FS 3809

Fine Times at our House

INDIANA

BALLADS FIDDLE TUNES SONGS

COLLECTED BY PAT DUNFORD & ART ROSENBAUM

DESIGN JOHN COHEN

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COLLECTED BY PAT DUNFORD & ART ROSENBAUM

43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

Oh Jim Haw he shot the crow and the buzzard stumped
his toe
And we'll rally in the canebrakes and shoot the
buffalo!

The seal of the State of Indiana depicts a pioneer firing a long rifle at a buffalo, intended to symbolize man's taming of the forces of the wilderness. The lines above came from the memory of a shaky-voiced 85-year old ex-quarryman named Pat Hudson as he recalled the play-party games of his boyhood in Owensburg, Indiana. His "Shoot the Buffalo" was a dance-like singing game that translated the hard realities of frontier life into stylized recreation. And during a long June afternoon Pat Hudsons singing of songs learned from his father--"they were old to him"--suggested many other facets of the repertoire of a Hoosier folk singer of a century ago. He sang a fragment of a very old version of "Barbara Allen":

Then slowly, slowly she got up and pinned her
clothes around her
And walked down to the bed where he lay, and
says,
"Young man, you're a-dyin'...

A stern, moralizing piece like "The Brunkard's Doom" followed bawdy ditties like "The Bell Cow" and this wild fiddle tune:

I been a hog driver for seven long years,
I spent all my money on whiskey and beers...

Oh Polly, oh Polly, I been down in town,
I saw a watermelon without any rind,
She says, "You old devil, you're a-losin' your mind!"

We had already met John W. Summers and Judge Dan White and were convinced that north central Indiana had a country fiddle trandition unsurpassed by that of any other area in the United States. Now old Pat Hudson's singing inspired us to make several trips into the rural areas of the state to record the songs still known.

The twenty songs and fiddle tunes on this record were selected from close to three hundred items recorded in southern and central Indiana over a period of two years. They were chosen to present a varied and interesting picture of the older songs and tunes remembered by Hoosier singers and fiddlers, music learned years ago from family or local tradition. This is meant to reflect no bias against newer folksong styles or music that was learned from recordings or the radio--and part of the repertoires of some of the performers here is derived from such sources--but was intended to present the music that has been more characteristic of the state and which will soon be all but gone. There are included, however, two ballads sung by Kentuckians who have lived in Indiana for years, and one song sung by a native of Tennessee and his wife in a more recent country music style. The inclusion of these songs is justified by the large role played by Appalachian music in shaping the folk music of Indiana. Many of the early settlers of southern Indiana came up from Kentucky, and in recent years the hard times in the mountains have driven many hill people up not only to the industrial cities but also to the towns and rural areas of Indiana. And while the "hillbilly" ways and music of the more recent immigrants are often looked at askance by the older residents of a city like Indianapolis, both are readily accepted by many rural Hoosiers whose way of life has been similar to, though not the same as that of the mountain people.

The folk music of Indiana is rich and even more varied than could be guessed from this record. This is understandable, as the state was settled by people of many different backgrounds--New Englanders, French, Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania, Germans, Virginians and Kentuckians--and which stretches over three hundred miles from its northern to southern border. It is for these reasons, and also because we have recorded comparatively few informants in southern and central Indiana and none in the very northern part (an area virtually untouched by any collector) that we can propose only with caution some generalizations about the music. More specific comments will be presented in the notes on the performers and on the songs and tunes.

It would appear, however, that there are significant differences in the music of the northern and southern parts of the state. Folklorist Ed Kahn has suggested that U.S. Highway 40, which neatly bisects the state, separates clearly the northern and southern traditions of its folk music. The music to be heard in the hills of Brown County and in the backwoods area along the Ohio River has a southern flavor, just as the landscape resembles the foothills of the Appalachians, farther south. Singing tends to be tight-throated, and some singers still perform in the old, highly ornamented rubato parlando style. Surge-singing was once practiced in some churches, although it seems a long dead tradition in the north. The repertoires of singers abound in sentimental parlor songs, lyric pieces, and some pesudo-Negro and Negro-influenced songs, in addition to ballads of American and British origin. Fiddle music has bluesy sound like that heard in the South, where Negro music has strongly influenced the British fiddle tradition. The instrumental repertoire as well is quite southern, and fiddlers and banjo pickers often combine their playing with the singing of fiddle and banjo songs widely known in the South. (The five-string banjo was once common in southern Indiana, while it was rare in the northern part of the state.)

North of Route 40, the picture changes. A more relaxed, midlands singing style is heard (as in Vern Smelser's music, learned in his boyhood near Muncie, before his family moved to the southern Indiana of Paoli). Fiddlers like John W. Summers are proud of their adherence to the old way of playing tunes in the Scotch-Irish tradition, and are disdainful of the devices used by most southern fiddlers. It would be unwise, however, to come to any conclusions about the music of the whole of northern Indiana until after further investigation.

One final word: the title of this collection, FINE TIMES AT OUR HOUSE, is particularly appropriate. The proverbial hospitality of Hoosiers is not exaggerated, nor is their wit and folksy sense of humor, from the sayings of Abe Martin to the poems of James Whitcomb Riley. And there is not a performer on this record whose music does not evoke for him memories of days when singing, dancing, or gathering at play parties provided some of the best times among good friends and close, happy families.

NOTES ON THE SINGERS AND FIDDLERS

Anna Mae Underhill and Virgil Sandage When Mrs. Underhill was asked what the first song she learned to sing was, she answered, "I can't remember, as I've tried to sing ever since I was old enough to talk." Indeed, she and her brother, Virgil Sandage, grew up in a family in which singing was as natural as talking, and one with an especially rich heritage of traditional song. Both her father, Mose Sandage (a veteran of the Civil War, whose discharge papers Mrs. Underhill proudly preserves) and her mother, Charlotte Taylor Sandage, were fine singers, as were her Uncle Jack Taylor and her Aunt Saphrome Taylor Reed. Her family was large (her father having had nineteen children by three wives) and happy, although the land they lived on, in the area of Uniontown and

Doolittle's Mill, Perry County, near the Ohio River, was "so poor and couldn't raise more than a fuss on it!"
Anna was born on June 17, 1905, and has always lived in her home county, as did her parents and aunts and uncles before. As she grew up songs would be sung as evening entertainment after dinner, or on Sunday afternoons when company came. Sometimes the children would gather around the parlor organ and sing to the playing of their mother. Anna mastered that instrument by ear, and just last year her husband presented her with an old-fashioned pump organ, which she now enjoys playing. During the early thirties Anna and Virgil wrote down the texts of many of their family songs in order to preserve them, and also so that Virgil could perform some of them on the radio in Louisville. (He played the fiddle and banjo and his wife played the accordion; they were following the practice of many folk-professionals in using family sources for their performances.) Some of these manuscripts fell into the hands of an old family friend, Dr. Claude Lomax of nearby Dale, a man interested in all sorts of early Americana, from miniature covered wagons which he would make and display, to folk songs. He transmitted the oldest ones to Paul Brewster, who was then compiling his definitive Indiana collection, and he printed Mrs. Underhill's "Elfin Knight" (Child 2), her exceptionally fine text of "Lord Thomas", (Child 73) which she learned from her Uncle Jack, and a splendid version of "The Derby Ram", entitled "Hark to the Roaring Sheep", obtained from her husband's family. Brewster had intended to visit her when he was accompanying Alan Lomax on a recording trip for the Library of Congress in 1938, but she lives too far back in the woods, and the roads, such as they were, were flooded. We met Mrs. Underhill and Mr. Sandage after trying by letter to locate some of Brewster's best informants.

In closing let us give some additional titles of songs in the Sandage-Underhill-Taylor repertoire in order to indicate the range of their music. Mrs. Underhill sings 19th century pieces like "The Shiloh Drummer Boy", "The Orphan Girl", "The Lightning Express", "Poor Little Joe", "Kitty Wells", and "The Sweet, Sunny South", as well as ditties like "Young Man's Lament", a comic song she considers almost too "foolish" to sing, and "The Roving Gambler", which she does not favor, because of its subject: she prefers religious songs like "The Model Church" and "The Sweet Bye and Bye." She used to go to play parties, and remembers some of the songs, but has never attended a dance in her life. Her brother, on the other hand, has somewhat different attitudes and a different preference of songs. He used to play "breakdowns and waltzes" on the fiddle and sings songs like "Sugar Babe", "Birmingham Jail", "The Texas Rangers", and "Did the Maine Go Down?" Together they provide an excellent picture of southern Indiana traditional singing.

Vern Smelser After a couple of inquiries about old-time singers and musicians in the Paoli area, we were directed to the homes of Ken Smelser, an excellent fiddler, and his brother Vern, a gracious and friendly man who played the guitar and sang many fine old songs and ballads. Vern was born on July 25, 1910, in Blountsville, near Muncie in north eastern Indiana. Both his father, of German ancestry, and his mother were musically inclined. His father played the guitar and five-string banjo and his mother taught piano "all over the country, besides teaching new songs to people in churches. Vern learned most of his songs from his grandmother, Rhoda Chapman, who had lived in Kansas until 1910. She would sing to him in the porch swing, after supper, when he was a small boy. When he was eleven, the family moved from Muncie to Paoli. "My father drove a covered wagon, my mother drove a horse and buggy, a distance of 182 miles. We left on the first day of March and go to our destination on the 20th day... Our favorite pasttime in the days ahead was gathering around the organ after supper, my mother learning each one of us our part of the song, and then putting all the parts together in order to harmonize."

He began to play the guitar at the age of twelve and his music would be part of the entertainment at parties. His first job was playing and singing at dances at the age of sixteen. More unusual entertainments were the two and a half hour plays which the Smelser family used to give at Young's Creek, south of Paoli. "My Mother and Father wrote most of the music...and the words, and the whole family took part in them, three brothers and one sister. People used to walk for miles to watch the plays, which went over big back in the years of 1923-24, which was known as the roaring twenties." Vern married Nellie Mae Bickelberger in 1932 and had two daughters who used to sing with him when he entertained at the Farm Bureau, Church gatherings, and homecomings.

A cross section of his repertoire includes two Child ballads, "Barbara Allen", and "John Came Home" (a version of "Our Goodman" learned from a recording); "Wild Cowboy" (of the "Unfortunate Rake" family), the American murder ballad, "Henry Green", "Mary of the Wild Moor", "The Orphan's Last Plea", and several songs like "Bluebelle" which come from an early popular music tradition.

John W. Summers "Dick" Summers, as his friends call him, is one of the finest musicians, craftsmen, and human beings I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. He is an essentially shy, intensely sensitive man whose ability to play the scores of intricate and beautiful old fiddle tunes in his memory is equalled only by his skill at violin making, an art which he learned comparatively recently.

He was born on a small farm in Union Township, Howard County, in the flat, rich farm land north of Indianapolis, on November 2, 1887. He writes that his father, Simon Summers, was "a fine fiddler of old tunes. He provided an organ, autoharp and guitars, and any instrument us 5 children, 4 boys and one girl would learn to play, so we had our own entertainment at any and all times -- we did not have to go out somewhere to be entertained. And he played for the Country square dances for quite aways around." Almost every night, he and the two older boys would "have a good session of music and go to bed and forget they'd done a day's work." An especially exciting occasion was when "my oldest uncle, Isaac Summers, one of the fine old fiddle players, would come to our house. He'd tuck his beard to one side of his fiddle, and when he'd play, it would just make your back creepy...

"When I was about 5 years of age, my father taught me to play the fiddle.. My father'd be out at work, and I'd persuade my mother to just open the violin case, so I could just pluck the strings with my fingers, and he'd come in, and when he'd pick up his violin, he'd say, 'Mary, has that boy been into my fiddle again?' 'Yes.' 'Well I knew he had. I could tell it.' So this particular evening--I had a sister just older than me and another brother--he said, 'Whichever one of the three makes the best stagger at playing Old Dan Tucker, that one I'm gonna learn to play the fiddle!' It would have been a great and wonderful thing if we'd just had a machine like this tape recorder, and recorded that evening! We like to broke our necks, us three kids did. Of course, I came out the winner, won the prize, and my father taught me to play. He would get me on his lap... Of course, I wasn't old enough to do any fingering--my fingers were too small--so I'd catch hold of the bow, and he'd catch his hand around my hand, and that was every night. My first two tunes were 'Old Dan Tucker' and 'The Soldier's Joy', called 'The King's Head' at that time...

"After becoming of age, I learned several tunes of other fiddlers, some from piano player records, and some by music... About 40 years ago I took up piano tuning, but never took to it as a business. I was a farmer. I loved to till the soil."

About ten years ago he began to make and repair violins, inspired by a good friend who was a fiddler and violin maker, the late Matt Simons, who also imparted to him his knowledge of the history of violins. Many country fiddlers fashion crude, or at times quite respectable instruments, but Dick Summers has made many violins of exceptional quality which he patterns after an authentic 18th century Burgonzi violin which he owns, and plays on this record.

Summers' fiddle playing is the brilliant consumation of a rich tradition in his area. He says that, although all his brothers and sisters could play to some extent, he was the only good fiddler in his generation; and both his father and his uncle were fine fiddlers in a generation that "cropped out fiddle players", but that there was no musical interest in his grandparents' generation. Dick learned many of his tunes from fiddlers other than his father and uncle: he got some from an Anderson fiddler, Tom Riley, who in turn had learned them from the ancient Old Man Page who claimed to know the "original" way to play the old tunes. He learned some from Pet Couch, a Tipton County fiddler, and some from Matt Simons, who had learned to read music in order to learn the jigs and reel in an old book, probably O'Neill's Music of Ireland. Indeed, he did learn a long and bizzarre piece called "Cornfield Capers" from a player piano roll, and has more recently learned some from his good friend, Judge Dan White.

We have recorded some ninety performances of over

seventy different tunes from Summers' playing, and he knows many, many more. He is virtually an encyclopedia of jigs, reels, and hornpipes, which he invariably plays "the right way" (he objects to "common fiddlers" who distort, over-embellish, or play crudely, the old tunes); however, at times he plays the well-known A and B parts to tunes like "Stony Point" or "Chicken Reel", and then comes up with a C part which he maintains adamantly, "belongs there." Recently he confessed that he had composed them, and they were such skillful uses of the existing melodic material that they did, indeed, belong there. He also plays tunes entirely of his own composition, indigenous Indiana tunes like "A Bunch of Chickens" and "The Old Blind Sow She Stole the Middlin'", and various other breakdowns, waltzes, and schottisches. He never retunes the fiddle, sticking to the standard g d a e tuning. He has a faultless sense of pitch and rhythm at his command, as well as many technical devices--double stops, drones, glissandos, triplet ornaments, "shuffle-bowing" and the "scotch snap"--which give his music its thrilling quality.

As deeply rooted as he is in country music he loves cultivated violin music, and was flattered when Dave Rubinoff played one of the instruments he had made at a Wabash concert. He greatly admires the playing of an acquaintance who is with the Fort Wayne Symphony Orchestra; when I asked if this man, in turn, could appreciate Dick's execution of the old-time country tunes, he answered, a bit sadly, "Well, no."

Dan V. White Judge White is a portly, elderly, well-known and respected resident of Indianapolis, and it would surprise many citizens of the capital to learn that a man they have known as a judge sitting on many benches and as an honorary member of the City Council, is a fine country fiddler. He was born on April 2, 1883, on a farm near Windfall, Tipton County. Windfall was a strongly Quaker village and square dancing was forbidden. Play parties were, however, permitted and were a great source of recreation among the young people. By the time Dan was in his early teens, the local feeling against musical instruments was weakening, and his crowd decided that they could and should have a fiddle at their parties. Dan was "elected", and proceeded to learn from his father and a friend, Frank Van Doren, although his mother taught him his first tune, "Go Tell Aunt Rhody". Several years later he heard Isaac Summers, the celebrated Groomville fiddler, although he did not meet this man's nephew, Dick, until fifteen years ago.

In 1907 he gave up farming and went to law school, marrying and moving to Indianapolis. He had an attorney's office for two years, then was elected prosecutor. In the following years he served on the Criminal Court, the Municipal Court, the Civil Court, and then for many years, on the Probate Court until he retired in 1958.

In the years that he and Dick Summers have known each other, they have had occasional "musicales", sessions with other old musicians at one or another's home. At these gatherings they worked out the unusual two-violin style heard here. Many of the old friends have died recently, but Judge White and Dick Summers still get together to play the music that binds them to each other, as dear friends, and to the memories of their youth.

Note: We are grateful to Lorna Morris and O'Leary of Los Angeles, who met Dan White on a Colorado dude ranch, for suggesting that we get in touch with him and Dick Summers.

Louis Henderson The hills of Brown County have long harbored a folk lore as colorful as the names of the towns: Gnaw Bone, Pike's Peak, Stone Head, Bean Blossom. Louis Henderson was born in the county in 1905, and has lived there all his life, as did his parents. He learned the fiddle as a boy from a friend and from his school teacher. Starting about 1935, he played for square dances at home and in the neighboring counties, usually with two sisters who played guitar and banjo. They also played at the Brown County Jamboree, now owned by Bill and Birch Monroe, and at dances at the Abe Martin Lodge in Brown County State Park. Although he plays here a fiddle which he fashioned from a cigar box and whittled oak, he is an accomplished performer on the conventional violin.

Oscar "Doc" Parks Doc Parks is a garrulous Kentuckian of near 70 with a head full of old songs who has made his home for the last thirty years in the hilly, thinly settled back country in Crawford County, just over the Ohio River from his home state. He was born in the westernmost tip of Virginia, in a round-log shack (about which he has composed a long ballad) near the town of Rose Hill. When he was a year and a half old his father, a native of Tennessee, and his mother, a Virginian, moved the family up to Livingston, Kentucky. As he grew up here, he learned his great store of ballads, lyric songs, and ditties, and his classic highlands singing style, from his father, who "had the best voice I ever heard." Before moving up to Indiana he worked as a wagoner and a crosstie cutter. In 1938 Alan Lomax recorded several of his songs, as well as some sung by his wife, Suda, for the Library of Congress Archive of American Folk Song. Doc Parks has a good memory for anecdote and incident as well as for songs, and has a vivid and entertaining way of speaking; these are abilities developed in a day when people had to get and remember news through story and song, when "newspapers didn't float out there in the country."

Ella Parker The sister of Mrs. Suda Parks, Ella Parker was born in Crawford County, Indiana, in 1894, but her parents moved back to their home state of Kentucky when Ella was three months old. Her father worked hard at farming, quarrying, and taking rafts down the river, but life was difficult for the family of 13 children. There was little time for schooling--Ella's only formal education was three months in a dirt-floor school house when she was 14--but she had learned to read, write, and "count figures" on her own when she was 8, and today she is proud to be able to "read the newspaper, my Bible, and most anything; make out money orders, attend to bank accounts, and pay my taxes." There was plenty of music at home, though. Her oldest brother played a homemade banjo, with a head made from the hide of a "varment" caught in a dead-fall, and all the children could play the "harmony", a long box with two strings, picked like a guitar and noted with a smooth stick--evidently a sort of mountain dulcimer. And their mother would sing for the children after evening chores were finished until about 10 or 11 at night.

Her mother died when Ella was ten, and she had to go out and work for other families for $1 a week. She married at the age of 20, and 35 years ago moved up to Franklin County, Indiana, where she now lives. She raised a family and is now a widow; she regularly attends the Holiness Church in Fairfield.

Shorty and Juanita Sheehan Shorty grew up in the mountains of Tennessee near Johnson City, where he learned to play the fiddle, banjo, guitar, and French harp. His attempt to get established as a country music professional was interrupted by World War II; he served in Germany as both an entertainer and translator. He came to Indiana on his return to the States, a Johnson County girl who had learned to sing from her Kentucky-born parents, and who was a very good guitar player.

They married and have since played and sung together professionally, performing everything from bluegrass and "Western swing" to Dixieland jazz. They had a country music program on Indianapolis T.V. from many years, and Shorty was the fiddler with Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys for two different stretches of time. They keep busy, Shorty having a daytime job, evening musical work, and the duty of coaching a Little League baseball team in Franklin. Still, Shorty and Juanita find time to play and sing the traditional music that they grew up with, the music that is still their first love.

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SIDE I, Band 1: UNNAMED TUNE,

John W. Summers, fiddle. Recorded in Marion, Grant Co., Jan. 5, 1964, by A. Rosenbaum.

Summers learned this very old piece from his Uncle Isaac over sixty years ago. It is one of the few among his many tunes that he cannot recall the name of. Its form is unusual: a short A part in the key of C is followed by a beautiful legato B passage in the relative minor in which a theme is further elaborated each time it is repeated.

SIDE I, Band 2: THE ELFIN KNIGHT (CHILD 2)

sung by Mrs. Anna Underhill. Recorded in Uniontown, Perry Co., Dec. 30, 1963, by P. Dunford and A. Rosenbaum.

Mrs. Underhill learned this ballad from her Aunt Saphrome Reed, and does not know a title for it. Her text appears in Brewster's Ballads and Songs of Indiana, p. 25. "The Elfin Knight" is the best-known of the old riddling ballads in America, where the original supernatural protagonist has disappeared and there is merely the battle of wits of two lovers, each demanding impossible tasks of the other. Bertrand

Bronson has established three tune groups, associated with certain refrains, for this ballad. The 19th century "sing ivy" is wholly English; the late 18th century "rosemary and thyme...true lover of mine" is widespread in this country; the "plaid awa" tune group is the oldest, dating from the 17th century when the first black-letter broadside appeared, and it is to this group that the present version belongs, as do others with similar refrains collected from Maine to Missouri. For a related New York State performance by Lawrence Older, see Folk Legacy LP FSA-15.

See: AAFS, BARRY, BELDEN, BREWSTER, BRONSON, BROWN, FLANDERS, FLANDERS & BROWN MORRIS, RANDOLPH, SHARP

If you go up to town tonight,
Lie flum-a-lum-a likker slomie,
Just hand this note to that young miss,
To my teece, my tice, to my tince,
Lie flum-a-lum-a likker slomie.

And tell her to make me a fine shirt,
And make it out of an old cotton sheet...

And tell her to sew it with her gold ring,
And every stitch a foot between...

And tell her to wash it in yonder well,
Where never a drop of water fell...

And tell her to hang it on yonder thorn,
That never grew there since Adam was born...

If you go down to town tonight,
Just hand this note to that young gent...

And tell him to buy him an acre of ground,
Between salt water and sea sand...

And tell him to plow it with a ram's horn,
And seed it in with one grain of corn...

Tell him to reap it with his pen knife,
And haul it in with two yoke of mice...

Tell him to haul it to yonder barn,
That's never been built since Adam was born...

Just tell that gent if he's done his work,
He can call tonight and get his shirt...

SIDE I, Band 3: PLAY PARTIES

sung by Mrs. Underhill. Recorded in Uniontown, by P. Dunford and A. Rosenbaum.

Play parties were common all over Indiana from the earliest times, and Mrs. Underhill says they occurred in Perry Co. as recently as twenty-five years ago. The two short songs she sings here were part of circle games in which kissing as a key feature. We have been unable to locate the first, sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" in any collection. The second is a form of "Getting Married" (see BOTKIN, No. 30, in which the first verse is identical with the present one; see also NEWELL, "Marriage", and "Sailing at High Tide"). Brewster reports the second verse as part of a different play-party, "Three Dukes", in "Game Songs from Southern Indiana", JAFL, Vol. 49, No. 193, 1936. For background, see WOLFORD, The Play-Party in Indiana.

I'd rather be a farmer's boy
And always sure in somethin'
And in the summer roastin' ears,
And in the winter, pumpkin,
Pumpkin, pumpkin, step up and kiss your pumpkin!

In this ring, two ladies fair,
Sky-blue eyes and curly dark hair,
Red rosy cheeks and a dimpled chin,
Please, kind sirs, won't you step in?

Ha! ha! ha! what a choice you've made,
Better by half in your grave been laid.
Hug her a little and a right smart too,
Kiss her twice if once won't do!

SIDE I, Band 4: TURKEY IN THE STRAW

Louis Henderson, cigar box fiddle. Recorded in Stone Head, Brown County, Dec. 1962, by P. Dunford.

"This is the classical American rural tune," says Carl Sandburg in The American Songbag. Descended from the minstrel show song "Old Zip Coon" and related to the fiddle tune, "Natchez Under the Hill", it is certainly one of the best loved and most widely known of any folk tune, both as a fiddle piece and as a vehicle for a great variety of texts. Henderson's performance evokes the atmosphere of a frontier dance at which home-made fiddles were the only music.

See: FORD, LINSCOTT, SANDBURG

SIDE I, Band 5: THE CUCKOO'S NEST

lead fiddle, Dan White, accompanyment, John W. Summers. Recorded in Indianapolis, Marion Co.

Judge White learned this hornpipe, one of the best of the old Scotch-Irish tunes, from Frank Van Doren. It is known in the northern tradition in America, as well as in the British Isles, where it is also sung, most often with bawdy verses (see Caedmon LP The Folksongs of Britain, Vol. II, TC 1143).

See: BAYARD; FORD, as "Good Ax Elve", HARDING; One Thousand Fiddle Tunes as "All Aboard" and "Cuckoo's Hornpipe"; O'NEILL

SIDE I, Band 6: SHERMAN'S RETREAT

John W. Summers, fiddle. Recorded in Marion, Jan. 5, 1964, by A. Rosenbaum.

We have not been able to find this unusual three-part tune in waltz time in any collection. Its title may reflect the wishful thinking of some southern fiddler rather than any historic occurrence. Country fiddlers were often called upon to play waltzes and slower solos as well as fast dance tunes, and the best ones could play these using high positions, vibrato, accurate double stops, and fine tone.

SIDE I, Band 7: THE MORNING OF 1845 (LAWS C 19)

sung by Vern Smelser, Paoli, Orange Co., Recorded Feb. 16, 1964, by P. Dunford.

Vern learned this ballad from his grandfather, Arthur Chapman, who had himself learned it in Wyoming, where he used to trade with Indians. Mr. Chapman was born in England and lived most of his life in Kansas. According to Helen Hartness Flanders, the song was composed in a lumber camp near Rutland, Vermont, around 1875. It gained wide currency, rapidly spreading west and south. Vern Smelser's version omits the usual concluding verses warning gossips not to spread tales of the night's carrousing. For a fine Appalachian rendition, see Folkways LP FA 2317, "Mountain Music of Kentucky."

See: FLANDERS & BROWN, LAWS, LOMAX II, RICKABY

I got up last Monday morning in 1845,
I thought myself quite lucky to find myself alive;
I harnessed up my old team my business to persue,
And I went to hauling coal as I used for to do.

The ale-house being open and the whiskey being free,
As soon as I drank one glass another was filled for me,
I only hauled one load instead of hauling four
And I got so drunk in Chippensports I couldn't haul no more.

I took my harness upon my back and staggered to the barn,
I saddled up my old grey mare, thinking it no harm;
I jumped upon her back and I rode away so still
That I scarcely drew a breath til I came to the Laurel Hill.

My father fast persuaded (pursued?) me, he rode both night and day,
He must have had a pilot or else he'd lost his way,
He peeped in every hole and corner where e'er he saw a light
Til his old grey locks were wet with the dews of the night

I have an honest comrade, his name I will not tell,
He invited me to go down town with him to cut a swell,
And after much persuasion, with him I did agree,
And we went down to a tailor shop some fiddlers for to see.

Up stepped four young ladies, all ready for the dance,

Up stepped four young gentlemen, all in advance;
The fiddlers being willing and their arms a-being strong,
I danced the ground of Laurel Hill at least four hours long.

SIDE I, Band 8: THE BIRDS' SONG

sung by Virgil Sandage. Recorded in Uniontown, June 12, 1963, by P. Dunford, A. Rosenbaum, and Peter Siegel.

Mr. Sandage learned this song from his Uncle Jack Taylor, who had "the highest, clearest tenor voice" he has ever heard. Talking animals appear in folk tales and songs all over the world, and "The Bird's Song", sung all over the United States, is this country's most delightful piece of this sort. Burl Ives' "Leatherwing Bat" is the version most familiar to city people.

See: BROWN, LOMAX II, MORRIS, STURGIS & HUGHES, SHARP

Well, said the big owl, his head so white,
All alone of a lonesome night,
The boys go courting, have I heard say,
Court all night and sleep next day.

Well, said the bluebird, sitting in a tree,
I once did court a fair lady,
But she proved fickle and she from me flew,
And ever since then my head's been blue.

Well, said the red bird, pickin' in the grass,
I once did court a handsome lass,
But she proved fickle and she from me fled,
And ever since then my head's been red.

Well, said the blackbird to the crow,
Down in the cornfield we will go,
For ever since Adam and Eve's been made,
Plucking up corn has been our trade.

Well, said the polecat to the mink,
Don't you know what makes us stink?
For ever since Adam and Eve's been made,
Catching hens has been our trade.

SIDE I, Band 9: AWAY OUT WEST IN KANSAS

sung by Mrs. Underhill. Recorded in Uniontown, Dec. 30, 1963, by P. Dunford and A. Rosenbaum.

The state of Kansas has often been joked about in song, as in the well-known "Kansas Boys". Mrs. Underhill's song has not been collected elsewhere, and it may be derived from the piece of the same name in FORD which is itself descended from the Irish famine song, "The Praties They Grow Small". Whatever their origin, both the text and tune of this comic song are at least partially the products of some travelling tent or stage show.

Folks don't stay out very late, away out west in Kansas,
They haul the sidewalks in at eight, away out west in Kansas;

The town's so small that, I declare, you can stand on the old town square
And knock on every front door there, away out west in Kansas.

The sun's so hot that eggs will hatch, away out west in Kansas,
It pops the corn in a popcorn patch, away out west in Kansas;
An old mule coming down the path saw all the corn and lost his breath,
He thought it was snow and he froze to death, away out west in Kansas.

There's a man who grew so tall, away out west in Kansas,
That if he ever should fall, he'd be out of Kansas;
I'll declare and I'll repeat that he's as long as our main street,
With a lot turned down for feet, away out west in Kansas.

There's a man named Crosseyed Pat, away out west in Kansas,
You can't tell who he's looking at, away out west in Kansas;
He cries because he's such a wreck and the tears run down the back of his neck
And he don't look straight to me, by heck, away out west in Kansas.

There was a man who loved his wife, away out west in Kansas,
They must have lived a peaceful life, away out west in Kansas;
There's a reason why, each night, they hold each others' hand so tight,
If one lets loose, they start to fight, away out west in Kansas.

SIDE I, Band 10: THE INDIANA HERO (FULLER AND WARREN--LAWS F 16)

sung by Mrs. Underhill, recorded in Uniontown, June 12, 1963, by P. Dunford, A. Rosenbaum, and P. Siegel.

Mrs. Underhill learned this full version of Indiana's most important indigenous ballad from her father; she recalls that it was his favorite song. On January 10, 1820, Amasa Fuller shot and killed Palmer Warren, who had gained the affections of his fiancee, in Lawrenceburg, a town in the southeastern corner of the state on the Ohio River. Feelings ran high in the frontier community, and public sympathy, as is reflected in the ballad, was clearly with Fuller. The people of Dearborn County petitioned Gov. Jennings to pardon him. There was even an unsuccessful attempt to rescue him before his hanging the following summer. The case was given much attention in the eastern papers, although they tended to be hostile to Fuller.

The authorship of this tragic ballad is often ascribed to Moses Whitecotton, a strange old scotsman who was a justice of the peace, painter, and poet. The flowery imagery, Biblical allusions, and stiff-collared moralizing would confirm what we know about Whitecotton, but Brewster and others have concluded that he did not write the ballad.

"Fuller and Warren" shows clearly the kind of pioneer morality that considered a woman's deceit to be a crime far worse than murder. As democratic as the frontier was in many ways, women were relegated to lives of toil and childbearing, and their weaknesses were felt to be sins, while those of men could easily be turned into virtues. Mrs. Underhill's "feeble-minded" in verse 4 is usually found as "fickle-minded", but Brewster has recovered another version reading "feeble-minded", so the term may well be a conscious choice rather than a corruption.

See Phillips Barry's discussion of this ballad in Bulletin of the Folk Song Society of the North East, VIII 12-13, IX 14-17.

See: AAFS, BELDEN, BREWSTER, FINGER, HUDSON, LAWS, RANDOLPH

Ye songs of Columbia your attention I well call
While a sorrowful ditty I will tell,
Which happened of late in the Indiana state
To a hero which none can excell.

Like Samson he courted his choice of the fair
And intended to make her his wife,
But like Delilah fair, oh, she did his heart ensnare,
Which cost him his honor and his life.

A gold ring he gave her in token of true love,
And the flower was the image of a dove;
They had mutually agreed to get married in speed
And had promised by the Power above.

Now this feeble-minded maiden was again for to wed
To young Warren, a liver of the place;
Fuller's heart did overflow, and he struck the fatal blow
Which ended in shame and disgrace.

When Fuller came to find he was deprived of his love
Which had promised by the Powers to wed,
With heart full of woe, straight to Warren he did go
And smiling, to Warren, he said:

"Oh, Warren, you have wronged me to gratify your cause
By relating I had left a prudent wife.
Acknowledge you have wronged me; although I break the law,
Oh, Warren, I'll deprive you of your life."

"Now, Fuller, your request, it must be denied,
For my heart unto your darling yet is bound,
And I can safely say that this is my wedding day
In spite of all your heroes in town."

Now Fuller in a passion of hate and anger high
Which has caused a many a man to die,
With one fatal shot, he killed Warren on the spot
And smiling, said "I'm ready now to die."

Now Fuller was condemned by the honorable court
At Lawrenceburg, and sentenced for to die
An ignominious death to hang above the earth
Like Haman, on the gallows so high.

The morning, it came when young Fuller was to die,
And smiling, he bade this world adieu;
Like an angel he did stand, for he was a handsome man,
On his breast he wore a ribbon of blue.

Ten thousand spectators were smote on the breast
And the guard dropped a tear from his eye,
Saying, "Cursed be she who has caused this misery,
For she in his stead ought to die."

Now, from all this ancient history that I can understand,
And what's more, that I'm bound to believe,
That women are essentially the downfall of men
As Adam was beguiled by Eve.

Now marriage is a lottery and few win a prize,
Though it's pleasing to the heart and to the eye;
And you that never marry may well be called wise,
So, gentlemen, excuse me, goodbye!

SIDE I, Band 10: FINE TIMES AT OUR HOUSE

John W. Summers, fiddle. Recorded Jan. 2, 1963, in Wabash, by A. Rosenbaum.

Samuel Bayard has noted two versions of this rare tune in south-western Pennsylvania, one of which he printed in Hill Country Tunes. He writes that "the title of this tune has the appearance of being an importation from the British Isles; and no doubt the melody is, too." There is reason to believe that it gave rise to the American tune, "Johnny Booker." Summers handles it with all his virtuoso skill, introducing subtle variations into the complex melody.

SIDE II, Band 1: THE YOUNG MAN WHO WOULDN'T HOE CORN (LAWS H 13),

sung by Vern Smelser. Recorded in Paoli, Feb. 16, 1964, by P. Dunford.

Nothing is known about the origin of this song, sung from New England to Texas. Vern learned this version from his grandmother. See Col. 15702D for "The Lazy Farmer Boy", an early commercial recording by Carter & Young, reissued on Folkways Anthology, FA 2951.

See: AAFS, BELDEN, BREWSTER, FLANDERS & BROWN, LOMAX, OWENS, SEEGER (No. 3, Resettlement Song Sheets, Washington, 1936-37)

Come listen you young folks to my song
About a man who wouldn't hoe his corn,
The reason why, I cannot tell
For this young man was always well.

He planted his corn in the month of June
And in July it wasn't knee high;
In the fall there came a frost,
And all this young man's corn was lost.

So he went around to his sweetheart's door
Where he had often gone before,
But e'er their courting they began
She asked him if he'd hoed his corn.

He hung his head and begin to sigh,
Saying, "Lady, lady, I'll tell you why,
I tried and tried, but all in vain,
I don't believe I'll raise a grain."

"Then why do you ask a girl to wed
If a man can't earn his own corn bread?
Single I am and I'll remain
For a lazy man I won't maintain."

At this the young man turned away,
Saying, "Lady, lady, you'll rue the day,
You'll rue it, madam, just as sure as you're born,
For giving me the shivers 'cause I didn't hoe my corn!"

SIDE II, Band 2: RYE STRAW,

John W. Summers, fiddle. Recorded in Marion, Dec. 28, 1963, by P. Dunford and A. Rosenbaum.

Summers' playing of this tune, descended from the British "Rolling in the Ryegrass", might suggest why some straight-laced mothers prohibited their daughters from attending square dances in the old days. His bowing is an early form of the "shuffle-bowing" popular with modern country fiddlers.

See: AAFS, FORD, O'NEILL

SIDE II, Band 3: WAITING FOR THE LORD TO COME

fiddle duet by Dan White and John W. Summers. Recorded in Indianapolis, Dec. 30, 1962, by P. Dunford and A. Rosenbaum.

The biographies of the performers on this record should make abundantly clear the importance of the organ in Indiana parlors fifty to eighty years ago. Here judge White and Dick Summers play a church tune known to both of them in their youth. The violins, each playing continuous double stops, thus producing four voices, imitate marvelously the sound of an old-fashioned pump organ and evoke the mood of a Sunday morning in a Hoosier prairie church, years ago.

SIDE II, Band 4: THE SAME TIME TODAY AS IT WAS YESTERDAY

John W. Summers, fiddle. Recorded in Marion, Jan. 5, 1964, by A. Rosenbaum.

In Ireland there is a retort to the question, "What time is it?": "The same time today as it was yesterday, but a day later." Dick Summers learned this previously unrecorded tune from his Uncle Isaac Summers.

SIDE II, Band 5: THE BATTLE OF STONE RIVER

sung by Oscar Parks. Recorded in Alton, Crawford Co., Dec. 30, 1963, by P. Dunford and A. Rosenbaum.

Doc Parks sang this vivid ballad for us a hundred and one years to the day after the Army of the Cumberland, under General William W. Rosecrans, and the Army of the Tennessee, under General Braxton Bragg, met to fight one of the fiercest battles of the Civil War in the cedar thickets along Stone River, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Many Indiana men participated in the hard-won Union victory that cost both sides nearly 19,000 killed and wounded. Many Civil War songs tend toward the sentimental, as does the Ohio song about the same battle:

Among the pines that overlook Stone River's rocky bed,
Ohio mourns many a son that's numbered with the dead... (EDDY, p. 127)

By contrast, the Union man who composed this ballad had no time for pious comment and concentrated on recording both the significant military movements and the feelings of a foot-soldier who had been through the bitter fight. The resulting piece, from the magnificent first verse to the sarcastic concluding one, has many of the qualities of the classic British ballads.

The confederate generals referred to are William Hardee and John C. Breckenridge; the Union ones, Richard Johnson and Horatio P. Van Cleve. General Joshua Sills was indeed killed leading a charge. We hope that no one is offended by Doc Parks' description of the man who claimed to have slain him, a rebel who was exceptional in the Kentucky hills, where sympathies were generally with the Union cause.

For background, see Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, New York, 1956.

See Parks earlier recording: AAFS 1727

Last New Year's Day we had a fight, and on the day before,
And then we fought right straight along, for three or four days or more.

Old Bragg he called his men to line, and he told them they must hold

Stone River and the country around, or else that
they'd be sold.

Hardee was in the cedar swamp, that line just on
the right,
Our general had his men in line all ready for the
fight.

When General Johnson saw their force, he told them
men to run,
He said that it was in vain to fight them rebels
ten to one.

But when Rosecrans saw their scheme, he understood
their plot,
And he reinforced General Van Cleves, and make them
rebels hot.

I never will forget that day, the ground all stained
with blood,
When hundreds of our gallant men lie weltering in the
mud.

We fought them full five hours or more, them rebels
would not yield,
Until our dead and wounded men lie piled upon the
field;
They swore that they would not leave the field, and
Breckenridge rolled in.

He took advantage of the night while everything was
still,
And he bravely dashed into the fight, and there fell
General Sills.

In wild confusion they left the ground, Stone River
they plunged through,
And they never stopped to look around for Yankees as
they flew.
Spoken:

I used to sing that--they's an old Col. Perry,
right in that fight, and he shot old General Sills.
And I used to sing that to him--he rode up on me
one day, a-singin' it right out in the woods, and
he made me sing it all to him...And when I'd sing
it to him, he'd say "I'M THE VERY GODDAM MAN THAT
SHOT HIM" and his neck-veins would get as big
around as your fist--arm! Yeah, he'd say it just
thataway, when I'd come over that part of it, "and
there fell General Sills", he's say, "Yes, and I'm
the very damn man that shot him," and those neck
veins would just crawl up!"

SIDE II, Band 6: LORD BARNETT (CHILD 68)

sung by Mrs. Ella Parker. Recorded in Fairfield,
Franklin Co., Jan. 20, 1964, by P. Dunford.

Mrs. Parker learned this version of "Young Hunting"
from her mother in Kentucky. The ballad is well-
known in this country, the most common make-up
being the "Love Henry", an Americanized form which
can be heard on an early commercial record, Dick
Justice's "Henry Lee" (Brunswick 367, or Folkways
Anthology, FA 2951). The present version is a
rarer Scottish form closely paralleling the Child
D text, known in this country as "Lord Bonnie" or
"Lowe Bonnie", - on Jimmie Tarlton's old recording
(Col 15763D). Some notes on the text: the cause of
the girl's apparent jealousy is not clearly established;
the expression "lie a bronze" may refer to bronze cups
used in the old medical practice of bleeding; the ac-
tion in the 7th verse harks back to the time when it
was felt that a murderer could not touch his victim,
or else blood would spring forth; "valleys", in verse
8, means "fathoms".

See: AAFS, BELDEN, BROWN, DAVIS, OWENS, MORRIS,
SHARP, RANDOLPH

Lord Barnett he was a hunting man,
A-hunting he did go,
With his hunting horn all around his neck
And his broad-sword by his side.

He rode and he rode 'til he come to the town,
He knocked and tingled at the ring;
There's none so ready but his own true love
For to rise and let him in.

"Come in, come in, my own true love,
Come in, come in," says she,
"For you shall have a burning fire
And a candle to give you light."

He was sitting in his true loves arms
A-kissing her so sweet,
With a penning knife she had in her hand
She wounded him fully.

"Oh live, oh live, Lord Barnett", said she,
"Oh live, oh live," said she,
"There is nary a doctor in this town
Can lie a bronze to thee."

"How can I live, how can I live,
How can I live?" says he,
"Oh don't you see my own heart's blood
Come twinkling down so free?"

So she rose up early next morning,
She rose at the break of day,
Saying, "Lord Barnett's dead and in my room,
I'd free-lie have him away."

Some took him by his lily-white hand,
Some took him by the feet,
They threw him into the middle of the sea
Which was fifteen valleys deep.

She dressed herself in Lord Barnett's clothes,
A-hunting she did go,
With his hunting horn all around her neck
And his broad sword by her side.

She rode and she rode 'til she come to a bird
A-sitting on a briar;
"Go back, go back, go back," says it,
"You killed a noble squire."

"Come on, pretty bird, come set by me,
Come and sit on my knee,
For your cage shall be made and linked with gold,
And hung on a green willow tree."

SIDE II, Band 7: YOUNG CHARLOTTE (LAWS G 17)

sung with guitar by Vern Smelser, Paoli. Recorded
June 11, 1963, by P. Dunford, A. Rosenbaum, and
P. Siegel. Henry Belden has written that "this
tragic ballad is perhaps the most widely and best
known of native American folk songs." (BELDEN, p.
308) It was written by Seba Smith (1792-1868)
and was published in 1843 in The Rover, vol. II,
no. 15, p. 225, under the title "A Corpse Going to
the Ball," based on a reported actual occurrence
on the eve of January 1, 1840. Helen Hartness
Flanders credits credits William Lorenzo Carter, a
Mormon from Benson, Vermont, who was long believed to
be the composer of the ballad, with expanding it to
"bring it closer to the conventions of the popular
ballad", setting it to the tune of "The False-
Hearted Knight" (Child 4), the so-called "western
tune", which Smelser sings here, and spreading it
through the West. Smelser learned the song from
his grandmother, who learned it in Kansas.

See: Phillips Barry, "William Carter, the
Bensontown Homer," JAFL, Vol. XXV, and AAFS,
BELDEN, BREWSTER, EDDY, FINGER, FLANDERS &
BROWN, GARDNER & CHICKERING, HUDSON,
LINSCOTT, LOMAX IV, OWENS, RANDOLPH

Young Charlotte lived on a mountainside
In a wild and lonely spot,
Where there was no dwelling for three long miles
Except her father's cot.

And yet on many a winter night
Young swains would gather near,
For her father held a social board,
And she was very fair.

One New Year's Eve as the sun went down,
Far looked her wistful eye
From out the frosty window pane
As the merry sleighs dashed by.

At the village fifteen miles away
Was to be a ball that night,
Though the air was very piercing cold,
Her heart was warm and light.

How lightly beamed her laughing eye,
As a well-known voice she heard,
When dashing up to the cottage door,
Her lover's sleigh appeared.

"Oh daughter dear!" her mother cried,
"This blanket around you fold,
For 'tis a dreadful night abroad,
And you'll take your death o'er cold."

"Oh, nay, oh nay," young Charlotte cried,
And she laughed like a gypsy queen.
"To ride in blankets a-muffled 'round

I never could be seen!"

Her bonnet and her gloves were on,
She spring into the sleigh;
And down they sped o'er the mountainside
And o'er the hills away.

How muffled beat, so silently,
Five mile at length were passed,
When (Charles) with few and shivering words
The silence broke at last:

"Such a dreadful night I never saw,
My reins I scarce can hold."
And Charlotte then faintly replied,
"I am exceedingly cold."

He cracked his whip and he urged his steed
Much faster than before,
Until five more dreary miles
In silence had passed o'er.

Quoth Charles, "How fast the freezing ice
Is a-gathering on my brow,"
And Charlotte still more faintly said,
"I'm getting a-warmer now."

Thus on they rode through the frosty air,
Through the glittering cold star light,
Until at last the village lamps
And ballroom came in sight.

They reached the door and Charles sprang out,
He held his hand to her.
"Why sit you there like a monument
That hath no power to stir?"

He called her once and he called her twice--
She answered not a word;
He asked her for her hand again,
But still she never stirred.

He took her hand in his, 'twas cold!
And hard as any stone,
He tore the mantle from her face
And the cold stars o'er it shone.

And there he sat down by her side,
And the bitter tears did flow;
He cried, "My own and charming bride,
You never more shall know!"

He twined his arms around her neck,
He kissed her marble brow,
And his thoughts flew back to where she'd said,
"I'm getting a-warmer now."

Then quickly to the lighted hall
Her lifeless form he bore,
Young Charlotte's eyes had closed for aye
And her voice was heard no more.

He put the corpse into the sleigh
And with it started home,
And when he reached her cottage door,
Oh how her parents mourned.

They mourned the loss of their daughter dear,
Young Charles wept o'er the tomb,
And after years he died of grief,
And they both lie in one tomb.

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SIDE II, Band 8: THE SOLDIER AND THE LADY (LAWS P 14)

sung by Shorty and Juanita Sheehan, with fiddle and guitar. Recorded in Franklin, Johnson Co., Sept. 16, 1962, by A. Rosenbaum.

Shorty learned this song, which goes back at least to the 17th century "The Nightingale's Song; or the Soldier's Rare Musick and Maid's Recreation" from his mother in Tennessee. It has special meaning to Juanita because Shorty first sang it to her at a time when he was a soldier as well as a fiddler.

See: BELDEN, LOMAX I, RANDOLPH, SANDBURG, SHARP

It was early one morning, one morning in May,
I saw a fair couple a-wending their way,
One was a lady as fair as could be,
And the other was a soldier and a brave lad was he.

They walked by the river for an hour or two,
When from a satchel, a fiddle he drew;
He played her a message that made the hills ring.
"Hark, hark," said the lady, "hear the nightingales sing!"

Said the lady to the soldier, "Will you marry me?"
"Oh no," said the soldier, "this never can be,
Oh no," said the soldier, "that never can be,
For I've a wife in Columbus and children twice three."

Young ladies, young ladies, take this warning from me:
Never place your affections on a soldier so free,
Never place your affections on a soldier so free,
For if you do he'll deceive you as mine has done me.

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