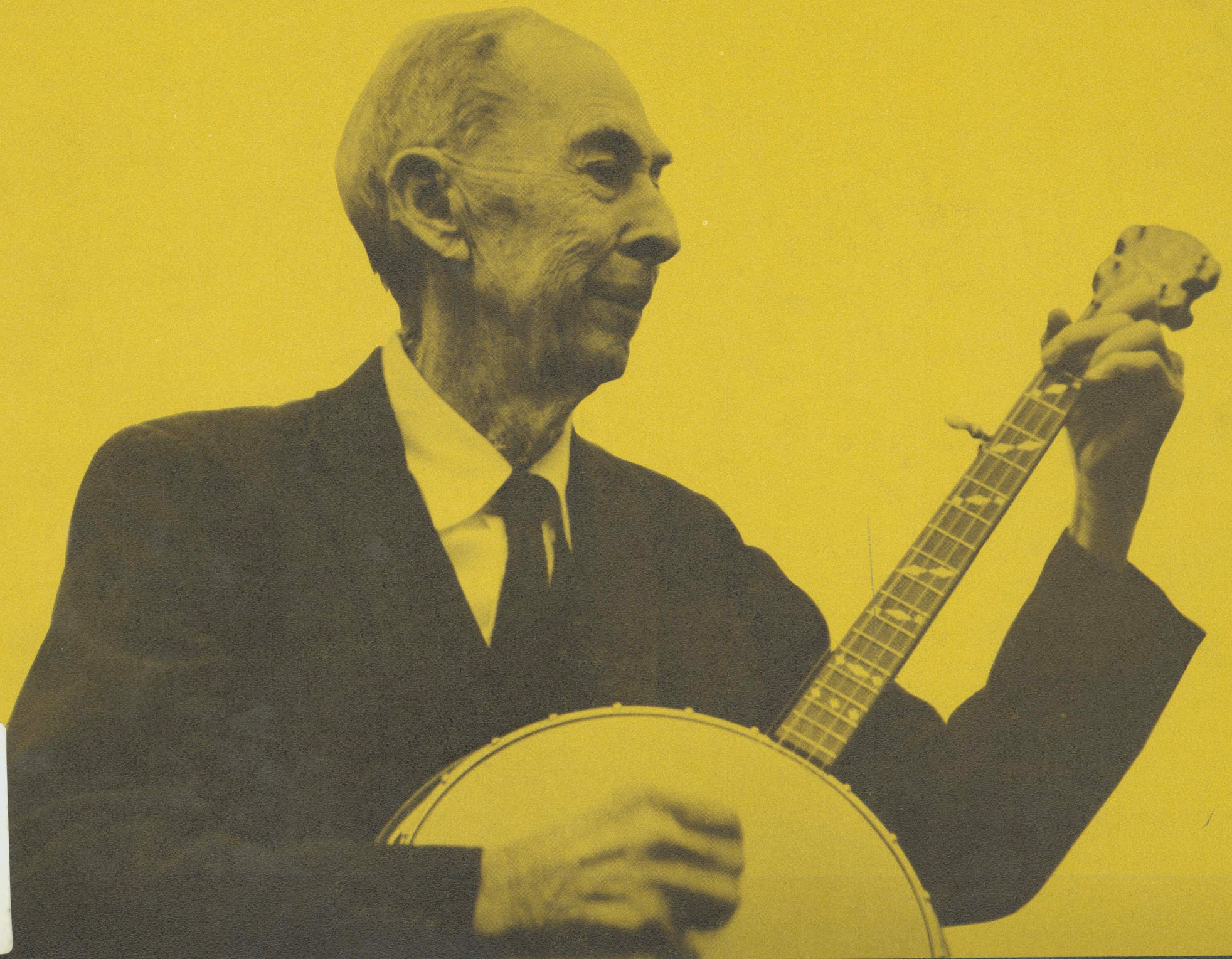


FOLKWAYS RECORDS FG 3525

**A. L. CAMP**

PLAYS THE BANJO



1  
120  
C186  
A673  
1965

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS FG 3525

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Jumping Jacks  
 Golden Bell Polka  
 Watch Hill March  
 The Darkies Awakening  
 Mount Gretna March  
 The Darktown Cakewalk  
 Light and Gay Polka  
 Silver Crown Scottishish  
 Chit-birt-bin Waltz  
 The Frogville Band

Mocking Bird  
 Little Toy Train  
 Dixie - Chicken Reel  
 Beautiful Dreamer  
 Banjo Sketch  
 The Jersey Carnival March  
 Dance of the Fireflies  
 Serenade of the Mandolins  
 Dance of the Wooden Dolls (Banjo & Guitar)  
 Jumping Jack (Banjo & Guitar)

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

PHOTOGRAPH BY DR. OAKLEIGH THORNE. II

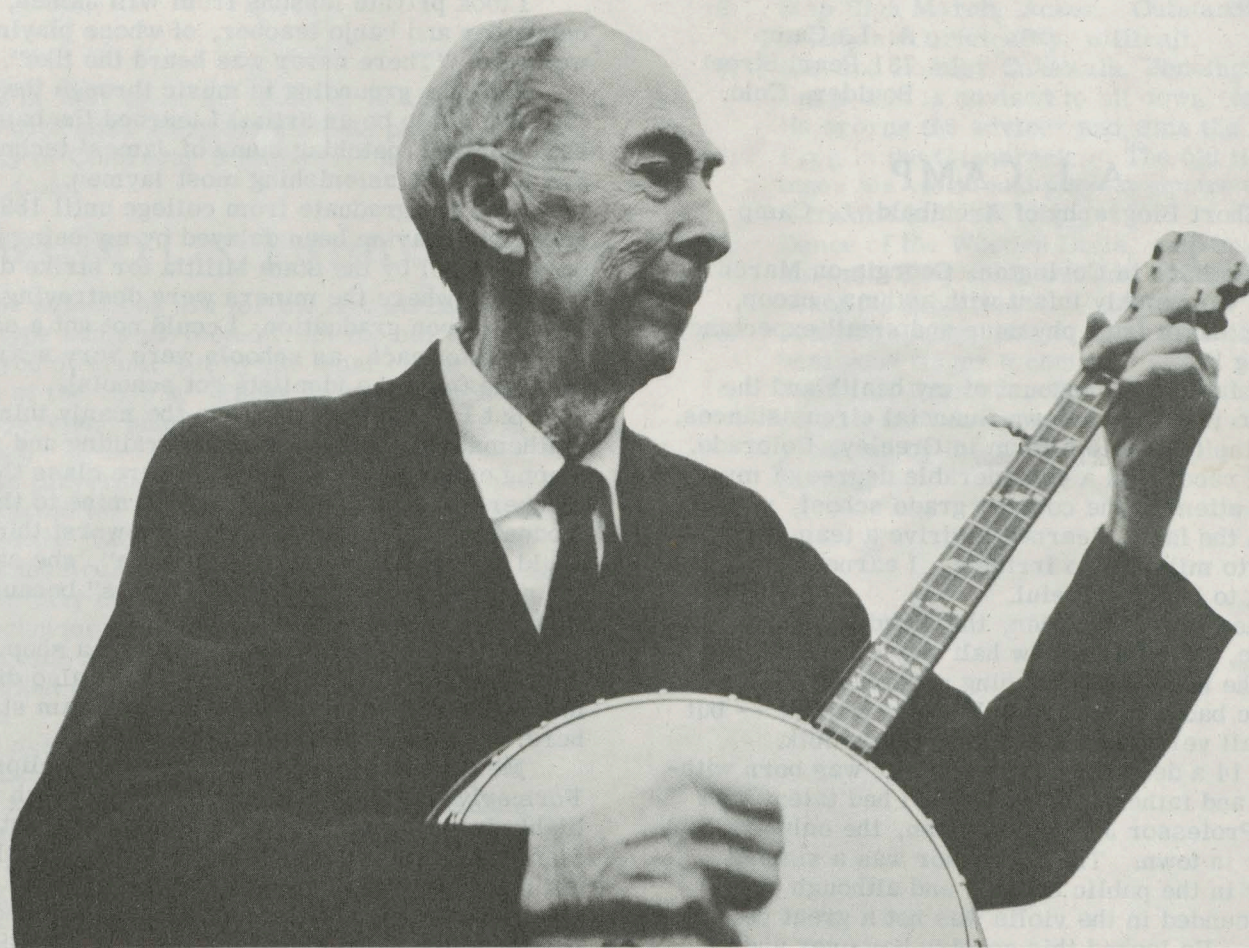
# A. L. CAMP

## PLAYS THE BANJO

FOLKWAYS FG 3525

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FG 3525  
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LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



M  
120  
C186  
A673  
1965

MUSIC LP

January 24, 1961

Folkway Record and Service Corporation  
New York

Gentlemen:

On hearing one of your records of banjo playing I am emboldened to write you in regard to my banjo tape. I am one of the old five string banjo players of 1895 when there was nothing but finger playing and real solos and music of quality. This music is all out of print and forgotten and destroyed as it was written in the old A notation and was useless in the later C notation. I have a tape of 18 top banjo solos of that period that I played myself, two originals and 4 arrangements. Although I am 84 I can beat most banjoists at this kind of music. I think some of this music should be preserved. I played a recital of it at the University of Colorado for the students and got an ovation as they had never heard anything like it before. I would be glad to send the tape for your valued opinion if you would care to hear it. I have been playing for 70 years.

Sincerely,

A. L. Camp  
731 Pearl Street  
Boulder, Colo.

## A. L. CAMP

A Short Biography of Archibald L. Camp

I was born in Covington, Georgia on March 4, 1876, a very sickly infant with asthma, croup, phthisic and of frail physique and small expectancy of a long life.

My father, on account of my health and the better to improve his own financial circumstances, moved the family to a farm in Greeley, Colorado. Here, I recovered a considerable degree of my health, attended the country grade school, worked a bit on the farm, learned to drive a team, herd cattle, to milk and to irrigate. I earned a little and learned to become useful.

When I was about ten, the hired man taught me to fiddle, holding the bow half way up, wrist up under the neck with stamping and every other conceivable bad habit for a violinist to acquire -- but it was all very pleasing to the country folk.

At 14 a desire for better music was born within me, and father, deciding that I had talent took me to Professor J. R. Whiteman, the only available teacher in town. The Professor was a singing teacher in the public schools and although pretty well grounded in the violin was not a great performer. He looked this country boy over and asked, "Can you play?"

I answered, "Oh sure".

The Professor said, "Play something."

I lit into Wagner with all the negative rendition of the country fiddler.

He listened a moment or two, then fell back in his chair.

"My God", he groaned, "What could a teacher ever do with a mess of misery like that?"

I was very crestfallen, so the Professor agreed to try and teach me.

In six weeks, with severe corrective measures (violin held by the chin, not down on the breast, wrist out from under the neck (which would have stopped all positions), hand back to the end of the bow, not one third of it.

In six weeks I was playing a respectable violin, and in a year had Greeley skinned. I rode to Denver after that (52 miles on a bicycle) once a week for further lessons from Miss Sindlinger, of the Dawkins Quartet.

I finished high school in 1892 then on to Colorado State College. At the College there was a very small mandolin, banjo and guitar glee club and I was appointed its leader. Meanwhile I had become interested in these small instruments, especially the banjo, for the marvelous technique needed and for its rhythmic possibilities. Around 1895, Farland, Ossman and Bacon were the banjo "heroes", while Valentine, Abt and Samuel Seigal were notable performers on the mandolin as was Foden on the guitar.

I took private lessons from Will James, a composer and banjo teacher, of whose playing it was said, "There never was heard the like".

With the grounding in music through the violin (I never got to be an artist) I learned the banjo very quickly, catching many of James' techniques and thus quite astonishing most laymen.

I did not graduate from college until 1899, my graduation having been delayed by my being pulled out of school by the State Militia for strike duty in Leadville where the miners were destroying the mines. Upon graduation, I could not get a school in which to teach, as schools were very scarce at the time (only the idealists got schools).

But I was pretty smart in the manly things - mathematics, physics, manual training and music, among others. But in the literature class the teacher had read a composition of mine to the students remarking that it was the worst thing that could have been written. "The idea", she said, "of naming the Greek hero "Diabetes" because it sounded Greek".

So I turned to my music, opened a shop for piano tuning, rebuilding and sales. I also did teaching of stringed instruments and I am still here, now, at Boulder, Colorado.

Meanwhile the banjo had gone into eclipse. Formerly written for in the key of A (which was highly inconvenient with piano and other instruments) it was changed to the key of C and all the old music disappeared.

Because I loved the banjo so, I resurrected fifteen solos of the old banjo "heroes" of 1895 from memory - and here they are.

Of course the old tunes, Dixie, Mocking Bird, etc. are immortal but their banjo arrangements and many tunes are gone forever except as remembered by a few old relics like me.

At that time there was only the standard or 5 string banjo and this was played with the fingers,

the tone and dexterity being superior to the pick which was being used for vaudeville and jam sessions, but I preferred the fingers as skin tone was much finer than pick tone.

In solos and clubs the endeavor was for real music as you can see by the resurrected records. The advent of the tenor banjo rather revolutionized the repertoire, as it is tuned like a cello and adaptable to any kind of music but, I cannot say that the style of it as adopted by Eddy Peabody and some phenomenal performers have improved the artistry. So in presenting this ancient music with its tone and lightning technique (developed by the banjo heroes of 1895), I hope, that it may not be lost forever.

As many of the pieces had no piano accompaniment, either lost or never had, Miss Marjorie Michels of the University of Colorado supplied them with telling support.

Sincerely,

Archibald L. Camp  
731 Pearl Street  
Boulder, Colo.

Recorded in 1961 by A. L. Camp of Boulder, Colo., banjoist; with Miss Marjorie Michels pianist, of the University of Colorado, September 4th, 1962. Boulder, Colo.

## BANJO LISTENINGS

These selections are for the five string or original type banjo perfected from the old "tubs" and the type of music set by the most remarkable banjoists of the 1890's. These were the teachers, stage players and phonograph recorders along in that period.

These players and musicians strove to rescue the banjo from the old one key rhythm which greatly resembled the "Mountain Music" of today, and to make it a musical instrument worthy of interest and study. To play this style of music required a system of technique of lightning rapidity, delicacy of touch and tone and many problems of technical passages worked out, which were peculiar to the instrument.

This system of technique was successfully evolved and adopted by several of the leading teachers and soloists of the day such as Ossman, Van Epps, Jennings, Armstrong, Bacon, James, Brooks, Rowden etc. and eagerly learned by the oncoming banjoists like myself. I was in college in those days and our banjo club was the marvel of its fans.

The first banjos were longer necked than the now standard banjo and the 4th string sounded the pitch of A and the books written in A or three sharps. Afterward the neck was standardized so the 4th string was C along with the piano, thus antiquating and destroying nearly all of the original published music.

The music of the 5 string has to be more or less adapted to it and the coming of the plectrum style and the tenor banjo with wider adaptation put it in eclipse for many years. However the charm of the tone and technique of the five string should never be displaced. These are all from memory.

1. Golden Bell Polka, Jennings. As played by a fine banjoist it becomes an Echo Polka.
2. Watch Hill March. A Banjo March of the first water by Kenneth.
3. Listen to the Mocking Bird. A concert arrangement by A. L. Camp winning first prize in banjo contest.
4. The Darky's Awakening, Lansing. A characteristic of the first class. The Darky is first sleeping and woke up jiggling.
5. The Frogville Band. Teasdale. An amusing novelty. Drums, Bugle, Trombone, etc.
6. Dixie and Chicken Reel. Special arrangement and harmony. Most effective.
7. Light and Gay Polka, Jennings. Brilliant and beautiful.
8. Step High March, Acker. Outstanding in beauty and originality, difficult.
9. Hog and Hominy Cakewalk, Jennings. Uncle Eph is advised to sit down, too old. He scorns the adviser and wins the cake.
11. Frog in the Canebreak. The old fiddler tunes his violin and plays a square dance, a comic banjo sketch.
12. Dance of the Wooden Dolls, author unknown. They come out and stamp. A beautiful schottische.
13. Jumping Jacks, Banjo clog, One of the best good finger technique.
14. Beautiful Dreamer, Foster. Demonstrates the beauty and pathos that can be produced by the new method of plectrum playing.

## 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, Bunt 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