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FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2358

Jean Thomas, The Traipsin' Woman

AMERICAN FOLK SONG FESTIVAL



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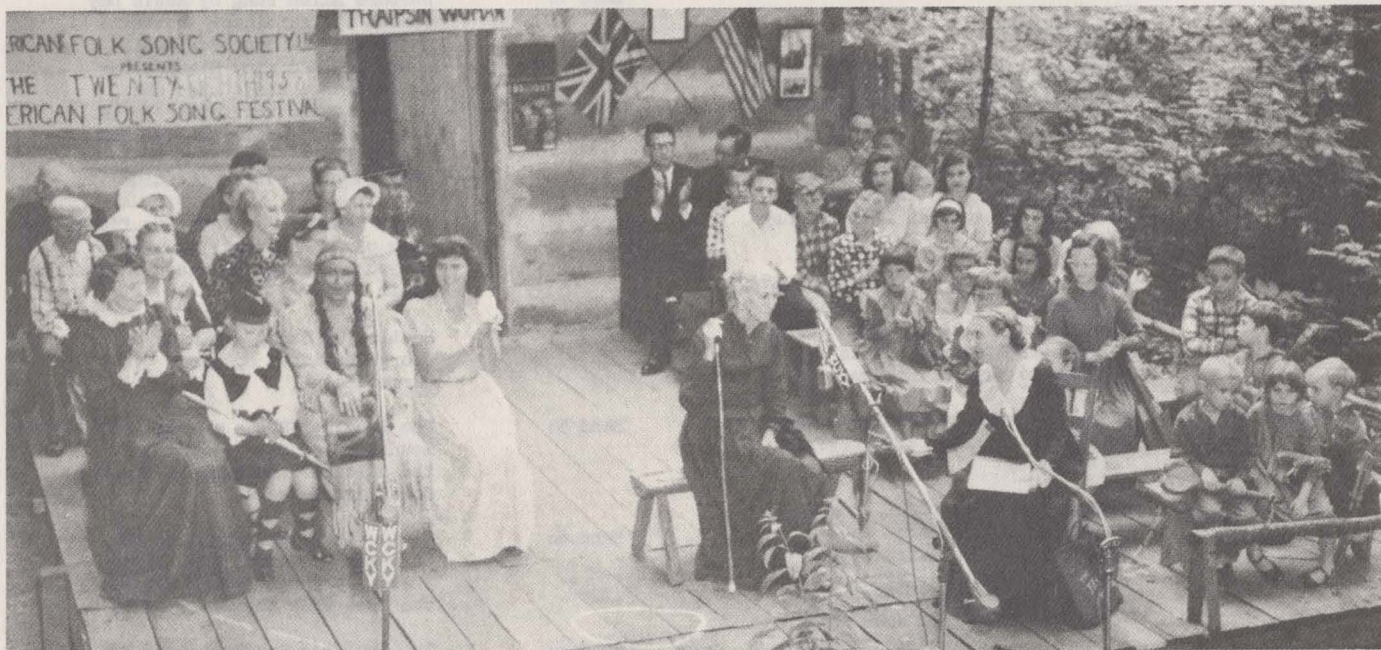
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Jean Thomas, The 'Traipsin' Woman
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Back in the days of Good Queen Bess wandering minstrels roamed the countryside and to the strum of dulcimer and note of lute sang old tales woven to old, old melodies of lords and ladies, knights and squires, castles and kings.

At the close of the Elizabethan era English, Scotch and Scotch-Irish wearied of the tyranny of their Kings and spurred by undaunted courage and love of independence they braved the perils of uncharted seas to seek freedom in a new world. Some tarried in the colonies but the braver, bolder more venturesome of spirit pressed deep into the Appalachians bringing with them - hope in their hearts, song on their lips - the song their Anglo-Saxon forbears had gathered from the wandering minstrels of Shakespeare's time. These sturdy Anglo-Saxons so loved the mountainous regions of Appalachia they were content there to live almost untouched by the outside world until a century later. From these sturdy Anglo-Saxons descended the sturdy mountain people of today - who still love to sing the songs of their forbears.

ROSIE DAY, front stage center, seated on puncheon bench. She is dressed in homespun linsey-woolsey which she has worn in the American Folk Song Festival for a quarter of a century. A black slat bonnet hangs on her arm. She is singing her WARNING SONG which she has made world famous. At her right at the microphone, Jean Thomas, The Traipsin' Woman, Founder-Director of the annual AMERICAN FOLK SONG FESTIVAL.

Front row left, Margaret Caudill Hurst and daughter, in royal Stuart plaid. Descendants of Mary Queen of Scots. Florence Clark in native dress sings Cherokee Song of Welcome in native tongue. Helen

Perkins, ballad singer. Behind Margaret Caudill Hurst (with glasses) Mrs. Willie Hatfield Clay, daughter of James Hatfield (brother of Devil Anse Hatfield. Mrs. Trudy McCoy-grey hair - flowered dress and Frankie Jane McCoy niece of Old Randall McCoy - they sing the Ballad Of Peace.

Next row behind them Canoud Williams with fiddle - his wife "Aunt" Alice Williams in white sunbonnet.

Last row against cabin - William R. Cornes, age 90 Pleaz Mobley, ballad singer of Clay County, Ky. and Curley Smith, famous fiddler.

Front Row right, Little Douglas Crawford with gourd banjo, Jacqueline Perkins in homespun frock of linsey-woolsey with corn shuck "poppet" a make-believe doll. And her 3 year old brother Kenneth with corn stock fiddle. He is wearing homespun jeans, linsey woolsey shirt and knitted galluses. Immediately behind Jean Thomas, Anna Jean Stewart with primitive 3-string dulcimer; Marieo Perkins with banjo whittled from whiteoak with coon hide for sounding head - and Donnie Stewart, ballad singer.

Back row against cabin - The Tall Kentuckian, Roger Lewis of Rowan County and Bob Ramey of Rowan County and Rev. Alvis Varney of West Virginia mountains who "lines" the hymns sung by group in the Festival. He gives out a line and the rest "chant" it back, without accompaniment on any musical instrument.

This is considered one of the most unusual groups ever assembled at our American Folk Song Festival because of the wide range in ages and the type of singing and rare musical instruments used, and the singing of their BALLAD OF PEACE by the Hatfields and McCoy's.

SIDE I, Band 1: INTRODUCTION by Jean Thomas, The Traipsin' Woman
Founder-Director AMERICAN FOLK SONG FESTIVAL

Band 2: Fox Horn sounded by George Davidson, once the hunting horn of Devil Anse Hatfield leader of his clan in the Hatfield-McCoy Feud.
Cherokee Song of Welcome sung by FLORENCE CLARK in native dress and native tongue

THE CHILDREN

Band 3: I Love My Rooster - sung by Marieo Perkins - to delight the children - it mentions many barn yard fowls

Band 4: Lord Lovell - sung by Lucindia Perkins - it is a tragic song of love like many other 16th century ballads

Band 5: Paper of Pins an "answering back", A scottish "flyting" or scolding ballad sung by little Linda Brown and Donnie Stewart. It is similar to Keys Of Heaven.

Band 6: Billy Boy sung by Donnie Stewart and Terry Perkins, an "Answering back" ballad

Band 7: Bonnie George Campbell sung by Margaret Caudill Hurst and daughter Carolyn Margaret Hurst who plays flute between the verses. The ballad dates back to the ancient feud among Highlanders and Lowlanders of Scotland - the Campbells and Mac Gregors. The singers are descendants of Mary Queen of Scots and wear the royal Stuart plaid.

Band 8: The Paw Paw Patch - a play game song sung and enacted by a group of children in calico and home-spun garments

THE (YOUNG) PEOPLE

Band 9: Love of Rosanna McCoy sung by Dave Varney. The tragic romance of Fair Rosanna McCoy and Young Jonse Hatfield, children of feudists Old Randall McCoy and "Devil Anse" Hatfield

Band 10: Ballad Of Peace - the story of peace between the clans brought about by their friend "Uncel" Dyke Garrett, beloved mountain Preacher. Sung by Dave Varney, kin of the Hatfields.

Band 11: Warning Song sung by Rose Dory a warning to Fair maidens against a false true love

Band 12: Cambric Shirt, Questions three asked by two doubting lovers sung by Margaret Winters with guitar

Band 13: Keys Of Canterbury sung by Ray Napier and Margaret Winters a love song

Band 14: Courtin' Song sung by Pleaz Mobley and Olive Mobley - it is an answering back song sometimes called the Bachelor's Song

Band 15: Give Me One More Chance - sung by 9 year old Ruby Dean and The Journeymen's Quartet - A modern hymn.

THE ELDERS

SIDE II

Band 1: Lord, You've Been So Good To Me, an old mountain hymn sung by Aunt Alice Williams

Band 2: Barbara Ellen sung by Rosie Day oldest ballad singer in the American Folk Song Festival. Rosie learned many Elizabethan ballads as a child when she played around her father's old water mill. While the men folk waited their "turn" for their corn they sang to put in the time

Band 3: Sally Goodin' - a favorite fiddle tune of the Kentucky mountains played by George Davidson on the mouth harp.

Band 4: Boatin' Up Sandy - played by George Davidson on the harmonica.

Band 5: The Prodigal Son - an old mountain favorite played on the dulcimer and sung by "Aunt" Dora Harmon age 89

Band 6: Civil War March played on the dulcimer by "Aunt" Dora Harmon - she heard her father whistle the tune when she was a child

Band 7: The Squire's Daughter sung by Lula Curry, blood kin of both the Hatfields and McCoys. The ballad is also called Twa Sisters and dates back to 16th century.

Band 8: Hi Said The Blackbird sung by Pleaz Mobley with guitar - it is an amusing song and delights the children with its dialogue between birds.

Band 9: Pretty Polly - a ballad in its original form as perpetuated in the mountains of Kentucky - sung by Pleaz Mobley with guitar

Band 10: Turkey In the Straw a favorite fiddle tune in the Kentucky mountains played by Curley Smith on the fiddle with Bob Ramey of Rowan County, Kentucky, rattling the bones

Band 11: I'll Never Be Lonesome In Heaven - a modern hymn sung at revivals. It is sung by Lula M. Curry of Mingo County, W. Va.

Band 12: Amazing Grace - a favorite hymn of the mountain people sung by a group of old and young without accompaniment.

Band 13: Down In the Valley, best loved Lonesome tune of the mountains with which the American Folk Song Festival is closed each year on the second Sunday in June according to the centuries-old tradition, The Singin' Gatherin' of the Kentucky mountains.

AMERICAN FOLK SONG FESTIVAL
Which grew from
The Singin' Gatherin'
of the Kentucky Mountains

The summer term of Circuit Court in a certain isolated section of the Kentucky mountains had been an unusually wearisome one. So when at last court adjourned "like on a Saturday," I, the court stenographer, age 17, welcomed a day of rest.

"You look plum peekid out of your eyes," declared Granny Kearey, aged proprietress of the old Kearey House, that Sunday morning when I came down from my cubb-hole of a room up under the eaves, to breakfast. "And hit's no wonder! You a-sottin' thar day arter day cooped up like so many feathered fowls in a barnyard, with a passel of lawyers and witnesses. You a-sottin' down ever word that drapped from their lips. You're plum tuckered out, I'm sartin. So get you gone, today bein' the Lord's Day, out whar the birds are singin' and the laurel's in full blowth. Whar the creek waters is clair as a crystal and gurgling like a song ballat over snowy white pebbles and sparklin' sands."

So - that second Sunday in June - as soon as breakfast was over and I had helped Granny with the dishes and we had "kitchen house put to rights", off I rode in the jolt wagon with the Turleys; I wish my portable typewriter and brief case (I never went without them); and the Turleys with a basket of "extrie vittals" for they aimed to take the day with their kin folks on Brushy Fork of Lonesome Creek. Granny Kearey smiled contentedly on the stoop of the old Kearey House and waved her checkered apron in farewell, calling out pleasantly, "Traipsin' Woman enjoy yourself! I'll look for you when I see you comin'!"

It was a glorious sunny June day and we rode for many a mile along the creek bed road. Turley and his wife, and six children in chairs in the wagonbed. Reaching the head of a lonely hollow I heard off in the distance the voice of little children and old folks singing to the accompaniment of a strange (to me) musical instrument. Knowing the way of the mountains I asked no questions, but Ethan Turley, the driver, seeing my interest stopped the teams, "so's you can listen," he said casually, "That's old Uncle Abner startin' up the Singin' Gatherin', like he everly does on the second Sunday in June. Hark!" His rugged hand cupped ear. "He's strummin' the dulcimore!"

"The dulcimore!" I echoed eagerly, "I wish..."

"I takend notice how you favor music and ballad singin'," said driver Turley, "so if you're a-mind to, you can go long crost the creek and stay the day for the Singin' Gatherin' will last till sundown. We'll fetch you back to the Kearey House with us, lest old Granny Kearey git out a sarch warrant for you."

Balancing myself with my portable typewriter in one hand and brief case in the other, I crossed the slippery foot log that spanned the turbulent creek, and made my way through a stragglin' corn patch in the direction of the singing. Emerging from the corn patch into a clearing I found the little group in front of a windowless log cabin with its crude chimney of mud and sticks and stones, its rived oak shingle roof, its crude plank door swinging on oak post pivot. The old man whom I came to know as Uncle Abner, sat on a puncheon bench with the ancient dulcimer across his knees. Old and young were grouped about him in the foreyard of the cabin.

So it was I came upon a centuries-old tradition of the Kentucky mountains.

"My grandsir afore me, and his'n afore him everly carried on the Singin' Gatherin' on the second Sunday in June," Uncle Abner explained. "So you come j'ine our Singin' Gatherin'. Little Chad!" he motioned to a child in homespun jeans, knitted galluses and holding a gourd banjo, "scrouge over so's the Traipsin' Woman can set alongside you. And you, too Emmaline," he turned to a little barefoot girl with pigtails, you set beside the Traipsin' Woman, and mind you don't drap your corn stalk fiddle."

I went back year after year and finally in 1931 at the suggestion of good friends including Dorothy Gordon (now Moderator of Youth Forums of the New York Times) and Carl Sandburg and Erskine Caldwell, we organized the American Folk Song Society for the purpose of perpetuating authentic interpretation of American folk music and folk song, as old Uncle Abner and his kin folks handed it down by word of mouth and without manuscript from generation to generation. In 1931 we brought the Singin' Gatherin' out of the Kentucky mountains to Traipsin' Woman cabin on the Mayo Trail in the foothills of the Cumberlands that the world might share its charm and beauty. The first year a mere handful of people came. But its popularity increased by leaps and bounds. In a few short years at a single Festival 20,000 people came from all over the U.S.A. and from the far corners of the earth. Through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation the Festival has been filmed and recorded in its entirety for the Division of Music of the Library of Congress.

The discovery of the Singin' Gatherin' has been dramatized in WLW's Builders of Destiny; on "God's Country" with Milton Bacon on CBS; on the RCA Victor Robert Merrill program; on CBS Gateways to Folk Music with the Traipsin' Woman and Burl Ives playing the leading parts. It has been carried by the British Broadcasting Company to England and via short wave to the Solomons. It has been published in Life, Time, National Geographic, Travel, Coronet, Courier Journal Magazine, New York Times, Hollands, Friends (GM publication).

It has brought together the Hatfields and the McCoy's to stand side-by-side to sing and to make music together. Our leading mountain minstrel, Jilson Setters the Singin' Fiddler of Lost Hope Hollow appeared in the royal Albert Hall at the invitation of the English Folk Song and Dance Society in December 1932 with Their Majesties, King George and Queen Mary seated in the royal box. It has twice been tape recorded for VOICE OF AMERICA and through that facility heard around the world.

Of the American Folk Song Festival Brooks Atkinson, Drama Critic of the New York Times, who came to cover the event, wrote in the New York Times June 15, 1942: "A..A genuine occasion in which the singers and fiddlers feel at home and are not offered to the public as romantic curiosities...No one can appreciate (the Ballads) human quality until he has heard them sung spontaneously under the trees by men, women, and children who have learned them from having heard them sung."

Robert J. Casey, Chicago Daily News, June 13, 1938: "There is nothing quite like it in America, so amazing in its effect." Vice President Alben W. Barkley once said: "Jean Thomas occupies in American Folklore and song an enviable position. She is a recognized authority on the subject and has made herself a widespread reputation for her ability to depict the mountain folk sincerely and naturally. I feel proud of the honor she has done the State of Kentucky through her Festival."

The American Folk Song Festival ballads and tunes is being preserved through recording by FOLKWAYS RECORDS SERVICE CORP.



Born in Ashland in 1881, Miss Thomas went first into the mountains in 1896 as a court secretary. It was while traveling about through the hills that she acquired the name "Traipsin' Woman," a title which has pursued her to this day.

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