

CONTENT ADVISORY

*FW 2380 - A Memorial to Wade Ward: Old Time Virginia Banjo Picker, 1892-1971*

Track 201 on this album contains derogatory language in the title. While it is offensive to us, we have chosen for the song titles to remain as published and interpreted in the time period in which they were written. We believe that to do otherwise would be to change a historical document. The “n word” was commonplace for a time in history, especially during the era of Jim Crow. Its circulation and popularization through blackface minstrelsy became associated with the identity of Black people in a white supremacist society.



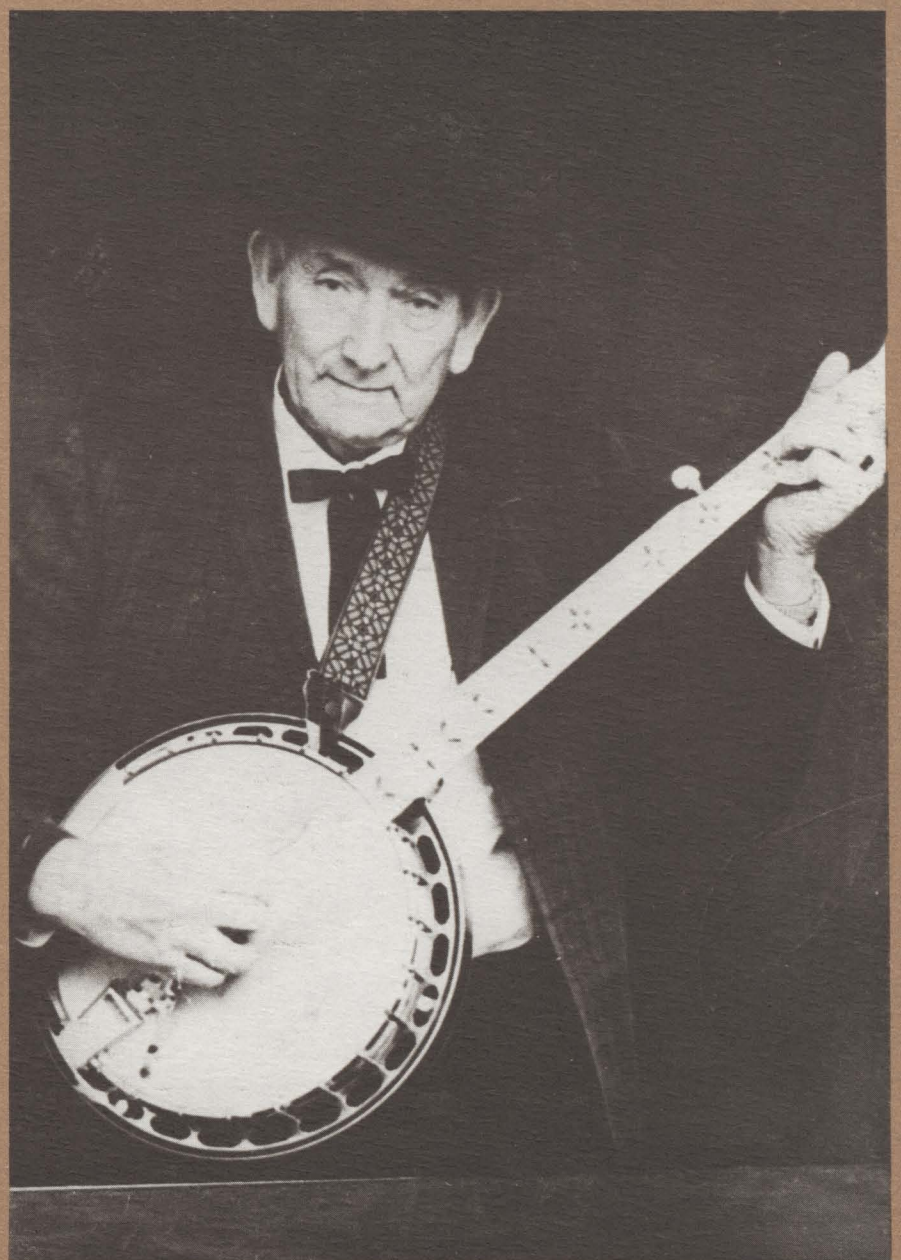
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2380



# UNCLE WADE

A MEMORIAL  
TO  
WADE WARD,  
OLD TIME  
VIRGINIA  
BANJO PICKER  
1892-1971

This project was  
assembled and annotated  
by JANE RIGG and  
ERIC H. DAVIDSON





## SIDE 1

- 1a. Conversation with Granny Porter
- 1b. Cluck Old Hen
- 2a. Western Country
- 2b. Katy Hill-remiscences
- 2c. Old Jimmy Sutton
3. Black Mountain Rag
4. Polly Put the Kettle On
5. Ida Red
6. John Love is Gone
- 7a. Conversation with Wade Ward & Glen Smith
- 7b. Arkansas Traveler
- 7c. Katy Hill-remiscences
8. Foxchase
9. Chilly Winds

## SIDE 2

1. Half-Shaved .....
2. Old Reuben
3. June Apple
4. Mississippi Sawyers
- 5a. Katy Hill-remiscences
- 5b. Billy in the Low Ground
6. Nancy Blevins
7. Sourwood Mountain
8. Chicken Reel
9. Ragtime Annie
- 10a. Katy Hill-remiscences
- 10b. Sally Goodin
11. Sally Ann
- 12a. Old Joe Clark
- 12b. Katy Hill-remiscences
- 12c. Peach Bottom Creek
13. Lone Prairie

PROPERTY OF  
FOLK LIFE PROGRAM  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Wonderful old-time country music from the legendary clawhammer banjo picker and fiddler of Virginia. With reminiscences by his niece, Katy Hill. Booklet with notes on Wade Ward and the songs, with many photos, is enclosed.

"He was the same every time you saw him. His banjo made him a million friends, and he had a good time all his life."  
—Katy Hill.

With:

Granny Porter

Bog Trotters: Wade, Crockett, & Fields Ward  
Glen Smith

Assembled and annotated by Eric H. Davidson & Jane Rigg

# UNCLE WADE

A MEMORIAL TO  
WADE WARD,  
OLD TIME VIRGINIA  
BANJO PICKER  
1892-1971

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

© 1973 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.  
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A. 10023

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2380



# UNCLE WADE

UNCLE WADE

A Memorial to Uncle Wade Ward,  
Old Time Virginia Banjo Picker

The information presented in these notes was collected, and this project assembled and annotated by Eric Davidson and Jane Rigg.

## Introduction: Uncle Wade

Wade Ward was 79 when he died "just settin'" early in the evening of May 29, 1971, on his familiar porch overlooking the Peachbottom Creek meadows. He had spent most of his life in that house, outlived two wives, operated a small farm, and became famous as perhaps the greatest living exponent of the old time clawhammer banjo style. Wade began playing the traditional fiddle and banjo tunes of his country as a lad. Like most of the traditional mountain musicians he was born into a family of musicians, and for the first years his musical performances consisted of playing with his brother Crockett at nearby home dances. By the end of his life, his music had been distributed by major record companies, and interested people had come from all over the United States and England to see and hear him play. In 1937 Wade had been recorded with the Bogtrotters Band for the Library of Congress. Three decades after that, now known to all who valued and loved the traditional sounds of old time Appalachian mountain string music, Wade was still going strong, and appeared in Washington for the Smithsonian Festival held that summer. But this was virtually the first time he had gone out of his native mountains to play music, and therein certainly is one of the keys to his special position in the annals of American traditional music.

All his life Uncle Wade stayed home and played music at local affairs, with local people. In a time when great highways and new populations and the events of history were uprooting the customs of his youth, Uncle Wade remained near Independence, Va., always living in more or less the old time rural way. His repertoire contained few, if any, "new" tunes, and his musical style was never overlain with bluegrass harmonies and rhythms, as was so generally the case for old time musicians who originated in his area over these same years. His was a rich and humorous outlook, and the comings and goings of local people were a source of pleasure and amusement to him. Everyone who knew him loved his gracious, easy ways. For whatever deeper reason, Wade was spared the frequently bitter and destructive restlessness which led so many mountain men off to wars and violent troubles and distant adventures. If ever there was a man who liked where he was, it was Wade.

So, for the love of playing, all his life Wade preserved his country's most intricate and memorable local traditions in music. He was fully aware of this role as he grew older. During the 14 or 15 years over which I knew him, we often discussed the rapid and progressive disappearance of old time music, and Wade cooperated in many ways in my efforts to record, collect, play, and understand these traditions. He regarded this as a most important matter. I shall never forget the week my associate Paul Newman and I spent with Uncle Wade, shortly after his second wife died in August, 1961. We had decided to record every single banjo and fiddle tune Wade knew, to serve as part of the base for an analysis of the archaic banjo-fiddle music of the region, and day after day Wade doggedly sat there picking away, in between periods when he was too overcome by grief to play.

Mostly one's recollections of Uncle Wade are of his marvelous music and his warmth and his pithy, wry humor. This memorial is partly motivated by such personal reflections, but primarily the project is intended as a retrospective on a towering figure of American traditional music. For this reason, we have focused on music played by Wade with other musicians, frequently Glen Smith of nearby Hillsville, Virginia. Banjo-fiddle string band music was the first music Wade learned, and was always the music he played best, and by his own words the music he loved best. His solo banjo and fiddle pieces can be found on many earlier records issued by Folkways and County Records, as well as Atlantic, Prestige and Biograph. We are much indebted to Wade's niece, Mrs. Katy Hill, the daughter of Crockett Ward, some of whose rich reminiscences of Wade can be heard on the present recording. Mrs. Hill knew Wade well from the beginning, and provided us with much invaluable information and recollections about him. As was the case with Uncle Wade, her powers of memory are remarkable. In the following we present a brief biographical sketch of Uncle Wade, pieced together from notes taken on conversations with Wade over the years, from information given us by Katy Hill and many others, from local newspaper clippings, and other sources.

## The Life and Music of Wade Ward

### Origins:

Benjamin Wade Ward was born October 15, 1892, one of five sons, and four daughters of Enoch Ward and Rosamond Carico Ward. Both his father's and mother's people came from the mountains and valleys above Independence, Virginia. As far back as legend goes the Wards had lived near Saddle Creek, where Wade was born. Enoch Ward had been raised in Saddle Creek and he died near there in 1922, at the age of 75, which would set the year of his birth around 1847. Tradition has it that the first Wards to come to Virginia were three brothers, all confirmed bachelors. One morning one of the brothers, who did all the cooking, set a fourth place at the table, and each time he took something he placed the same on the fourth plate. When breakfast was over he pointed to the fourth plate and said "It would take too much food to keep a woman here." But eventually one of the brothers, the Ward family ancestor, married and when this happened the other two brothers left, never to be heard from again. Figure 1 is a photograph of part of the Ward family, evidently taken about 1893.



When Wade was 9, the family moved to the nearby Rock Creek Community, and in the next year, 1902, Enoch Ward purchased the Peachbottom Creek farm a few miles above Independence where Wade lived ever since. One of Wade's earliest memories dated from this period. He once told me that he had gone into Independence town one summer day when he was 9 or 10 and saw a great crowd around the County Courthouse, which still stands. Peeking through the fence he watched a Negro being hanged by the sheriff there, a sight which he said he always remembered, and never wanted to see again.

Wade began learning to pick the banjo when he was 11, and began fiddling when he was 16. His main teacher in both instruments was his brother,



David Crockett Ward, who was 20 years older than Wade. Eventually Wade became an even more proficient banjo picker than Crockett though Katy Hill states that there were certain tunes Wade never did learn "just right". Although Wade was mainly to become famous as a brilliant clawhammer banjo picker, he was also a first-rate fiddler. Katy feels that Crockett and Wade were about equally good on the fiddle, though she felt Crockett's performance was a little more "old timey". Examples of Wade's fine fiddling on this record are his "Black Mountain Rag", Band 3, Side I; "Ida Red", Band 5, Side I; "Billy in the Low Ground", Band 5, Side II; "Nancy Blevins", Band 6, Side II; and "Lone Prairie", Band 13, Side II. Wade's matchless banjo style can be heard on this record in "Polly Put The Kettle On", Band 4, Side I; "Foxchase", Side I, Band 8; "Chilly Winds", Band 9, Side I; "Half-Shaved Nigger", Band 1, Side II; "Old Reuben", Band 2, Side II; "June Apple", Band 3, Side II; "Mississippi Sawyers", Band 4, Side II; and "Peachbottom Creek", Band 12, Side II.

There was much old time music in the Ward family background. Enoch Ward had played the fiddle, though by this time he had quit, and Rosamund Ward was the source for many of the ballads and songs which Crockett knew and later performed. There was also another older brother, Joe Ward, who picked the banjo as well. Wade once explained to me that he never sang with the banjo himself because he had a physical disability with his voice stemming from a bout with whooping cough when he was 14, but this could not be confirmed. A contributory reason was probably that there were always good singers around, first Crockett, and then Crockett's son, Fields. Whatever the reason, Wade's later musical activities were almost exclusively instrumental.

Wade played intensively during his teens. During this period he was out making music with Crockett almost every night. A photograph of Wade, taken when he was about 18, is presented in Figure 2\*. By this time the duo had become well known in the area and were playing at a variety of local events, including Christmas and other festivities at school houses in the Independence and Sparta, N.C., area, and weekly dances at a local Independence hotel (described by Katy Hill, Band 2, Side I). The main activity of all rural family string bands such as Crockett and his young brother Wade, however, was playing at home dances associated with important events, both social (weddings, celebrations) and economic (corn-shucking, house-raising, etc.)

The traditional banjo repertoire and the traditional fiddle repertoire in general overlap, i.e., a given banjo tune normally has a matching fiddle counterpart, and vice versa. The extent of overlap is not symmetrical for the two instruments, however, for although all banjo pieces may have possessed matching fiddle counterparts, the converse was clearly not true. The traditional fiddle repertoire was thus more complex, even though the major part of this repertoire was indeed banjo-fiddle string band music.

Both the claw-hammer banjo and the old-time fiddle music are characterized by the prevalence of drones, usually in 4ths and 5ths. This is accomplished by the use of almost continuous double stops on the fiddle, and on the banjo by the use of the monotonic 5th string. This string is never noted on the fingerboard of the instrument, and is plucked continuously with the thumb. On both instruments, the strings are tuned differently for different songs. Five or six tunings exist on the banjo as played in Grayson and Carroll Counties, and at least three or four on the fiddle.

The exciting harmonic character of the early banjo-fiddle music is due basically to the extensive use of bagpipe-like drones, and to the prevalence of unusual scales or modes. These are the factors which give this music an archaic, unique flavor. Most of the tunes and songs collected elsewhere in the U.S.A. are couched either in the common seven-note major (ionian) or minor (aeolian) scales, but the traditional

Southern Appalachian songs utilize a variety of pentatonic and hexatonic scales as well as some uncommon seven-note modes such as the myxolydian. In the Grayson and Carroll Counties area almost all the early rural band style dance tunes are pentatonic or hexatonic and the instruments tend to be tuned directly to the main notes of the scale. Chording and noting with the left hand on the fingerboard are kept to a minimum in this style, and the one or two chords used in a given piece always include open strings acting as drones. This open-stringed harmonic structure, based on intervals of 4ths and 5ths, tends to be harmonically incompatible with conventional "major" or "minor" chords such as are played on guitar, accordion, piano, etc.

The old-time dance music is characterized by a driving, accented rhythm, in which upbeat and offbeats are often stressed. Intricate offbeat notes picked on the banjo are interlocked with equally intricate fiddle rhythms; the two instruments are integrated perfectly in the old-time versions of the band dance tunes. One of the most fascinating aspects of this music, in fact, is the ease with which the traditionally learned fiddle part to a given tune can be fit to the traditional banjo part of the same tune by musicians who are both from the same general area, but who may never have played together before. For a detailed description and analysis of this music the reader is referred to earlier records assembled by the writer with Paul Newman and others, particularly "Band Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties, Va." FS 3832 (Folkways), and "Traditional Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties, Va." FS 3811 (Folkways).

#### Wade the musician : manhood

On August 6, 1913, Wade married Lelia Mathews, who was then 19 years old. He was 20. Lelia came from the community of Spring Valley, Va., a few miles north of Wade's farm. Wade met Lelia through one of his sisters, who with her husband was working on the farm of a neighbor. There Lelia was staying also, and Wade's sister induced Wade to visit specifically so that Lelia and Wade would meet. Often Lelia would travel about over the countryside with Wade and whoever was playing with him. She is remembered as a woman who enjoyed such travels but who was jealous of Wade's time, and particularly when she stayed home, of the days and nights he was off picking the banjo and fiddling. She was not a musician, and according to some informants she never really became closely familiar with his music. Wade and Lelia lost two children in childbirth, and raised one son, who like so many others left the mountains when he was grown to return only for occasional family visits.

1919, when Wade was 26, was an important year for his musical activities. This was the year the Buck Mountain Band was formed, including Wade, the banjo picker, a well-known local fiddler called Van Edwards, and the latter's son, Earl Edwards. Earl played guitar, and the Buck Mountain Band was one of many new string bands forming in this area in which the guitar was for the first time incorporated. This instrument had been unknown in these mountains until after the turn of the century. The advent of the guitar in the local music would result eventually in many changes. Along with other influences it can be said to have been partly responsible for destroying much of the unique harmonic structure of old time music, leading in the end to its replacement with bluegrass music (see discussion in Notes to "Band Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties, Va.", *op cit*). In the less distant future, however, lay one of the great periods of traditional South-West Virginia band music, in which guitar, an increased use of vocals, and the old banjo-fiddle tradition were blended excitingly together, sometimes with the addition of autoharp as well. The band music of this period, which we referred to in earlier essays as the "Old Galax Band Style", still relied mainly on the older repertoire and harmonics. Some years later, Wade was to become a key figure in what was one of the greatest of all the string bands of this genre, the "Grayson County Bog Trotters." His early musical experience with the Buck Mountain

\*Figure 2 on Album Cover



Band must have served to prepare his ear and his repertoire for later participation in the "Bog Trotters" Band. Wade began to pick the banjo Charlie Poole style, with his fingers and picks, in order to fit with the guitar and fiddle on tunes with which the archaic clawhammer harmonies and rhythms were not completely compatible. Wade can be heard using the finger picking style in "Ragtime Annie", Band 9, Side II, of this record.

The Buck Mountain Band played for the Parson's Auction Company, at public land sales. The day he died Wade had played for a Parson's sale -- for 51 years Wade and his partners made music for the Parson's auctions. After Van Edwards died, Wade played with Crockett and Fields Ward, the guitar player and singer who was Crockett's son. Then for many years Uncle Charlie Higgins was his fiddler, and later Charlie and Wade played with Dale Poe, a local guitar player. Wade also played with men of the Lundy family, and with other local musicians. tain Band. According to Joe Parsons, the band was dubbed "Buck Mountain" in the early days by a man whose forced sale of property was accompanied by the music of Wade and Van Edwards, and the name stuck.

Besides dances and land sales Wade and the band also played at local Republican party meetings. "Born a Republican", Wade played at campaign stops all over the country, particularly in association with John Parsons and the latter's son, Joe Parsons, who was County Clerk from 1928 to 1960 and was Wade's lifelong friend. Bud Ward, Wade's brother, was a local Republican sheriff for many years and Wade was well known as a campaign adjunct, providing music between the speeches, for many other Republican candidates as well. On election day he would drive around and help "get out the vote". Playing for political events and for the Parson's Auction Company were both considered exceedingly lucrative, particularly in relation to the scarcity of cash on the farms.

After his father's death in 1922, Crockett moved in to Galax, where he earned a living as a carpenter. Wade would come in to play with Fields and Crockett, and up the road a little ways Uncle Eck Dunford, another old time fiddler, heard them playing. Eck got a neighbor who knew the Wards to introduce him and thus the Bog Trotters were born. The 5th regular



3

member of the band, Doc Davis (autoharp) was brought in by Eck Dunford. Figure 3 is a photograph taken of the Bog Trotters in 1940, and Figure 4 shows Crockett and Mrs. Ward. During the Bog Trotters' era Wade



4

and Fields and sometimes Crockett roamed widely about the countryside, playing music at land sales and other events. Sometimes they were gone for three or four days at a time. The Bog Trotters con-

vened to play at the famous fiddle conventions at White Top Mountain, and at Galax, and were frequently heard under the auspices of the Galax Moose Lodge. "Cluck Old Hen", Band I, Side I of this record, is one of the few extant recordings of the "Bog Trotters".

With the Bog Trotters Wade played in relatively distant places in Virginia, including Roanoke, and locations in North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and even Arkansas. At one contest held at Mt. Vernon, Kentucky, the top prize of which was the honor of being recorded for commercial records (the day was won by the famous Coon Creek Girls) the Virginia band was offered \$200 a week to stay on, but were unable to accept. This was a far cry from the days of a boyhood trip to Tennessee, when according to his recollection, Wade and his group had agreed to play a dance for fifteen cents apiece. Later the Bog Trotters played for the campaigning governor of the state down the Shenandoah Valley at Blacksburg, Virginia, and on another occasion they provided the "official" music at the state dedication of a bridge at Hillsville, Virginia. Wade was competing in the widely attended Old Fiddler's Conventions at Galax in the meantime, and was regularly walking off with the first place year after year. 1940 was the highwater mark. Three years previously J. Lomax had recorded Wade and the Bog Trotters for the Library of Congress and now, through A. Lomax it was arranged for the Bog Trotters to appear on a nationwide CBS radio program, originating in Roanoke, Virginia (January 9, 1940), the "American School of the Air". I was told that when the time came for the program to go on the air everyone in Grayson County near a radio stopped work to listen; in Independence itself the County Courthouse was the scene of a trial that day, and as the program hour approached the Judge temporarily halted the proceedings and called for a radio to be brought into the courtroom. Wade by this time (1940) was a deep and seasoned performer. He had been playing banjo for 37 years, and fiddle for 32, and he was still playing with the man he had first learned from, his brother Crockett Ward.

In earlier studies, e.g. "Band Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties, Va." (op cit), we have compared the music played by the Bog Trotters to the archaic banjo-fiddle music of the country. Some basic changes have occurred, and the way the Old Galax string bands turned a tune differs from the mode in which the same tune would have been played by the earlier banjo-fiddle string bands. Often the tempo is slowed down and squared off, with accents relatively confined to downbeats. This is a consequence of the fact that the dominant rhythmic role has been taken over by the guitar instead of remaining with the clawhammer banjo, as in the old rural band music. Despite all the innovations and changes, there is retained an amazingly strong flavor of the ancient rural traditional music, and the main component in the stylistic and repertorial background of the old Galax band music is, in fact, the music of the old rural bands. It is the fiddler who is mainly responsible for this retention of older elements, or the fiddler and the clawhammer banjo palyer when they play an old tune together, for their parts are least changed.

From about 1930 on, Wade was the sole owner of his Peachbottom Creek farm, and it was this farm which for the rest of his life provided him and his family with a basic living. Income derived from music was always extra, a welcome assistance, but not the source of his livelihood. Wade, like the old time musicians before him, was not economically dependent on professional music performances. During the period I knew Wade the main income from his farm accrued from the sale of heifers which he had raised, and milk. Vegetables were grown, and in his house the whole range of traditional pre-electricity preparations of food for winter storage was practiced: curing of hams, and pickling or "canning" of beans, squash, tomatoes, peaches, and virtually all other fruits and vegetables. Potatoes, apples and cabbages were buried deep in the earth, beneath the frost level. Wade himself had no enormous appetite for farm labor, and apparently never had. Wade "never cut himself too much at hard work", as one informant



told me: "What did he like to do besides hard work? Pick the banjo and carry on, laugh and tell jokes, run around. That was his main thing all his life." And he did a lot of fox hunting. Fox hunting was a passion with Wade. This sport consisted mainly of letting the dogs go up on a ridge, and with a large fire and some cronies to keep one company, listening to those wonderful dogs bay the whole night long.

During the war the Bog Trotters stayed home and played around Galax, occasionally appearing on local radio or at Moose Lodge functions. Then in the early 1950's disaster struck. Fields left the mountains for Maryland, where he had found a job. That meant the end of the Bog Trotters, for Fields had always been the vocalist and no one else could sing. Though, as Katy Hill put it, "We all hated for him to go, we couldn't tell him not to go," for Fields had got a good job and that was a serious concern. About the same time Crockett Ward, then in his 70's, suffered a debilitating stroke, and though he remained alive until he was over 90, he never played the fiddle again.

On May 10, 1951, Lelia died at the age of 63. Wade and Lelia had been married for 38 years. Wade began courting again and about three years later, in 1954, he married Mrs. Mollie Yates.

#### Uncle Wade : the last 15 years

In 1956 and 1957, Wade was visited by Michael Seeger and myself, respectively, and this began a phase of widening contacts and ever-increasing fame which lasted until his death. In contrast to the old days of the pre-war Lomax visits, electricity was now available in the mountains, and it was now possible to make a thorough study of the whole of Wade's repertoire. Comparison with the earlier recordings shows that at this time he had lost none of his famous precision and speed. Later this was no longer routinely true, though on occasion, particularly in the excitement of playing with others, he could still summon his old brilliance. In 1962, Wade was featured on two records assembled by the writer and others: *Traditional Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties*, FS 3811 (Folkways, 1962), and *"The Music of Roscoe Holcomb and Wade Ward"*, FA 2363 (1962). Half of the latter album was devoted exclusively to his music. In 1963-66 we made an attempt, in which Wade enthusiastically cooperated, Wade together with Glen Smith, a very excellent old time fiddler from Hillsville, Virginia. For some of these sessions Fields Ward, who happened to be in his home country at the time, was also present. *"Band Music of Grayson and Carrol Counties, Va."* (1967) includes some of the pieces then recorded. Wade exulted in the pleasure of playing the old time banjo-fiddle music, and his performances were often as good as in the best of his younger days, though he was already well over 70. On this record Fields, Glen and Wade are presented in *"Western Country"*, Band 2, Side I; and Wade and Glen can be heard together in *"Old Jimmy Sutton"*, Band 2, Side I; *"John Lover is Gone"*, Band 6, Side I; *"Arkansas Traveler"*, Band 7, Side I; *"Sourwood Mountain"*, Band 7, Side II; *"Chicken Reel"*, Band 8, Side II; *"Sally Goodin"*, Band 10, Side II; *"Sally Ann"*, Band 11, Side II; and *"Old Joe Clark"*, Band 12, Side II.

Wade's years with Mollie, a sweet and generous woman, were happy ones, and he was devastated by her death from cancer on August 4, 1961. While Mollie was alive, and for several years thereafter, her mother, Granny Porter, then in her 80's, also lived in the Peachbottom Creek house. Granny was as pithy, sharp and humorous as Uncle Wade, and together they made a memorable pair. Once a banjo picker herself, Granny Porter too had deep roots in old time music, having come of the family of a legendary old time fiddler, Van Sage. Occasionally Granny and Wade made music together. Wade accompanies Granny on a striking rendition of *"Barbr'y Allen"* in *"Songs and Ballads of the Blue Ridge Mountains"*, (AH 3831, 1968) Asch Records (Folkways).

As the 1960's wore on Wade was invited to visit

the great urban centers of the Northeast to perform there. This he was reluctant to do, finally being persuaded to come to the Smithsonian Festival at Washington in 1967. On the way he stopped in Richmond and performed for the governor, Mills Goodwin. He was 75, and it was virtually the first time Wade had taken his music out of his native hill country. Thereafter he made several other trips to Washington and on one trip in 1969 performed with Fields in Maryland. Recognition was his finally, and as a recent article by John Cohen put it, "the trip to Wade's house was part of the homage to old time music that one paid." (*Sing Out* 20 (5), 1971). But it was very late in his life. By now Wade had outlived not only his two wives and all his brothers, and the two generations of old time musicians he had played with during his long career, but also the isolated mountain culture from which he and his music grew. He died on a chilly, late May day, a day on which he had done just what he always did, picked the banjo at the land sale, stopped in to see Katy Hill, and gone home to sit on his porch and look out over Peachbottom Creek.

One can see Wade's personality in the photos, Figures 5, 6 and 7. As Katy Hill said it, "He was the same every time you saw him. His banjo made him a million friends, and he had a good time all his life."



6



7

#### Acknowledgments

We are primarily indebted to Mrs. Katy Hill, who, in the summer of 1971, after Wade's death, provided us with a warm and detailed account of his life and times. Mr. Joe Parsons was also extremely helpful, as was Mr. Nelson Edmonds, and to both of these gentlemen we owe our thanks. Many others also helped us in our quest for local information regarding Wade. The *Galax Gazette* was the source of much valuable information. Mr. George Hansen of Cue Recordings did a superb job of editing our tapes, some of which were over 15 years old and not of the best quality. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the many associates with whom I recorded the music of Uncle Wade in the period 1957-1970, particularly Paul Newman, Caleb Finch, and Lyn Davidson, and also David Soifer, Robert Gebelein and Eric Sackheim.

**Figure 1:** Wade's parents, Enoch and Rosamond Ward, with a brother and sister. Wade is the baby on his mother's lap. About 1893.

**Figure 2:** Wade about age 18. Note that he is playing a fretted banjo. Many of the banjos current at this period were fretless. Wade is holding his right hand just as he did all his life when picking clawhammer style. About 1909.

**Figure 3:** The Grayson County Bog Trotters. This photo was taken 1940, by A. Lomax, at Cummins Farm, Arkansas. From left to right: Eck Dunford, Fields Ward, Crockett Ward, Wade Ward and Doc Davis.

\*Figure 5 on Album Cover



Figure 4: Crockett and Mrs. Ward, probably about 1937.

Figures 5, 6, 7: Uncle Wade. Photos courtesy of the Galax Gazette. Figs. 6 & 7 made by Mr. Mark Sanderford.

Figure 8: Mrs. Katy Hill, 1971.

Figure 9: Uncle Wade's house on Peachbottom Creek.



#### Side I

- Band 1. a) Conversation with Granny Porter. (rec. 1961 E.H.D.). It is she who says, in answer to Wade's comment that the old time songs are about to fade away, "Well when they fade away, the best'll then be gone."
- b) "Cluck Old Hen". Bog Trotters. (rec. 1937, J. Lomax, Library of Congress). Wade is playing banjo, Crockett fiddle and Field Ward is singing. This performance is notable in several respects: the instruments imitate the sound of a hen in an intricate rhythmic interplay; notice the manner in which the thumb-picked banjo runs counter the fiddle, particularly in the last round of the "b" part of the tune.

My old hen is a good old hen  
And she lays eggs for the railroad men  
Sometimes one, and sometimes two  
And sometimes enough for the whole darn crew  
Now cluck old hen  
Cluck old hen, chickens all gone.

Cluck old hen, cluck and sing  
Cluck old hen I've got you by the wing.

- Band 2. a) "Western Country" (rec. 1964, E.H.D.). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle, Fields Ward-guitar and vocal. A ubiquitous archaic banjo-fiddle dance tune, well known in the Grayson-Carroll County.

I wish I was in them Western Country  
Sittin' on a big armchair  
One arm round my whiskey barrel  
And the other around my dear.

It rained all night the day I left  
The weather was so dry  
The sun shined on and froze me to death  
Susannah, don't you cry.

Whiskey by the gallon  
And sugar by the pound  
A great big bowl to pour it in  
Pretty gal to stir it round.

- b) Katy Hill's reminiscences about old time dances.

- c) "Old Jimmy Sutton" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. Granny Porter called this an old time "jig dance tune" and it is rhythmically one of Wade's most exciting. It has been in this region as long as any such tune as far as is possible to determine, and seems to inspire all Grayson County musicians to heights of virtuosity.

- Band 3. "Black Mountain Rag" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. An example of one of Wade's virtuoso fiddle tunes. Unlike the case of many fiddle tunes, a clawhammer banjo part is not traditionally known.

- Band 4. "Polly Put the Kettle On" (rec. 1958, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. One of Wade's elegant banjo dance tunes, which he also played on the fiddle. A good example of use of the thumb in the clawhammer style.

- Band 5. "Ida Red" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-fiddle. This exciting fiddle tune is a well-known dance tune, and a humorous song as well. Wade's rendition is classic for old time fiddle styling. The use of the drone at an interval of a fifth is evident, as is the driving rhythm. Wade stated that this tune was not played in Grayson and Carroll Counties' area until about the time he was learning to play; it was evidently made up elsewhere and imported around the turn of the century.

- Band 6. "John Lover is Gone" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. This piece probably originated as a song rather than as a dance tune, which would explain its slower and more deliberate tempo. However, no words to this title are remembered in the area today.

- Band 7. a) Conversation between Wade Ward and Glen Smith. (rec. 1963, EHD).

- b) "Arkansas Traveler" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. Also a famous banjo-fiddle tune of this region. Both musicians could play it on either the banjo or the fiddle.

- c) Katy Hill's recollections of the Fiddler's Convention.

- Band 8. "Foxchase" (rec. 1958, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. Wade apparently made this tune up. For many years it was Wade's trademark at Fiddle Conventions, as Katy describes. In 1926 Okeh Records recorded, but never released, Wade's version of this



tune. It is one of the few tunes which he sings.

**Band 9.** "Chilly Winds" (rec. 1958, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. Wade stated that he first heard this song when he was fourteen on a trip to Tennessee with his older brothers. Though this became perhaps his most famous banjo tune, it is atypical in that no fiddle part is known. Crockett Ward never played "Chilly Winds", nor do other banjo players of the region. It differs from most of Wade's clawhammer banjo tunes in that it requires chording above the 5th fret.

## Side II

**Band 1.** "Half-Shaved Nigger" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. According to Wade, this tune is said to be a dance tune of local Negro origin. Note in the "b" part the continuous brush strokes on each beat, unusual in Wade's music.

**Band 2.** "Old Reuben" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. A popular train song to which words are well known, played in a unique tuning.

**Band 3.** "June Apple" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. Part of the old banjo-fiddle dance tune repertoire. The tune is almost identical to that to which the Bog Trotters sang "Train on the Island".

**Band 4.** "Mississippi Sawyers" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. An old time favorite in Wade's area and an excellent example of Wade's own style: note the varying use of the thumb in producing interesting rhythmic changes, e.g., the off-beat accents in the "b" part of the tune where the thumb is used on the fifth string for an accented melody note.

**Band 5.** a) Katy Hill describes Wade learning to play music.  
b) "Billy in the Low Ground" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-fiddle. An archaic fiddle tune.

**Band 6.** "Nancy Blevins" (rec. 1958, EHD). Wade Ward-fiddle. An archaic fiddle tune. Again, no banjo part is known.

**Band 7.** "Sourwood Mountain" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-fiddle, Glen Smith-banjo. An archaic banjo-fiddle dance tune. Note the interplay between the two instruments.

**Band 8.** "Chicken Reel" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-fiddle, Glen Smith-banjo. Glen plays this in a very old style, making use of frequent brush strokes. Note the complex rhythm developed by the two instruments.

**Band 9.** "Ragtime Annie" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. This tune exemplifies the Charlie Poole style finger picking that Wade used for band tunes not included in the old clawhammer repertoire.

**Band 10.** a) Katy Hill's reminiscences about one of Wade's escapades.

b) "Sally Goodin" (rec. 1964, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. One of the most popular and best known of the archaic dance tunes.

**Band 11.** "Sally Ann" (rec. 1964, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. This is a showpiece among the old time dance tunes from the point of view of both listeners and musicians, and it calls for considerable virtuosity on the part of the banjo player.

**Band 12.** a) "Old Joe Clark" (rec. 1963, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo, Glen Smith-fiddle. It is said that this traditional banjo-fiddle breakdown was made in Grayson County, not far from where Wade lived.

b) Katy Hill's reminiscences.

c) "Peach Bottom Creek" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-banjo. This was among Davy Crockett Ward's favorite tunes. Wade learned it from Crockett, but could not recall its proper name, and "Peachbottom Creek", the name of the creek on which Wade's house is located is a name Wade thought appropriate. Wade suspects this tune to have been of local Negro origin, but has never heard it played except by his brother. Crockett called it "Sapsucker pickin'" at a longleaf pine."

**Band 13.** "Lone Prairie" (rec. 1961, EHD). Wade Ward-fiddle. Wade's haunting rendition illustrates the classic traditional fiddle style of the region. Wade considered this tune indigenous.

Figures 2 & 5 are photos on the cover.

