

RECORDED BY MARGOT MAYO AND STUART JAMIESON AT ALLEN, KENTUCKY, 1946 ♦ EDITED BY RALPH RINZLER ♦ FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2342

# RUFUS CRISP

---





## Side 1

- Band 1. Shout Little Lolie  
Vocal & Banjo - Rufus Crisp
- Band 2. Blue-eyed Girl  
Vocal & Banjo - Rufus Crisp
- Band 3. Story of Banjo Contest & Song -  
"Trouble On My Mind"  
Rufus Crisp
- Band 4. Ball and Chain - Rufus Crisp
- Band 5. Cumberland Gap - Rufus Crisp
- Band 6. Shady Grove - Rufus Crisp
- Band 7. Roll On John  
Vocal & Guitar - Palmer Crisp

## Side 2

- Band 1. Old Joe Clark-Sourwood Mountain  
Fiddle-Pharmer Howell; Banjo-Rufus Crisp
- Band 2. Fall, Fall, Build Me A Boat  
Rufus Crisp
- Band 3. Farewell To Old Beaver  
Story - Rufus Crisp; Song - Mrs. Lafferty
- Band 4. Walk Light Ladies  
Banjo Piece - Rufus Crisp
- Band 5. Blue Goose - Rufus Crisp
- Band 6. Banjo Tunings & Songs:
  - a. Sourwood Mountain
  - b. Do, Little Bobby
  - c. Shoofly
  - d. Brighter Day
 Rufus Crisp

# RUFUS CRISP

PROPERTY OF  
FOLKLIFE PROGRAM  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. 72-751032

©1972 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.  
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET



# RUFUS CRISP

## Introduction

by Margot Mayo

The music in this album was recorded in the home of Rufus Crisp in Allen, Kentucky. Allen, in Floyd County, is in the mountainous eastern section of the state and is five miles north of Martin, where Rufus was born.

Rufus played and sang for pleasure; for the pleasure it gave him and for the pleasure it gave others. He never arranged his music for effects. Many times within one song he added embellishments and changed the words and accompaniments to suit his whim. He never studied diction, and if it is sometimes difficult to understand his words, it does not matter. He frequently interchanged the words of songs and often improvised new words to fit the occasion. Many a youngster was delighted to hear himself unmistakably described in song.

Music was part of the daily life in Rufus' home. His wife, Lulu, sang ballads such as "Pretty Fair Miss" and "Brother Green." His son, Palmer, has sung and played the guitar for years, favoring commercial hillbilly songs. Palmer's wife, Tincy, sings and plays the piano, reading both round and shaped-note music. Tincy's mother, Mrs. Laferty, knew and sang many songs, both secular and religious. Fiddle music is supplied by cousin Sam Leslie.

Rufus sang ballads and songs such as "John Reilly" and "Marrowbone," some sentimental songs such as "Mother, Put My Little Shoes Away" and religious songs such as "We're Travelling Home" and "Lonesome Valley." His favorite songs, however, were banjo songs that had a distinct minstrel show flavor. Perhaps he loved this type of music so much because it fits the banjo so perfectly, or maybe it was because this kind of song was very popular when he was a young man. Probably he was fond of these songs because of the memories associated with them, memories covering a period of more than fifty years. He could usually remember where and from whom he learned each song, or had other reminiscences such as those he described in the banjo contest conversation. Some of his songs have verses that can be found in play-party songs.

After Lulu's death in 1952 Rufus sang mostly religious songs, although he would sing and play any song that was requested of him. Sometimes he would not sing or play for months at a time, but he always took down the banjo from the wall and loosened up his fingers when I came a-calling.

Rufus was born in a two-room house on November 17, 1880, near Martin. He was one of the five sons and three daughters of Marion, "Duck", and America Hubbard Crisp. The Crisps were an average, hard-working farm family. They had the usual farm

buildings: the house, with the kitchen in a little building separated from the living quarters, a barn, smokehouse, chicken house and outhouse.

Rufus worked on the farm as a boy. He started to pick the banjo when he was fifteen years old. On Saturday nights he would travel miles on foot or horseback to play at square dance. He could play all night and never repeat a tune. Many times he returned to the farm just in time to start his morning chores. Rufus always claimed that he was part Indian, and was, by his own admission, quite a gay blade before he married Lulu in 1905. After his marriage Rufus settled down and gave up his youthful "shenanigans" including banjo-picking. But even in 1923 people were still saying that Rufus "was the best banjo-picker anywhere around." We were visiting in Kentucky that summer and my sister, Gladys, heard about Rufus' playing and wanted to hear him, but he had no banjo. This was before the re-discovery of the five-stringer by city people, and the instrument was almost unknown outside of rural neighborhoods. Gladys located one, strangely enough in New York City, and sent it to Rufus. He began to play again, and this was the banjo he used in making these recordings. He had filed off the frets because "he couldn't hit the right notes" on a banjo with frets. This banjo still hangs on the wall of his home in Allen.

Rufus, like many of his generation in the mountains, had little formal education. And, like many of his neighbors, he never travelled far from home. The trip to Catlettsburg, described in the banjo contest recording, was probably the longest he ever made. He was deeply devoted to his family. After Lulu's death Palmer and Tincy moved in to live with Rufus. They modernized parts of the house and while Rufus was proud of the kitchen with the refrigerator, deepfreeze, nice stove and sink with running water, he could never accept the indoor bathroom. He occasionally listened to the radio, especially the news broadcasts, but he refused to look at TV.



Rufus was a great tease who loved fun and laughter. He was a magnet to children. His speech was colorful with such expressions as, "He ripped out an oath," and "Hit's an awful blackguardy (off-

color) song." Some of my favorite Rufus-sayings are "What fer? Cat's fur, to make kitten's britches," "Watch out, or ye'll git a back-itching (a whipping)," and, at the supper table, "Every time you bend your elbow you open your mouth!"

During the summer of 1934 when Rufus decided to sing and play one hundred pieces for me to notate (he far exceeded his quota). Each night that I spent at his house became a party.

The frustrating experience of trying to capture Rufus' music on manuscript paper was the prime factor that made me decide to buy a recording machine. The result was a collection, made in 1946 in collaboration with Stuart Jamieson, of folklore from Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee which has been described as among the important collections in the Archive of Folk Song in the Library of Congress. Stuart, a member of the American Square Dance Group, acted as recording engineer and chauffeur of the expedition which also included another Group member, Freyda Simon.

Rufus was delighted to cooperate with the recording of his music, but he never understood why I felt it important to preserve his music, technique and style. And it was impossible for him to realize how many people had heard of him and his banjo-picking.

During the summer of 1955 Rufus made some tape recordings for me despite the fact that he had suffered a heart attack and was under the constant supervision of a heart specialist. On June 4th, 1956 he had another attack and was rushed by ambulance to the Methodist Hospital in Pikesville. At five o'clock on the morning of June 9th Rufus was laughing with and teasing a nurse when he suddenly passed away without any apparent suffering.

Rufus was baptised in 1955 and was a member of the Freewill Baptist Church at the time of his death. He was buried next to Lulu in the Mayo Cemetery, one mile south of Allen.

The recordings in this album and in the Library of Congress make it possible for others to enjoy Rufus' music, even though Rufus himself has walked that lonesome valley.

## Floyd County

Floyd County once covered the entire Big Sandy Valley and adjacent lands. Other counties have been carved out of the original county, and now Floyd covers 402 square miles. It was formed in 1799 to become effective in 1800. The first county clerk was William James Mayo, who served from 1800 until 1820. When the log courthouse at Prestonsburg, the county seat, burned down in 1808 his home (dismantled in 1954) served as the courthouse. He also bought land south of Prestonsburg and some of his descendants still live on this farm. His great-great granddaughter, Lwellyn Clark, married Rufus Crisp. She was my first cousin and was always known by her nickname, Lulu.

Prestonsburg (population 3,585, in 1950) is situated on the Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River. This fork was originally called Louisa but the name was later corrupted into Levisa.

Allen is at the junction of Levisa and Beaver Creek, ten miles south of Prestonsburg. There were, around 1900, some twenty-five families scattered throughout the neighborhood. In a letter dated



Lulu and  
Rufus Crisp



February 17, 1958, Willie Wright, former resident of Allen and friend of Rufus, wrote, "When I crossed on logs called a Boon T.J. Allen had a store and Dwelling house on one side. Willie Hatcher had a store on the other side. Two stores and one house was all there was." Today there are more than five hundred people living in the town itself. There are stores, restaurants, movie theaters, a post office, a railroad station, a good school and nice homes. The two largest churches are the Baptist and Methodist, but there are several smaller churches.

In 1950 the population of Floyd, classified as rural, was listed as 53,000. The farms are small subsistence farms typical of hill country. Some of the farmers have bottom lands along the Big Sandy or its tributaries, but many hillside fields appear almost perpendicular. The main industries today are coalmining and the production of natural gas and oil. Coal was discovered on Big Sandy in 1750 but its exploitation did not become a major industry until the first part of the present century.

One of the earliest industries was logging, for there were magnificent forests of hardwood trees. Raftsmen floated the logs to Catlettsburg in Boyd County, which, after the Civil War, became one of the largest buyers of hardwood in the world. Sawmills are still especially characteristic of eastern Kentucky.

Another occupation of the early settlers was the gathering and exporting of wild ginseng, and later the cultivation of the medicinal plant. Until the 1870's many mountain women raised silkworms and spun and wove their own silk. Another important industry was the mining of salt. Tobacco was raised mainly for family use. Barter was the common means of exchange and even in the 1940's the women took home grown produce to the store to trade for store-bought goods.

Some of the earliest settlers were well-educated; others could only "make their mark," an X to stand for a signature. In the mountains it was more important to know how to use a rifle, a plow, an axe, than to know how to read and write. But most of the descendants of the pioneers wanted formal education for themselves and their children. For some it was enough to know how to read the Bible, but others wanted a well-rounded education for their children. This was an impossibility for many of the poorer families. In large families children often took turns, some working on the farms while others, having earned the necessary money, went out of the mountains to study. Frequently those who waited at home never got their turns, so that in some cases there were illiterates and college graduates in the same family. Outsiders, "furniners" to the mountain eers, became interested in the hill people at the beginning of the twentieth century, and established settlement schools which stressed not only academic studies but health and general improvement of living conditions. Handicrafts were encouraged and the manual work and other chores were performed by the students. Often entire families came to live and learn at the schools. Although none of these schools is in Floyd, many of the young people from that county have attended them. But the number of students the schools could reach was at first limited, for the schools were almost inaccessible. When I first visited Caney Creek at Pippapass, Hindmand County, in 1923, I had to ride horseback part of the way and walk barefoot in creek beds the rest of the way. It is possible to reach Caney by car,

now, if you don't mind narrow, twisting and bumpy roads. Widely scattered and inadequate one room schools were common until well into the middle of this century and some are probably still in use. Even today children must walk many miles over rough, bad roads in order to reach the highways and be picked up by school buses. Authorities are making continuous efforts to improve the school system.

Floyd is rich in Indian lore. Cherokee, Miami, Shawnee, Delaware and Wyandots were among the Indians who had hunting grounds in the Big Sandy Valley. They fought so fiercely to protect the valley against "civilization" that there were no permanent white settlements in Floyd until 1791. However, before the beginning of the nineteenth century Scottish, Irish, English and German families had moved into the county. Many of the early settlers were veterans of the French and Indian War and of the Revolution. Their descendants were isolated for generations because of the lack of good roads. No attempt to build and expand the road system was made until the late 1920's, when the Mayo Trail (route 23) was completed. Since travel by land involved danger and hardships the only alternative was river travel. The economic and social life of the county was shaped by the Big Sandy River. For many years this river offered almost the sole means of communication with the "outside" world.

Rafts, push boats and, after 1837, steamers transported produce and people. Rufus remembered when the steamboats the Frank Preston, the Mountain Boy, the Mary L. and Cando were familiar sights on the Big Sandy. There is no evidence that show boats came to Prestonsburg, but they did play the river towns of the Big Sandy near Catlettsburg. Mountain folk who visited these towns were certainly exposed to the popular songs of the period. They surely brought some of these songs back into the hills. This may explain why many of the Rufus' songs have traces of show boat and minstrel songs.

Railroads did not penetrate into the mountains of Floyd until 1902 when the first railroad reached Prestonsburg. Building railroads was slow work and it took from 1911 through 1914 for the Elkhorn and Beaver Valley Railroad to construct the tracks from Allen to Wayland, a distance of twenty-one miles.

Floyd was not devastated by pitched battles during the War Between the States. War damages in Floyd were mostly the results of guerrilla fighting on both sides. Although there were few slaves, compared to the numbers in the plantation regions, loyalties were divided. Floyd men served in both the Southern and Northern armies, and many are the stories of brother fighting brother, father fighting son.

Life in the mountains after the Civil War continued in much the same semi-pioneer pattern as before the war. The following excerpts describing life in Floyd following the Civil War were chosen from a letter written by Dr. Marion Mayo, Professor of Psychology. He was born in Allen in 1871. He knew Rufus and their boyhood experiences were similar.

In our family and in mountain families generally, in early post-Civil War days, social life was simple and limited. Sunday School and church and school activities were the most prominent features of our social life. Weddings were usually important events. Big dinners were served at the home of the bride on the wedding day, and next day at the groom's home. There was a custom of serenading the

bridal couple on the wedding night in a sort of Halloween spirit, using farm and cattle bells, tin pans and other noise-making contraptions. This was called a shivaree.

Spelling bees, often between rival divisions of a school, sometimes between neighboring schools, sometimes with the participation of the adult community, were a part of the social life. Protracted and camp meetings and foot-washings (among Baptists) were among our religious activities. I can remember, too, happy Christmas visiting among our relatives.

Our mountain people sing a great deal, usually singing hymns as they go about their daily labors. In the main they sing by ear, although they had and have shaped notes, particularly in the Sunday School hymnals. It was the common practice for the preacher to "line out" the hymns and pitch the tunes for the congregation, never using a pitch pipe.

Dancing was frowned upon by all people devoted to the church. There was never such a thing as a dance held in our home or in any other Mayo home that I know of. There were, of course, dances held in the neighborhood and all I ever attended or knew about were either square dances or play-parties. A lone fiddler or banjoist often supplied the music. Banjo picking and dancing were often seen at our elections. There would usually be one or two dancers on the floor, dancing something like a jig. "Classy" people did not engage in this diversion.

Steamers went up Big Sandy as far as Pikesville, carrying away chickens, eggs, feathers, hides and other country produce. They brought back boots, shoes, bacon, flour, sugar, coffee, hardware and other supplies for town and country stores. Dances were occasionally held on the boats.

There was sufficient water for navigation on the Big Sandy only in the winter and spring seasons. In the dry weather of summer and fall river traffic was carried on by means of flat boats. Men pushed these boats along with poles. Going down stream was easy, but going up stream was slow and laborious. Traffic up and down Beaver was to some extent of this flat boat type, but also it was by wagons drawn by horses, mules or oxen. When I was a young man I did nearly all my travelling on horseback.

It is true that there were no large slave holders in the mountains of Kentucky, but it is not true to say there were no slaves in this section. The Mayos had slaves, the Martins had some, and I know of a few other families who had slaves. My father had one man, his wife and children, and in all probability that was the way it was in most families. Our family stayed with us until 1875, when they migrated to Catlettsburg. Uncle Jesse Mayo, the father, often came back to visit us. He returned when your grandfather died in 1889, and again when your grandmother died in 1905. Each time he stayed and worked on the farm until things were straightened out. He was a highly respected and loved man, a preacher as well as an artisan.



When I was a boy Prestonsburg was our most convenient post office, although it meant an eleven mile horseback ride to get the mail. My father kept a country store, as well as managing a farm and a timber business. He always kept a water mill on the farm, and a blacksmith's shop.

On a farm such as ours we had plenty to eat: milk and butter the year around, corn-bread and biscuits, fresh meat in the winter, hickory-cured bacon and hams and dried beef in the summer, with all sorts of fresh vegetables from the garden, honey a good part of the year and sorghum always, and chickens and eggs in all seasons. We dried apples, and peaches, beans and pumpkins, canned or jellied berries, apples and peaches, and holed-up apples, turnips and cabbages. We were fortunate to be so well nourished. Many of the families crowded together on little creeks and branches, on poor farming land, had a very poor and inadequate diet. These families constituted a majority of the people.

We wore homespun and homemade clothing before and for many years after the Civil War. By the eighties woolen and cotton textiles began to supplant our clothes of domestic weave. My first "store suit" was purchased when I was eleven years old. In the more isolated districts the domestic industries survived longer. We had to be especially careful of our shoes and when we had to walk a great distance to church or play-parties we walked barefooted until we were in sight of our destination and then we put on our shoes.

When I first went to school in 1877 school lasted but three months. Soon the term was increased to five months.\* There were no public schools in Kentucky during the Civil War, but there was a decided effort to establish a public school fund and system soon after the war.

The language of the mountain people up until this last generation was much as it was in the Virginia countryside of the Revolutionary era. The people brought their language and customs with them and handed them down with little variation. There was practically no outside contact to cause modification. The coming of railroads, highways and buses, and the opening of mines, gas and oil wells, the development of radio, motion pictures and TV, as well as the appearance of a considerable new element of population, have all tended to modify our language and customs.

Life in the mountains did not change substantially until after World War 1. Veterans of that war and of the second World War demanded and made many changes. New homes and modern conveniences are making life simpler and healthier for many of the Kentucky mountain people.

\* It was customary to "hold school" during the summer months, since the children were needed on the farm during the spring and fall months and the roads were impassable in the winter. This continued until well into the 1930's.

## Banjo Tunings

Scordatura, the deliberate mis-tuning of stringed instruments, has been practiced by folk and classical musicians since the Seventeenth Century. Seemingly originating with lute music this mis-tuning has been used in music composed or written for the violin, cello, guitar and banjo. It is still used today in classical guitar music. Bach and Tartini are among the composers who have written music employing the changing of the traditional tuning of instruments. Paganini tuned the fourth string of his violin higher in order to increase the volume and brilliance and to assure facility in playing certain passages. Folk instrumentalists today re-tune their instruments for the same reasons. The use of different tunings enables the folk musician to play in the first position without "having to climb all over" the instrument.

In the Nineteenth Century the banjo was conventionally tuned in A Major. The interval sequence was, however, the one generally used today as G Major, with all strings tuned down a whole note. Many of the tunings which Rufus knew have no conventional names. By playing the open strings in these tunings Rufus produced melodies and harmonies that are, in many instances, distinctly oriental and sometimes have a Scottish bagpipe flavor. Many of Rufus' tunings allowed him to play the melody almost entirely on open strings.

Rufus seldom played the tonic, dominant and sub-dominant chords generally associated with folk music, unless he was accompanying other instruments. He never used picks on his right hand.

The following tunings which Rufus used in these recordings are but a few of the many tunings he knew and used.

The strings on a five-stringer are designated as follows: the first string is the high one nearest your legs as you hold the banjo on your lap and the other strings are designated in order. The fifth, or thumb string, is the short string nearest your face.

In all of the following tunings there are certain strings that are never re-tuned. The first string is always tuned to the D immediately above middle C on the piano. The third string is always G, the fourth below middle C. The fifth string is always the G a fifth above middle C. The second and fourth strings are changed in these tunings. Use the G tuning as a base and learn that tuning first. Always return to the G tuning before attempting to tune your banjo in the other tunings.

## G Tuning

1st string.....D  
2nd string.....B  
3rd string.....G  
4th string.....D  
5th string.....G

Rufus played the following songs in the G tuning: "Trouble On My Mind," "Sourwood Mountain," "Roll On, John," and "Fall, Fall, Build Me a Boat."

## C Tuning

1st string.....D  
2nd string.....C  
3rd string.....G  
4th string.....C  
5th string.....G

In this tuning the second string is tuned up one half-step from B to C, and the fourth string is tuned up a whole step from D to C.

Rufus played "Ball and Chain," "Shout, Little Lulie," "Blue-eyed Girl," "Dolittle Bobby," "Walk Light, Ladies," and "Blue Goose" in this tuning.

## Shoo Fly Tuning

1st string.....D  
2nd string.....C  
3rd string.....G  
4th string.....D  
5th string.....G

This tuning is almost the same as the G tuning, with the exception of the second string, which is tuned up on half-step from B to G.

Two strings must be changed to put a banjo into this tuning. The second string must be tuned up a half-step from B to C, and the fourth string must be tuned up a minor third from D to F.

The final tuning Rufus used in these recordings is the "Brighter Day" tuning.

## Brighter Day Tuning

1st string.....D  
2nd string.....A  
3rd string.....G  
4th string.....G  
5th string.....G

Tune the second string down a whole step from B to A. Tune the fourth string down from D to the octave below the third string G. The fifth string is, therefore, one octave higher than the third string and two octaves higher than the fourth string.

Side A

## Band 1.

Shout, Little Lulie: Rufus Crisp, vocal and banjo.

This is the sort of nonsense song so dear to Rufus' heart. The recording is an excellent example of banjo technique and skill. The air is based on a six-note scale with the seventh step omitted. In this recording Rufus demonstrates his amazing "double shuffle" fingering of his right hand.

Shout, little Lulie, shout, shout (3 times)  
What in the world are you shouting about?

Shout, shout, little Lulie, shout, shout,  
What in the world are you shouting about?  
Shout a nickel, shout a dime,  
Shout a nickel every time.

Hey, little Lulie, what do you say (3 times)  
Gonna be on the old headache.  
Take a nickel, take a dime,  
Take a nickel every time.



Well, little Lulie, shout, shout,  
What in the world are you shouting about?  
.....trip,  
Catch my true love by the lip.

\*Seeger, Pete, How to Play the Five-String Banjo, published by the author, Beacon, N.Y. 1954. (Oak Pub.)

## Band 2.

Blue-Eyed Girl: Rufus Crisp, vocal and banjo

"Blue-Eyed Girl," "Ball and Chain" and "Shady Grove," different as they may seem, have much in common. All are based on five-note scales, with "Blue-Eyed Girl" and "Ball and Chain" being pent-a tonic. All three are play-party songs and dance tunes. Verses in all three are found in "Old Joe Clark," "Cindy" and "Liza Jane."

Compare the verses in "Blue-Eyed Girl" with those found in "I Built My Love a Big Fine House" in The Swapping Song Book. See, also, "Swing a Lady" in English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Vol. 11.

Space does not permit a detailed comparison of the three related songs in this album, but the books listed below can serve as a bibliography for all three.

### Refrain:

Fare you well, my blue-eyed girl,  
Fare you well, my daisy,  
Fare you well, my blue-eyed girl,  
You almost run me crazy.

Apples in the summertime,  
Peaches in the fall,  
If I don't git the girl I want  
Don't want none a-tall. (at all)

Fare you well, my blue-eyed girl,  
Fare you well, my dandy,  
Fare you well, my blue-eyed girl,  
Going up Big Sandy.

Blue-eyed girl is mad at me,  
And black-eyed one won't have me,  
If I don't get the girl I want  
Single I will tarry.  
(I won't neither)

### Refrain:

Used to live on a mountain top  
Now I live in town,  
Boarding at the same hotel  
Courting Betty Brown.

### Refrain:

'Member what you told me last,  
Remember what you said,  
Said you wouldn't marry me  
If all the rest was dead.

(repeat second verse)

When I was a single boy  
Happy as could be,  
Now I am a great big boy  
So happy do I feel.

When she saw me coming  
She wrung her hands and cried,  
"Yonder comes the ugliest thing  
That ever lived or died."

## Bibliography

### Blue-Eyed Girl

Botkin, Benjamin A. A Treasury of American Folklore, Crown Publishers, New York, 1944.

Cox, John H. Folk-Songs of the South, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1925.

Lomax, John A. and Alan Folk Song: U.S.A., Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1947.

Lomax, John A. Cowboy Songs, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1919

Owens, William A. Swing and Turn, Tardy Pub. Co., Dallas, 1936.

Randolph, Vance Ozark Folksongs, Vol. 111, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 1949.

Ritchie, Jean The Swapping Song Book, Oxford University Press, New York, 1955.

The Singing Family of the Cumberland, Oxford University Press, New York, 1955.

Scarborough, Dorothy On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1925.

A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains, Columbia University Press, New York, 1937.

Sharp, Cecil English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Vol. 11, Oxford University Press, London, 1932.

## Band 3.

Story-Banjo Contest: Margot Mayo talks with Rufus.

On the night before this recording was made we sat in the kitchen, talking and snacking. Lulu had gone to bed and Rufus was remembering some of his youthful escapades. He told us a hilarious story of his trip to compete in a banjo contest in Cattlettsburg. The town was named for Horatio Catlett and his family (who kept an inn which was visited by Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay on their journeys to and from Washington). The town, which seems to have been wide-open, was one of the river towns described by Edna Ferber in Show Boat.

The contest was held in a whiskey store and Rufus' description of the carryings-on was vivid and detailed. Unfortunately, it was too late to record the story as he was telling it, and when the recording was made, with Lulu listening, Rufus censored his narrative considerably. By the end of the recording Rufus was tired of the whole thing and started to play "Trouble On My Mind," which had nothing to do with the contest. Rufus' story, however, gives one a picture of the days when three hundred and fifty players of five-string banjos could gather in one town and compete for a "Railroad Special."

The melody is based on an incomplete six note scale, with the seventh step of the scale omitted. The supplementary verses are some of those I wrote down from Rufus' singing in 1934. So far I have found no references for "Trouble On My Mind." Similar verses can be found in "Lynchburg Town" in Our Singing Country, in "Going Down To Town" in Songs of American Folk and in other collections. Rufus knew "Going Down Town" and it is possible that he interchanged verses in the two songs. Lynchburg, Virginia, is frequently mentioned in Southern folk songs because it was and is a market center. Before the Civil War one Floyd County family drove a herd of 2,000 hogs to Lynchburg. The trip took about sixty days. During the "Late Unpleasantness" the town served as a Confederate supply base.

Story - Banjo Contest: Margot Mayo talks with Rufus

Tune - Trouble on my Mind: Rufus Crisp, vocal and banjo

Trouble, trouble, trouble on my mind  
Trouble don't kill me, boys, live a long time.  
Trouble on my mind, live a long time,  
Trouble on my mind.

Once I had an old banjo  
Was all strung with twine,  
Only tune that I could pick  
Was trouble on my mind.  
Trouble on my mind, trouble on my mind.  
Supplementary verses:

I went down to Lynchburg town,  
Did not go to stay,  
Fell in love with a purty little gal  
And could not get away.  
Could not git away, boys, could not git away.  
Could not git away, boys, could not git away.

They sent me back to Lynchburg town  
To git me a bottle of wine,  
Tied me to the whupping post and give me  
ninety nine.

Give me ninety nine, boys, give me ninety  
nine.

I went back to Lynchburg town  
To git me a bottle of gin,  
Tied me to the whupping post and gave me  
hell agin.  
Give me hell agin, boys, give me hell agin.

Lomax, John A. and Alan Our Singing Country, Macmillan Co., New York, 1941.

Coleman, Satis N. and Bregman, Adolph Songs of American Folks, John Day Co., New York, 1942.

Ball and Chain: Rufus Crisp, vocal and banjo

Since this song is related to "Blue-Eyed Girl" and to "Shady Grove" refer to the notes on these songs. See "The Squirrel" in English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Vol. 11, and "I Went to see my Sweetheart's House," in On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs. See, also, "Jubilee" in The Swapping Song Book.

In "Ball and Chain" Rufus often sang a stanza which began "Used to wear a big white hat." And in "Shady Grove" he sang about a little boy who



learned to rob and steal." Both of these verses can be found in "Logan County Jail" in Folk-Songs of the South, and in "Root Hog or Die" in Cowboy Songs.

Rufus also sang the verse which begins "Wish I had a needle and thread," which is found in "Old Joe Clark," "Cindy," "Liza Jane" and other songs and play-party games. He also sang the stanza "I used to live on the mountain top" and another, "When she saw me coming," both of which he recorded in "Blue-Eyed Girl."

Gamble 'way your money, love,  
Gamble 'way your gold,  
Gamble 'way your money, love,  
'N now I have to go.

When I were a little boy  
'Bout ten inches high  
The way I hug and kiss those gals  
Made their mamas cry.

Wish I were in Tennessee  
Settin' in a big armchair  
One arm round my whiskey jug  
And 'nother round my dear.

Standin' on the big platform  
Waiting for a train,  
Going down to Frankfort  
To wear that ball and chain.

Tune my old banjo  
Ring so sweet and high  
I'm going down to Frankfort  
.....

Possum he's a cunning thing,  
Travels after dark  
Almost kills them darkies dead  
To hear old Rover bark.

Git on board, little children,  
Git on board, I say,  
Git on board, little children,  
Tomorrow's election day.

Going 'way to leave you,  
Going down the train  
Going down to Frankfort  
To see poor Liza Jane.

Hailing and raining  
Falling from the sky,  
If my true love don't want me  
Surely I will die.

Steam boat, steam boat,  
Standing on the shore,  
Fare you well, my darling girl,  
Never come no more.

Band 5. Cumberland Gap

Band 6.

Shady Grove: Rufus Crisp, vocal and banjo

The melody of this modal song is based on a five-tone scale, with the third and sixth steps missing. The song may be of Irish origin. The only printed source for the melody as we know it, that I have discovered as yet, is the version collected from the Ritchie family of Perry County,

Kentucky. The words of their song, however, differ from those Rufus sang. I also collected the tune in Tennessee, but with different words. There it was called "Little Betty Ann."

Some authorities have explained the title of this song by claiming that it is a place-name, mentioning that there are communities of this name in several states of our country. There is a Shady Grove in Kentucky, but it is a small town in the western part of the state, and could hardly have influenced the title of a mountain song. The song could, however, have been imported from an eastern state.

In The American Play-Party Song Botkin discusses the crossings between "Shady Grove," "Old Joe Clark," "Liza Jane" and "O My Laura Lee." Rufus frequently sang a verse in this song which began "Used to wear a big white hat" and another, "When I was a little boy about ten inches high." He sang these verses in "Ball and Chain" and they can be found in some versions of "Old Joe Clark" and in "Logan County Jail."

For references see the bibliography in the notes on "Blue-Eyed Girl."

Refrain:  
Shady Grove, my little love  
Shady Grove, I know,  
Shady Grove, my own true love,  
Down that Shady Grove.

Tell me where my love is,  
Tell me if you can,  
Tell me where my love is  
Gone with another man.

Refrain:

Whenever I'm sick and on my bed  
Banjo by my side  
All those pretty girls standing 'round  
Crying 'cause I'm dying.

Refrain:

Once I were a little boy  
All I wanted was a knife,  
Now I am a great big boy  
All I want's a wife.

Refrain:

Once I were a little girl  
Playing in the sand,  
Now I am a great big girl  
All I want's a man.

Refrain:

Band 7.



Palmer Crisp  
Roll On, John:

Palmer Crisp, vocal and guitar

Palmer was born in 1913 and lived on a farm until he was eight years old, when his family moved to Allen. He was active in school sports and after he was graduated from high school he became a coach for elementary and high school basketball teams.

During World War II Palmer served in the army in the Pacific area. Afterward he, known as "Singing Sam", had his own radio program which originated in Bluefield, West Virginia. He and his wife Tincy live in Allen, where he works for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad.

As Palmer says, "Being Rufus Crisp's son, it is only natural that some of his music rubbed off on me." "Roll On, John," is one the songs he learned from his father.

This railroad song is known by various titles, some of which are varied by substituting Babe or Buddy for John. Another title is "Nine Pound Hammer." The origin of the song is unknown, but it seems to be composed and to have become popular when the railroads were being constructed in the mountains around the end of the 19th Century.

Some versions of this song include verses about John Henry and the two songs apparently are related. If this is true then the song probably dates from the late 1870's and 1880's, when the Chesapeake and Ohio was being built in West Virginia and some sections of Kentucky.

Palmer learned the song from Rufus, but he doesn't sing, in this recording, all the verses that Rufus knew. Rufus sang fourteen verses of "Roll On, John." Neither Palmer nor Rufus sang the verses invariably in the same order, and they sang the refrain whenever they felt like singing it. Palmer sometimes sang "Buddy" instead of "John." Both Palmer and Rufus knew several versions of "John Henry," but neither ever substituted verses from one of these songs to another.

Palmer usually played this song in D on the guitar, while Rufus used the G tuning for his banjo. The melody is pentatonic, but with the conventional harmonies Palmer uses it does not sound particularly modal. In his singing Palmer holds certain words which are not ordinarily held or stressed in song or poetry. This is typical of genuine mountain folk singing. He also occasionally sings "hit" for it, which is common in mountain speech.

Refrain:  
Oh, roll on, John, and make your time,  
For I'm broke down and I can't make mine.



I asked that girl to be my wife  
Right down she set and begin to cry.

The longer she cried the worst I felt  
Till I thought to my soul my heart would melt.

Now, some of these days, oh, hit won't be long,  
You'll call my name and I'll be gone.

Oh, I love your papa, and your mama too,  
I love them both on account of you.

Oh, it's some of these days and it won't be  
long  
I'll sing you all my farewell song.

Refrain:

Ain't that enough to break my heart  
To think of us so far apart.

Supplementary verses:

Oh, I dreamt last night that my love was dead,  
She died with a gold chain round her head.

I look to the East and to the West,  
I turn to the woman that I love best.

I looked to the sun, the sun looked high,  
I looked at the boss and he looked shy.

Wish to the Lord the horn would blow,  
Cause I'm so tired of that old railroad.

Chappell, Louis W. John Henry A Folk-Lore Study,  
The Ballad Press, Morgantown,  
W. Va., 1933.

Johnson, Guy B. John Henry, Tracking Down a Negro  
Legend, University of North Caro-  
lina Press, Chapel Hill, 1929.

Lomax, John A. and Alan Our Singing Country, Mac-  
millan Co., New York, 1941.

Side B

Band 1.

Old Joe Clark - Squirwood Mt.: Pharmer Howell, fiddle;  
Rufus, banjo

Tapes of these tunes from my collection were  
not available to us when this album was assembled,  
so the tunes were re-recorded from my original discs.  
My personal recordings have been played many times  
and therefore are not as clear as the Library's tapes.

These were among the first recordings we made  
in Kentucky, and we had so much to learn about re-  
cording in the field. They were among the first  
that Rufus had made, and it is interesting to notice  
how his recording technique improved as he became  
accustomed to singing and playing into a mike. We  
had only one session with Mr. Howell, who lived in  
Broad Bottom near Pikeville in Pike County.

"Old Joe Clark" is based on what may be called  
an "interrupted" scale and may at first seem out of  
tune. However, Pharmer intended the tune to sound

that way, for he never varied his playing of it.  
He played it that way in 1934 when I recorded his  
tunes by means of musical notation. He repeated or  
omitted the chorus at whim and ended abruptly with-  
out any signal to Rufus. Consciously or otherwise,  
Rufus subdued his playing to allow the fiddle to  
take the lead; he backs Pharmer with the solid  
rhythmic background so necessary to square dance  
music. These performances give a vivid picture of  
the way square dance music was played in the early  
part of the century, for Rufus and Pharmer often  
played for dances when they were young men.

Band 2.

Fall, Fall, Build Me a Boat: Rufus Crisp, vocal  
and banjo

For many years I thought Rufus was singing  
"Fall, fall" instead of "Father" of "Paw" and to  
me fall still sounds correct. The refrain of the  
song comes from "The Sailor Boy" which was popular  
in the United States and in the British Isles.  
Another version was entitled "The Sailor's Trade."  
In most variants there is a verse which begins

"Brown was the color of my true love's hair, his  
cheeks resembled a lily fair."

Rufus' song sounds like a play-party game and  
although I have no source for it as a game I feel  
sure it is. Another pentatonic melody.

Refrain:

Fall, fall, build me a boat, (3 times)  
Sail across the ocean.

Come, my love, and stand by me, (3 times)  
'N sail across the ocean.

Come, my love, and go along, (3 times)  
Go along with me.

Belden, Henry M. The University of Missouri Studies,  
University of Missouri, Columbia,  
1940.

Band 3a.

The Story of "Sweet Beaver": Rufus Crisp, narrator

"Farewell to Sweet Beaver" was recorded after  
a six week's search for a singer. Many of the older  
people in the neighborhood had heard of the song,  
but none could remember all the words or melody.  
Each person interviewed suggested some one else,  
and much exciting and valuable material was record-  
ed as a result, but not "Sweet Beaver."

In desperation I visited the editor of the  
Floyd County Times. This notice was printed in  
the paper on August 22, 1946:

#### BALLAD-HUNTING

Anybody remember the words of the old ballad,  
"Farewell, Sweet Beaver," by Mart Hayes? If  
you do, mail the ballad to Margaret Mayo, 550  
Riverside Drive, New York City, who is anxious  
to make a recording of it.

Miss Mayo herself is good, old Floyd county  
stock, so there's no "dumyankee" connections  
to this. It's just a matter of one of us  
being interested in things indigenous to  
Floyd county.

Just before we left Floyd Mrs. Laferty recorded  
the song for us in Rufus' home. In New York  
the following letter awaited me:

Hueysville, Ky.  
August 23, 1946

Seeing your request for the poem composed  
by Mart Hayes when we was boys in the floyd  
County Times thought I would give it to you  
as nere correct as I can remember it. Mart  
and me was raised together and after he was  
sent a way and had composed this piece; and  
me beeing a Banjo player of corse I put a  
tune to it and sung it Quite a lot and played  
it for the boys and girls who was acquainted  
with him, but I havent even thought of it for  
several years and dont remember if this is  
quite correct or not but it is nere it.

The writer then gives words similar to those  
recorded by Mrs. Laferty. The letter was signed  
A.J. Coburn. I thought I had found an original  
ballad with a known author and composer. I have  
since discovered the song, under the title of "A  
Prisoner for Life," in the 1919 edition of Cowboy-  
Songs and Other Ballads, by John Lomax, in The  
Cowboy Sings, edited by Kenneth Clark, and in  
American Cowboy Songs, published by Robbins Music  
Corporation. None of these collections gives any  
sources for the song, but obviously the versions  
are all based on the same words and air. In Ozark  
Folksongs, Volume 11, Vance Randolph gives two  
versions, one of which closely resembles Mart  
Hayes' song. The two singers who sang the songs  
for Mr. Randolph credited the song to William  
Alexander, who was tried for murder at Fort Smith,  
Arkansas, in 1890.

Probably we shall never know the facts about  
the origin of this song, but we do know that the  
Hayes trial took place around 1898, and that Mart  
was in his late teens or early twenties when he  
attempted to murder "Cripple" John Martin. Hymn  
number Sixty, in the Sweet Songster has the same  
rhythm and is full of farewell and adieu, troubles  
and temptations. It could easily have served as  
an inspiration for "Sweet Beaver" since the book  
was a favorite of the mountaineers.

In the story of "Sweet Beaver" Rufus explains  
how, after his sentence, Mart refused to work, even  
to man the pump when he was placed in a tank of  
water.

The melody is in natural minor, with the low-  
ered seventh. Mrs. Laferty alters the tones in the  
time-honored manner of the true mountain singer.

Band 3b. Mrs. Betty Laferty

Farewell to Sweet Beaver: Betty Laferty - vocal un-  
accompanied

Mrs. Laferty was born near Allen in 1891.  
Descended from early Irish settlers, she was one of  
the nine children of Joseph and Susan Laferty. She  
grew up on a farm and attended a one-room school-  
house. When she was sixteen she married James W.  
Laferty. They had two sons and two daughters. The  
Laferty family is active in religious affairs. Mrs.  
Laferty's two daughters are Methodist preachers,  
and both her father and father-in-law were ministers.





*Bill Crisp  
older brother  
to Rufus Crisp*

The Laferty family moved to Allen in 1927 so that the children could attend the Allen school. Mrs. Laferty died on Easter morning, 1959. Tincy says, "She was a wonderful mother, and ever since I can remember she sang to us children. She usually sang old folk songs and hymns and she knew many of Rufus' songs."

Farewell to Old Beaver  
Soft meadows adieu,  
Your rocks and your mountains  
Now parts from my view.  
Never more will I witness in your beauty's  
deep bliss,  
Never more will I soothe the soft bosom for  
rest.

Farewell, little fishes,  
That glides through small streams,  
Your life is all happiness,  
All sunshine and gleams,

Now what would I give  
For such freedom to share,  
To roam in my ease  
And to breathe the fresh air.

Farewell, little birdies,  
So merrily they fly,  
Sing all your sorrows  
And troubles all die,  
But the doom and the downfall  
On my poor little wife  
God pity and pardon  
A poor prisoner for life.

Farewell, kind friends,  
I'm willing to mourn,  
For such a wild outcast  
Never was known,  
Neither sun, moon, nor stars  
Shall again reach my sight  
In the doom of my dungeon  
In the cold winter night.

#### Farewell to Sweet Beaver - Bibliography

Billups, Edward W. The Sweet Songster, Catlettsburg,  
Ky., 1854.

Clark, Kenneth S. The Cowboy Sings, Paull-Pioneer  
Music Corp., N.Y. (now Shawnee  
Press Inc., Delaware Water Gap,  
Pa.) 1932.

Lomax, John A. Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier  
Ballads, The Macmillan Co., N.Y.,  
1919.

Randolph, Vance Ozark Folksongs, Volume 11, The  
State Historical Society of Missouri,  
Columbia, Mo.

Band 4.

Walk Light, Ladies: Rufus Crisp, banjo solo

According to Rufus "Walk Light, Ladies" was an "old banjer-piece or dance-tune." I have been unable to find, so far, a source for the tune under this title, in any printed collection of dance-music, play-party songs or folk songs. The melody is based on a pentatonic scale. It is an excellent example of Kentucky mountain banjo picking and reminds one of the "Cripple Creek" and "Cumberland Gap" kind of song-dance.

Band 5.

Blue Goose: Rufus Crisp, vocal and banjo

So far I have found the blue goose mentioned in only one song, "The Heavy-Hipted Woman" in American Ballads and Folk Songs. In this song is referred to in connection with weather-prophecy. The blue goose in Rufus' song has nothing to do with folk-beliefs.

Only the first two verses seem actually to belong in a song about a blue goose. The other words can be found in other songs. The third verse suggests the words of the Kentucky lullaby that Rufus sang, "What Shall We Do With the Baby-O?" The fourth verse reminds me of a book in my possession, The "Whose Been Here Since I've Been Gone" Songster, published in New York in 1867.

These words are also found in the first verse of the Texas play-party, "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More," in which the girl wears red shoes. The first line of the fifth verse and variants of the last line are found in play-party games, especially in "Sandy Land." I have found no source for the last verse nor am I even sure of the words Rufus sings. The melody is an example of an air based on six tones only, with the seventh step of the scale missing.

The blue goose, while not actually rare in this country, is not considered an American fowl. It is a salt-water bird, and although it seldom flies far from the ocean an occasional blue goose has been spotted in Kentucky.

Rufus remembered that the song was taught to him in 1895 by "Fiddling" John Layne.

Stay in the meadow till the blue goose comes  
(3 times)  
Shoot him with a gattling gun.\*

Way off to the east the blue goose flew (3)  
If I'd a had wings I'd a went along too.

Purtiest little girl in the county-o (3)  
And I can get her if I want her-o.

Who's been here since I been gone (3)  
Pretty little girl with a blue dress on.

Sift your meal and save your bran (3)  
Shake that little foot, Polly Ann.

Sift your meal and save your bran (2)  
Come to the wedding if you can.

Sally Ann and Cindy Jane  
And I can have 'em with a ball and chain.

\* a Gattling gun? It was a machine gun named after an American inventor, R.J. Gattling.

Botkin, Benjamin A. The American Play-Party Song,  
University of Nebraska Press,  
Lincoln, Nebraska, 1937.

Owens, William A. Swing and Turn: Texas Play-Party  
Games, Tardy Publishing Co., Dallas,  
1936.

Band 6.

Banjo Tuning and Songs: Rufus Crisp, vocal and  
banjo

Sourwood Mountain

Do, Little Bobby

Shoofly

Brighter Day

Sourwood Mountain

There are many verses in this song and Rufus recorded some of them on another record for the Archive of Folk Song in the Library of Congress. The melody is another example of the pentatonic scale so frequently found in mountain music.

Hey, Sourwood Mountain, hey,  
My true love's in the head of the holler  
Hey, dee yink die deedle dum day  
Gonna see her'n get me a dollar-hey.

Sandburg, Carl The American Songbag, Harcourt,  
Brace & Co., New York, 1927

Wyman, Loraine and Brockway, Howard Lonesome Tunes,  
The H.W. Gray  
Co., New York,  
1916.

Do Little Bobby

Rufus was very fond of this banjo-piece. It was one that he played in the banjo contest when he won the "Railroad Special." Unfortunately, in this recording, it is almost impossible to understand his words and he does not sing on the other two recordings of "Do, Little Bobby" we made for the Library of Congress. One recording was a banjo solo with no vocal and on the other, also without words, he played with his fiddler friend, Pharmer



Howell. The tune, in this last, is very clear and easy to follow.

I have found no source for this song.

Hey, do little Bobby, do,  
Do, little Bobby, do,  
Do, little Bobby, do.

Hey, hit that floor and hit it hard,  
Do, little Bobby, do....hey.

#### Shoo Fly

This is not "Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me" which has been so popular as a song and play-party game since it was published in 1869. It is, however, a play-party song which I notated from Rufus' singing in 1934 and which I played in the Tennessee mountains in 1935. Many folklorists have collected variants in different regions of the country. The second verse, in particular, is associated with "Weevily Wheat" or "Prince Charlie" which some authorities claim dates back to the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Well, you swing here and I'll swing there  
And then we'll be together,  
You swing here and I'll swing there,  
Cold and stormy weather.

Yes, the higher up the cherry bush  
The riper grows the berries,  
The more you hug and kiss those girls  
The sooner you'll get married.

Hudson, Arthur P. Folksongs of Mississippi,  
University of North Carolina,  
Chapel Hill, 1936.

Thomas, Jean Devil's Ditties, W.W. Hatfield,  
Chicago, 1931.

#### Brighter Day

Rufus said that this was one of the best dulcimer-picking tunes in the world. The hymn was written by Andrew Young, a Scottish school teacher. The pentatonic melody is supposedly a Hindoostan air called "Happy Land" which a friend played for Young one evening in 1838. Young immediately wrote the words, which have been translated into many languages and is sung in Sunday Schools all over the world.

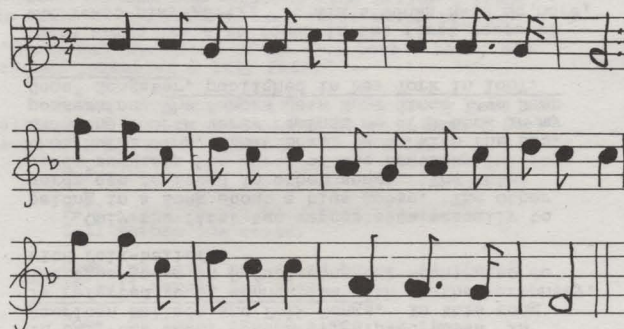
There have been many parodies on this hymn, including one version of "Old Soldiers Never Die" which were sung in World Wars One and Two, and during the Spanish Civil War, when the men also sang another set of words about a cookhouse. In the 90's a parody about a boarding-house was popular in this country.

The original hymn appears in the 1847 edition of the Southern Harmony, published by William Walker, of Spartansburg, South Carolina. This popular hymnal was first published in 1835. It was reproduced in 1939 by the Federal Writer's Project, published by Hastings House, New York.

The hymnal is still used in the South. Since 1884, on the fourth Sunday in May, singers have met in Benton, Marshall County, Kentucky, to sing together from the Southern Harmony, and "Happy Land" is one of their favorite hymns.

The Southern Harmony is printed in the fasola system of notation. In this system four shapes, faw, sol, law and me are used to represent the notes on the staff. The melody of "Happy Land" or, as Rufus called it, "Brighter Day" was written as follows:

#### The Scale



▷ ○ ◻ ▷ ○ ◻ ◊ ▷  
Faw Sol Law Faw Sol Law Me Faw

There is a happy land, far, far away,  
Where saints in glory stand,  
Bright, bright as day.  
Oh, how they sweetly sing,  
Worthy is our Savior King,  
Loud let His praises ring,  
Praise, praise for aye.

See Heart Songs for more verses, and White Spirituals for information on shaped-note hymns.

Heart Songs, World Syndicate Co., New York, 1909.

Jackson, George Pullen, White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands, Chapel Hill, 1933.

design: randi wasserman