Niles, appearing on Victor Red Seal and later on Asch, as Moe expressed it, "broke the ice to American audiences by introducing folk songs in homes as a manifestation of American culture along with opera and so on."

In his important study, "Negro Folk Music, U.S.A." (Col. U. Press) Harold Courlander found evidence of ballad awareness and usage -- including lyric usage from balladry such as is found in John Henry, etc. -- and emphasized as typical that ballad materials "were generally absorbed into the main flow of Negro musical tradition, where other concepts dominated, and where a style characterized by allusion and interpolation usually remained supreme." It is in this sense that Go Down, Ol' Hannah -- in which the sun is Ol' Hannah -- which makes a dramatic structure of what is basically a relatively simple "holler" form, contributes to the rounded picture of the ballad in America. This version, with its effective use of falsetto, is unique to Dock Reese, is distinctively Afro-American in form, and is usually referred to as the type of holler sung where no specific work rhythm is required. Unlike many blues of today, which are stanzas strung together, Go Down, Ol' Hannah exhibits formal development appropriate to the story line of its lyric; one doesn't think of it as a holler of so many bars, but as a holler using 4-bar units. In this it is comparable to Rich Amerson's beautiful field blues, Black Woman, which Harold Courlander recorded in Alabama (in "Folk Music of Alabama - Secular" Folkways FE 4417, also included in "Folk Music, U.S.A." FE 4530 and "Music Down Home" FA 2691.)

A development that brought a crisis to a head in the record industry (while helping to solve one) was Decca's answer to the depression in a 77¢-priced disc for the type of music that had theretofor appeared on more expensive labels. Recording became increasingly competitive; when artists failed to shake the money tree, contracts were dropped. Moreover, the established companies tended to drop slow-selling records from their catalogs -- which made for collector's items and confusion, all the way from folk songs to operatic arias. (As it happens, this was corrected later, most effectively in the activity of young producers such as George Avakian and John Hammond who proved that jazz and folk albums of out-of-print performances, for example, could have respectable over-all sales, even though sales for a specific period might be unimpressive.)

What happened earlier in the folk field was simply that albums by very fine singers -- such as Niles on Victor Red Seal and Andrew Rowan Summers on Columbia Masterworks -- did not sell in the quantities expected. As a consequence, these singers were free to record where they could, as was Richard Dyer-Bennet, whose work had appeared on Decca. It was Alan Lomax who got Woody Guthrie into Victor for his historic "Dust Bowl Ballads" -- now in the RCA Victor Vintage series -- and when it went out of print Woody was, for then, exclusive on Asch. What was happening at Asch Studio was symptomatic of the re-birth of interest in our own folk music that was beginning to take place all over the country. Singers, musicologists and friends of singers were excited by what Moe Asch was doing and heartened by his less parochial approach to folk song audiences than had been common previously. Asch and Disc albums, documentaries, children's songs by Woody and others, along with album designs, were given awards. Those who knew him at the time warmed to Moe's enthusiasm for songs and music that had vitality and life, that spoke of the historic past and of history in the making and that could, perhaps, restore something of its lost prestige to folk music in the context of modern, industrial, urban life. Years later Pete Seeger would refer to the cultural acceptance of folk music as "the reflection of a new national maturity. We are trying to identify with our country again." (Look, 8/27/63).

In the early days at Asch you knew Pete by his banjo and blue jeans, Leadbelly by that powerful twelve-string guitar, the crease in his pin-stripe suit and the shine on his shoes. In the early 1940's Pete was modest about his talent, though Alan Lomax even then considered him a folk singer of great potential. Though schooled at Harvard he was schooled as well -- like metal being tempered to its true resonance -- by real life. Through his father, Charles Seeger, the distinguished composer-musicologist, he came to know folk festivals and traditional singers and banjoists such as Bascom Lamar Lunsford. Through Alan, who taught him many songs, and later on his own he got to know even more -- some of them are referred to in his, "How To Play The 5-String Banjo" (Oak) though this is not intended as anything but an instruction manual. Pete made his first solo tests -- one of them was Old Blue -- after hitch-hiking to the West Coast where friends raised the money needed ($150. or so) to make the audition records. This was in 1947, after he had begun to record for Moe but it was following this trip to the Coast that he did most of his solo recordings. Moe commented, of Pete's song in this set: "He keeps to tradition without imposing his own interpretation."

Richness and variety in American folk music reflects the diversity of its backgrounds. In 1935 Richard Dyer-Bennet, with lute and bicycle, arrived in Sweden where ancient traits and traditions rubbed elbows with Art Song and where Sven Scholander, a collector and singer of ballads, sang for him, talked with him and contributed songs to his wide-ranging repertoire. "I was greatly influenced by Scholander," Dyer-Bennet recalled later (in Ray M. Lawless' "Folksingers and Folk Songs in America" Duell, Sloan and Pearce) "and tried to develop a comparable approach to the art of song. With him, it was a trinity of poetry, melody, and lute accompaniment." Back in this country he studied guitar with Rey de la Torre (1944) and at the time he recorded for Asch and Disc he usually favored Spanish guitar.

Far different was the background of Dock Reese, whose father was a folk minister but whose finishing school was State Prison Farm No. 1 in Texas. (He took to robbery from desperation, but was no more a criminal than Louis Armstrong, who learned to read cornet parts in the "Waif's Home", as the home for wayward boys was called. Louis' waywardness had been shooting off a pistol in a moment of holiday zeal.) Like pockets of poverty -- the Appalachians, for example -- prison farms were repositories of living folk music. At farms such as the one where Dock Reese improved his singing and enlarged his repertoire, the songs, Alan Lomax observed in "Folk Songs of North America" "were handed on from slave to peon to leased convict to state prisoner." Later, when Dock Reese settled down to being a house painter and minister, he used many of the songs and spirituals he'd learned in the cruelest folksinging school in America, and used them to a purpose, in organizing drives of his local N.A.A.C.P.

In yet another and completely different environment, that of a Catskill area (N.Y.) farming community, George Edwards learned Bonnie Labouring Boy from his mother before he was nine. When he recorded it for Asch, he was over seventy. Gnarled hands, bent back, and a face lined and weathered like old parchment that had yellowed and cracked, testified that he'd worked the land and, as with Woody Guthrie (though their voices are not at all the same) the texture of his voice suggested that he'd become a singer within an oral tradition. Norman Studer, in notes for "Ballads" (Asch 560) stated that George Edwards had been to New York City only twice -- and on one occasion lost his way to a musicologists' conference and headed back home, sleeping in barns and along fence rows. A few years after the album mentioned was released, a reference to this song appeared in English Folk Dance And Song Journal (London) quoting a Such's Ballad Sheets version, e.g.

"As I roved out one evening, being in the blooming
spring,
I heard a lovely damsel fair most grievously did
sing...."

Woody Guthrie came to Asch by way of People's Songs, to which Alan had directed him so that he might meet Pete Seeger and others. The impact of his voice

on other singers can be imagined from Woody's uninhibited description of it (Current Biography, 1963): "I had rather sound like the ashcans of the early morning, like the cab drivers cursing at one another, like the longshoremen yelling, like the cowhands whooping and like the lone wolf barking." This was the troubadour of the Oakies come to town, fresh from a radio program that, like one Cisco had had, wasn't completely satisfying. His hair was sticking out and his guitar held loosely, ready for action. When he came to meet Moe, he sat down on the floor and said, "What have you got here?" In answer, Moe played him some things by Leadbelly; soon Woody was making acetates of his own -- except when he was off on singing jaunts with his contemporaries, or in the Merchant Marine with his friend Cisco: "He sung with me in three trips," wrote Woody in "900 Miles" (Oak), "and through three invasions in the merchant marine ships and we got torpedoed two times out of three trips." When in town (that is, in New York, which he didn't fancy much) he'd spend hours at Asch Studio and was as familiar a figure there as was, say, Max Bodenheim (the poet) at the Village Vanguard. During such periods, "There wasn't a week that he didn't record something. He'd wait until I was free," Moe said, "and sometimes we'd have supper together. It gave him a great opportunity to create right on the spot." As Moe recalled Woody, he was not nice, in the conventional sense, but had a true deep-down feeling for humanity; his outlook was not local but worldly.

There were two aspects of the most typical groups that sang as groups at Moe's studio. They were most of them young people and most of them sang in the same or slightly different groupings than on Asch -- before unions and on other much-chronicled occasions. Some groups on records resulted when individuals met at Asch Studio and Moe suggested they sing together. Songs and singers were much as those you might hear, if you were lucky, at a hootenanny. Many of these same people were heard, as well, on local radio stations (such as the city-owned WNYC) and on CBS network programs that Alan Lomax wrote and that Nick Ray directed. It was a time of stylistic impact, as in influences (discerned in Cisco's and Pete's singing, for example) from Negro folk music that came from associations and friendships. Woody was a constant visitor at Leadbelly's and Martha's East Side flat -- it was usually over-heated but marvelously bursting at the seams with music -- but Woody's dragged beat and bent tones came from his Okalahoma heritage -- the friendship with Huddie just made it better than ever. Bess Lomax, Alan's sister, who married singer Butch Hawes in the early 1940's, helped to get some of the musical settings and sessions at Asch organized, as for the albums of "America's Favorite Songs". There were the Almanac Singers and "Folksay" and such sessions of improvisation as that that produced the little pastiche on the 900 Miles theme, included in this set. (There was the greatest disparity in quality in discarded tests in those who took chances and tried out new ideas, Woody, Sonny, Pete, Cisco, for example.)

Millard Lampell, in "I Think I Ought To Mention I Was Blacklisted," (New York Times, 8/21/66) mentioned the scarcity of folksinging groups in that era and, in fact, it was groups such as those that recorded for Asch and Disc that were the prototypes of more professional groups such as The Weavers, and that, in effect, began a trend that led to Peter, Paul & Mary, The Kingston Trio, and countless other combinations of vocal talent. "In 1940," Millard wrote, "I had come up from West Virginia and, with Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and Lee Hays, formed a folk-singing group called The Almanacs... There wasn't exactly a clamor for folk-singers, and we were grateful for any paid bookings we could get. Mostly, we found ourselves performing at union meetings and left-wing benefits for Spanish refugees, striking Kentucky coal miners, and starving Alabama sharecroppers." In fact, to some folk singers of that period, the challenge of the environment was as immediate as that suggested by Captain Ahab's Quarterdeck catechism in "Moby Dick":

> "And what tune is it ye pull to, men?"
> "A dead whale or a stove boat!"

That spirit carried over into the singing of tunes such as those in "America's Favorite Songs". They were, in truth, singing for keeps and with, as the trade magazine Billboard noted, "a high degree of authenticity."

Groups of an entirely different nature are suggested in music for dancing, from the singing Callers to Woody's ingratiating fiddle and that nostalgic Cowboy Waltz. As dancers swung to figures of a New England square dance, singing callers such as Ralph Page (Vermont) instructed them and described the dance in the lyric. Changing partners in the Square Dance was a part of socializing and a good caller was as adept at getting people to know each other as an old-time country auctioneer. Alan Lomax has pointed out that the role of Caller, who could mix figures up and use his imagination in calling them, was more important here than in Europe. In Negro life, too, the square dance was often an accepted part of socializing. Quadrilles and cotillions went directly into urban life -- based not upon city but country dances -- the quadrille being played by early jazz bands. As for the cotillion on San Juan Hill in New York City, it was based on a group dance from South Carolina. James P. Johnson, who often recorded for Moe, told how he used to play tunes inspired by Gullah folk music and rhythms from South Carolina for the promenade called "walkin' for the cake" in which dance steps were improvised - and the rhythm was the one he incorporated in the dance melody most associated with the 1920's, The Charleston.

That Bile Them Cabbage Down was described to Lydia Parrish as a "cracker dance" by a resident of one of the Georgia Sea Islands, suggests that it relates to an old tradition. A "cracker" at one time meant not a hillbilly or a poor white but a frontiersman. That Georgia was a "cracker" state meant that it was a frontier state. In the frontier revolts, that first attempt at significant unified action by men of the Colonies preceding the American Revolution, Negroes fought along with whites, usually with the promise of freedom or of the acceptance of their status as servants. It was, perhaps, long after this that the term "cracker" came into general usage on the frontier, and it may have been because the frontier, like ships at sea, throve on barrels of hard crackers. The Afro-American breakdown was synonymous with a "cracker-barrel" dance, danced on boards across the barrels or on the barrel-head itself. In the loose

life of the frontier many types of dancing were interrelated and the frontier Negro was, according to what sparse evidence there is, able to exercise more of his natural independence than elsewhere. But no matter what the Negro's social position may have been, his role in music was far from being a stereotype. Even in the 19th century, when the stereotype was accepted literary usage, it is possible to sense the vigorous reality of folk dance and music in such descriptions as these -- relevant to the term "cracker" and to the term "break" (the latter came into jazz from Negro usage; break numbers are among the oldest jazz forms). The quotations are from Mathews' "A Dictionary of Americanisms" (U. of Chi. Press). From the Lexington Observer, 8/8/1838: "He got to 'breaking down' so hard toward the end of his dance, that the head of the barrel went in." From "The Gilded Age" (Twain & Warner, 1873): "The twang of banjo became audible as they drew nearer, and they saw a couple of negroes, from some neighboring plantation, 'breaking down' a Juba."

There was something altogether appropriate about Josh White and Leadbelly -- the first at Cafe Society (NYC) and the latter at the Village Vanguard a few blocks north -- singing songs other than those expected of Negro folk singers, that is, outside of spirituals or blues. Though they sang these, their repertoires also included songs to the hard rhythms of work and the soft rhythms of play, children's songs and old ballads -- all that miscellany that reflected the give-and-take of American folk music with music of many lands (not merely the British Isles). In the Americanization of European folk songs, it is impossible to say how much may have been owed to Negro folk creators, since the debt of accreditation was so rarely paid. Banjo transcriptions, early and late, are described today in terms of tonal-centered styles and of West African ancestry. Negro musicians and Negro folk composers were undoubtedly responsible for a steady flow that went into other-than-folk areas of American music, beginning with frontier entertainers and the earliest plantation minstrels.

A New York Times report by Robert B. Semple, Jr. (4/7/66) -- the Conservation Service Award of the Dept. of the Interior -- described an award-giving ceremony for Woody Guthrie in absentia -- for eleven years he has been seriously ill in a Brooklyn hospital - and concluded with these words: "On the sidelines hovered the short, heavy figure of Moses Asch, who has recorded about 500 of Mr. Guthrie's songs. Mr. Asch, who once turned down Joan Baez because he felt her songs and style were derivative, and who today sang along quietly in the shadows of the auditorium, called the award 'a great occasion'. It was, he said, 'official recognition of an authentic culture that this country has long denied.'"

Folk music on Asch and Disc -- other aspects of it than are emphasized here, such as topical, will be represented in later collections -- tells us something of beginnings and destinations. It preserves a quality in music that was present in ancient times, its identity with the processes of life and death. Historically it is less subservient to fashions and fads than other types of music -- though the bounce and bite of big city sounds these days (some of which Moe is recording) suggests that our most cherished ideas of tradition and change are in for some overhauling. Even so, in a world in which the environment changes almost too quickly for us to cope with it, something of the great traditions, in folk music as in all the arts, will survive because they serve a need. On the edges of the contemporary folk explosion the field is constantly losing talent to popular or art music. As a consequence, the term "folk music" may be, and often is, as loosely used a generality as "jazz". "When I feel pessimism, as I sometimes do," Pete Seeger told Joan Barthel (N.Y. Times, 1/23/66) "I feel like a man who loved to go out in the woods and track animals. He wanted other people to know what it was like, so he wrote a book about nature. It was a simple book, but it became a best-seller. . . and then there were organized tours. . . and LPs of bird calls, and all the rest. And the man said, "But that isn't what I was talking about at all.'"

The Records Side One

I. FOLK SINGERS

1,1 LEADBELLY (HUDDIE LEDBETTER), voice and 12-string guitar On A Monday (c. Folkways Mu. Publ.)

In a tradition as old as folk music, Leadbelly learned a song from a singer at Bellwood County Farm, Birmingham, Alabama. Only the process was new. The song was recorded at Bellwood by John A. and Alan Lomax (1934) and Alan "taught it to Lead". Moe first recorded it on Asch but this version was recorded later, in a musical history of Negro life that also included Baptist hymns. One Christmas, Huddie gave a concert for children at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC). "It was jam-packed," Moe wrote ("The Leadbelly Songbook" Oak) "children all over the place, frantic parents. But the moment Leadbelly started to play and sing, the audience hushed, the children grouped around him as thought it was grandfather singing for them, some sang with him, others danced, parents were bewitched."

1,2 BURL IVES, voice and guitar Poor Wayfaring Stranger

The World War II musical, "This Is The Army," catapulted Burl Ives to fame but it was Alan Lomax, working with Burl in the studio while Moe recorded Asch 345 in the control room, who helped him forget singing lessons and Broadway parts and get back to the traditional style he'd never altogether left, that he'd grown up with in Jasper County, Illinois. "It was very nice the way they worked together," Moe recalled. Only a cough and a hesitation kept this warmly sung version of Burl's famous theme from being issued in the 1940's. You couldn't edit acetate. In 1966 such editing was possible once one had transferred the performance to tape, as was done in this instance. Of this old spiritual Alan wrote in the booklet for Asch 345 ("Burl Ives - Poor Wayfaring Stranger") "You find it hidden away in the old shape-note hymn books that lie next to the family bible on the parlor table of many a Southern country home."

1, 3 BURL IVES, voice and guitar The Bold Soldier (Alt. master, A-345)

An 18th century text of this ballad, printed at The Angel in Duck's Lane, London, set the scene with admirable brevity:

"He woo'd his Lord's Daughter and carried the day,
But soon after marriage was forced for to fight..."

Ancestrally, the song relates to Douglas Tragedy or Earl Brand (Child No. 7) but Burl learned it from a blind street singer. "Burl 'pure delights' in singing ballads," Alan wrote (booklet) and that is how many of us heard him before his well-deserved fame and those fifty-cent cigars, sitting on the floor with that guitar working hard, bringing a true American country sound to a big city apartment.

1, 4 ALAN LOMAX, voice and guitar Mama, Mama (c. Ludlow Mu.)

This was sung for John A. Lomax by Augustus Haggerty, Huntsville, Texas and, like the following song, is found in "Our Singing Country" (MacMillan). From early field trips with his father, John A. Lomax, to recent work in urban neighborhoods, Alan's concern has been for the people who create songs as well as for the songs themselves. Musically, musicologically and in countless other ways, he has been lending his dynamic presence to the folk field since he first wrote about sukey-jump and holler for Southwest Review (1934). He recorded this and the next song for Moe to illustrate aspects of American tradition.

1, 5 ALAN LOMAX, voice and guitar Once I Knew An Old Lady (c. Ludlow Mu.)

This song was first recorded for the Library of Congress (by the Lomax's) - sung by a singer, James Baker, known to the folk cognoscentias. Ironhead, at a prison farm famous in folk if not penological annals, called Sugarland. (ref. "Our Singing Country" Macmillan). It's a Negro version of the Scots ballad, The Wily Old Carle.

1, 6 PETE SEEGER, voice and 5-string banjo The Devil And The Farmer's Wife (The Farmer's Curst Wife, Child No. 278)

In the 17th century the sentiment of this ballad was expressed as "How The Divell Was Guld By A Scould" (1630). It has lost nothing of its contentiousness and, possibly, gained in exuberance in American versions that, like this one, were often accompanied by 5-string banjo. "His whole musical life has been a learning process," Joan Barthel wrote of Pete Seeger (N.Y. Times, 1/23/66). The early 1940's marked a period of fusion between banjo and voice -- he was later to achieve something comparable on 12-string guitar -- as in this song. It is loose and lively, yet conveys that sound that has its own special eloquence -- a sound that, at best, can be casual and yet, paradoxically, true as a plumb line. This song was recorded on a day off from the Army, just before doing "Lonesome Train" for Decca. Though learned from Lee Hayes, he sings a traditional version.

1, 7 WOODY GUTHRIE, voice and guitar The House Of The Rising Sun (incl. in Folkways FA 2483, recorded earlier.)

This song, sung in a style completely Woody Guthrie, even to the chopped guitar accompaniment he often used, is related, so we're told, to Child No. 81, Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard and Little Mathy Groves. Moe commented that it seems to have got into the American hobo tradition, judging by Woody's version. Of his teens, when he learned countless songs and ballads, Woody wrote ("American Folksong - Woody Guthrie," ed. Moses Asch, Oak). "I carried my harmonica and played in barber shops, at shine stands, in front of shows, around the pool halls, and rattled the bones, did jig dances, sang and played with Negroes, Indians, whites, farmers, town folks, truck drivers, and with every kind of a singer you can think of. I learned all of the tricks of strings and music and all of the songs that I could remember and learn by ear."

1, 8 CISCO HUSTON, voice and guitar Cryderville Jail (Issued in Folkways FA 2480)

Cisco came to Moe from Denver where he'd had a western show on radio. He'd been a working cowboy and had acting ambitions but poor eyesight was a handicap. He could unionize and harmonize and could say of a folksong, citing Aristotle (poetics): "It is true to its own inner necessity rather than the accidental historical event." For a long time, Cisco was content to be a "second voice" with Woody. Moe encouraged him to sing on his own as well. He recounted that Cisco knew the insides of jails and knew that trick of stashing a banknote in a shoe so as not to be pulled in for vagrancy. Cisco achieves a dispassionate style with no loss of folk intimacy. His singing is often simple, effective, as here, the guitar closely related to the voice. This song, identified with many jails, also seems to be related to an older song that Alan recorded as sung by a Sea Islands singer (on Prestige), Hard Times In Old Virginia.

1, 9 BROWNIE MCGHEE, voice and guitar Betty And Dupree (Issued in Folkways FA 2030)

Brownie McGhee, an outstanding singer and guitarist, was introduced to Moe by Sonny Terry whom Moe had known since the early days of Asch Records. Brownie learned how to sing blues from his father, who tried to dissuade him from the rough tough life of a singer-entertainer in the Tennessee hills. Brownie's natural, unaffected singing is quietly impressive and he plays guitar in what Pete Seeger has called "the classical early blues fingerpicking style." This song was based on a Negro youth in love with a white girl, who tried to rob for her a diamond ring -- who was, in real life, the last man to be hung in the state of Georgia (before the electric chair was introduced).

The song was created almost immediately as a topical blues and Brownie learned his version from his father. In it, "blind the passenger" refers to stealing a ride on the "blind baggage," a car without end doors.

II. TRADITION

(A) TRADITION AND NEW AUDIENCES

1,10 BESS LOMAX (HAWES) and GROUP: Bess Lomax, mandolin; Pete Seeger, 5-string banjo; Butch Hawes, Tom Glazer, guitars. Go Tell Aunt Nancy (Issued in Disc 607 "America's Favorite Songs")

When Bess, Butch, Pete and Tom got together, chances are they'd sing songs like this one, that dared anyone to stay out of it. You probably know the song, but may have sung it about an Aunt Rosie or Rhoda or just as a good old song called The Old Gray Goose Is Dead. It has an ancient, errant melody, found in the Methodist Hymnal (No. 187), an 18th century opera by Rosseau (accd. Richard Chase, "Amer. Folk Tales & Songs" Signet), and traces of it have been noted in music of the English Renaissance. Its Americanization appears to have come early. Alan (in "Best Loved American Folk Songs" Grosset & Dunlap) wrote of its lyric: "There's irony here, pathos, humor, and, if you like, history--a reminder of the days when a goose-feather bed was the very prime in sleeping..."

2,1 PETE SEEGER and GROUP (Same personnel as on Go Tell Aunt Nancy) Polly Wolly Doodle (from acetate)

This is one of those early 1940's performances in which one first heard the binding force that Pete Seeger, with 5-string banjo, gave to a group. This is an old standby of the barn dance and of the clan gathered around the upright or parlor organ. They made many tries at it, aiming for texture and clarity of voicing, balance of instruments with voices, etc. This relaxed and rhythmic interpretation is what Moe recorded after Pete said, "This a test cut? -- well, we'll do it over again."

2,2 BESS LOMAX (HAWES) and GROUP (Same personnel as preceding) Down In The Valley (Issued on Disc 607)

Bess Lomax Hawes -- she married Butch Hawes around the time this was recorded -- has a voice one associates with a way of traditional singing, characterized by sweetness and a delicate vibrato. With the OWI during the war years, she planned and produced countless folk and other music programs (Overseas Operations, Radio). From foreign desks -- radio programs were beamed to specific areas overseas -- she patiently bore with queries on everything from the history of Yankee Doodle to the religious denominational association of masses by Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. In group activity at Asch and Disc, Moe recalled, "Bess contributed to the musical setting just as Mary (Mary Lou Williams) did on jazz."
This plaintive, familiar and cherished bit of folk Americana is found in many collections. (There's a variant of it in "Leadbelly's Last Sessions" Vol. II Folkways FA 2942, Birmingham Jail.)

2,3 JOSH WHITE, voice and guitar Number 12 Train (Alternate master of title in Asch 358.)

An attractive entertainer, white shirt open at the throat, his foot on a chair, guitar held casually--yet those whining tones came out sure and strong -- Josh White sang of chain gangs, Jim Crow and injustice, of bad men and good men and the women you meet in the blues. He sang in smart clubs, in concert halls and on radio. Few in his audience realized Josh's guitar style was in part inspired by Blind Lemon Jefferson, whom he'd "led around" as a boy. Nor did they know he'd recorded on "race" labels, as records liked by Negro listeners were then called. Sometimes these two worlds -- of singing for Negro audiences and for largely white audiences -- would merge, as when he sang a blues such as this Number 12 Train.

2,4 LES PAUL, voice, with guitars, piano accordion and violin. Born To Lose (From tape)

This song, taped in the 1950's to co-memorate an early association, documents a borderland, of which there've been many crossings both ways, between folk and popular music. As noted previously, Les was a prime mover in electronic recording of sound. And, as many listeners will recall, he and Mary Ford were immensely popular in a type of music that was an influence on today's Rock sounds.

II TRADITION

(B) COUNTRY DANCE TRADITIONS

2,5 FRANK WARNER, voice and 5-string banjo; with Group including: Pete Seeger, 5-string banjo; Bess Lomax Hawes, mandolin; Butch Hawes, guitar. Johnson Boys (From acetate made at same time as Disc 607 but never issued.)

Frank Warner, born in Selma, Alabama, with his wife Anne constituted one of the best known singing-collecting teams of the 1930's. In notes for an Asch album Frank wrote: "Songs we had learned in Carolina mountain cabins reminded our New York friends of ballads they and their folks had been singing since way back. Anne got the words, I got the tunes." The "New Lost City Ramblers Songbook" (Oak) includes a variant in which the Johnson Boys are heroes in the Civil War. Here it stomps off as for an informal dance, up-tempo with a thrust in the singing and attractive color in the ensemble.

2,6 RALPH PAGE, Singing Caller, with instrumental group. (Issued in Disc 630 "Square Dances").

Ralph Page, who plays fiddle as well as practicing the old-time art of the Singing Caller, came to New York from Vermont to record for Moe. His calls, inserted in the lyrics, are both imagery and cues (e.g. "dip and dive in the valley") - couples and figures cued by numbers.

2,7 WOODY GUTHRIE, fiddle, w. instr. group. Cowboy Waltz (From Acetate)

The first time Moe heard Woody do this -- which re-creates a scene for the listener -- it was done in tempo, for dancing, as in the Southwest. Woody played the fiddle country style, holding it against his chest. For album notes he described the routine at the dances he used to play for: ". . . an old-time waltz number, then a two-step, a fox-trot, and a square, and another waltz, a Round Dance, and a Ragtime, and another Square. I used to always play Ranchdance tunes in this order."

2,8 MR. SILLER, violin; MRS. SILLER, piano. Country Dance Music. (Issued in "Country Dances" Asch 344.

This came with a call book and if you know square dancing at all -- and perhaps even if you don't -- you can spot the places where the calls come in. In parts of Vermont and New Hampshire violin and piano are still played in this way for country dances.

2,9 PICK-UP BAND Bile Them Cabbage Down

Moe bought this master, briefly issued on a now defunct American Record Company label, to show the music in between, the commercial square dance music that was rife on radio in those days -- shades of the Blue Grass sound! Its possible relationships have been noted in introductory text.

III THE BALLAD IN AMERICA

(A) ART BALLAD SINGERS

3,1 Richard Dyer-Bennet, voice and guitar Two Maidens Went Milking One Day. (Alternate master from acetate of title in "Love Songs" Disc 609).

Whether one follows voice or guitar, this makes beautiful listening and as light-hearted an introduction to the ballad singer's art as one could ask for. In early studies, Dyer-Bennet aimed for "crystal clear enunciation". Sven Scholander, the Swedish singer-collector, we learn from Current Biography, told him to sing to all who would listen and to present songs "so that it would seem that the songs were fresh." Dick was always well groomed -- he even seemed that way in his unprofessional moments -- and when he sang this song it was with a kind of dead-pan stance which, we like to think, is contained in his superb presentation of it here.

3,2 ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS, voice and dulcimer The Hangman's Tree (Child No. 95) (Issued in "The Lady Gay" Folkways FA 2041)

Once, inheriting some folk material such as ballad sheets, Andrew Rowan Summers -- not appreciating its value -- threw it out. Later, as his involvement and dedication to folk music developed, he more than made up for this in his own contributions to American folk singing. He began to play dulcimer after inheriting one -- this time he fully appreciated such inheritance -- from an old man who, shortly before his death, had been too feeble to play it at the White Top (Appalachian) Folk Festival. Summers has been described as one of the best traditional players of this instrument that seems to cushion the sound as he sings this venerable, wide-spread ballad. Old title: The Maide Freed From The Gallows. Bruno Nettl in "Folk And Traditional Music of The Western Continents," (Prentice-Hall) tells of a German counterpart in which things are livened up when the judge tells the victim's sister that she can redeem him by running around the gallows naked nine times.

3,3 JOHN JACOB NILES, voice and dulcimer Little Mattie Groves (Alternate master from acetate of title in "Child Ballads" Disc 665). (Child No. 81)

When John Jacob Niles recorded for the Asch label, he not only sang, he enacted parts, with gestures and emotional expressions, he became a small man, a large man. While perhaps too personal to fit the somewhat flamboyant ballad style Bela Bartok called "parlando-rubato" (In chap. 4 of Bruno Nettl's book previously mentioned.), it has many of the characteristics described, and is, in its highly personal way, very respectful of ballad tradition. This may be said, as well, of many of his own songs. Fortunately for the listener, whether one calls it "parlando-rubato" or not, the acting-out is inherent in his singing style and particularly effective here, in this short version of Little Mattie Groves. "He interpreted to the hilt," Moe said, "like a Shakespearean actor. I call it act-singing."

3,4 CRATIS WILLIAMS (Unaccompanied) The Wife Of Usher's Well (Lady Gay) (Child No. 79) Alternate from acetate of same title on Asch and in "Cratis Williams - Child Ballads" Disc 662.

A professor of English who has conducted courses in folksong and in American literature at Appalachian State Teachers College, Boone, N.C., Cratis Williams had no singing-learning background but comes of mountain parents who knew folksongs, and has collected many himself, particularly in the South. When he recorded this, he was an instructor in English in New York City. Though neither a great stylist like Richard Dyer-Bennet nor a folk singer with an aged-in-the-song voice like George Edwards, Cratis Williams sings with taste and an ear for ballad tradition and modal nuance. (We have referred to the lyric in introductory text.)

III THE BALLAD IN AMERICA

(B) BALLADS AND FOLK MUSIC IN FOLK INTERPRETATIONS

3,5 TEXAS GLADDEN (unaccompanied) Dark Scenes of Winter (From tape recorded by Alan Lomax)

Though this and the next two were recorded more recently than "Blue Ridge Ballads" (Disc 737), an album recorded by Moe in the studio, they were chosen for their better recording quality. In style, the selections are as representative

of Texas Gladden and her brother, Hobart Smith, as was the Disc album. Alan describes Dark Scenes of Winter as an American lyric song. Generations of ballad-singing Virginians handed down to Texas Gladden the songs she sang from childhood in Smith County. A heavy-set country woman with a big goiter on her neck, she had a quality of voice that was rare, even among gifted folksingers.

3, 6 HOBART SMITH, voice and guitar
Railroad Bill (From tape by Alan Lomax)

When Hobart Smith and Texas Gladden died not many years ago, within a few months of each other, the country lost two important artists in the folk tradition. Hobart Smith played a variety of instruments, including banjo and piano, and each affected his playing of others. When this title was in Disc 637, we are told in "New Lost City Ramblers Songbook", it gave big city guitar pickers something on which they "showed their stuff". Smith once mentioned that one of his influences was the guitar of Blind Lemon Jefferson, who had come through town on his ramblings. The song, Railroad Bill, was found in Negro and white traditions, an example of the familiar hero-villain type.

3, 7 TEXAS GLADDEN, voice; HOBART SMITH, fiddle. Down In The Willow Garden (Rose Connelly) (From tape by Alan Lomax)

In this "rather strange murder of a young lady named Rose Connelly," ("Best Loved Amer. Folk Songs") the murderer apparently botched up a poisoning and finished the job with a skeever (dagger). Alan noted that the song was enthusiastically taken up by "young lady folk singers," and one conjures up sweet ingenuous voices singing of lust and murder! Texas Gladden's beautifully textured voice and style give it the character of a classic ballad. The fine fiddle part, with its drone-like role, reminds us that Hobart Smith learned fiddling from a Negro, Jim Spencer, "who was raised up in slave times."

3, 8 BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD, voice and 5-string banjo Springfield Mountain (Issued in Folkways FA 2040 - "Smoky Mt. Ballads).

In notes for "Smoky Mountain Ballads," Pete Seeger wrote: "Bascom Lamar Lunsford is an old country lawyer whose fondness for his native Smoky Mountain folk music led him to start the annual Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in North Carolina, which for years has been the best shindig of its kind in the forty-eight states." And of the type of banjo played in the set, "The African technique of setting up a complicated rhythmic-melodic pattern, repeated over and over again with subtle variations within a narrow frame, was adapted to minor modes of old England." Song discussed earlier in text.

3, 9 GEORGE EDWARDS (unaccompanied)
Bonnie Labouring Boy (Alternate of title in "Ballads" - Asch 560.)

An old ballad sung in an old style, with a suggestion of the small ways in which lyrics used to change, in this instance hardly noticeably, as in "hired man", etc. Edwards' father and mother could sing dusk to dawn, without repeating themselves.

3, 10 DOCK REESE (unaccompanied)
Go Down, Ol' Hannah. Rec'd by Moe Asch, 1940's. Issued in FJ 2801 ("Jazz, Vol. I, The South").

Born in Travis County, Texas, Dock Reese eventually became a minister (Baptist) and house painter and was active in the local N.A.A.C.P. In his youth he was convicted twice of robbery. The second time, though his sentence was reduced after John Henry Faulk had argued in his behalf, he was sent to State Prison Farm #1. Since he knew various State officials, Faulk was allowed to visit the farm, ride out with the sergeants at the actual time Reese was there. He described (to this writer) the singing traditions and the hard plantation heritage. Men sweltered in squads of twenty, perhaps (depending on the type of work) singing the heavily rhythmic lines of a worksong that would one day be a Basie blues, or that might have already made that transformation. Bloodhounds sought the shade of the utility vehicle while perhaps, on another part of the farm, other bloodhounds were trained in trailing escaped prisoners, with an actual prisoner having to play the role of the escapee. This was a segregated farm in 1940 and the "dog" sergeant, who ranked his fellows, prided himself on judging the distance he should keep a prisoner with a complaint from his horse, in order to play safe. This Afro-American song in Dock Reese's unique version, must have come from far back, along with the style of singing it, with the lyric changing to fit time and place, as this one is set in the Brazos River bottoms. Dock sang it for Moe when he was in New York in the mid-Forties to participate in a Town Hall concert. It is not so much a prison song as it is one of the great songs of segregation, a cry of anguish to Ol' Hannah, the sun.

IV INSTRUMENTALISTS

"Did you ever hear Negroes play the piano by ear?" Lafcadio Hearn wrote (c. 1883). "There are several curiousities here, Creole negroes. Sometimes we pay them a bottle of wine to come here and play for us. They use the piano exactly like a banjo. It is good banjo-playing but no piano playing. But then, it was not Hearn's privilege to hear Boogie Woogie, which owed something to banjo rags, or Hobart Smith, who was white but who never forgot one instrument when he played another. That folk ingenuity is far from being naivete, though the ingenuous may be part of it, is amply demonstrated in this set. A common characteristic of many instrumental pieces, from Sonny Terry's harmonica on a Fox Chase to Rev. Gary Davis' Civil War March is that they set scenes and, in each instance, present a little entertainment, complete in itself. Woody and his friends improvise the same sort of thing on their railroad piece. Baby Dodds, the pioneer jazz drummer, set out to play a tom-tom work-out for Fred Ramsey and Moe--he ended up with an exercise in artistry that he called "Bumble-Rumble of the Tom-Tom."

4, 1 HOBART SMITH, piano Cindy, Cindy (From tape recorded by Alan Lomax)

Long familiar as country dance music, singers in particular may be interested in the Gullah version found in Dorothy Scarborough's "On The Trail Of Negro Folk Songs," (Folklore Associates), with its amusing innuendo. Hobart Smith's remarkable piano style seems to combine various elements -- ragtime, guitar and reminiscences of banjo.

4, 2 CHAMPION JACK DUPREE, piano Stomp Blues (From acetate)

With his sharp clothes and a ring in his ear, Champion Jack Dupree recalls the oldtime sporting world pianist-entertainer. His is a loose, even crude technique that enables him to produce unique sonorities appropriate to the style called Boogie Woogie. Even in his recorded solos he puts on a show. On this occasions the girl with him -- he didn't bother to introduce her -- helps things along with stomps and shouts.

4, 3 SONNY TERRY, harmonica and falsetto voice Fox Chase (From acetate)

In "Negro Folk Music, U. S. A." Harold Courlander writes of harmonica traditions: "One popular exercise is the fox chase, in which the harmonica is called upon to imitate the panting and baying of the hounds, their yelps as they approach their quarry, and the fading of the sounds as the pack disappears in the distance. Sonny first heard a fox chase from a musician passing through his part of North Carolina. "But he didn't play it like we play it now -- harmonica wouldn't be sayin' nothin' much." (Quoted in Federic Ramsey, Jr.'s notes for FA 2035) Sonny listened to others, his father's among them, and made up his own, using also the falsetto voice that, in American folk music, often relates to West African practices. Imaginative and deeply moving pieces such as this Fox Chase and his Lost John (in FA 2035) established Sonny Terry as one of the great folk artists of our time.

4, 4 WOODY GUTHRIE, fiddle, w. instr. group. 900 Miles (From acetate)

The slow dragged tones of Woody's singing have their counterpart in a blues-like drone when he plays fiddle -- a low and lonesome sound effective against the brighter color of the other instruments. This is from one of those informal 46th Street hootenannies' with friends of Woody's, including Cisco, contributing to it.

4, 5 WOODY GUTHRIE, SONNY TERRY, harmonicas, w. instru. group. 900 Miles (From acetate)

The rough phrases Woody uses at the opening remind one of his chopping guitar style. This is another 900 Miles, more or less, as the musicians improvise a train trip from the West Coast to Chicago, complete with junctions, grades, etc. As Woody gets the drivers rolling, Sonny comes in with his incomparable high tones and falsetto. This is yet another folk tribute to the trains that, as Carl Sandburg wrote in "American Songbag", "gave cruel desert spaces a friendly look."

4, 6 REV. GARY DAVIS, guitar Civil War March (from acetate)

This lively and fascinating pastiche on a marching band, reminds one, in its stringy charm and versatility, of the guitar of Hobart Smith. In this guitar solo, which is mildly satirical and deals in innuendo, as in the "shots" and the vocal interpolations, the Rev. Gary Davis creates for us the flourishes with which the march begins and ends, the counting-out phrases and even the plaintive trio section.

4, 7 BABY DODDS, Tom-Tom Tom-Tom Workout (First issued in "Baby Dodds Drum Solos" Disc 709; reissued Folkways FJ 2290.)

Talking to Fred and Moe, Baby Dodds said, "Well, then I came to the conclusion to feel that every beat -- even shell work -- you hit the shell -- that woodblock and anything else, cymbals -- it's all supposed to correspond to the melody." As mentioned earlier, this is what Baby called a "Bumble-Rumble of the Tom-Tom". Before he came north to Chicago to play with King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, Baby played at a cafe called Few Clothes, in the famous marching bands of New Orleans and on Mississippi riverboats of the Strekfus Line.

ASCH RECORDINGS

AA 1/2 - THE ASCH RECORDINGS, 1939-1947. BLUES, GOSPEL, AND JAZZ. Volume 1, Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Leadbelly (Defense Blues; Keep Your Hands Off Her); Champion Jack Dupree (Too Evil To Cry); Josh White (Careless Love); Lonnie Johnson (Drifting Along Blues); Brownie McGhee (Pawnshop Blues); Sonny Terry (Lonesome Train); The Gospel Keys (Precious Lord; You've Got To Move); The Thrasher Wonders (Moses Smote The Water); Sister Ernestine Washington with Bunk Johnson's Jazz Band (Does Jesus Care?; Where Could I Go But To The Lord?); Muggsy Spanier (You're Driving Me Crazy); Pee Wee Russell (I'd Climb The Highest Mountain; Take Me To The Land Of Jazz - Pee Wee, vocal); Omer Simeon Trio (Harlem Hotcha); James P. Johnson (Hesitation Blues); Joe Sullivan and Sidney Bechet (Sister Kate); Art Tatum (Topsy); Coleman Hawkins (Leave My Love Alone); Stuff Smith (Desert Sands); Mary Lou Williams (Roll 'Em); Jazz at the Philharmonic (Blues: Part 3 - Les Paul, guitar).

2-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $13.58

RBF LISTINGS

RF 1 - THE COUNTRY BLUES, Volume 1. Early Rural Recordings of Folk Artists.
Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Blind Lemon Jefferson (Matchbox Blues); Lonnie Johnson (Careless Love); Cannon's Jug Stompers (Walk Right In); Peg Leg Howell (Low Down Rounder's Blues); Blind Willie McTell (Statesboro Blues); Memphis Jug Band (Stealin', Stealin'); Blind Willie Johnson (You Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond); Leroy Carr

(Alabama Woman Blues); Sleepy John Estes (Special Agent); Big Bill (Key To The Highway); Bukka White (Fixin' To Die); Tommy McClennan (I'm A Guitar King); Robert Johnson (Preachin' Blues); Washboard Sam (I Been Treated Wrong).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 3 - HISTORY OF JAZZ: THE NEW YORK SCENE. Documentary Recordings Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Europe's Society Orchestra, 1914 (Too Much Mustard); Original Dixieland Jazz Band, 1917 (Sensation Rag); Mamie Smith accompanied by Perry Bradford's Jazz Hounds, 1920 (Crazy Blues); Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra, 1925 (Sugar Foot Stomp); Clarence Williams' Washboard Five, 1928 (Log Cabin Blues); Charlie Johnson's Paradise Orchestra, 1928 (Boy In The Boat); Miff Mole's Little Molers, 1929 (Shim-me-sha-wabble); Louisiana Sugar Babes, 1929 (Thou Swell); Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, 1928 (Harlem River Quiver); The Missourians, 1929 (Ozark Mountain Blues); Cab Calloway and his Orchestra, 1934 (Keep That Hi-De-Hi In Your Soul); Jimmy Lunceford and his Orchestra, 1934 (Jazznochracy); Coleman Hawkins Quartet, 1944 - with Thelonius Monk, piano (Flyin' Hawk); Dizzy Gillespie and his Sextet, 1945 (Groovin' High).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 5 - AN INTRODUCTION TO GOSPEL SONG. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Fisk University Jubilee Quartet (Roll Jordan Roll); Tuskegee Institute Singers (I've Been Buked and I've Been Scorned; Most Done Traveling); Pace Jubilee Singers with Hattie Parker (Leave It There); Rev. J. M. Gates and Congregation (You Mother Heart Breakers; Jesus Rose From The Dead); Rev. F. W. McCee and Congregation (I Looked Down The Line And I Wondered; Jesus The Lord Is A Savior); Sister Ernestine Washington with Bunk Johnson's Jazz Band (Did I Wonder); Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux and his "Happy Am I" Choir and Orchestra (I Am So Happy); Rev. Utah Smith and Congregation (I Got Two Wings); Mother McClease and her sons (Psalm for Confusion); The Spirit of Memphis (When Mother's Gone; He's A Friend Of Mine).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 6 - THE JUG BANDS. Early Recordings of the Jazz Greats. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

The Old Southern Jug Band (Blues, Just Blues, That's All; Hatchet Head Blues); The Birmingham Jug Band (Bill Wilson); King David's Jug Band (Rising Sun Blues; What's That Tastes Like Gravy); Cannon's Jug Stompers (Mule Get Up In The Alley); Clifford's Louisville Jug Band (Struttin' The Blues); The Memphis Jug Band (Overseas Stomp; Whitewash Station; She Done Sold It Out); The Dixieland Jug Blowers (Florida Blues; Banjoreno; Carpet Alley; House Rent Rag).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 7 - THE PIANO ROLL. A Study of The Standard Home Player Piano Compiled and Edited by Trebor Jay Tichenor.

MACHINE CUT ROLLS - Bubbling Spring; Southern Jollification "Plantation Scene"; Beautiful Creole "Original Cake Walk"; Floreine "Syncopated Waltz"; Let 'Er Go; Trail of the Lonesome Pine; Rag Medley; Sunburst Rag. HAND PLAYED ROLLS - Floating Down That Old Green River; Something Doing "Rag Two-Step"; Pianoflage "Rag One-Step"; Dardanelle; Sweet Georgia Brown; Jazz Dance Repertoire; Satisfied Blues; Dr. Jazz's Raz-Ma-Taz.

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 8 - SLEEPY JOHN ESTES, 1929-1940. Edited and with an Introduction by Samuel B. Charters.

Divin' Duck Blues; The Girl I Love, She Got Curly Hair; Street Car Blues; Milk Cow Blues; Jack and Jill Blues; New Someday Baby; Floating Bridge; Brownsville Blues; Need More Blues; Jailhouse Blues; Everybody Ought To Make A Change; Working Man Blues.

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 9 - THE COUNTRY BLUES: Volume II. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Texas Alexander (Levee Camp Moan); Peg Leg Howell (Tishamingo Blues); Henry Townsend (Mistreated Blues); Eddie Kelly's Washboard Band (Poole County Blues); Papa Charlie Jackson (Papa's Lawdy Lawdy Blues); "Georgia Bill" (Scarey Day Blues); Luke Jordan (Church Bells Blues); Bo Carter (I'm An Old Bumble Bee); Charlie Lincoln (Jealous Hearted Blues); Bukka White (Strange Place Blues); Blind Boy Fuller with Sonny Terry (Bye Bye Baby Blues); Charlie Pickett (Let Me Squeeze Your Lemon); Brownsville Son Bands (Weary Worried Blues); Big Maceo with Tampa Red (Maceo's 32-20).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 10 - BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON 1927 - 1930. Edited and with an Introduction by Samuel B. Charters.

Jesus Make Up My Dying Bed; God Don't Never Change; Trouble Soon Be Over; Let Your Light Shine On Me; The Rain Don't Fall On Me; I Know This Blood Can Make Me Whole; I'm Gonna Run To The City Of Refuge; Lord, I Just Can't Keep From Crying; Everybody Ought To Treat A Stranger Right; Jesus Is Coming Soon; Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning; Church I'm Fully Saved Today Bye and Bye I'm Goin' To See The King; Can't Nobody Hide From God.

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 11 - BLUES REDISCOVERIES. Original Recordings of Today's Rediscovered Bluesmen. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Mississippi John Hurt (Ain't No Tellin'; Avalon Blues); Bukka White (Sleepy Man Blues; Aberdeen Mississippi Blues); Henry Townsend (Poor Man Blues); Sleepy John Estes (Poor Man's Friend; Liquor Store Blues); Blind Gary Davis (You Got To Go Down; Oh Lord, Search My Heart); Peg Leg Howell (Doin'Wrong); Furry Lewis (Jelly Roll; Sweet Papa Moan); Joe Williams (Highway 49; Someday Baby).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 12 - PIANO BLUES. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Walter Roland (Big Mama; Dice's Blues); Sylvester Palmer (Broke Man Blues); Mississippi Jook Band (Skippy Whippy); Wesley Wallace (Fanny Lee Blues; Number 29); Jabbo Williams (Pratt City Blues); Walter Davis (M & O Blues #3); Romeo Nelson (Dyin' Rider Blues); Louise Johnson (On The Wall); Roosevelt Sykes (Lost All I Had Blues); Little Brother Montgomery (The First Time I Met You); Jabbo Williams (Jab Blues); Peetie Wheatstraw (Good Woman Blues).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 51 - UNCLE DAVE MACON. Re-recordings from the Original Masters, conceived by Pete Seeger, selected and edited by Norman Tinsley, Bob Hyland, and Joe Hickerson.

Cumberland Mountain Deer Race; All In Down And Out Blues; From Earth To Heaven; The Gal That Got Stuck On Everything She Said; I've Got The Mourning Blues; Hold That Wood-Pile Down; Johnny Gray; Jordan Is A Hard Road To Travel; My Daughter Wished To Marry; The Old Man's Drunk Again; Over The Road I'm Bound To Go; Rise When The Rooster Crows; Tom and Jerry; Two-In-One Chewing Gum; When The Train Comes Along; Wreck of the Tennessee Gravy Train.

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 203-1 - NEW ORLEANS JAZZ: THE '20's, Volume I. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra (Black Rag); Piron's New Orleans Orchestra (Red Man Blues; Bouncing Around, Kiss Me Sweet); Original New Orleans Rhythm Kings (Everybody Loves Somebody); Brownlee's Orchestra of New Orleans (Dirty Rag); Johnny Bayersdorffer and his Jazzola Novelty Orchestra (Waffle Man's Call); Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight (Franklin Street Blues; To-Wa-Bac-A-Wa); Sam Morgan's Jazz Band (Short Dress Gal; Down By The Riverside; Mobile Stomp); Fate Marable's Society Syncopators (Frankie and Johnny); Billy Mack and Mary Mack, with Punch Miller (My Hearbreakin' Gal).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

RF 203-2 - NEW ORLEANS JAZZ: THE '20's, Volume 2. Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters.

Johnny DeDroit and his New Orleans Jazz Orchestra (New Orleans Blues); Albert Brunies and his Half Way House Orchestra (Let Me Call You Sweetheart; Maple Leaf Rag); Anthony Parenti and his Famous Melody Boys (Creole Blues); Arcadian Serenaders (Sans Sue Strut); New Orleans Owls (Meat On The Table; Picadilly); Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra (I'm Satisfied You Love Me; It's Jam Up); John Hyman's Bayou Stompers (Alligator Blues); Johnny Miller's New Orleans Frolickers (Panama); Monk Hazel and his Bienville Roof Orchestra (Sizzling The Blues); Jones and Collins Astoria Hot Eight (Damp Weather; Duet Stomp).

1-12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes $5.79

LITHO IN U.S.A.

Asch
Recordings
NEW YORK

ART BALLAD SINGERS

Band 1. RICHARD DYER-BENNET - guitar
Two Maidens Went Milking
Band 2. ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS - dulcimer
The Hangman's Tree
Band 3. JOHN JACOB NILES - folk lyre
Little Mattie Groves
Band 4. CRATIS WILLIAMS - unaccompanied
The Wife of Usher's Well

SIDE 1 ASCH 4A

FOLK BALLAD SINGERS

Band 5. TEXAS GLADDEN - unaccompanied
Dark Scenes of Winter
Band 6. HOBART SMITH - guitar
Railroad Bill
Band 7. TEXAS GLADDEN & HOBART SMITH - fiddle
In the Willow Garden
Band 8. BOSCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD - banjo
Springfield Mountain
Band 9. GEORGE EDWARDS - unaccompanied
Bonny Laboring Boy
Band 10. DOCK REESE - unaccompanied
Go Down Ol' Hannah

Asch
Recordings
NEW YORK

INSTRUMENTALS

Band 1. HOBART SMITH - piano
Cindy
Band 2. CHAMPION JACK DUPREE - piano
Clog Dance

ASCH 4B

SIDE 2

Band 3. SONNY TERRY - harmonica
Fox Chase
Band 4. WOODY GUTHRIE - CISCO HOUSTON
fiddle and guitar
900 Miles
Band 5. WOODY, CISCO, SONNY
harmonica and 2 guitars
RR Blues
Band 6. BLIND GARY DAVIS - guitar
Civil War Parade
Band 7. BABY DODDS - drums
Tom Tom Workout

AA48 3V