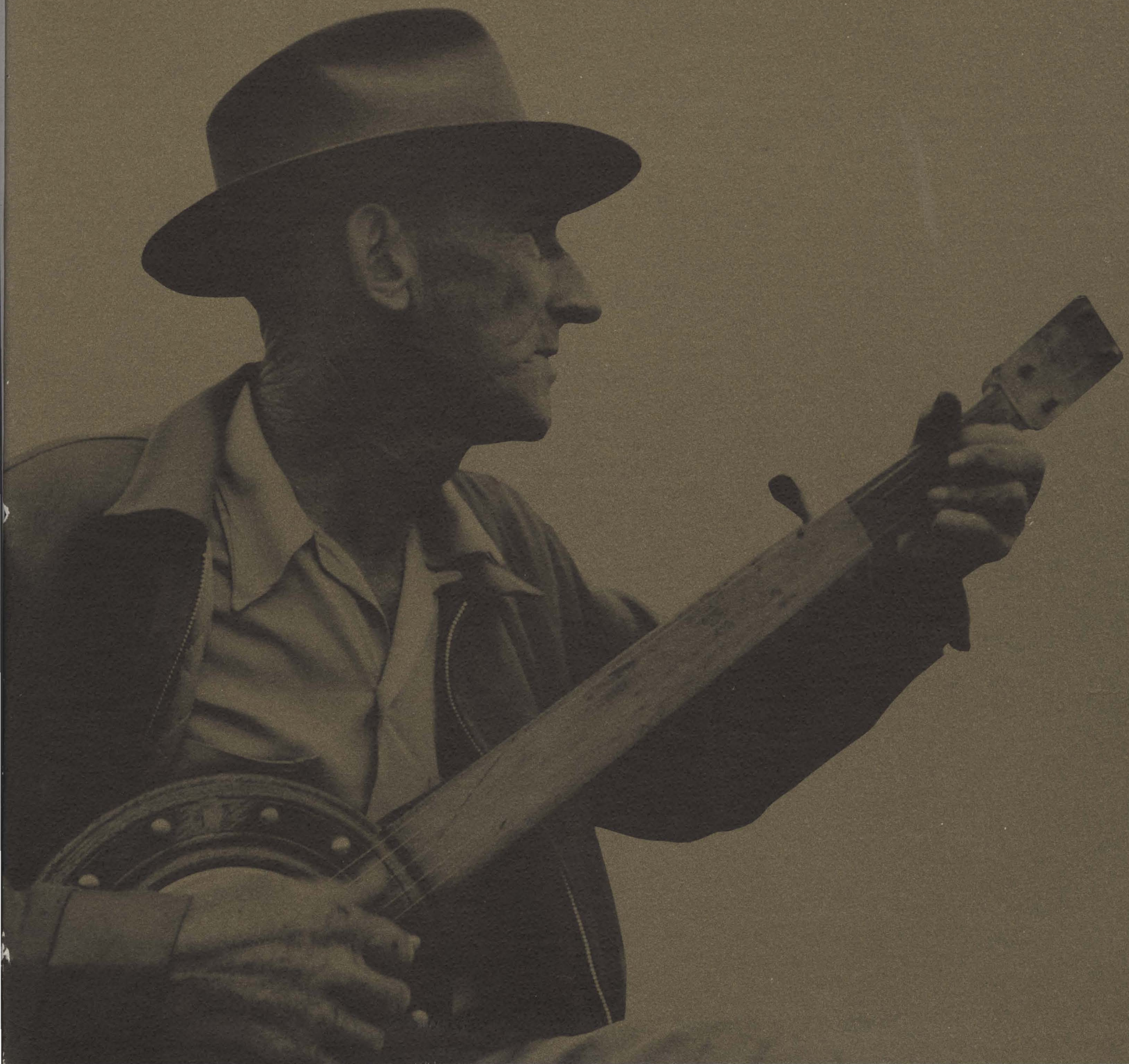


# Frank Proffitt Sings Folk Songs

Recorded by Sandy Paton / Edited by Frank Warner / Folkways Records FA 2360



SIDE I  
Band 1: Beaver Dam Road  
Band 2: Cindy  
Band 3: Bo Lamkin  
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

# Frank Proffitt Sings Folk Songs

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE / PHOTO BY J. C. BROWN

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# FRANK PROFFITT SINGS FOLK SONGS

Recorded by Sandy Paton  
Edited by Frank Warner



Frank Proffitt and his family (except Oliver) in the new home he built around 1950.  
Frank, Bessie, Ronald, Franklin, Phyllis, Eddie and Gerald. (1960)

Photo by J. C. Brown

by Anne and Frank Warner

Frank Proffitt has been our friend since 1938 when we met him at the home of his father-in-law, Nathan Hicks, on our first visit to "the Beech" -- Beech Mountain in the Blue Ridge section of the Appalachian chain in the northwest corner of North Carolina. We began our serious collecting experience with Frank, who taught us two songs on that first visit. One of them -- Dan Doo -- he sings on this recording. Over the years, he gave us many more -- maybe a couple of hundred--more than any other person we have sung with. Frank Warner has sung Frank's songs, and talked about Frank, from one end of America to the other (and on a number of recordings), and we are proud and happy that now Frank's own voice can be heard singing the songs he learned from his father, his mother, his aunts and uncles, and from other folks in his music-rich area. Frank has a tremendous storehouse of these songs, and he sings and plays them in the heart-stirring mountain style that creates a feeling deep in one's bones -- as if long-forgotten pioneer memories were there to be awakened.

Frank has a very special understanding of his heritage and an unusual appreciation for the old ways of his people. He is proud, as he ought to be, of the ways of his folks (and they are our folks, too, for they settled our country) -- the rugged, hearty stock that came into our Carolina mountains in the late 18th century and licked the wild ridges and stayed right there. The feel of the mountains got into their bloodstream and they passed it along to their descendants. Mountain life is hard but beautiful, and mountain people are reserved and dignified, but friendly. We admire their dignity, and we have long basked in the warmth of their friend-

ship. The Warners, all four of us -- Jeff and Garret too -- look forward each summertime to visit with Frank and Bessie and the five younger Proffitts in their snug house that Frank built a dozen years ago to replace the mountain cabin where we first visited them. Farther up the mountain behind Frank's house is his father's old house, now his workshop for banjo making. In between carpentry jobs and his farming, Frank works here where his father lived, making banjos and dulcimers after his father's patterns. It is while he is working, Frank says, that the words of songs he has been trying to remember come to him most easily. Here, when he is alone, he can almost hear Wiley and Noah Proffitt and Aunt Nancy Prather and the others. We like to sit there with him.

Mountain life in the Beaver Dam section where Frank lives has electricity now, and electric refrigeration and TV and school busses and good roads -- if they do make hairpin turns, or worse, in getting across a mountain. If you stop at Sugar Grove to ask the way to Frank's place, the man at the store may say, as he once did to us, "Keep going over George's Gap until you get to Bethel Church. When you can see your own tail lights going around a bend, you'll know you're nearly there."

Frank grew up in the old way, though, and he remembers more of the joys of the old days than their hardships. Frank's father, Wiley Proffitt, never saw a town of any kind until he was past middle age. Frank never did, either, until he was 14, when he and some other boys walked barefoot over the mountains to Mountain City, Tennessee. Frank once told J.C. Brown (who took the more recent photographs in this folder and who wrote a feature article on Frank and his banjo making in the Carolina Farmer) that his,

father "was always busy, but never hurrying. He lived about as interesting a life as one could ask for. Along with his brother and sister, they always had time to talk far into the night about happenings of long ago. The many hair raising tales of the Civil War, and of their father's part in it all... I never got over my love of these kinds of things."

As a little boy Frank sat on the hearth by the fire and listened, and remembered. Sitting there quietly one day while the grownups were a-talkin' and a-pickin', he saw one of the men had a broken shoe, and through the hole in the top of the shoe his big toe kept time to the music. Frank says that was the first time he ever realized music had a rhythm or a "beat!"

In most of the songs on this recording, Frank accompanies his singing by playing one of his own five-string, fretless wooden banjos--made just the way he remembers his father making them. (He makes dulcimers, too, to his father's pattern, and uses one to accompany two songs on this recording.) Most interesting are Frank's own words about his banjo and banjo making. This quotation is a composite from various letters on the subject, written to us, to J.C. Brown (mentioned above), and to Gary Ferraro, a student at Hamilton College who, through us, became so interested in the mountain banjo that he wrote a term paper on it, with Frank Proffitt's help.

"My interest in the banjoes started very early because I had an ear for music which was sort of gifted to me. My earliest memory was of waking up on a wintry morning and hearing my father picking...in a slow mournful way...The shavings and smell of the fresh wood, the going along to the woods to get the wood...the tuning up for the first time the new Banjo, will always be good memories for me..."

"As a boy I recall going along with Dad to the woods to get the timber for banjo-making. He selected a tree by its appearance and by sounding...a timber cutter's term of speech in describing hitting a tree with a hammer or axe broad-sided, to tell by the sound if it's straight grained, sound, shaky, faulty, or hollow. I do this myself also...I can't describe it in words but I see inside the tree by the sound of hitting it..."

"My father would cut the tree down and saw it up in neck lengths. Then set the blocks on their ends and lay off in squares. This is my way also, using a maul and wedges to split the squares for banjo necks. I then as Dad taught me, stick the squares in ricks to air dry for 6 months or more...after...they are taken and put over a stove or fireplace to kiln dry..."

After describing the shaping of the head and the putting together of the banjo, Frank wrote,

"As I watched my father shaping the wood for a new banjo ... I wanted to rush him in his work so that I could hear the sound. When the strings were put on and the pegs turned, and musical notes begun to fill the cabin, I looked upon my father as truly the greatest man on earth for creating such a wonderful thing out of a piece of wood, a greasy skin, and some strings..."

"So it is true the banjo has been the lightener of loads for the mountain man. When he wanted to feel jolly he could pick Going up Cripple Creek, all in a run. When he wanted to feel mournful he could sing and play of the Turtle Dove off in yonder tall Pine, or lift his eyes up in The Pore Wayfaring Pilgrim..."

Sandy Paton, in his tribute to Frank in this folder, mentions Tom Dula and the Tom Dooley song, lately (1958-9) the top of the hit parade.

Frank taught us Tom Dooley some 22 years ago. Frank

Warner sang it on programs throughout the intervening years and included it on a recording, with notes, of course, about Frank Proffitt. Alan Lomax published it, with credits to Proffitt and Warner, in Folksong, USA. And then look what happened to it!

Old Tom has meant a lot to Frank, though not (as Sandy points out) in the way some people think. It hasn't meant a lot of money. But wide-spread interest in the song, and its origins, has opened a path to Frank's door and opened many new interests to him. He never knows, these days, what may arrive in the mail, or who may come to see him on his mountainside. He has made an old-time gourd banjo for a documentary film on Colonial Williamsburg, articles have been written about him, and early this year Frank Proffitt and Frank Warner sang together at the Chicago University Folk Festival. Many people, these days, want "an original Frank Proffitt banjo."

Now, happily, the growing interest in authentic folk music--and in Frank--has brought Frank a visit from Sandy Paton, who made this recording. We are delighted that Sandy, with his deep understanding and appreciation of Frank as a man and as a carrier of traditional music, has caught the spirit of Frank and his music so well in this Folkways recording.

— by Sandy Paton —

It was dark as Frank Proffitt and I carried the recording equipment up to "the old house" on the hill behind his home. The katydids were in full chorus to warn us, as the mountain saying goes, of frost to come in forty days. Frank, going ahead to lead the way, stretched his long legs into a ground-covering stride, moving silently through the dense underbrush as though his eyes could penetrate the night.

When we reached the split-rail fence near the barn, he turned. "Better let me take the machine the rest of the way." I started to protest. After all, he was the artist I had come to record; it was my job to carry the load. "No," he insisted, generously ignoring my gasps for breath, "it'll be safer with me. It gets pretty rough up ahead and I know the path." He took the fifty-pound recorder out of my arms and hoisted it easily to his shoulder. "I'm sort of what they call a 'whit-leather' man, anyway," he smiled. I clambered over the fence and looked up just in time to see him disappear, effortlessly, into the darkness.

Whit-leather. You probably won't find it in a dictionary, but you may have come across it in a boarding-house stew. It's the name the mountain people have for the tough, white skin that lines the inside of the rib-cage on a beef.

Whit — white — whit-leather — Whitsunday. An ancient usage. "Up here, it ain't until a man gets to the hard, skin-and-bone stage, the whit-leather stage, that he's considered to have reached his full strength."

Frank Proffitt is a whit-leather man.

Long-faced, lean, sinew-tough and bone-hard, he gives the impression of being taller than he actually is.

A soft-spoken, thoughtful man, when Frank speaks it is because he has something to say. His is a wisdom born of long hours of patient observation and study. Both man and nature have come under his quiet, perceptive gaze and he knows both well.

"I like people, you understand, but I look forward to coming up here to 'the old house' where I make the banjos and dulcimers. Sometimes I'll spend the whole day up here, alone. Gives me a chance to think things out. I reckon you might call me a loner."

Then he smiled and his long, sombre face, which, in repose, might be that of an ancient prophet, suddenly radiated with an almost pixy-like glee. I began to see the range of the man — began to understand how he could sing the light, humorous songs of mountain courtship and moonshine whiskey, as well as the long, tragic ballads.

We cleared a space on his workbench for the recorder and, while I readied the microphone, Frank began tuning up the banjo. "Hope this doesn't turn out to be one of those times when I just can't seem to make a banjo sound in tune. Some-

times I'll come home from work, pick up the banjo, and it'll sound just right to me. Another time, I'll struggle with it for an hour and still not be satisfied. That ever happen to you?"

He cocked his head to listen, twisting the wooden pegs with his thick, working-man's fingers. A few strums, another adjustment, and, finally satisfied with the tuning, he glanced up to see if I were ready. I nodded and punched a couple of buttons.

Frank Proffitt drew a deep breath, hunched forward over his home-made, fretless banjo, lifted his head toward some distant mountain only he could see, and the deep voice began to outline the story of Bo Lamkin, murderous mason of long ago.

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Later, taking a break, we talked of the Folk Festival at the University of Chicago, where we had first met.

"When I first walked in there and saw all those Bluegrass fellows with their big, white hats and their fancy banjos --- me with my old home-made one under my arm --- I thought to myself, 'What am I doing here?' For a minute I figured maybe I ought to try to do a few extra licks --- maybe that was what was expected of me. Then I decided, no, I'd just get up there and do what I do. I'd be myself and if they liked it, fine. If they didn't, well, I could just come on back here to the mountains and forget the whole thing."

Asked what he thought of Scruggs picking, Frank thought for a long moment, then looked up at me very seriously. "I'd like to be able to do it," he drawled, "and then not do it."

I knew what he meant.

About commercial "hill-billy" music makers: "They're not mountain men. They don't care about tradition. They're the ones who went down out of these mountains and started trying to earn a lot of money by making fun of the backhouse --- by making fun of their mothers!" I caught a glimpse of the wrath inside this quiet mountain man and, once again, I understood.

Frank Proffitt is devoted to the tradition he has inherited, a tradition he fully understands. "While I know I'm not much, musically speaking, I do what I am able, trying to keep to the original as handed me from other days."

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It was nearly two A.M. when we stopped. I had trouble with a defective tape and mentioned to Frank that it was guaranteed. The company agreed to replace it, at any rate. He compared this with the guarantee on apple trees. "You plant 'em, then you wait six years. If it turns out the apples aren't good enough to market, the company will send you new trees. Then all you have to do is wait another six years."

That led to talk of farming. "I raised snap-beans for awhile. Used to be a good cash crop. Then it got so you couldn't depend on the market. Hard work, too. You'd work all day pickin' 'em, then drive all night gettin' 'em to market. I got so tired I stumbled when I walked and still stayed poor as a whip-poor-will." About the occasional tobacco crop that fails: "You never saw a more pitiful sight than a bunch of kids standing alongside their whole year's work and the buyer just lookin' at 'em, shaking his head. Wouldn't even bid on it."

We talked of cutting timber on the steep mountainsides, of log-rollings in the old days when thousands upon thousands of feet of fine southern hardwoods were piled up and burned to clear new ground for crops. Frank shook his head sadly. A sensitive man, he sees more than his neighbors see. Although he had to leave school after the sixth grade to go to work, he has taught himself so well that his friends, even those who finished high school, bring their income-tax problems to him.

Frank works as a carpenter now, raising 6/10ths of an acre of tobacco and some strawberries on the side. Still, every time the school term begins, it's hard to scrape up the cash for the kids' books and fees. Last year, selling the hand-made banjos and dulcimers helped quite a bit.

"Some of the people around here think I got a lot of money from the Tom Dula song. Well, I have got a little, that's true, but the other day I was driving past a group of boys and heard one of them say 'There goes the man that made ten thousand dollars off of Tom Dooley.' Truth is, I had just seventy-five cents in my pocket at that time and five kids getting ready for school."

It was nearly dawn as I drove back over the winding road to Sugar Grove. We had talked for several hours and, even then, I had been reluctant to leave. Frank Proffitt was a man I wanted to know. I found myself wondering what it would be like to wander with him along those high mountain ridges he knows so well --- hunting groundhogs, maybe, for the hides from which he makes the banjo-heads.

One would really have to step to keep up with this long-legged man for whom the mountains have always been home.

Sandy Paton

Burlington, Vermont  
September, 1961

#### Notes About the Songs - by Anne and Frank Warner

##### SIDE I, Band 1:

BEAVER DAM ROAD This wonderful local song borrows the refrain "Hard times, poor boy" (used in many a jailhouse song and other laments) -- but nothing else. Frank says the sheriff caught a fellow making a little whiskey and took over to the Boone Jail. While he was there he made up some of the verses of this song and he and the other inmates sang it to pass the time. Since then it has traveled the countryside and others have added more verses. They are still doing it. "You will find different versions around about. I think it's everybody's song now."

Beaver Dam Road, in the song, is in Beaver Dam Township in Watauga County, where Frank lives. Traveling through the country one will find many a Beaver Dam Road. There's even one on Long Island. Maybe the outlanders won't know that the product of small mountain stills was "put up" in fruit jars, like any other home produce. Frank first sang this song for us about 1940.

##### BEAVER DAM ROAD

I didn't have no hog to kill,  
I went and set me up a little bitty still,  
It's hard times on the Beaver Dam Road,  
Hard times, poor boy.

Along come a man in a Chevrolet car,  
He's lookin' for the man with the old fruit jar,  
It's hard times on the Beaver Dam Road,  
Hard times, poor boy.

He took me to Boone and he put me in jail,  
I had nobody for to go my bail;  
It's hard times on the Beaver Dam Road,  
It's hard times, poor boy.

Got a letter from my wife, she's farin' awful good,  
Had a man a-diggin' 'taters and choppin' the wood;  
It's hard times on the Beaver Dam Road,  
Hard times, poor boy.

Now listen to me, fellers, wherever you are,  
Don't go totin' 'round the old fruit jar.  
It's hard times on the Beaver Dam Road,  
Hard times, poor boy.

##### SIDE I, Band 2:

CINDY This is an ante-bellum minstrel song that has ever since been popular with traditional singers, and now is known in some form, or just as a tune, to all Americans who like to square dance. Through the years the song has picked up additional verses, or lost those it once had, and other songs or song fragments have attached themselves to its refrain. For details see notes in Brown, Vol. 3, p. 482.

##### CINDY

I went up on the mountain  
I 'lowed I'd have some fun,  
I waited all day, I waited all night  
And Cindy never come.

Git along home, Cindy, Cindy,  
Git along home,  
Git along home, Cindy, Cindy,  
I'm goin' to leave you now.

Cindy in the summertime,  
Cindy in the fall,  
If I can't have Cindy all the time  
I don't want her at all.

(CHORUS)

Cindy went to meeting  
How happy she did shout  
She got so happy  
She tore her stocking-heel out.

(CHORUS)

Cindy is the sweetest girl,  
She's sweet as sugar plum,  
Threw her arms around my neck  
Like a grapevine 'round a gum.

(CHORUS)

I made a little banjo,  
I made it out of pine,  
The only tune that it would play  
"I wish that you'd be mind."

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 3:

**BO LAMKIN** This story of the wronged and revengeful mason is Child Ballad No. 93, and may be found in Motherwell (collected in England in 1825) and also in a number of American collections, including those of Cecil Sharp and Frank C. Brown. Brown suggests that "Lamkin" is a Flemish version of the name Lambert, since many fine masons were of Flemish blood and were often brought to England as builders. The "Bo" is, no doubt, an abbreviation of "bold," since some versions of the ballad are titled "Bold Lamkin." It is interesting that the old world "Lord" becomes "landlord" in this and other American versions. We like Frank Proffitt's own comments:

"I want to say that I never gave much thought to Bo Lamkin's feelings until I too got to building. It seems he got angry because 'pay he got none.' I have had a occasion or two of this kind, not much I am glad to say. I don't claim that I had murderous intent, but how I would have liked to take a big stone hammer and undone the work that pay I got none for. Old Bo, if he had only done this to his work would have had my admiration very much. Perhaps we would not have heard of him then, which perhaps would have been just as well."

"I like to think of just where the place is now where he built the fine castle. For I believe it really happened as well as all the old ballad things. The older folks wanted a fact, then they went all out in building a legend around it, but never to destroy the fact that planted the seed. They kept it intact and thank God for it."

**BO LAMKIN**

Bo Lamkin was as fine a mason  
As ever laid a stone,  
He built a fine castle  
And pay he got none,  
He built a fine castle,  
And pay he got none.

He swore by his Maker  
He'd kill them unknown;  
Beware of Bo Lamkin  
When I'm gone from home. (Repeat)

Bo Lamkin he come to the castle  
And he knocked loud and long,  
There was no one as ready as the faultress,  
She arose and let him in. (Repeat)

Oh where is the landlord,  
Or is he at home?  
Oh no, he's gone to Merry England  
For to visit his son. (Repeat)

How will we get her downstairs,  
Such a dark night as it is?  
Stick pins and needles  
In the little baby. (Repeat)

Bo Lamkin rocked the cradle  
And the faultress she sung,  
While the tears and the red blood  
From the cradle did run. (Repeat)

The Lady, comin' downstairs  
Not thinking no harm,  
Bo Lamkin stood ready  
He caught her in his arms. (Repeat)

Bo Lamkin, Bo Lamkin,  
Spare my life one hour,  
You can have my daughter Betsy,  
My own blooming flower. (Repeat)

Bo Lamkin, Bo Lamkin,  
Spare my life one day,  
You can have all the gay gold  
Your horse can tote away. (Repeat)

Oh, keep your daughter Betsy,  
For to go through the flood,  
To scour the silver basin  
That catches your heart's blood. (Repeat)

Daughter Betsy was a-settin',  
In the castle so high,  
She saw her dear father  
Come a-ridin' hard by. (Repeat)

Dear father, dear father,  
Come see what's been done,  
Bo Lamkin has been here  
And he's killed your dear son. (Repeat)

Bo Lamkin has been here  
He's killed your baby,  
Bo Lamkin has been here,  
And killed your Lady. (Repeat)

Bo Lamkin was hung  
To the scaffold so high,  
And the faultress was burned  
To a stake standin' by. (Repeat.)

SIDE I, Band 4:

**JULIE JENKINS** The first time we heard this song it was sung by Rosie Hicks (now Presnell), a cousin of Frank's wife, Bessie, and it has been ringing in our memories ever since. We like the way Frank sings it, too. He says he has heard it was very popular in Watauga County just after the close of the Civil War. His Aunt Nancy Prather "used to sing it to us kids when we'd go to see her on Sunday and she'd be a-sittin' on the cabin porch." Aunt Nancy sang it for Dr. Frank C. Brown in 1937 and her version is in his Collection of North Carolina Folklore. Other versions, usually known as "Jennie Jenkins", are in a number of collections. This is one of many "color" songs that long have been popular with traditional singers. We can look for deep and hidden meaning in the references to the various colors--or we can sing it for fun. It is fun, once you have mastered the refrain!

**JULIE JENKINS**

You can't wear red, my own true love,  
You can't wear red, Julie Jenkins,  
Oh, you can't wear red, it's the color of your head,  
I'll get me a folli lolli, dilli dolli, servi juci,  
double rolli binding  
To wear with my robe, Julie Jenkins.

You can't wear black, my own true love,  
You can't wear black, Julie Jenkins,  
Oh, you can't wear black, it's the color of a sack,  
I'll get me a folli lolli, dilli dolli, servi juci,  
double rolli binding  
To wear with my robe, Julie Jenkins.

You can't wear yellow, my own true love,  
 You can't wear yellow, Julie Jenkins,  
 You can't wear yellow, the color's so shallow,  
 I'll get me a folli lolli, dilli dolli, servi juci,  
     double rolli binding  
 To wear with my robe, Julie Jenkins.

You must wear blue, my own true love,  
 You must wear blue, Julie Jenkins.  
 Oh, you must wear blue, for the color is so true.  
 I'll get me a folli lolli, dilli dolli, servi juci,  
     double rolli binding  
 To wear with my robe, Julie Jenkins.

#### SIDE I, Band 5:

GEORGE COLLINS This is a version of "Lady Alice," Child Ballad No. 85, and the text found most frequently in the mountains of western Carolina. Frank says he has known it since he was a little boy, that his mother and his mother's sisters used to sing it to him. Texts of this song are found in many collections--among them: Davis's Traditional Ballads of Virginia, Henry's Folk songs from the Southern Highlands, Cox's Folk songs of the South, Brown's North Carolina Folklore (with extensive notes), Sharp's English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Hudson's Folk songs of Mississippi, etc. Some versions (not in Carolina) indicate that the lady is a mermaid or a banishee, in some way responsible for the young man's death. The version Frank sings we first heard in the early 40's from Nathan and Rena Hicks (Bessie Proffitt's parents) on Beech Mountain.

#### GEORGE COLLINS

George Collins rode home one cold winter night,  
 George Collins rode home so fine,  
 George Collins rode home one cold winter night,  
 He took down sick and died.

Now Mary was seated in yonder fair town  
 A-sewin' her silk so fine,  
 But when she heard that George was dead  
 She laid her fine silk aside.

She followed him up she followed him down,  
 She followed him to his grave,  
 And there upon her bended knee  
 She cried and screamed and prayed.

O daughter, dear daughter, why do you weep so?  
 There's more young men than one,  
 Oh no, Oh no, George has my heart,  
 And now he's dead and gone.

Oh don't you hear that turtle dove,  
 Way off in yonder lone pine?  
 A-mournin' for its own true love  
 Just like I mourn for mine.

George Collins rode home that cold winter night,  
 George Collins rode home so fine,  
 George Collins rode home that cold winter night,  
 He took down sick and died.

#### SIDE I, Band 6:

NINETY AND NINE This well known gospel song based on the Bible verse, Matthew 18: 12, is one of the hymns made popular by the famous evangelistic team of Moody and Sankey. The words were written by E. C. Clethane and the music by Ira D. Sankey. It was copyrighted in 1876 by Biglow and Main Co.

In a later hymnal, dated 1894, there is a note stating that the song is "to be sung only as a solo."

Frank Proffitt remembers this hymn from his boyhood days.

#### NINETY AND NINE

There were ninety and nine  
 That safely lay in the shelter of the fold,  
 But one went out on the hills away  
 Far off from the gates of gold.

Way out on the mountains wild and bare  
 Away from the tender shepherd's care,  
 Away from the tender shepherd's care.

Now Lord thou hast here the ninety and nine  
 Is that not enough for thee?  
 But the shepherd made answer, "This of mine  
 Has wandered away from me.  
 Although the road be rough and steep  
 I go to the desert to find my sheep,  
 I go to the desert to find my sheep."

Now none of the ransomed ever knew  
 How deep was the waters crossed,  
 How dark was that night that the Lord passed  
     through

To save His sheep that was lost.  
 Out in the desert he heard its cry,  
 Sick and helpless and ready to die,  
 Sick and helpless and ready to die.

And the angels echoed around the throne...  
 Rejoice for the Lord brings back his own,  
 Rejoice, for the Lord brings back his own.

#### SIDE I, Band 7:

DOWN IN THE VALLEY This lonesome mountain song, in various versions, can be found everywhere in the United States. Sometimes a prisoner's song ("Birmingham Jail"), it has the mournful feeling that all lonely lovers know. Alan Lomax says it has become a national property, along with "Home on the Range" and a few others. See Lomax, Folksong, U.S.A.; Sandburg, American Songbag; Belden, Ballads and Songs Collected by the Missouri Folk-Lore Society; Brown, North Carolina Folklore, Vol. 3, etc.

#### DOWN IN THE VALLEY

Down in the valley, valley so low  
 Hang your head over, hear the wind blow.  
 Hear the wind blow, love, hear the wind blow,  
 Hang your head over, hear the wind blow.

Up on the mountain, mountain so high,  
 I get so lonely, that I wish I could die.  
 I wish I could die, love, wish I could die,  
 I get so lonely that I wish I could die.

If you don't love me, go court who you please,  
 First put your arms 'round me to give my heart  
     ease.  
 For to give my heart ease, love, for to give  
     my heart ease,  
 First put your arms 'round me for to give my  
     heart ease.

Write me a letter containing three lines,  
 Tell me you love me, you'll forever be mine.  
 Forever be mine, love, forever be mine;  
 Tell me you love me, you'll forever be mine.

Goin' to build me a castle, forty feet high,  
 Set at my window and watch you go by.  
 I'll watch you go by, love, watch you go by,  
 I'll set at my window and watch you go by.

#### SIDE II, Band 1:

BABY-O This song can be a lullaby or a song to amuse somewhat older children. Mountain people have many children and a great love for children. Or it can be a song to sing just for fun. In the mountains, though, it is also a "very old banjo tune," and most any banjo player can pick it for you. Cecil Sharp collected one verse of it in 1917 in Pineville, Kentucky, and Jean Ritchie sings a Kentucky version very much like this one.

#### BABY-O

What you goin' to do with the baby-o?  
 What you goin' to do with the baby-o?  
 Wrap him up in calico, send him back to his  
     mammy-o.  
 That's what I'll do with the baby-o!

What you goin' to do with the mammy-o?  
What you goin' to do with the mammy-o?  
Give her a needle and thread to sew,  
That's what I'll do with the mammy-o!

What you goin' to do with the lassie-o?  
What you goin' to do with the lassie-o?  
Marry her off to a handsome beau,  
That's what I'll do with the lassie-o!

What you goin' to do with the laddie-o?  
What you goin' to do with the laddie-o?  
Put him on a horse and watch him go,  
That's what I'll do with the laddie-o!

What you goin' to do with the daddy-o?  
What you goin' to do with the daddy-o?  
Kick him out in the rain and snow,  
That's what I'll do with the daddy-o!

#### SIDE II, Band 2:

OLD ABE In spite of all our years of singing together, Frank never thought to sing us this song until 1959. We think it was all the talk about the Centennial of the Civil War that brought it to his mind. These verses (Frank says it had many more) he learned from his father, Wiley Proffitt, and his father's brother Noah. Their father was a "Southern Yankee" from Tennessee, a member of the 13th Tennessee Cavalry, USA--though his brother joined the Confederate army. The tales handed down to Frank from those unhappy days are fascinating indeed--and so is this song.

These boys in blue are sick of the war and aren't feeling very respectful toward their leaders, but they aren't about to give up.

Everybody knows the tune as "John Brown's Body," though it was once a Sunday School tune from Georgia.

#### OLD ABE

Old Abe he's in the White House  
He's a-takin' of a snooze,  
Old Grant he's a-bustin' his gut with the booze,  
We're out a-wadin' snow and we aint got no shoes,  
We'll keep a-marchin' on.

Glory, glory, Hallelujah,  
Glory, glory, Hallelujah,  
Glory, glory, Hallelujah,  
We'll keep marchin' on.

Winter is a-comin', it's a-gettin' mighty cold,  
Winter is a-comin', it's a-gettin' mighty cold,  
Soon all the generals will be crawlin' in their  
holes,  
We'll keep marchin' on.

#### (CHORUS)

Every time you shoot a rebel, there's one thing for  
sure,  
Every time you shoot a rebel, there's one thing for  
sure,  
Every time you shoot a rebel up'll jump a dozen  
more!  
We'll keep marchin' on.

#### (CHORUS)

Old Abe he freed the colored man, glory hallelu!  
Old Abe he freed the colored man, glory hallelu,  
I wish to my Lord he would free me too,  
Then I'd go marchin' home.

#### (CHORUS)

They tell us we are winning, but I can't hardly  
tell,  
They tell us we are winning, but I can't hardly  
tell,  
For I know at Chickamauga that they shot us all  
to hell.

#### (CHORUS)

#### SIDE II, Band 3:

POOR ELLEN SMITH When Frank sang us this song in 1959 we had never heard it, or seen it, before. Since then we have found it in Brown III, in A.P. Hudson's Folksongs of Mississippi, in Davis's Folksongs of Virginia, Henry's Folksongs from the Southern Highlands, etc. Although he is not mentioned in Frank's version, one Peter De Graff was convicted of the murder of Ellen Smith in the August 1893 term of Forsyth (N.C.) Superior Court, his conviction being later upheld by North Carolina Supreme Court. In most versions of the song he claims he was innocent. Frank's version seems more concerned with reaching a verdict on the morals of the victim! Frank does not know the facts behind the song. He says, "I heard all the old folks, including my father, play it on the banjo, but I never heard the words until some boys from this country went to the coal mines of West Virginia in 19 and 23, and came back a-singing it."

The tune is one used for the hymn "How Firm a Foundation." Frank plays one of his hand-made dulcimers to accompany this song.

#### POOR ELLEN SMITH

Poor Ellen Smith, where was she found,  
Shot through the heart, lyin' cold on the ground.

Many hearts she has broken, many lies she has told,  
It all now is ended in her bed in the snow.

Poor Ellen, poor Ellen, you've wasted your life,  
You could of made some man a very good wife.

Many friends tried to warn you, of your ending you  
was told,  
It all now is ended in your bed in the snow.

So early this morning, poor Ellen was found,  
Shot through the heart, lyin' cold on the ground.

The men they will mourn you, the wives will be  
glad,  
Such is the endin' of a girl that is bad.

Perhaps you're in heaven, God only knows,  
But the Bible plainly tells us you've gone down  
below.

#### SIDE II, Band 4:

DAN DO This version of Child Ballad No. 277, "The Wife Wrapt in Wether Skin," is the first song Frank Proffitt sang to us in 1938, and we've been singing it ever since. Variants, differing widely from each other in everything but the story line, have been found in all parts of the British Isles and throughout the United States. We never heard Frank sing the final verse until 1959. We had thought his version lacked the reform element! Frank says now that he often leaves off that verse because the words don't fit in so well.

#### DAN DO

Oh the good little man come in at noon, Dan do,  
Dan do,  
The good little man come in at noon,  
Have you got my dinner soon?  
To my high land, to my low land,  
To my krish, krash, klingo.

There's a little piece of bread a-layin' on the  
shelf, Dan do, Dan do,  
There's a little piece of bread a-layin' on the  
shelf,  
If you want any more, go fetch it yourself.  
To my high land, to my low land,  
To my krish, krash, klingo.

The little man went out to his sheep-pen, Dan  
do, Dan do,  
The little man went out to his sheep-pen,  
He downed the wether and off with the skin  
To my high land, to my low land,  
To my krish, krash, klingo.

He laid the hide right on her back, Dan do,  
 Dan do,  
 He laid the hide all on her back  
 And he made that stick go whickety-whack,  
 To my high land, to my low land,  
 To my krish, krash, klingo.

I'm goin' to tell my father and all of my kin,  
 Dan do, Dan do,  
 Goin' to tell my father and all of my kin  
 How you dress your mutton skin,  
 To my high land, to my low land,  
 To my krish, krash, klingo.

Go tell your father and your brothers too, Dan  
 do, Dan do,  
 Go tell your father and your brothers too  
 What a whippin' I give you,  
 To my high land, to my low land,  
 Krish, krash, klingo.

Next day the little man come in from plow, Dan  
 do, Dan do,  
 Next day the little man come in from plow,  
 She met him at the door, said 'Your dinner's  
 ready now!'  
 To my high land, to my low land,  
 To my krish, krash, klingo.

#### SIDE II, Band 5:

JOHN HARDY Frank Proffitt sang us this song about the Negro badman in one of our early years together, but he didn't have much to say about the story behind it. We think in the mountains it is mainly another "good banjo piece" -- and that it surely is. John Hardy, who killed a fellow gambler for stealing a quarter, lived in the same section (West Virginia) as the legendary John Henry of steel-driving fame, and many singers (and songs) confuse the two. See Cox, *Folksongs of The South*. John Hardy, in various versions, may be found also in Lomax, Brown, Sharp, Randolph, and in N.I. White's *American Negro Folksongs*. Frank Proffitt says he learned this version from "some boys who went to West Virginia a-working, cutting timber. They learned it and brought it back."

#### JOHN HARDY

John Hardy, he was a desperate little man  
 And he carried two pistols every day,  
 When he shot a man on the West Virginia line  
 You oughta saw John Hardy gettin' away, Lord, Lord,  
 You oughta saw John Hardy gettin' away.

John Hardy he went to the East Stone Bridge  
 And he vowed that he would be free,  
 Up stepped Ned Bawly and he took him by the arm,  
 "Johnny, walk along with me, Lord, Lord,  
 Johnny walk along with me."

John Hardy, he had a little girl  
 And the dress that she wore was red,  
 She followed him to his hangin' ground,  
 "Papa, I would rather be dead, Lord, Lord,  
 Papa, I would rather be dead."

John Hardy, he had another little girl  
 And the dress that she wore was blue  
 She followed her daddy to his hangin' ground  
 "Papa, I've been good to you, Lord, Lord,  
 Papa, I've been good to you."

Now I've been to the East and I've been to the  
 West  
 And I've been this whole world 'round,  
 I've been to the river and I've been baptized,  
 Now I'm on my hangin' ground, Lord, Lord,  
 Now I'm on my hangin' ground!

#### SIDE II, Band 6:

GROUNDHOG This is a nursery and fun song about a small animal that is, Frank says, "as thick as fleas" in the mountains. It is also a favorite banjo tune that has been around a long time. Frank

says, "I heard my father pick it years ago when I was a little boy--about the first song I ever heard him play." Our mountain friends "over on the Beech" sang it to us years ago and very similar versions are in most of the American collections: Sharp, Lomax, Cox, Brown, Randolph, etc. The humor is pioneer American, as the groundhog is an American critter. We can't figure out why "the meat's in the churn"--and Frank can't either.

#### GROUNDHOG

I shouldered my gun and I whistled for my dog  
 Shouldered my gun and I whistled for my dog,  
 I headed to the mountains for to tree a groundhog,  
 Groundhog.

Two in a rock, and three in a log,  
 Two in a rock, and three in a log,  
 Good God amighty, what a big groundhog!  
 Groundhog.

Run here, Jim, with a great long pole,  
 Run here, Jim, with a great long pole  
 To twist this groundhog out of his hole,  
 Groundhog.

Yonder come Granny a-walkin' on a cane,  
 Yonder come Granny a-walkin' on a cane,  
 Swears she'll eat them groundhog brain,  
 Groundhog.

Yonder comes Sal with a snigger and a grin,  
 Yonder comes Sal with a snigger and a grin,  
 With groundhog grease all over her chin,  
 Groundhog.

The hide's in the cupboard, the meat's in the churn,  
 The hide's in the cupboard, the meat's in the churn,  
 If this aint good groundhog I'll be durned,  
 Groundhog.

I took him home, I tanned his hide,  
 I took him home and tanned his hide,  
 He made the best shoestrings ever I tied,  
 Groundhog.

#### SIDE II, Band 7:

JOHNSON BOYS This is a dance tune for fiddle and banjo--one of the oldest in the mountains--and the words are incidental. Frank learned the tune from his father's picking, and picked up these verses from people on Beech Mountain, friends from Virginia, and others here and there. See Brown or Lomax for other versions. Frank does mighty fine work here on the banjo.

#### JOHNSON BOYS

Wake, Oh wake, you drowsy sleeper,  
 Wake, Oh wake, at the break of day,  
 Stick your head out of the window,  
 Watch the pretty girls marchin' away,  
 Watch the pretty girls marchin' away  
 Watch the pretty girls marchin' away.

Johnson boys, they went a-courtin'  
 Johnson boys, they didn't stay  
 The reason that they went no further  
 Had no money for to pay their way  
 Had no money for to pay their way  
 Had no money for to pay their way.

Johnson boys are brave and hardy  
 They know how to kiss old maids,  
 They hug and kiss, call them honey,  
 Fresh up pretty girls, don't be afraid,  
 Fresh up pretty girls, don't be afraid,  
 Fresh up pretty girls, don't be afraid.

# COUNTRY MUSIC ON FOLKWAYS RECORDS

OLD TIME & BLUEGRASS

by John Cohen

This is to serve as an introduction to one segment of the Folkways catalog which represents something of the seeds and sources for a dynamic aspect of American folk music which has found a voice in the cities and colleges in recent years. For the most part, this is mountain music derived from the rural south.

There is now an excitement about this music throughout the colleges and cities, amongst young people who are finding a voice in this music, and who are making it their own voice.

There are a great range of approaches to this music, and a great many styles involved; yet inherent in this movement is a desire to remain close to the traditional ways of playing the music.

The movement, diverse as it is, has taken on a structure which has its heroes, artistic leaders, legendary characters, a sort of language of its own, and several senseless confusions and stereotypes applied to it.

Much of the clamor about this music has come from banjo pickers & guitar singers who have brought the music to everyone's attention by their very enthusiasm. It is their excitement about the music which has communicated first. But there is much more to be heard and understood.

These spirited musicians are often 'put down' for being merely 'ethnic imitators' by the very same people who recognize that traditional folk music is the only aesthetically complete folk music to be heard.

Although it is relatively new in its present situation, this music is part of one of the oldest American traditions. It has its roots in the music of the early settlers, and has received fresh vigor over the years from developments within American culture which have introduced new sounds and new instruments to this tradition, as well as new rhythms and harmonies to accompany the changing social functions the music has performed.

It is part of an active and progressive tradition, yet it has always maintained a terrific sense of respect and preservation for its own past. In this way elements from years ago are still considered as significant to the present day music by those who perform and live with this music.

Within old time string band music, bluegrass and just home performances, are found trances of the old ballad styles of singing, of bagpipe and fiddle sounds from the British Isles, as well as sounds of the sentimental songs from the 19th century, minstrel stage songs, early Negro blues, rhythms from jazz as well as those now found in rock-and-roll.

One significant and important aspect of the current city trend towards this music is that it has presented a way to enjoy and understand the popular music, without sentimentality and without losing the perspective of culture as a whole. It is only in the nature of this perspective that the urban interest differs from the country tradition. This can neither be praised nor lamented, nor can it be overlooked. It must be recognized, for it is the basis upon which an intelligent approach can develop to the many ideas which are being encountered in the current investigation of folk music.

The importance of academic scholarship can not be denied: neither can an excited emotional involvement. It is only when folk music becomes just a form of entertainment, in the more commercial sense of that word, that it is being abused.

That the investigation has become more like an involvement of love or art, is to the credit of the investigators. If city people have found that country music is meaningful to them, then this is a genuine enrichment of their lives.

The more one gets involved in this music, the more one realizes the character of an old tradition at work, and the astonishing directness and simplicity in the approach of the traditional artist. An understanding of the music opens up the possibilities for us all to get the most pleasure and reward from these old songs, and from the people who sing them.

In various college campuses and cities now, folk music societies and festivals are emerging which incorporate active research with song collecting, concert producing, and music playing. At one school, on the event of a New Lost City Rambler concert, the folk music society increased its membership by 100, a panel discussion was held with university faculty and visiting musicians participating, a student string-band was formed, and a local Bluegrass band of country kids was 'discovered' and incorporated into the general university folk song scene. In addition to this, a regular publication was started. At another place, serious discographical research is being done and a record of rare re-issues of early hill music was released. Concerts are being produced employing traditional artists; this is no longer a unique situation. The University of Chicago Folk Festival, the Berkeley Festival, the Friends of Old Time Music, and the Ash Grove in Los Angeles, are all pointing the way towards an intelligent enjoyment of traditional folk music.

Within the Folkways catalog is a group of recording which present the scope and nature of the various facets of this music. Folkways has been consistent in its presentation of this music as it is traditionally and authentically performed.

FA2951 (Vol. 1) - Ballads: 27 traditional ballads performed by The Carter Family, Clarence Ashley, Buell Kazee, Carolina Tar Heels, Furry Lewis, Charlie Poole with the North Carolina Ramblers, G. B. Grayson, The Masked Marvel, "Chubby" Parker, many others.

2 12-inch 33-1/3 rpm longplay records

FA2952 (Vol. 2) Social Music: 29 selections performed by Bascom Lunsford, Blind Willie Johnson, Carter Family, Sacred Harp Singers, Dunt Stephens, A Hunt's Ramblers, The Pep-Steppers, Cincinnati Jug Band, others.

2 12-inch 33-1/3 rpm longplay records

FA2953 (Vol. 3) Songs: 28 selections incl. East Virginia, One Morning In May, Sugar Baby, Mountaineer's Courtship, 99 Year Blues, K.C. Moan, Fishing Blues, etc., performed by Uncle Dave Macon, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Clarence Ashley, Cannons Jug Stompers, Carter Family, John Hurt, "Dock" Boggs, Stoneman Family, many more.

2 12-inch 33-1/3 rpm longplay records

The Anthology of American Folk Music FA 2951, FA 2952, FA 2953

This collection is a most comprehensive one, and gives an incisive look into the folk music current from 1927 to 1932 as recorded by the commercial recording companies of that time. Good representation of rural music, with many important artists represented, ed. and annotated by Harry Smith.

Vol. 1 Ballads:

Some Child Ballads, and many other old songs in the ballad tradition, sung as current and popular songs in 1927, etc.

Vol. 2 Social Music:

Dance music and religious music. Both white and Negro traditions. Many instrumental pieces.

Vol. 3 Songs:

Excellent collection of country songs and many blues.

Important artists in this collection.

Clarence Ashley  
Buell Kazee  
Dick Justice  
Uncle Eck Danford  
Burnett & Rutherford  
Conner & Young  
Carolina Tar Heels

Miss. John Hurt  
Furry Lewis  
Jilson Setters  
Eck Robertson  
Uncle David Macon  
Blind Lemon Jefferson  
Dock Boggs

Grayson & Whitter  
The Carter Family  
Kelly Harrell  
Frank Hutchison  
Charlie Poole  
Bascom Lunsford  
Jim Jackson  
Ernest Phipps  
E.V. Stoneman  
Blind Willie Johnson