

MOVING
STAR
HALL
SINGERS
AND
ALAN
LOMAX
SEA
ISLAND
FOLK
FESTIVAL

Johns Island, S.C.
Recorded by Guy Carawan

Folkways Records FS 3841

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID GAHR



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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

SEA ISLAND FOLK FESTIVAL

Moving Star Hall Singers and Alan Lomax



From Moving Star Hall to Newport
Performers include Mrs. Janie Hunter (left), Mrs. Isabel
Simmons, Benjamin Bligen, James W. Mackey, Mrs. Mary
Pinckney, and Mrs. Ruth Bligen. (Photo by Dibble.). Cour-
tesy of Charleston News & Courier, S.C.

FOLK MUSIC AND THE WAR ON POVERTY

We are talking now in this country about a war on poverty. Esau Jenkins is trying to get funds for this area -- which certainly qualifies. These festivals can play an important roll in the community in this war on poverty program. Aside from the need to teach skills and create jobs for people, psychological needs must be met. For people who have been conditioned to be ashamed of the way they express themselves, these festivals begin to create pride in the parts of their heritage that are beautiful. People who have been taught that they are useless begin to see that they have something very special to offer. On Johns Island, as elsewhere, it is usually the poorest and least educated people who are keeping alive the older folk ways. A festival of this kind is a natural for reaching these people and getting their participation. Any community center or settlement house trying to build community spirit and reach grass roots people could profit from the kind of joyous gatherings that result from these festivals. Aside from using the music to draw people out to interest them in literacy schools, vocational training, etc., there is no reason that folk music should not be considered a natural resource to be developed.

Guy Carawan

ABOUT THE SINGERS

The Moving Star Hall Singers pictured above are all life-long residents of the Johns Island Community. Four of them are descendents of one great singer, now deceased but recognized as a leader and teacher of a large number of old songs and stories. Another of the singers married into this family.

From left to right they are Mrs. Janie Hunger, a daughter of Joe Bligen; Mrs. Isabel Simmons, another daughter; Benjamin Bligen, a son who looks and sings a great deal like his father; James Mackey; Mrs. Mary Pinckney, Mrs. Hunter's daughter; and Mrs. Ruth Bligen who married another of Joe Bligen's sons.

While Moving Star Hall claims 70 or 80 fine singers, these six are perhaps representative. They work at a variety of jobs -- the women doing primarily domestic work (the backbone of the economy) for \$15 - \$25 a week. The men can handle a variety of skills from carpentry to farming and mill work. All supplement their incomes by seasonal picking on farms here. Mrs. Hunter has raised 13 children and has 31 grandchildren, Mary contributing five. All of these people work hard and long hours during the week and spend Sunday in a full schedule of Church gatherings culminated in a two or three hour prayer meeting at Moving Star Hall.

The group ranges in age from 25 to 65. As Mrs. Hunter explains, most of them began singing seriously and learning the old songs at the age of 12. Joe Bligen himself began learning songs at the age of twelve, and died when he was 75.

ABOUT THE SONGS

"All these songs go way back yonder in slavery time, when them old people didn't have nothing to do but grow sweet potatoe and corn and grind corn grits, and then they sat down and taught us these old songs. Always it was families together, we sit down by the old chimney fire and were taught these old songs like Ezekiel in the Valley and Jonah Man and See God Ark, and the story of Mary & Jack -- that's a true life story."

Remember Me: "That song always lets you know that God always will remember you. That's a real heart-warmin' song! There's two airs to that song -- in the high meter and in the low meter. And when you say 'Oh Lord, do remember me,' that's just like you're praying. You always feel like when you sing that song, the Lord is looking after you." High meter means you sing 'em fast and clap; low meter means you sing 'em slow without clapping. Sometimes you sing one verse slow, then go on off fast and shout with 'em, shout and clap.

See God Ark: "The old man sang that. You know Benjamin can sing that and he still can't sing it as much as the old man did. Oh, he was a singer. He must have learned these songs from his older people, 'cause he said his older people were singing people too. They were raised up on Johns Island too."

Ask the Watchman How Long: "That's a special New Years song. When you get on your knee to watch and everybody have it in mind how long before we see the New Year coming in, we all praying and hoping that we'll see the New Year, so that song was made up for that. When you get off your knee and we see another new year, then everybody sing that song and get happy off it for they're glad to see the New Year."

Ezekial in the Valley: "That's a song from part of the Bible. Ezekial was a prophet, and Jesus command Ezekial to go in the valley and preach to the bones. Ezekial say 'Lord, what could I preach to the dry bone? When I preach to the live and they don't espound.' And Jesus told him to go and preach anyhow -- tell them dry bone that they must hear the word of the Lord, for the time is now at hand."

"We sing these old songs because we made our daddy a promise. He tell us that one of these days he gonna leave us, but 'though he leave us he still be with us as long as we keep these old songs up. We promise him, long as we live, we sisters and brothers, we will remain singing these songs. 'Ask the Watchman' is my father's famous song, and when we sing that song, we just feel like he's here with us."

Sea Island Folk Festival -
The Moving Star Hall Singers

SIDE I, Band 1: REMEMBER ME

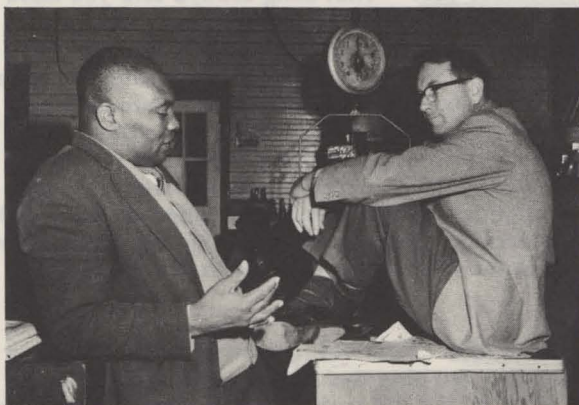
Remember days past, Remember me,
Remember days past, Remember me,
Oh Lord, Remember me.

Well, Remember dying days
Remember dying days
Oh Lord, Remember me.

(Hum)

Howdy do, everybody. I am very, very happy to see so many faces. I want to welcome you all to our home. I cannot welcome you all enough. I just wish you all could just stay with us until the 25th morning.

Janie Hunter



Esau Jenkins & Myles Horton of Highlander Folk School planning community center. (Photo by Ida Berman)

SIDE I, Band 2: MEET ME IN GALILEE

Glad to see so many faces. At this time I try to bring to you "Jesus laid in the Tomb. And when his disciples, Mary and Martha

Jesus Christ declared that I will go and see." And I decided to sing this and you'll hear it.

James Mackey

Oh Mary, O Lord, If you want to see me
Meet me in Galilee.
Oh didn't you see me,
Ay Lord,
If you want to see me,
Meet me in Galilee.
Oh, tell me Mary
Ay Lord,
If you want to see me,
Meet me in Galilee.
Oh, one morning soon,
Ay Lord
Want to see me,
Meet me in Galilee.
Oh, in Galilee
Oh Lord
If you want to see me,
Meet me in Galilee.
Oh, Just roll the stone away
Oh Lord
If you want to see me,
Meet me in Galilee.
Oh, he promised us,
Oh Lord
Tell my disciples,
Meet me in Galilee.
If you want to see me,
Ay Lord,
Want to see me,
Meet me in Galilee.
(shout)

SIDE I, Band 3: ASK THE WATCHMAN HOW LONG
(New Years Eve Song)

We don't know how long will we meet together.
Neither we don't know how long we sing together.
This time next year we all ask Watchman, "How long?" We don't know how long before the roll call.

Janie Hunter



Ida Berman- Photo. Courtesy of Thorsten Horton

Ask the Watchman how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, we don't know how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, in '64 how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, ask my brother how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Well, ask my daughter how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Well, ask my Preacher how long
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, all my neighbors how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, before the roll call
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, just a few more risings,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, ask my leader how long
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Well all my neighbors how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, just a few more risings,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Oh, soon it will be over,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Well, just a few more risings,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Well, soon it will be over,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Watchman, how long
 How long, how long
 How long Watchman, how long,
 (shout)
 In '62 how long
 How long Watchman, how long,
 In '64 how long
 How long Watchman, how long,
 You know how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Ask my friends how long,
 How long Watchman, how long,
 Ask my preacher how long
 etc...
 Brother Jenkins, how long,
 etc...



Moving Star Hall Singers doing a "Shout" at Newport



Alice Wine in front of Moving Star Hall.



Moving Star Hall Singers doing Row Michael Row at the Newport Folk Festival, 1964.

SIDE I, Band 4: SEE GOD'S ARK A'MOVING

Before God destroyed the people on Earth, he warn-
 ed Noah to build an ark. And after Noah built the
 ark, I believe he told Noah to warn the people...
 that they might change their wicked ways before He
 came upon them and destroyed them. And when
 Noah had done build his ark, I understand that some-
 body began to raise a song. And the song began to
 move off, I understand, like this:

Benjamin Bligen

Oh, see God ark
 See God ark
 Oh, see ark
 See God ark a'moving.

Tell me how long,
 See God ark
 Tell me how long,
 See God are a'moving.



Courtesy of Thorsten Horton

Ask my class how long,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Tell me how long,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Let me tell you the news,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Well, God said to Noah
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Tell him to build an ark,
See God ark

Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.
I want you to warn the land
See God ark,
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Well, I want you to see from the rock,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Oh, you know I gonna destroy the land,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

(shout)
Ask my partner how long,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Ask my class how long,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Ask my class how long,
See God ark,
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Tell me how long,
See God ark,
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.

Sister how long,
See God ark
Tell me how long,
See God ark a'moving.
(That's all)



Courtesy of Thorsten Horton



Courtesy of Thorsten Horton

SIDE I, Band 5:

Alan Lomax - Talk about Sea Island Folk Festival
and Texas Folk Tale - Having a Hard Time: Texas
Hide and Seek Song - All Hid.

SIDE II, Band 1: EZEKIAL IN THE VALLEY

Ezekial in the valley
hmmmm
Ezekial in the valley
hmmmm
Ezekial in the valley
hmmmm, Lord,
Time draws near.

Oh, Ezekial, Ezekial
hmmmm
Ezekial, Ezekial
hmmmm
Ezekial, Ezekial
hmmmm, Lord,
Time draws near.

Ain't you heard me call you?
hmmmm
Ain't you heard me calling?
hmmmm
Ain't you heard me calling?
hmmmm, Lord
Time draws near.



James Mackey. (Photo - G. Carawan)



Mary Pinckney. (Photo - G. Carawan)

Oh, Ezekial, won't you answer?

hmmmm

Ezekial, won't you answer?

hmmmm

Ezekial, won't you answer?

hmmmm, Lord

Time draws near.

These bones, these bones,

hmmmm

These bones, these bones,

hmmmm

These bones, these bones,

hmmmm, Lord,

Time draws near.



John Smalls is the person who runs the Christmas Watch meetings.



Courtesy of Thorsten Horton

These bones going to rise again,

hmmmm

These bones going to rise again,

hmmmm

These bones going to rise again,

hmmmm Lord,

Time draws near.

Oh, somewhere up the valley,

hmmmm

Oh, somewhere up the valley,

hmmmm

Somewhere up the valley,

hmmmm, Lord,

Time draws near.

That's a long song. Tells you all about the bone

-- from your foot bone to your ankle bone...

I know it too, your ankle bone back up to your knee bone, your knee bone onto your thigh bone, and go right on up to your skull bone.

Janie Hunter

SIDE II, Band 2: Gullah Folk Tale -
BARNEY MC CABE

Once upon a time it was a twin sister and brother. The sister name was Mary and the brother name was Jack. So one day they decided to went on a travelling, just for a little walk. So the brother was a wise boy. So he said to his sister, said "Go and ask Mother, could you go with us." And Sister went in the house and asked the mother, and Mother said "Yes Children, you all may go, but be careful."

So Jack said "Wait a minute Sister," and Jack went to the barn and get three grain of corn. And Mary said to Jack, said "What you gonna do with that corn?" Jack said "In a long while you will see." So he put the corn in his pocket and they went on travelling. And they travelled and they travelled... until they got to a house beyond the village. And Jack said "Oh Sister," said "I got to go back, or call Mama, and tell her I leave a glass of milk on the dining room table, and if you see that glass of milk turn to blood, turn my three dogs loose, because I realize that I'm in trouble."

So they get tired, it was come dark and way down... they get weary and tired. And then they went

and knocked at an old lady house. And the old lady run to the door, say "Who is it?" And Jack say "Me, mama," said "Could we spend the night here?... 'cause we far from home and we very tired." And the old lady say "Oh yes, come on in."

And all that time, it was a witch-craft and the children didn't know it. She hurry and put the children to bed, said "Let me feed y'all first." And she set the table and fed the children and put them to bed. And all that time the old witch was thinking what to do. The old witch had a knife he called Tommy Hawk. And she put the children to bed, and all that time began to sharpen the knife, said:

"Penny get your knife
Penny get your knife,
Penny get your knife, go shock 'em, shock 'em.

Hump back a Josie back a see antony
Mama and my daddy tell me so,
See so, I think it so,
Tam-a-ram-a-ram."

The children say "Grandma, what's all that? I can't sleep." She say, "Oh that ain't nothing son, but your Grandma frock tail switchin' to get your supper hot." And Jack think the same time, Jack feel in his pocket, and the old lady keep sharpening the knife and Jack drop one corn to the window, and that corn turn a ladder. And the old witch have two pumpkin in the bedroom where Jack was sleeping. And Jack got the two pumpkin and put them in the bed and covered them over and pretend that was him, and Mary was in the bed. And then Jack climbed the ladder down and they start travelling for home.

The old lady sharpening her knife faster:

"Penny get your knife,
Penny get your knife,
Penny get your knife, go shock 'em, shock 'em.
Hump back a josie back a see antony,
Mama and my daddy told me so,
See so, I think it so,
Tam-a-ram-a-ram."

Grandma say "Hush" say "I don't hear nothing" say "Maybe they're sleeping." And Grandma sneak in the room, go over sneak in the room, and run back

in the kitchen and get a dishpan, and pull back the cover and when she think she putting the meat in the pan for cook for breakfast, he drop the pumpkin in the pan. And Jack and Mary was long gone.

And Grandma run back and get the old axe he call Tommy Hawk. And she run down Jack and Mary, and Jack drop another corn and it turn a tall pine tree. And Jack and Mary flew up on the pine tree. And the old lady start cut on the pine tree, say:

"A cut on the old block, a chip on the new block, a chip on the old block, a chip on the new block"

Then Jack remember he had a bow and arrow in he hand. And Jack point that bow and arrow back at the house and shoot in the dining room and shoot that glass of milk over, and then them dog began to holler. And the mother ran in the yard and turned the dogs loose. And Jack say:

"Barney McCabe! And Doodle-le-doo! And Soo-Boy! Your Maussa (master) almost gone."

Dogs say:

"Maussa, Maussa, coming all the time. Maussa, Maussa, coming all the time."

Old witch say:

"A chip on the old block, a chip on the new block, A chip on the old block, a chip on the new block."

Dogs say:

"Maussa, Maussa, coming all the time, Maussa, Maussa, coming all the time."

They were only just a mile away from where Jack and Mary was. Jack say:

"Barney McCabe! And Doodle-le-doo! And Soo-Boy! Your Maussa almost gone."

"A chip on the old block, a chip on the new block"

Then Jack drop another corn, that was the last corn, and then it turn to a bridge appear. And then when the old witch pull the axe up for chop Jack and Mary in the head, and then (the dogs) cut throat and suck blood. One suck the blood and drag her on the bridge. The bridge bend and that's the way that story end.

(Oh boy!)

("He" and "she are used interchangeably on Johns Island, referring to both men and women.)

SIDE II, Band 3: SOMEBODY STOLE MY HENHOUSE KEY - Children's song

Dog fleas will bite me
No man can get out of here,
I lost my mother's henhouse key
No man can get out of here
I betcha ten dollars I can get out of here
No man can get out of here,
Dog fleas will bite me,
No man can get out of here.
I lost my mama henhouse key,
No man can get out of here.
Dog fleas will bite me,

No man can get out of here.
Betcha ten dollars I can get out of here,
No man can get out of here.
Mama calling for peas and rice,
No man can get out of here.
Betcha ten dollars I can get out of here,
No man can get out of here.
I lost my mama's henhouse key,
No man can get out of here.
(Interchange of singers - repeating same verses)

SIDE II, Band 4: BLUES (made up on the Spot)

When I wake up in the morning
Benjie, try and find yourself a job,
Yes, stop being around here telling me
Oh baby 'bout the time being odd.

(Cupped hands improvising like a muted trumpet)

Hey, don't ride no streetcar
Please walk all over town
Please don't ride no streetcar,
You must walk all over town
Hey one of these days, Benjie
You'll be sorry
That I've gone too far.

SIDE II, Band 5: EZEKIAL IN THE VALLEY
(version two)

Looka what a wonder
Oh...
Looka what a wonder
Oh...
Looka what a wonder
Oh... Lord,
Times drawing near.

Oh, the calling of the thunder
Oh...
Calling of the thunder
Oh...
Calling of the thunder
Oh... Lord,
Times drawing near.

Oh, Ezekial in the valley,
Oh...
Ezekial in the valley,
Oh...
Ezekial in the valley,
Oh... Lord,
Times drawing near.

Oh, he's telling of the dry bones
Oh...
Telling of the dry bones
Oh...
Telling of the dry bones
Oh... Lord,
Times drawing near.

Oh, Jesus telling Ezekial
Oh...
Telling Ezekial
Oh...

Telling Ezekial
Oh... Lord,
Times drawing near.

Oh, head's on the neck bone,
Oh...
Head's on the neck bone
Oh...
Head's on the neck bone
Oh... Lord,
Times drawing near.

SIDE II, Band 6: MARY ROLLED THE STONE
AWAY -
(Easter song)

Mary rolled the stone away
Early on a Easter Sunday morning
Just about the breaking of the day
Angel came from Heaven
Mary rolled the stone away.

I goin' tell you 'bout
He rolled the stone away
Oh Lord, he rolled the stone away
On a new bright sunshine morning
Mary rolled the stone away.

Oh, see my brother yonder comin'
Yes he comin' at the breaking of the day
Oh he bring the news from Heaven,
Mary rolled the stone away.

Oh, Mary rolled the stone away
Mary rolled the stone away,
On a new bright sunshine morning,
Mary rolled the stone away.

(repeat last verse)

SIDE II, Band 7: MOONLIGHT IN GLORY
(Easter song)

Moon, oh the moon
Moonlight in glory,
Oh the moon, moon,
Moonlight in glory,
Oh the moon, the moon,
The moonlight in glory
See Jesus, as he's risen from the dead.

Oh Lordy, the sun, Oh the sun,
Sunlight in glory
Oh the sun, oh the sun, oh the
Sunlight in glory
Oh the sun, oh the sun,
The sunlight in glory,
Oh Jesus, yes he's risen from the dead.
Oh Lordy, the star, oh the star,
Starlight in glory,
Oh the star, oh the star, yes the
Starlight in glory
Oh the star, oh the star,
Starlight in glory
Oh Jesus is risen from the dead.

Oh yes, but Death, oh death
Tell me where is your stinger,
Oh death, oh death,
Where is your stinger,

Oh death, oh death,
Where is your stinger,
Oh Jesus, yes he's risen from the dead.

SIDE II, Band 8: YOU GOT TO MOVE

I got to move, we got to move
We got to move, we got to move,
When the Lord get ready, you got to move.

Oh, you may be rich, you may be poor,
You may be high, you may be low,
But when the Lord get ready, you got to move.

Oh, my brother move, my brother move.
My brother move, my brother move,
But when the Lord get ready, you got to move.

Oh, sometime I'm up, sometime I'm down,
Sometime I'm almost to the ground,
But when the Lord get ready, we got to move.

Oh, we got to move, we got to move,
We got to move, we got to move,
When the Lord get ready, you got to move.

(repeat last verse)

REPRINT FROM SING OUT VOL. 14, NO. 2

The Living Folk Heritage of the Sea Islands

In late October and at Christmas time, Guy Carawan organized folk festivals on Johns Island, South Carolina. He was given financial assistance by the Newport Folk Foundation. A third festival is to be held at Easter time—March 28-29. In the following article, Guy describes the area and explains what he hopes to accomplish there.



by Guy Carawan

The oldest forms of Negro folk life still alive today in the United States are to be found in the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. These low flat islands, covered with swampy marshes, black farm land, and forests of live oaks draped with Spanish moss, have only had bridges and causeways built to them from the mainland since about 1930. Some of them are still only accessible by boat. Because of their relative isolation from the cross-currents of modern life, the sea islands have preserved many aspects of the old slave culture, including the Gullah dialect, the old spirituals and style of singing them, their own folk version of Christianity and "praise house" form of worship, folk tales, and beliefs.

There are hundreds of these islands dotting the coast and on many of them the Negro population is as high as 90%. They are the descendants of the old sea island cotton plantation slaves, who, after the Civil War, acquired small pieces of land. Johns Island is in some ways representative of all these islands. Most of the Negroes are very poor and have large families. Many of them have to go into the nearest big city, Charleston, for work, since there is little opportunity to make a living on the island. There is also a very low level of literacy among the older generation.

For the last five winters, I have been living and working with the people on Edisto, Wadmalaw, and Johns Islands — all near Charleston, South Carolina — helping with their new adult literacy and citizenship schools and recording their old and beautiful singing traditions. As the guest of Esau Jenkins, the most loved and respected

Continued

"grass roots" Negro leader in the area, I was able, from the very beginning, to attend the gatherings where the best singing takes place. Here is a description of the first Christmas Watch Meeting on Johns Island that I attended. It was in 1959, when I had just arrived.

"When the hall had filled and quieted, the singing started. Some woman with a thick, rich, low alto started off in the corner and very soon was joined by some deep, resonant male 'basers' from another corner. Then falsetto walls and moans sailed in to float on high over the lead. By the time the whole group of about sixty worshippers had joined in, each freely improvising in his own way, the hall was rocking and swaying to an ecstatic 'Savior Do Not Pass Me By.' This is a relatively modern hymn of white origin, but, in their style of singing, it was as old as any Negro religious singing in America today. All sorts of overlapping parts and complementary sounds wove and blended together to produce a breathtaking whole, full of rough beauty. I've never heard such colors in the human voice before. Some people did things with their voices that I don't think anyone could duplicate unless he'd grown up in that tradition.

"Song followed song with different people taking turns at leading off as the spirit moved them. I couldn't understand half of what was being sung because of the thick dialect.

"After awhile, different individuals began to pray and give personal testimony while everyone else hummed, wailed, moaned, and answered fervently in response. That sound was the strangest and most beautiful of all. Every person seemed to have his own special musical twists, turns, and vocal colorings which expressed his deepest feelings and said things that words couldn't say. As the fervor mounted at the end of each prayer or testimony, the congregation would soar back into song, sparked by the testifier himself or by someone who felt a particular song at that moment.

"Then the preaching came, with different people telling in their own words the nativity story found in the Bible and their special Christmas feelings. (The many versions of the Christ story told in the Gullah dialect that night, some of them in contemporary terms and settings, would make a beautiful book of sea island folklore.)

"I could hear a single foot tapping in response to the preaching, sometimes rising and then falling to a hush, sometimes increasing in tempo, stopping, or changing to a rapid double time. It punctuated the sermon and added excitement. The tapping came from different parts of the room at different times—but I rarely heard more than a single foot at a time.

"From the moment the watch started with the first song, heads and bodies began to sway, feet to tap, and hands to clap. They sang with their whole bodies. These motions increased in abandonment as the evening went along until finally the 'shouting' started. Someone stood and

started rocking back and forth doing a special rhythmic step and handclap in time to the singing. Others followed and, by the end of the song, the whole group was on its feet singing, dancing and clapping a 'joyous noise to the Lord'. The whole building was rocking in time. Three different rhythms were being carried by the hands, feet, and voice. (I felt like a motor-moron when I tried to do it.)

"The watch went on from midnight to 'day clean' (dawn) in a seemingly informal fashion, but with a near perfect sense of timing for change of mood and pace. Everyone seemed able to sing, lead and pray, preach or give testimony when the spirit moved him—and in a very beautiful way that contributed to the whole. It truly was a group product and form of expression."

This highly developed folk form of worship, body of songs, and style of singing are in danger of complete extinction in another generation or so. Most of the younger generation in this area have lost them to a great extent already. The combined forces of the schools, the organized churches, and the mass commercial culture with its control of radio, records, TV, etc., have been too much for the young people to resist. The finer aspects of their parents' folk culture get practically no recognition from these institutions that play such a large part in their education. Local schools and churches here usually take no responsibility for helping keep them alive. The young people are losing a valuable part of their heritage. They are the victims of a couple of generations of Negro educators who were trained in traditional white schools and taught to ignore or scorn all African and Negro folk culture. Genuine Negro music is discredited. It is no wonder that many of the older people are ashamed to sing the old songs in front of whites and more educated Negroes. In Moving Star Hall, where they feel more secure, the singing is spirited and vigorous.

The purpose of the two festivals recently held on Johns Island (in late October and at Christmas time) and the one to be held at Easter time (March 28 - 29) is to provide some support for groups like the Moving Star Hall Singers and to encourage a revival of the old songs. We are hoping to set an example on Johns Island of how a

revival of this old-time music can provide many joyous occasions, a sense of pride, and possibly some financial remuneration for community improvements. Hopefully, this could be repeated in many other sea island communities. At present we have groups from about a dozen nearby communities coming to participate in the Johns Island festivals. (Thanks to the financial assistance of the Newport Folk Foundation, admission to the festivals has been free for the island people.)

This is the first time that I know of that Negroes have put on their own festival of old-time music for each other and for whites in this area. It was really a break in tradition for about 100 white Charlestonians to come out to the Negro community on Johns Island for these festivals.

The financial assistance of the Newport Foundation also made it possible to bring the Georgia Sea Island Singers to both festivals. It has been a revelation for the singers on Johns Island to see such a model group that has kept alive all aspects of its folk heritage—religious and secular—and sings with such devotion, humor, and pride. On Johns Island (as on nearly all of the sea islands), most of the older secular music—work songs, children's songs and rig plays, dances, folk tales, etc.—has died out except in the memories of some of the older people. But, after getting together with Bessie Jones, John Davis, and the rest of the Sea Island Singers for a session of swapping songs, tales, and dances, the Johns Island singers began remembering lots of older things that they hadn't sung in a long time and expressed the feeling that they, too, might perform them at future programs and festivals. (The Georgia group heard some old songs that they didn't know and said that they wanted to come back to Johns Island to learn them.)

Between festivals, we have been holding informal song fests of the old-time singers, trying to stimulate people's memories, and at the same time, beginning to build a local tape collection. Lorenzo Turner, of Roosevelt University in Chicago and author of Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect, has tapes and notes made here between 1932 and 1947 with informants who have since all died. He has expressed an interest in helping with a project where, by use of tapes, the singers could remember or relearn the songs of their foreparents. Festival. Here are a few of the impressions of one New Yorker, Gil Turner, after he attended the first festival:

"These Carolina islands may be some of the richest picture-takin' country in the USA, spangled with forests of big oaks dripping Spanish moss all over, but the people are poor as hell. Some of the ladies I met here can sing like they invented folk music, but they have to work in people's homes for fifteen dollars a week. 'I don't think anybody has ever gone through a greater 48-hour concentration of real folk music than the Sea Island Festival turned out

to be. Words to describe music like this haven't really been invented. When Bessie Jones and her Georgia Sea Island Singers take over a stage, they come up with a flood of shouts, hollers, spirituals, worksongs, playparties, dances, and whatnots that tell more about people and their folk music in 30 minutes than 30 lectures on the subject in any college. It was almost too much to have them on the same concert together with that equally gifted group, the Singers of Moving Star Hall.

Editor's Note: The following is reprinted from the Charleston, South Carolina, The News and Courier, Sunday, January 19, 1964.

By ALAN LOMAX

Twice in recent months, Johns Island has been host to a folk song festival which, in my opinion, can be of great importance to the life of the South Carolina Low-country.

I don't know how many Charlestonians attended these singing gatherings of the country Negroes of the Sea Islands under the live oaks. Because I happened to attend the first one and because I found it so moving and so full of good potential for the South, where I was born and raised, I wanted to write about it.

We all grew up loving and enjoying the singing of the Negro people. Because it was all around us like the soft air of our land, we took for granted that it would always be there. Only when it had almost entirely disappeared, replaced by the juke boxes, television and booktrained choruses, have we realized how much was disappearing from our lives.

We all know that somehow the Negro has captured in his songs the essence of the pathos, the irony and the hope of the states of the deep South. The question has been how to nurture this tradition of sweet music so that it would continue into our future.

A larger series of questions emerges from the first: What avenues for musical expression will we have after the dust of war and social change and automation has settled? What will be the cultural resources of the various regions of the world? Will each one have its own tradition from which it can build its own culture future, or will all traditions be merged at some mechanically operated center? What will fill our leisure time?

I spent most of my youth traveling around the South and recording the songs in their natural settings for the Library of Congress. There, in our national archives, are preserved thousands of songs virtually forgotten today.

During the same period, the Charleston Society for the Preservation of Spirituals faithfully learned the slave songs of the Sea Islands and presented them on records in books and concerts.

But neither of these efforts affected the Negro community, itself, which turned its back on its old traditions on the ground that they were the symbols of slavery and degradation. Until recently it appeared that Negro folk music was a lost cause.

During the '50s, The Weavers, The Kingston Trio, Peter Seeger and others made folk singing popular among the

"Sunday night put the frosting on the cake with a 'praise house' meeting at Moving Star Hall. It seemed to me that every single member of Moving Star Hall was both a folksinger and folkpreacher of the best kind you can ever hope to hear. When they all got together after the services and started swapping songs, tales, dances, etc., it was almost too much to describe on paper. You'll just have to go down there and see and hear all these things for yourself."

young people of the United States. Most of their material, however, was Southern Appalachian. Negroes figured little in the revival except for Harry Belafonte. Then, during the integration movement, some Negroes—both those who participated in sit-ins and those who did not—began to realize that their songs had an importance beyond politics and a dignity that outweighed their origins in slavery.

The two singing gatherings on Johns Island are first steps in putting these discoveries into action. An audience of farmers and rural workers sat rapt in pleasure as the famous Georgia Sea Island Singers performed the music of their great-grandfathers, as Guy Carawan sang pioneer hoedowns, and as local groups performed the old spirituals of the Charleston area. An electric current of discovery ran through the hall, the thrill of a people finding that they were carriers of a worthy tradition, that what they knew was of interest to the whole wide world.

The next night, in a little country cabin, I heard 50 superb "new" spirituals sung by Johns Islanders who had earlier said that they remembered nothing. Charming animal stories and fairy stories were told and enacted. The material from that one evening would have made a fine book.

More important, however, was the realization that the way for Southern folk music to continue to grow and the way for regional culture to grow was that local festivals like this should be held continually wherever the tradition is still alive today. My assertion at the meeting was that there were more good folk singers among the 300 attending the Johns Island festival than among the 45,000 people who attended the Newport, Rhode Island festival a month earlier.

My prophesy is that one day this Charleston festival will attract a far bigger crowd and will earn even more money for the region. More important than that, however, is that the musical genius of the South, which has helped to give Southern life its flavor in spite of our special problems, will be alive again—that the strong, sweet music of our world will be linking us together and will be one of the symbols by which the South will be known and of which we will be most proud.

The seeds have been sown in the live oaks near your city, and my hope is that, because the musical soil is so rich there, the growth will be generous and of benefit to the generations to come. Guy Carawan has organized and produced this festival largely as a testimony of his personal faith in the area from which his family came. He will certainly have full support.

