

SMOKY MT. BALLADS



SUNG BY BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD WITH BANJO

SWANNANOA TUNNEL • MR. GARFIELD • JENNIE JENKINS

LITTLE MARGARET • ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO • SPRINGFIELD

MOUNTAIN • THE DEATH OF QUEEN JANE • MOLE IN THE GROUND

FA 2040

FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP., N. Y.

Smoky Mt. Ballads

SIDE I

- Band 1. Swannanoa Tunnel
- Band 2. Mr. Garfield
- Band 3. Jennie Jenkins
- Band 4. Little Margaret

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Illustrated Notes are Inside Pocket

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FOREWORD BY PETE SEEGER

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 twenty-five years has been the best shindig of its kind in the forty-eight states.

The songs he sings here are a cross section of the repertoire of the old-time balladeer. (Mr. Lunsford knows more than 300 by heart). Some are English ballads, whose origins are shrouded in antiquity. In earlier times they were sung unaccompanied, with free cadence. When the banjo became popular in the last century the singers kept their irregular meter, but added the driving rhythms of the new instrument.

Other songs in this album are 19th Century American popular songs: sentimental, epic, or humorous, as simmered down to conform to the mountain folk tradition. The remainder are the work of folk songwriters and singers, describing local events and people, great and small. In all cases the songs as we hear them are the work of many individuals, who have added words and verses of their own, and left out what seemed unimportant.

The banjo that Mr. Lunsford plays is the old fashioned



"5-stringer". Three hundred years ago American Negro slaves made the first banjos on this continent, naming them after models in their lost homeland of West Africa. Drums were forbidden them, for fear of its religious powers, and its suspected ability to signal slave revolts, so for many years the banjo, a pair of bones, and perhaps the newly acquired fiddle, provided the music at plantation slave parties. The words of the songs were English, but the syncopated and rhythmic music was more African than European.

In 1832 a poor white farm boy named Joel Walker Sweeney picked up the banjo from slaves near his home of Appomattox, Virginia. The minstrel show was born the hitherto scorned instrument became the most popular in the nation. Every covered wagon train going west took one along. Many a pioneer cabin kept one hanging on the wall. Few players could afford to buy them, but even a child could stretch a possum hide on a gourd, and run a stick through it for a neck. An adult craftsman, with the help of the village blacksmith, could make a fine one. (In the Los Angeles County Museum one can see Joe Sweeney's own banjo. There were no frets on the neck, and it used gut strings).

Many varieties of banjos were invented and used, with strings ranging from three to eight in number. Changing popular tastes at last made them all but vanish from the urban scene. Yet today in the

southern mountains Joe Sweeney's original five-stringer still remains a favorite.

Consider these fiercely independent hill people. Mostly Scotch-Irish, with a trace of Indian, they were forced to farm the rocky mountainsides because the slave owners monopolized all the rich flatland. Isolated from the main streams of commerce and 'culture' they maintained and developed their own. The banjo became theirs. They dropped the phony dialect of the minstrel stage songs. 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 the minor modes of old England. A folk musician might not know more than a few dozen tunes, but these he knew well, and his rippling banjo rhythm had more artistry in it than many a hectic performance piece by a stage virtuoso.

Someday the music schools of the nation will recognize the worth of the banjo as Mr. Lunsford plays it, though at present it is largely unwritten and unrecognized. The right hand may sound the strings in several different ways, and even the left hand may pluck some notes. A few Yankee youth, fallen in love with American folk music, owe Mr. Lunsford a considerable debt; they have learned the banjo from his records, patiently transcribing them, note by note.

Bascom Lunsford lives at South Turkey Creek, ten miles from Asheville, North Carolina. Imagine yourself a traveler near there. In the old days you would not have whirled by in a cloud of dust; you'd have been afoot, or on horseback. The sun is going down, and amid the calls of evening birds you hear the faint plunk-plunk of a banjo. Around the bend is a solitary cabin. The man on the porch quiets the aroused dog.

"Howdy. Been a hot day. Might I have a drink of water?"

"There's the dipper; help yourself."

"Banjo sounds good. Mind if I listen?"

"Why, no stranger. Set down a spell."

The days work is done now. Sit down with Bascom Lunsford, singing songs and ballads, telling stories passed on to him through long evenings at the fireside. Sit down a spell and join the family.

Introduction by Frances Lynne

During the past decade folk music has come into its own --back full circle to its place as THE music of all the people. Again, as in the days of England's first Queen Elizabeth, it has spread from humble homes to the "high and mighty" of the land. Simple and heart-warming "country" songs, no longer disparaged as "hillbilly", cast their magic spell alike in rural areas and sophisticated marts of entertainment. They head the hit parades, belong in every "pop" singer's repertoire, and make fortunes for the lucky "makers" (composers) of top sellers and singers blessed with the artistry of the folk song STYLE.

There is a folk-song new and folk-song old. Genuine or synthetic, each is a branch of the same root. The root is English, the basis of our national culture, transplanted by colonial settlers from the motherland, cherished longest in the remote hills of the southern Appalachians. Though the main body of traditional folksong has been preserved as to WORDS in the collectors' Bible, Child's "English and Scottish Popular Ballads", the essential MUSIC would have been lost as a living art but for the mountain folk. Professor Bertrand H. Bronson, noted musicologist, has said: "Folk song does not live in a book. It is only alive, really and truly alive, while it's being sung." The stark drama, the quaint phrasing, the unusual harmonic modes of the centuries-old folksong, the story-ballad, calls for the traditional STYLE for complete enchantment.

Notable among mountain-born musicians, reared in the folk music tradition is Bascom Lamar Lunsford, of South Turkey Creek, Buncombe County, North Carolina. He was born March 21, 1882, in that region between the Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge, called "The Ballad Country" because of the fabulous song treasure discovered there by collectors such as the great English scholar, Cecil J. Sharpe.

Bascom Lunsford enjoys a three-fold distinction in the folklore field: as performer, collector and festival-founder. He originated the first festival of authentic native American folk musicians in 1928, the famous Annual Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, at Asheville, N.C. It runs three days during the first week of August, starting "about sundown."

In 1946 he inaugurated a similar event at Renfrew Valley, Kentucky, John Lair's re-created pioneer settlement; and in 1948 added the Carolina Folk

Festival, sponsored by the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill. Such festivals serve to sharpen public interest in American folk music.

The Asheville Festival launched Bascom Lamar Lunsford in a new career as professional folklorist. Until then he had been by turns, farmer, school teacher, country newspaper editor, attorney and political office-holder, but without ever neglecting his avocation of folk musician. With his family grown up -- he was married young, mountain-fashion, to his childhood sweetheart, and fathered six daughters and one son -- he could afford to make it his vocation, though knowing the rewards would be small financially. He speaks of "spreading the gospel of folk music" almost with religious fervor. Much of his time for the past 25 years has gone into lectures and square dance instruction at schools and colleges. He toured California in 1947, appearing at major universities to enthusiastic crowds. He has sung for the faculty of Columbia University, and for many years was a leading figure in the annual sessions of the National Folk Festival. In 1939 he was honored by an invitation to appear, with other folk artists, in a "Command Performance" at The White House, before King George V and Queen Elizabeth.

As "The Minstrel of the Appalachians" Mr. Lunsford has been widely publicized, as over-flowing scrapbooks testify. He has been profiled in a national weekly by the noted feature writer, Harold H. Martin; praised by such erudite music critics as John Martin of the New York Times and Alfred V. Frankenstein of the San Francisco Chronicle; written up in musical reference books and mentioned gratefully in nearly every collection of folk songs of recent years.

Nineteen forty-nine was a particularly busy year for "The Minstrel." In the spring he went to Washington, D.C., where he made history with a seven-day marathon of song-singing for the Library of Congress, Folklore Division, a feat unparalleled in recording annals. This was repeat performance, with modern sound equipment, of a prior recording for the Archives (non-commercial) in 1935. His contribution of nearly 350 songs and tunes is the largest from any single performer. In the fall he went to Venice, Italy, as United States representative to the first International Folk Festival, traveling by plane. Homeward bound, he stopped off in England to look at the British Museum portrait of his reputed ancestor, the spectacular Royalist Sir Thomas Lunsford, celebrated in historical balladry. Sir Thomas emigrated to Virginia in 1649, and lies buried in Bruton Churchyard in old Williamsburg.

No sign of a slow-down yet in this extraordinary man, now in his seventies. Wherever American folk music is known and loved, Bascom Lamar Lunsford is honored for his many achievements and faithful work, in the cause he loves.

Notes on the recordings by Bascom Lamar Lunsford

SWANNANOVA TUNNEL: This is a fine type of work song extant in the mountains of North Carolina and is doubtless the source of the more refined "Water Boy" known to art music. It takes its name from the famous Swannanoa Tunnel through the great Blue Ridge twenty miles east of Asheville, which was dug about 1885. The construction work hands brought it to that section, and various other stanzas have been added by other workers doing mining or roadbuilding, as indicated by the "nine pound hammer" to drive the "steel" drill, while the "shaker" lifts it and turns it preparatory for the "stroke." Cecil Sharpe, the English folk music authority, includes this song in his collection of Appalachian Mountain folksong, and states it is a variant of an old English song.

Asheville Junction, Swannanoa Tunnel,
All caved in, baby, all caved in.
I'm going back to that Swannanoa Tunnel,
That's my home, baby, that's my home.

What'll you do there; watch a dog a-howling,
Somebody round, baby, somebody round.
Who'll you hear there; hoot owls calling,
Somebody dyn', baby, somebody dyn'.

Last December I remember,
The wind blow cold, baby, the wind blow cold
The hammer falling from my shoulder,
All day long, baby, all day long.

Ain't no hammer in this mountain
Outrings mine, baby, outrings mine.
This old hammer it rings like silver,
It shines like gold, baby, shines like gold.

Took this hammer and threw it in the river,
It rings right on, baby, it shines right on.
I'm going back to Swannanoa Tunnel,
That's my home, baby, that's my home.

MR. GARFIELD:

"Mr. Garfield" is one of a number of "assassination songs" which are extant in the Southern Appalachian region. Others are "Charles Guitau", "Czolgotz", "Whitehouse Blues", "Booth" (sometimes called "Booth Killed Lincoln". This text of "Mr. Garfield" I secured from Anderson Williams, near Fletcher, N. C. in 1903, with the exception of the first stanza, which I learned later from a Yancey County man.

MR. GARFIELD

Going down the street the other day, I heard the report of a pistol. I says: "What does that mean." Friend of mine looked up excited and give me somethin' sort o' like this:

Oh, they tell me Mr. Garfield is shot,
And is layin' mighty low, mighty low.
Oh, they tell me Mr. Garfield is shot.

I saw a big crowd of people gathered up over there. I went across, went in, saw Mr. Garfield lying on the bed and I says: "How you feeling?" He looked up, rather sad like, give me somethin' sort o' like this:

Oh! I'm shot down,
Very low down low.
I'm shot down very low.

Said, "Better send for a preacher." Sent for the preacher, preacher come in, walked over (to) the bed side, said: "Mr. Garfield, if you should die to-night where do you think you'd spend eternity?" He looked up with a smile on his face and give 'm some thin' sort o' like this:

Oh, I'll make my home
In heaven, Lord, Lord!
Oh, I'll make my home in heaven.

Good many people there that day. They all stayed for dinner. There was one city feller there. They asked him what he'd have. He says:

You may pass around your ham
And your eggs, Lord, Lord.
You may pass around your ham and your eggs.

There was a country feller over there. Asked him what he'd have. He says, "Give me something I'm

used to" and leaned back give m' somethin' sort o' like this:

Go bring on your bacon
And your beans, Lord, Lord.
Go bring on your bacon and your beans.

Mrs. Garfield got through washing the dishes; come in and set down by the bedside and said to Mr. Garfield: "If the worst should come to the worst and you shouldn't get well, would you be willing for me to marry again?" He looked up with a smile on his face and give her' somethin' sort o' like this:

Don't you never let a chance go by
Lord, Lord.
Don't you never let a chance go by.

Going down the street next day, and I saw Mrs. Garfield carrying a large bunch of roses. And I said: "Mrs. Garfield, what are you going to do with those roses?" She looked up at me with tears in her eyes, and give me somethin' sort o' like this:

Goin' to place them on my husband's grave,
Lord, Lord.
Goin' to place them on my husband's grave.

I'll bury 'em on that long flow'ry branch,
Lord, Lord.
Goin' to bury 'em on that long flow'ry branch.

JINNIE JENKINS: I have known this song in about the same form used here, since childhood. It is sometimes called "Jillie Jenkins," and some variants have different refrains from those I have sung. It is traditional throughout the southern mountain region and the tune remains very much the same. Charlie Edwards of Rabbit Ham Branch in Buncombe County, N. C., sang the text used here.

Will you wear green, oh my dear, oh my dear?
Will you wear green, Jinnie Jenkins?
I won't wear green, it can't be seen.

Refrain: I'll buy me a tally feather, aye, sir;
I'll buy me a tally (walkabelly)
So to wear with my robe,
To go with my robe, Jinnie Jenkins.
I'll buy me a tally feather, aye, sir;

I'll buy me a tally feather
(doubledoseadillydallysukisukiwhyman)
AskaRosyjustawhy, Jinnie Jenkins.

Will you wear red, oh my dear, oh my dear?
Will you wear red, Jinnie Jenkins?
I won't wear red, it's the color of my head.

Refr.

Will you wear black, oh my dear, oh my dear?
Will you wear black, Jinnie Jenkins?
I won't wear black, it's the color of my back.

Refr.

Will you wear blue, oh my dear, oh my dear?
Will you wear blue, Jinnie Jenkins?
I won't wear blue, it's the color of my shoe.

Refr.

Will you wear brown, oh my dear, oh my dear?
Will you wear brown, Jinnie Jenkins?
Yes, I'll wear brown, I'll go uptown.

Refrain: I will wear me a tally feather, aye, sir;
etc.

LITTLE MARGET: (Child Ballad #74)

This fine text and melody is an American variant of the classic traditional ballad known by various titles reciting the tragic romance of "Sweet William" and "Lady Margaret." It is a centuries-old tale, with supernatural overtones that make it peculiarly effective. One time when visiting the Roaring Fork section of Madison County, N. C., I heard little nine-year old Alice Payne sing this song, just as given here. She had learned it from her mother and grandmother and had never seen a written copy. Other lyrics have been used for this folk tune, like "Old Uncle Ned" and "Little Betty Ann" to make modern-type songs.

Little Margaret is sitting in her high hall door,

A-combing back her long yellow hair.
So sweet William met a new made bride,
A-riding up the road so near.

She throw'd down her ivory comb,
She throw'd back her long yellow hair.
Said, "I'll go out and bid him farewell
And never more go there."

'Twas so late, late in the night,
When they were fast asleep.
Little Margaret appear'd all dressed in white,
Standing at their bedfeet.

How do you like that snow white pillow,
How do you like your sheet?
How do you like that fair young lady
That lies in your arms asleep?

O, well do I like my snow white pillow,
O, well do I like my sheet.
Much better do I like that fair young lady
That stands at my bed feet.

He called on his serving man to go
And saddle the dapple roan.
He went to her father's house that night,
He knocked on the door alone.

Is little Margaret in the house,
Or is she in the farm?
Little Margaret is in her coal-black coffin
With her face turned to the wall.

Unfold, unfold those snow white robes,
Be they ever so fine,
And let me kiss them cold corpsy lips
For I know that they will never kiss mine.

Once he kissed her little white hand,
And twice he kissed her cheeks.
Three times he kissed her cold corpsy lips
And he fell in her arms asleep.

ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO: I have secured texts of this song over quite a wide range of territory, with little variation in phraseology. This type of ballad is sometimes called an "American murder song." In this group appear such songs as "Florella," "The Knoxville Girl" and "Pearl Bryant", some of them based on real-life tragedies.

I asked my love to take a walk,

Just a walk a little way,
That she and I may have a talk
All about our wedding day.

chorus: Then only say that you'll be mine,
And our home will happy be,
Down beside some waterflow,
On the banks of the Ohio.

I held a knife close to her breast,
And closely to her bosom pressed.
"Willy dear, don't murder me,
For I am unprepared to die."

Chorus

I took her by the little white hand,
I led her to the river strand,
I plunged her in where she would drown,
And stood and watched as she floated down.

Chorus

Returning home 'tween twelve and one,
Thinking of the deed I done.
I drowned the girl that I loved best,
Because she would not be my bride.

Chorus

SPRINGFIELD MOUNTAIN: "Springfield Mountain" or "The Big Snake" is generally known to folklorists throughout the country and is given in a number of publications. Texts vary from region to region, and this unusual text and tune was sung to me by Mrs. Kinnard, formerly from Kentucky. The song is seldom used for public entertainment, but its quaintness has an appeal which all folklorists seem to love.

On a summer's day, a man did go
Way down in the meadow for to mow.
Come-a-too-di-da-ri-do, too-di-da-ray
Too-di-da-ri-do-ray.

When he had come, half 'round the field,
A p'isoned serpent bit him on the heel.
Come-a-too-di-da-ri-do too-di-da-ray
Too-di-da-ri-do-ray.

When he layed down, upon the ground,
He rolled his eyes and looked all 'round.
Come-a-too-di-da-ri-do, too-di-da-ray
Too-di-da-ri-do-ray.

Well, brother dear, what made you go
'Way down in the meadow for to mow.
Come-a-too-di-da-ri-do, too-di-da-ray
Too-di-da-ri-do-ray.

Well, sister dear, I'll have you know
'Twas daddy's grass and it must be mowed.
Come-a-too-di-da-ri-do, too-di-da-ray
Too-di-da-ri-do-ray.

Young people all this warning take,
And don't get bit by a big black snake.
Come-a-too-di-da-ri-do, too-di-da-ray
Too-di-da-ri-do-ray.

THE DEATH OF QUEEN JANE: (Child Ballad #170)

This splendid text is an American variant of the striking English ballad given, with a number of variants, in the Child collection of English and Scottish Popular Ballads, and is well known to be one of the 305 basic traditional ballads. I have heard the melody and many of the stanzas since childhood.

Well Jane was in labor for three days or more,
She grieved and she grieved and she grieved her
heart sore.

She sent for her mother, her mother came o'er,
Said "the Red Rose of England shall flourish no
more."

Well Jane was in labor for three days or four,
She grieved and she grieved and she grieved her
heart sore.

She sent for her father, her father came o'er,
Said "the Red Rose of England shall flourish no
more."

Well Jane was in labor for four days or more,
She grieved and she grieved and she grieved her
heart sore.

She sent for the doctor, the doctor came o'er,
Said "the Red Rose of England shall flourish no
more."

Well Jane was in labor for five days or more,
She grieved and she grieved and she grieved her
heart sore.

The nurses grew weary and the doctors gave o'er,
Said "the Red Rose of England shall flourish no
more."

Well Jane was in labor for six days or more,
She grieved and she grieved and she grieved her
heart sore.

She sent for Prince Henry, Prince Henry came
o'er,

Said "the Red Rose of England shall flourish no
more."

MOLE IN THE GROUND: This is a fine type of indigenous American banjo song extant in the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge Mountain region of the south, and has numerous unrelated stanzas born out of the hilarity of mountain banjo "picking." The text used here is part of the song as sung by a schoolmate of mine, Fred Moody, of Haywood County, N. C., adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, in 1901. The term "the bend" means, according to Moody, the bend of the Pigeon River in that section, and well-known to provincial fame for romance and tragedy.

I wish I was a mole in the ground,
Yes, I wish I was a mole in the ground,
If I was a mole in the ground I'd root that moun-
tain down,
And I wish I was a mole in the ground.

Kempie wants a nine-dollar shawl,
Yes, Kempie wants a nine-dollar shawl,
When I come over the hill with a forty-dollar
bill,
'Tis, baby where you been so long.

Where have you been so long,
Yes, where have you been so long,
I've been in the pen with the rough and rowdy
men,
'Tis, baby where you been so long.

Oh, I don't like a railroad man,
No, I don't like a railroad man,
A railroad man will kill you when he can,
And he'll drink up your blood like wine.

I wish I was a lizard in the spring,
Yes, I wish I was a lizard in the spring,
If I was a lizard in the spring I could hear my
darling sing,
And I wish I was a lizard in the spring.

Oh, it's where have you been so long,
Yes, it's where have you been so long,

I've been in the pen with the rough and rowdy men
men,
'Tis, baby where you been so long.

BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD'S FOLKSONG
PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
(BERKELEY)-- March 21, 1947.

INTRODUCTION BY PROFESSOR BERTRAND H.
BRONSON, OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT,
NOTED MUSICOLOGIST:

"Folk song can be thought of as a rich deposit of our common humanity, laid down centuries deep, layer after layer, by generations of anonymous men and women, who have shared in the same cultural heritage. Its value lies not in what individual contributions can be made by outstanding and gifted personalities, but in the possession of the essentials of our common human nature.

In an age like the present, an egocentric time, we're likely to be drawn into bypaths that go far from the common denominator, in the pursuit of the ego. And folk song serves as a precious touchstone to remind us how far away we get and to call us back to our common center.

Folk song does not live in a book. It's only alive, really and truly alive, while it's being sung. And ideally a singer of a folk song should be so completely absorbed in the anonymity of his song that whatever audience he has -- happens to have -- would be unconscious of his personality apart from the song; would be unable to think of the two as separate entities.

The best folk singers can give you this experience. It's a very rare experience, and it's rare because the power to give us this sense of merely overhearing a song that's singing itself, has very special qualifications of artistic humility and integrity and a native sympathy, which can hardly ever be acquired. It has to be inborn.

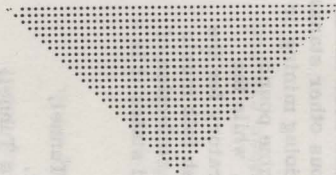
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Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33-1/3 RPM

SMOKY MOUNTAIN BALLADS

Sung by BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD
with Banjo

FA 2040 A

SIDE 1

- Band 1. SWANNANOVA TUNNEL
- Band 2. MR. GARFIELD
- Band 3. JINNIE JENKINS
- Band 4. LITTLE MARGET

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SMOKY MOUNTAIN BALLADS
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FA 2040 B

SIDE II

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