

negro folk music of alabama secular

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RECORDED IN ALABAMA BY HAROLD COURLANDER

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FIELD BLUES
URBAN BLUES
HARMONICA BLUES
FIELD CALLS
RING GAMES
LULLABIES
WORK SONGS
STORY

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NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA

FOLKWAYS FE 4417

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NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA

RECORDED BY HAROLD COURLANDER
IN THE COURSE OF A FIELD TRIP
SPONSORED BY THE WENNER-GREN
FOUNDATION

ASSISTED BY RUBY PICKENS TARTT
AND EMMA COURLANDER

VOLUME I: SECULAR MUSIC
VOLUME II: RELIGIOUS MUSIC

INTRODUCTION, NOTES AND TEXTS BY HAROLD COURLANDER

These recordings were made in central and western Alabama in January and February, 1950. They are presented as study materials as well as music for good listening, and should contribute fresh documentation of what American Negro folk music really is.

The deformation that such music has undergone in the process of popularization at the hands of its friends and admirers is considerable. "Spirituals, for example, in becoming art songs have lost much that is genuine and inspiring. Negro singing styles that have been incorporated into popular music have become, in many instances, caricature. The trend away from the old folk style is felt even in many Negro churches which today prefer trained choirs which can "read songs from the book" to the old style of participative singing.

These six albums do not attempt to cover the entire field of Negro folk music, but rather to present a number of facets of the musical life of a given area. Other recordings of American Negro folk music which contribute valuable study materials to the total picture have been gathered by John and Alan Lomax and others for the Library of Congress. And Frederick Ramsey, Jr., has documented certain aspects of Negro folk music of this general region in a series of recordings issued by Folkways Records in 1955.

The emphasis in these recordings from Alabama is upon musical content and style rather than performance. Selections have been made with a view to documentation. "Performances" have been sacrificed to make way for what seem to be more traditional folk styles. But the sheer music in many of these recordings is not easily excelled.

There are already so many writings on the subject of American Negro music that it would be superfluous to attempt to discuss the matter at length here. The controversy concerning African vs. European elements in the Negro music of the United States still goes on. It is hoped that these recordings will help to shed further light on the study of origins. While the importance of European influences on Negro singing is taken for granted, it may be interesting to note briefly some of the West African elements that appear to have played a part in the creation of American Negro music.

Handclapping as employed in church singing and children's ring games has a clear African precedent. Clapping in religious singing is common in West Africa and in the West Indies, and clapping in the children's game songs is almost universally practiced in West Africa.

Responsive singing of the kind observed in American Negro work songs, ring games, and religious meetings is also frequently in the African pattern. The existence of a singing leader and one or more "helpers" and the treatment in which the "helper's" lines sometimes overlap those of the leader, is African in conception. Many religious songs cannot be sung properly without this balance.

The rhythmic punctuation by the work gang's "hanh!" (timed to the blow of the pick or hammer), the preacher's "anh hanh!" or "my friends" in the delivery of poetic-prose sermons, and the "ah-hmm!" or "anh-hanh!" of the old field blues all derive from a style that is African rather than European.

The strong tradition for community singing of work songs is in itself African.

Older people in the South sometimes place a finger in one ear while singing, so as to better hear and thus control their own voices while participating in a group song, a practice that has been observed both in West and East Africa.

The counter-clockwise ring shout, notwithstanding all its proscriptions against "dancing", is a clear survival of the African circle dance. In a recording made of a ring shout some years ago by Alan Lomax in Texas for the Library of Congress, while the music is not African the general constellation of dancing, hand-clapping, singing, and shouting gives a rather sharp picture of the extent to which African motifs permeate the musical scene. ¹

The conspicuous value placed upon use of the falsetto voice is also in the African tradition.

Among certain non-Baptist cults, such as The Church of God in Christ, the use of the tambourine and sometimes the guitar reflects a fusion of White revivalist and African practices.

The washtub and washboard, used by small secular musical groups, are adaptations of common West African musical devices, and some of the other musical ideas employed by the washboard bands appear to have African inspiration. ²

The humming style used in much Negro secular and religious singing is non-European. Frequently the last consonant of a word or phrase is changed to m or n for softening, producing a humming effect. Thus father is frequently heard as fathum, mother as mothum, angel as angen or angum, there as then, where as when, hammer as hammum, ark as arm, etc. This alteration of final consonants is particularly noteworthy during the singing of "moans", several of which are included in this collection. In ordinary speech this softening does not ordinarily take place, which points toward a clearly established musical principle or value in regard to the alteration. Many available recordings from West, Central and East Africa indicate similar attitudes towards word articulation in singing.

The persistence of songs of protest, recrimination, gossip, and ridicule in the secular music of the Negro has already been amply noted by such observers as Melville J. Herskovits ³ as evidence of the scope of West African cultural influence. U.S. Negro song literature, both secular and religious, shares this African inheritance with other New World Negro cultures

1. LC 102, "Run Old Jeremiah."

2. See notes for "Salty Dog" in Vol. I of this issue. Curt Sachs, George Schweinfurth, and others have noted the presence of the prototype of the "tub" in East Africa, the Cameroons, the Congo, and Nigeria. A portable variant of the earth bow in Haiti, closely akin to the "tub" is described in Courlander, "Musical Instruments of Haiti", the Musical Quarterly, July, 1941. Also see Ethnic Folkways Library album P407, which contains an example of the Haitian instrument.

3. *The Myth of the Negro Past*, New York, 1941.

in Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, other West Indian islands, Surinam, Brazil and Venezuela. Looking only at one facet of U.S. Negro music, the Blues, one sees the extent and importance of this tradition. An overwhelming percentage of Blues songs is made up of songs of complaint (against an individual or the community), ridicule, gossip, or recrimination.

In religious traditions there also remain a number of disguised or diffused attitudes which are shared by other Negro communities in the West Indies, South America and West and Central Africa. Among these are to be mentioned such things as baptismal rites, which have a special non-European character, and ecstatic seizures. One perceives in possession of worshippers by the "spirit" certain unmistakable ties with West African concepts. While ecstatic seizures are universally known, the context of their appearance in U.S. Negro cult worship suggests a continuity of well-established tradition. From time to time this relationship with pre-Christian concept is projected in the words of songs such as "Lord I'm Waiting On You" (Vol. IV, Side II, Band 2).

Throughout West Africa, and among Negro communities in the West Indies and South America, one notes a widespread use of the repeated first line or first couplet of a song. This tradition is deeply rooted in U.S. Negro singing, whether it is in religious or secular surroundings. Many spirituals begin in this fashion, as do many Blues and worksongs.

People still alive in the South a decade or two ago have provided valuable documentation of the persistence of African musical and religious motifs well into the 19th Century. Some of this testimony is found in the book *Drums and Shadows*, compiled by the Georgia Writers' Project and published in 1940. One informant on St. Simons Island declared:

"We used to have big times for the harvest, and the first thing what growed we take to the church so as everybody could have a piece of it. We pray over it and shout. When we have a dance, we used to shout in a ring. We ain't have what you call a proper dance today." (p. 174)

The celebration referred to will be readily recognized as the yam harvest rites practiced over a large part of West Africa, and still found today in Haiti. The style of singing and dancing is clearly indicated to be of African pattern.

Another informant in the same region stated: "When we were young we used to have big frolic and dance in a ring and shout to (the) drum. Sometimes we have rattle made out of dry gourd and we rattle them and make good music." (p. 176)

The drum and the gourd-rattle referred to are, of course, the nucleus of African instrumentation. On the Island of Darien a woman described the traditional drum in a way that leaves no doubt of its West African ancestry:

"You kill a 'coon and you skin it and you tack the skin up side of the house to dry and you stretch it good till it's tight and smooth. Then you stretch it over the end of a hollow tree trunk. . . ." She indicated that such drums were sometimes three feet high, and continued: ". . . It ain't good to use oak if you can help it. It too hard. You take a good cypress or cedar what eaten out on the inside, and you take it and scoop it out and stretch the skin over the end. . . . Alex, he make drum up to two years ago, and we sure have big time doing the dances while they beat the drums." (p. 148)

An informant on Darien described the drums coming in three different sizes, much as they are found in Dahomey and Haiti today. (p. 155)

Nor was the metal percussion instrument forgotten. Metal plates were beaten, along with drums and rattles, apparently in the style of the West African iron bell.



Documentation of this sort must be well considered in evaluating the various elements in Negro religious and secular music as we now hear it.

One interesting field of study, as yet relatively unexplored, is the persistence of old terminology in Negro music and its prevalence in the West Indies and elsewhere as well as in the United States. One form of U.S. Negro religious singing is referred to not as a "spiritual" but as a "moan", or sometimes as a "groan". Moaning or groaning does not imply pain or grief in the usual sense; it is a kind of blissful or ecstatic rendition of a song or prayer, often interlarded with humming and spontaneous melodic variation and improvisation. The song "When You Feel Like Moaning" (Vol. IV, Side I, Band 1) states:

"When you feel like moanin',
It ain't nothin' but love...
When you feel like groanin',
It ain't nothin' but love..."

One example of the "moan" or "groan" is found in Vol. IV, Side II, Band 1, "It's Getting Late In the Evening". Another is the prayer by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward in Vol. II, Side II, Band 4

Of some significance is the fact that the term "groaning" is used also among some West Indian cults for ecstatic religious activity of a differing kind, but relating directly to supplication.

The term "jumping", so commonplace in our Jazz lingo, is found among the so-called Pocomania cults of Jamaica to describe "laboring in the spirit." Another Jazz term, "mamma beat", used in reference to a hard left-hand beat on a drum, has explicit connections with drumming in the West Indies and West Africa. In Haiti, Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Trinidad, for example, certain drums that take the hard stick beats are called "mamma". The same terminology is heard in Dahomey and Nigeria.

Other terms associated with Negro religious and secular music may yet be found to derive out of an old tradition, rather than being spontaneous inventions.

The discussion of surviving non-European traits in American Negro singing is not intended to create the impression that this music is "African", however. A number of the songs that may be heard in Negro communities are delivered in an English style of some antiquity, and appear to be completely outside the realm of what is sometimes called "Afro-American" music. Some

"Negro music" in Louisiana is basically French in character; elsewhere it is colored by regional tradition, the phonograph and radio, as is the case with folk music anywhere.

The notation of African atavisms is intended only to point out the complicated and composite nature of American Negro music.

In the end it has to be recognized that regardless of the sources of inheritance, in general the American Negro has produced over the years a music that is clearly his own. It is familiar to all of us, yet easily distinguishable from other musical trends in America. It has maintained its own identity and integrity in the midst of the nervous disorders with which our musical life has been afflicted. And it has deeply affected not only the development of Jazz and various styles of popular songs, but it has also influenced the White folk music in the South. Studies of American Indian musical culture indicate that African elements have infiltrated some Cherokee singing (Herzog) as well as that of other tribal groups.

While the musical relationship between Negro religious and non-religious songs is evident, there is a strong prejudice on the part of deeply religious people against singing secular or "sinful" songs. Many Negroes refuse to sing not only Blues, but worksongs, ballads, and lullabies as well. But the social need for singing has created some hybrid types. Railroad workers may sing a modified spiritual in work time, or invent a work song with familiar religious motifs. In a prison camp near Livingston, Alabama, when the prisoners were invited to sing, about a third of them would participate only in religious songs. Some knew only secular songs, and others had no feeling against singing both types.

Many spirituals can be sung fast time or slow time... referred to as common meter and long meter. An example of common meter is to be found in "Move Members Move", Vol. II.

The pieces included in these six albums were selected from among several hundred recorded during a field trip sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Preparation of the albums and the accompanying text was made during the course of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Special thanks are due to Ruby Pickens Tartt and Pratt Tartt of Livingston, Alabama, Thomas M. Campbell of Tuskegee, and S. W. Boynton of Selma, whose knowledge of the countryside and its people contributed immensely to the value of the field trip.

The song texts which appear in this article have been transcribed as closely as possible to conventional English, and wherever practical the suggestion of "dialect" has been avoided. It is felt that the colloquial aspects of Negro songs and speech have been overstressed in many documents. In actual fact, close listening tends to blur the seeming distinction between the dialect of the area and so-called standard English. Certainly there is no more logic in phonetic spelling of Negro speech of Alabama than in phonetic spelling of White speech of the region -- or, for that matter, of any other region. In the following transcriptions, missing vowel or consonant sounds occasionally have been indicated by apostrophes.

VOL. I, SECULAR MUSIC (P 417)

SIDE I, Band 1: MAMMA DON'T TEAR MY CLOTHES. Played by Joe Brown at Livingston, Alabama. The harmonica, usually called the mouth harp, or simply the harp, is an extremely popular instrument in the South. Its inexpensive-ness, its portability, and its adaptability to Negro folk themes have given it a secure place in the musical scene. Its interpretations of familiar songs are very free. Its capacity to produce harmonic effects and difficult passages beyond the limitations or tradition of the voice usually results in virtuoso performances. In some areas the jew's-harp is called a mouth harp. In the spiritual "All God's Children Get Wings", the reference to a harp suggests to many singers either the harmonica or jew's-harp.

SIDE I, Band 2: SOUTHERN PACIFIC. Wherever harmonicas are played in the South the "railroad" piece is to be found. Each performer of a "railroad" piece gives his personal interpretation of the sounds of the onrushing express train, and the titles vary according to the individual's experience -- "Yellow Dog", "Union Pacific", "Cannon Ball Express", or as in this case, "Southern Pacific."

SIDE I, Band 3: BLACK WOMAN. Sung by Rich Amerson at Livingston, Alabama. The ancestor of all city Blues was a type of "field Blues", sung solo in the open air. The simplicity of conception, the "moaning" and use of falsetto, and the impression given that the singer is singing to himself, all seem to relate the field Blues to the once-common field calls of plantation days. Black Woman obviously is sung in an old style. The rhythmic "Ah-hmm" which punctuates the singing throughout is characteristic of old preaching styles, such as in the Abraham and Lot sermon in Volume Two of this issue. Songs such as Black Woman must have had an important influence upon the evolution of the familiar urban Blues.

Well I said come here Black Woman,
Ah-hmm, don't you hear me cryin', Oh Lordy!
Ah-hmm, I say run here Black Woman,
I want you to sit on Black Daddy's knee, Lord!
M-hmm, I know your house feel lonesome,
Ah don't you hear me whoopin', Oh Lordy!
Don't your house feel lonesome,
When your biscuit-roller gone,
Lord help my cryin' time don't your house feel

lonesome
Mamma when your biscuit roller gone!
I say my house feel lonesome,
I know you hear me cryin' oh Baby!
Ah-hmm, ah when I looked in my kitchen Mamma,
And I went all through my dinin' room!
Ah-hmm, when I woke up this mornin',
I found my biscuit roller done gone!
I'm goin' to Texas Mamma,
Just to hear the wild ox moan,
Lord help my cryin' time I'm goin' to Texas
Mamma to hear the wild ox moan!
And if they moan to suit me,
I'm going to bring a wild ox home!
Ah-hmm I say I'm got to go to Texas Black
Mamma,
Ah-hmm I know I hear me cryin', oh Lordy!
Ah-hmm I'm got to go to Texas Black Mamma,
Ah just to hear the white cow I say moan!
Ah-hmm, ah if they moan to suit me Lordy
I b'lieve I'll bring a white cow back home!

Say I feel superstitious Mamma
 'Bout my hoggin' bread Lord help my hungry
 time,
 I feel superstitious, Baby 'bout my hoggin'
 bread!

Ah-hmm, Baby I feel superstitious,
 I say 'stigious Black Woman!
 Ah-hmm, ah you hear me cryin',
 About I done got hungry oh Lordy!
 Oh Mamma I feel superstitious
 About my hog Lord God its my bread.
 I want you to tell me Mamma
 Ah-hmm I hear me cryin' oh Mamma!
 Ah-hmm I want you to tell me Black Woman,
 Oh where did you stay last night?
 I love you Black Woman,
 I tell the whole wide world I do,
 Lord help your happy black time I love you
 Baby,
 And I tell the world I do!
 Ah-hmm, I love you Black Woman,
 I know you hear me whoopin' Black Baby!
 Ah-hmm, I love you Black Woman
 And I'll tell your Daddy on you, Lord!

SIDE I, Band 4: KANSAS CITY BLUES. Sung
 and played on the guitar by "Red" Willie Smith
 at York, Alabama. This is one of an almost
 countless number of variants of a piece that has
 become one of America's best-known Blues.
 But the transmutations it has undergone in the
 process of popularizing are considerable. Willie
 Smith's presentation is direct and rich:

I was first on Main Street,
 Started down Beal,
 Lookin' for the good gal
 They call Lucile.
 She done moved to Kansas
 She done moved to Kansas
 She done moved to Kansas City,
 Honey where they don't like you!
 I want to tell you one thing Baby
 I wouldn't do,
 Don't let no woman think she always love you.
 Call you honey,
 Call you pie,
 Then take loose beef on the fly.
 She done moved to Kansas
 Yes yes
 She done moved to Kansas
 Honey where they don't like you!
 I've got me a little gal
 She's named Lucile
 Ever' time I see her she's hangin' all around
 Mobile!
 She done moved to Kansas City
 Yes
 She done moved to Kansas City
 Honey where they don't like you!
 I was first on Main Street
 Started down Madd
 Lookin' for the gal we call Lizzy Ladd.
 She done moved
 She moved Baby,
 Honey where they don't like you!
 I'd rather be a catfish
 Swimmin' in the sea
 Have a lot of others swimmin' 'round after me,
 She done moved to Kansas
 She done moved Baby,
 Honey where they don't like you!

Originally from the country around Savannah,
 Willie Smith -- who plays his guitar left-handed
 -- now drives a tractor in a lumberyard in York,
 Alabama. He is primarily a product of the
 Georgia cities, and speaks and sings with an
 accent that is regarded as "foreign" in rural
 Alabama. He has played his guitar and sung
 with a number of small bands, but his greatest
 pride is that he learned many songs directly
 from Blind Lemon Jefferson. Willie Smith's
 music, like Willie Smith himself, is a product
 of the urban South. It tends toward performance
 rather than self expression. But on the whole,
 his style is direct and unselfconscious. He sings
 to himself and his friends, and his approach is
 that of a participant rather than a performer. He
 regards the Blues he learned from Blind Lemon
 Jefferson as true folk music.

Willie Smith's repertoire includes such pieces
 as "Bad Rooster," "Up the Road Blues," "Big
 Foot Mamma," "Lectric Chair Blues," "Cairo
 Street Blues," "Broke and Hungry," "Down in

Jail," "Bed Bug Blues," "Kinky-Headed Woman,"
 "Midnight Blues," "Too Tight," "Deep Blue
 Sea," "House Over Yonder," "Salty Dog," and
 many others of similar vintage.

SIDE I, Band 5: SALTY DOG. Played on
 guitar and sung by "Red" Willie Smith, accom-
 panied on "tub" by Huston Townsend. Recorded
 at York, Alabama. Usually called a "tub",
 sometimes a "drum", the washtub was at one
 time a common musical instrument in southern
 United States. Often it was played in complement
 with a guitar and a washboard, sometimes with
 drumsticks, "bones", or harmonica. Small
 bands of this kind, with three or four performers,
 can still be seen in the South, and occasionally
 in northern urban centers such as Chicago and
 New York. The tub is not, as some have
 supposed, simply a demonstration of the Negro's
 facility at making anything into a musical
 instrument. It is an Americanized model of an
 old African instrument, the earth bow. The
 African prototype is made by placing a membrane
 of bark or stiff leather over a hole in the ground
 to provide a sound chamber. To this membrane
 a cord is attached. The other end of the cord is
 connected to the tip of a bowed sapling firmly
 set in the ground at an angle. The string is
 played by plucking or tapping, and the tone is
 varied by pressing upward or downward on the
 bow. The tub which is used in the United States
 is a variant of this originally African device. It
 is constructed in the following way: A washtub
 is inverted and a cord attached to its bottom,
 which acts as a sounding board. A stiff stick,
 usually a broomstick about four feet long, is
 braced against the lip at the outer diameter of
 the tub, and the string is attached to its upper
 end. The tub is played in precisely the same
 manner as the earth bow. The string is usually
 plucked with the thumb and forefinger, or
 sometimes tapped with a stick. On occasions
 another musician will beat sticks on the inverted
 tub as well. This also conforms to the practice
 in Haiti and Africa. It is interesting to observe
 in regard to the tub how its tradition carried
 over into urban music. In certain styles of
 jazz performance, the double bass fiddle is
 played almost precisely as though it were a
 tub rather than an instrument for bowing. The
 over-all tonal effects of the double bass fiddle
 in a jazz orchestra are those of the washtub in
 the street band. The close connection appears
 obvious.

"Salty Dog" begins:

Goin' downtown!
 Gotta get drunk!
 Don't like you to know you're drunk,
 Mamma don't ask, papa don't like!

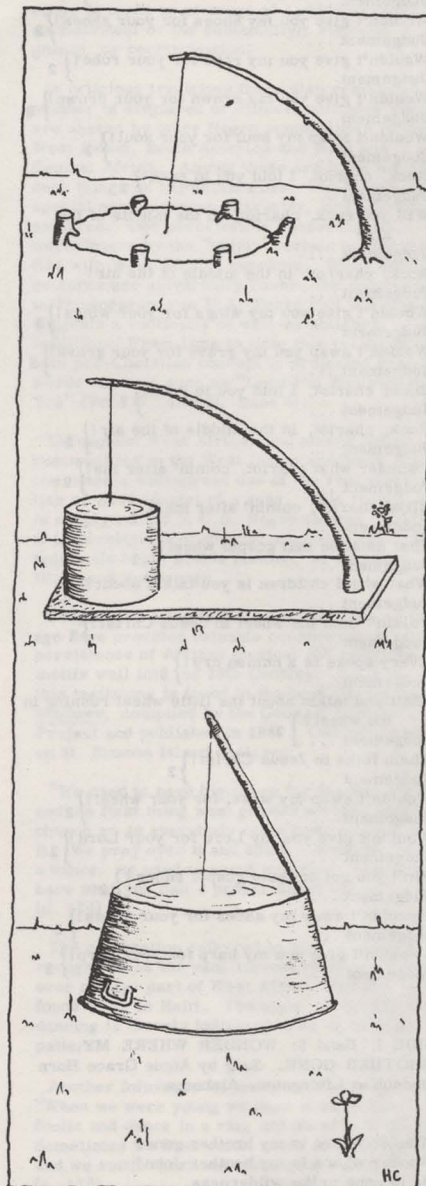
Salty dog!
 Salty dog!
 You doggone salty dog!
 I think you're a devil
 Your mammy don't like you to have a little fun!
 Anyhow,
 Ain't gonna have it, papa don't like it!

Etc.

SIDE I, Band 6: I'M GOIN' UP NORTH. Sung
 by the children of East York School, East York,
 Alabama.

The ring game was at one time a familiar sight
 in the South. In former days it was, along with
 the animal tales told by adults, one of the forms
 of recreation most loved by Negro children. Ring
 games were also played by White children. The
 ring game was both European and African, and
 elements of both traditions are found where this
 kind of play survives today. English rhymes
 and melodies are frequent, but certain traditional
 African elements remain in these games as they
 do in other forms of Negro singing. Ring games
 most frequently are found in rural places where
 children congregate together, such as in the
 playgrounds of small one-room country schools.
 The slow replacement of these frontier-type
 schools, isolated from city trends, by more
 modern facilities, and the introduction of modern
 recreational activities such as a baseball and
 basketball, is contributing to the gradual but
 almost certain disappearance of the ring game.

TOP: AFRICAN EARTH BOW
 CENTER: HAITIAN "MOSQUITO DRUM"
 BOTTOM: U. S. WASHTUB



Among the best known ring game songs in
 Western Alabama are: "Li' Red Wagon Painted
 Blue", "May Go 'Round the Needle", "Stoppin'
 On the Window", "Walkin' the Strawberry",
 "Charlie Over the Ocean", "Amasee", "Rosie
 Darlin' Rosie", "Sippy Liza Jane", "Here We
 Go Loop de Loop", "Green Fields", "Sally
 Walters", "Climb the Ladder", "Tell Me Who's
 Your True Love", "Bird Eye", "Bubba Neal",
 "Old Lady Sally Wants to Jump", "Watch That
 Lady", "Oh Mary Mack", "See See Rider", and
 "I'm Goin' Up North". (See Vol. VI)

Like many of the adult songs in the tradition,
 "I'm Goin' Up North" makes tangent allusions
 that are not readily grasped by the outsider. It
 contains an element of ridicule, already familiar
 in Negro songs, and an obvious irony. Some-
 times the refrain "Satisfied" acts merely as
 rhythmic punctuation, other times it is clearly
 part of the sense of the text:

I'm goin' up north
 Satisfied!
 An' I would tell you
 Satisfied!
 Lord I am
 Satisfied!
 Some peoples up there
 Satisfied!
 Goin' to bring you back
 Satisfied!

Ain't nothin' up there
Satisfied!
What you can do
Satisfied!
Mamma cooked a cow
Satisfied!
Have to get all the girls
Satisfied!
Their bellies full
Satisfied!
I'm goin' up north
Satisfied!
And I would tell you
Satisfied!
Lord I am
Satisfied!
Some peoples up there
Satisfied!
Goin' to bring you back
Satisfied!
Ain't nothin' up there
Satisfied!
What you can do
Satisfied!
Mamma cooked a bull
Satisfied!
Have to get all the boys
Satisfied!
Their bellies full
Satisfied!
I'm goin' up north
Satisfied!
And I would tell you
Satisfied!
Lord I am
Satisfied!
Some peoples up there
Satisfied!
Goin' to bring you back
Satisfied!
Mamma cooked a chicken
Satisfied!
Have to get all the girls
Satisfied!
Their bellies full
Satisfied!

SIDE I, Band 7: LITTLE SALLY WALKER.
Sung by the children of Lilly's Chapel School, Lilly's Chapel, Alabama. This ring game song is widely known both in the South and the North. It is frequently played in Harlem streets, and the play that accompanies it is the same as in Alabama. To the words "Put your hands on your hips, let your backbone slip," etc., each participant in turn stands in the middle of the circle and makes the appropriate motions, ending by a movement toward "the very one you love the best." The chosen one then takes his turn in the center.

Li'l Sally Walker,
Sittin' in a saucer,
Cryin' for the old man,
To come for the dollar,
Ride Sally ride,
Put your hands on your hips,
Let your backbone slip,
Ah shake it to the east,
Ah shake it to the west,
Ah shake it to the very one
You love the best.

SIDE I, Band 8: SEE SEE RIDER. Sung by the children of Lilly's Chapel School. Another ring game with the "Satisfied" refrain, this piece has a different theme:

See see rider
Satisfied!
What's the matter
Satisfied!
I got to work
Satisfied!
And I am tired
Satisfied!
And I can't eat
Satisfied!
Satisfied Lord
Satisfied!
Satisfied!
Satisfied!
Some folks say
Satisfied!

((.....))
Satisfied!
((.....))
Satisfied!
((.....))
Satisfied!
Who had a butcher
Satisfied!
Who had a pig
Satisfied!
They had a rope there
Satisfied!
Around his neck
Satisfied!

See see rider
Satisfied!
What's the matter
Satisfied!
I got to work
Satisfied!
And I am tired
Satisfied!
And I can't eat
Satisfied!
Satisfied Lord
Satisfied!
Mamma mamma
Satisfied!
Leave me alone
Satisfied!
When you were young
Satisfied!
Were you in the wrong
Papa papa
Satisfied!
You the same
Satisfied!
You the one
Satisfied!
Give mamma's name
Satisfied!

Etc.



-- RED WILLIE SMITH, WITH GUITAR

SIDE II, Band 1: MAMMA'S GOIN' TO BUY HIM A LITTLE LAP DOG. Lullaby, sung by Vera Hall Ward at Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Mamma's goin' to buy him a little lap dog. (3)
Put 'im in his lap when she goes off,
Come up horsie, hey hey (2)
Go to sleep and don't you cry.
Mother's goin' to buy you some apple pie.
Come up horsie, hey, hey. (2)

SIDE II, Band 2: SOON AS MY BACK'S TURNED. Lullaby, sung by Earthy Anne

Coleman at Livingston, Alabama. The words and melody are reminiscent of "Down In the Valley".

Darlin' if you love me, give my heart ease }
Soon as my back turned, love who you please }
Darlin' darlin' darlin',
Go to sleep darlin',
Darlin' baby oh puddin' pie.
Darlin' if you love me, give my heart ease. (2)
Soon as my back turned, love who you please.
Ah baby oh baby, baby oh puddin',
Darlin' heart please go to sleep,
Darlin' baby oh mine.
Please if you love me, give my heart ease.
Soon as my back turned, love who you please.

SIDE II, Band 3: SHE DONE GOT UGLY.
Sung by Archie Lee Hill near Livingston, Alabama. This is a work song of a type which used to be very familiar in the South. The tradition of gang singing in America probably dates from the arrival of the first slaves from Africa. It is an important ingredient of Negro group work -- on the plantations, on the railroads, and among prison gangs. The work song is usually heard where rhythmic work is performed, such as tie tamping, track lining, wood-cutting, etc. The work song deals with many themes. It may tell a story of dramatic adventure, it may be a song of social criticism or personal ridicule, it may reflect with patience and irony upon the status of the Negro in this world, or it may recount in traditional terms the sad denouement of a love affair. Sometimes the singing is about the work the men perform. Occasionally work variants of such ballads as John Henry and Stagalee are heard.

The changing economic scene in Alabama leaves the railroad and the prison camps as the main sources of gang singing in that area. While railroads commonly hire a singing leader for their work gangs, Alabama prison regulations frown upon permitting prisoners to sing while at work.

In a more traditional setting "She Done Got Ugly" would be sung responsively by a large group of men.

Says huh Julie }
Hullo gal.
Says early in the mornin' baby,
Half past four,
Says early in the mornin' baby,
Oh half past four.
I come to your window baby,
Knocked on the door.
Says get away from my window baby,
Quit knockin' on my door.
Says got another man baby,
Don't want you no more.
Says huh gal baby,
Done got ugly.
Says huh Julie,
You done got ugly.
Says oh Lord baby,
Don't want you no more.
Says hey gal now,
Hey rock that baby.
Juh baby,
Oh keep him dry.
Says early in the mornin',
Oh soon one mornin',
The clock strike four baby,
And I knocked on the door.

SIDE II, Band 4: NOW YOUR MAN DONE GONE. Sung by Willie Turner near Livingston, Alabama. This song, which is well known in Alabama and Mississippi, is sometimes sung "Another Man Done Gone". The reference in the last stanza to "walking your log" is a threat to kill the woman if she goes away.

Now your man done gone. (3)
To the county farm,
Now your man done gone.

Baby please don't go, (3)
Back to Baltimore,
Baby please don't go.

Turn your lamp down low. (3)
And Baby please don't go,
Baby please don't go.

You know I loves you so. (3)
And Baby please don't go.
Baby please don't go.

I beg you all night long. (3)
And night before,
Baby please don't go.

Now your man done come. (3)
From the county farm,
Now your man done come.

Baby please don't go. (3)
Back to Baltimore,
Baby please don't go.

I'm goin' to walk your log. (2)
And if you throw me off,
I'm goin' to walk your log.

SIDE II, Band 5: FIELD CALL. During slavery days in the South the plantation laborers were not permitted to mingle at will with friends on nearby plantations. Men and women working together over a wide stretch of fields maintained social contact throughout the workday by calling back and forth and singing songs together. Sometimes the songs would be sung in unison, sometimes responses would be sung from different parts of the field. Often this singing simply maintained a feeling of community among the slaves. On occasion the songs were of the type we have come to know as "work songs". Sometimes an individual would sing to the others and they would assist as he went along improvising and developing his theme. "Black Woman" in this album probably was such a piece. But there was also the "call" or "sign". The field call served primarily as communication. It might be a message, or a familiar signal. Sometimes the call contained information. Although the call was in an old tradition (it exists in West Africa and Haiti today), the structure of slave life in America gave it special social importance. The tradition continued on after the Civil War, disappearing slowly as the conditions of life changed. But the calls are still to be heard in many rural parts of the South. This example is a field hand's call, sung by Annie Grace Horn Dodson. The singer gives from memory the call of the field workers during her childhood. She sings both the call -- "Woh hoo, woh hoo!" -- and the response -- "Yeh hee, yeh hee!"

SIDE II, Band 6: FATHER'S FIELD CALL. Sung by Annie Grace Horn Dodson. This is the way her father used to call her mother to say it was time to go in from the fields.

SIDE II, Band 7: CHILDREN'S CALL. Annie Grace Horn Dodson. This holler was one that the children used to call to each other out in the fields.

SIDE II, Band 8: GREETING CALL. Annie Grace Horn Dodson. A man has returned after a long absence, and is greeted by the question:

Hey, Rufus! Hey boy!
Where in the world you been so long?
Hey buddy, hey boy!

And he replies:

Well I been in the jungle!
Ain't goin' there no more!

The answer is of course metaphoric. It would be understood by the listener to mean that Rufus has been in prison or some other kind of trouble.

Mrs. Dodson was about 59 years old when these recordings were made. She lives in Sumter County on the farm once owned by her father Josh Horn, born a slave. Josh took his name from that of his owner, Ike Horn. Annie Dodson sings many kinds of songs, but none more beautiful than her field calls, which she remembers from her childhood. Her father Josh used to sing such calls in his youth. Mrs. Tartt tells about Josh's use of the "holler" in slave days:

"Sometimes while loading corn in the field, which demands loud singing, Josh would call to Alice, a girl he wanted to court on the adjoining plantation, 'I'm so hongry want a piece of bread'; and her reply would be 'I'se so hongry almost dead.' Then they would try to meet after dark in some secluded spot. Josh said they were not given time out for weddings in those days but, 'took up an' went on from dere; dey call hit jumpin' de broom.'"

SIDE II, Band 9: COMPLAINT CALL. Sung by Enoch Brown. Enoch used this call, or a variant of it, each time he came to the bridge at Livingston. Used in this way, the call takes on a magico-religious aspect, and becomes a means of warding off unseen dangers that lurk at critical places along the road. In Haiti special shouts or calls are sometimes given when a person approaches a crossroads.

Ohhh the times don't get no better here,
I'm goin' down the road,
I'm goin' away to leave you!
If the times don't get no better here,
I'm down the road I'm gone!
If the times don't get no better
If the times don't get no better,
Down the road I'm gone!

SIDE II, Band 10: BRER RABBIT AND THE ALLIGATORS. Told by Rich Amerson at Livingston, Alabama. The Brer Rabbit stories of the south are a part of the large unwritten tradition of the American Negro. Since the days of Joel Chandler Harris they have been familiar to many people outside the mainstream of Negro life. There has probably been a good deal of local and individual invention in the development of the Brer Rabbit cycle. Accomplished story tellers have constantly added to the vast body of animal tales. But the animal stories are in large measure out of an old tradition that antedates the arrival of the Negro in the Americas. Many of the stories about Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox and other animals of the North American woods and fields are paralleled by stories about similar animals in the West Indies and other parts of Latin America. And many of them can without difficulty be traced to West African beginnings. Probably most noteworthy about the tales, except for their preservation, is the way in which they have been adapted to the New World environment. The stories have become, as their tellers have become, products of the New World.

One of the most vital aspects of the folk tale is its narration. To read a Brer Rabbit tale in print, even as Joel Chandler Harris wrote it, is to miss the dramatic presentation of the tale teller.

Rich Amerson here tells the story of how Brer Rabbit avenged himself on the predatory alligators.

He entices the alligators to come to a party, promising all kinds of good things to eat, singing, and dancing. Then Brer Rabbit sets the grass afire and destroys them.

Other Brer Rabbit tales, told by Rich Amerson, are found in Vol. III.

VOL. II, RELIGIOUS MUSIC

SIDE I, Band 1: TRAMPIN' TRAMPIN' Sung by Dock Reed at Livingston, Alabama. This spiritual is one made familiar by concert performance. Compare with Marian Anderson's rendition (Victor 1896A).

Trampin', trampin', tryin' to make heaven my home!
I'm trampin', trampin', tryin' to make heaven my home!
It's an up-hill journey but prayin', tryin' to make heaven my home! (2)
I'm leanin', leanin', tryin' to make heaven my home
I'm shoutin', shoutin', tryin' to make heaven my home! (2)

SIDE I, Band 2: DEAD AND GONE. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. This spiritual is perhaps less well known than "Trampin'", but it is in the same tradition. Dock Reed usually sings the words "Dear and Gone". It is his personal interpretation, and adds much to the poetry of the piece. In some instances the word father is sung fath-um, and mother as moth-um; this is a singing style that occurs frequently among spiritual singers in the region.

Dear and gone, Lord! (2)
All the friends I have,
Dear and gone!

Gone to the bone yard! (2)
All the friends I have,
Dear and gone!

My poor mother! (3)
Dear and gone!

Gone to the bone yard! (3)
Oh my Lord!

Never turn back! (3)
Oh my Lord!

My poor father! (3)
Dear and gone!

Gone to the bone yard! (3)
Oh my Lord!

SIDE I, Band 3: ABRAHAM AND LOT. Preached by Rev. E. D. Tuckey at Bogue Chitto, Alabama. The sermon was delivered in the Shiloh Primitive Baptist Church. The theme is "Strife," and the text is taken from the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Genesis. Only a portion of the sermon is included in this recording, for reasons of space. Bogue Chitto is a small Negro village community about twelve or thirteen miles from Selma, Alabama. Reverend Tuckey's preaching style is sincere and appealing. He begins:

"I'm thinking, and the text reads here, brethren, let there be no strife... strife... I'm thinking the first thing of all, there has been some strife around. My friends, if you notice how the outline here reads, there is strife's startin' place... in the outline the strife starts in the home. That's the first thing that strife makes a start at. It starts in the home, then it get in the community. You will bear with me, my friends, that you cannot go from time to time with a whole lot of madness in your heart. That's what they call strife. You got madness in your heart, and then keepin' it hid. God help me this mornin', got it in the heart and just won't let it out. Goin' on and tell me that you love me and yet you know you don't love me. Then God knows your mind and then know your heart and then know all about you. So it is my friends: at this time in the days of old when these words were spoken unto Abram. Abram did not have anything in his heart. No, he didn't have anything in his heart. Because the Lord said if you carry anything in your heart Abram I can't bless you. And I won't let you multiply. I won't let nothin' multiply for you. If you carry a clean heart I'll bless you on it. So it is the Lord said to him in that land of Ur I want you to get out from 'mong your kindred... He tells how Abram and his wife and Lot go to Egypt, where the Pharaoh believes Sarah to be Abram's sister, and how they later continue on to Canaan, where Lot and Abram go different ways and divide the land between them.

SIDE I, Band 4: ROCK CHARIOT, I TOLD YOU TO ROCK. Sung by Rich Amerson, Earthy Anne Coleman, and Price Coleman at Livingston, Alabama.

Rock, Chariot, I told you to rock! } 4
Judgement goin' to find me!
Won't you rock, chariot, in the middle of the air? } 2
Judgement goin' to find me! } 2
I wonder what chariot, comin' after me? } 2
Judgement goin' to find me!
Rock, chariot, I told you to rock! } 2
Judgement goin' to find me! }

Elija' chariot, comin' after me! }
 Judgement ...
 Rock, chariot, I told you to rock! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Rock, chariot, in the middle of the air! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't give you my shoes for your shoes! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't give you my robe for your robe! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't give you my crown for your crown! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't swap my soul for your soul! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Rock, chariot, I told you to rock! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Will you rock, chariot, in the middle of the
 air?
 Judgement ...
 Rock, chariot, in the middle of the air!
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't give you my wings for your wings! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't swap you my grave for your grave! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Rock, chariot, I told you to rock! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Rock, chariot, in the middle of the air! } 2
 Judgement ...
 I wonder what chariot, comin' after me! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Elija' chariot, comin' after me! } 2
 Judgement ...
 That must be that gospel wheel! } 2
 Judgement ...
 What wheel children is you talkin' about? } 2
 Judgement ...
 Talkin' 'bout the wheel in Jesus Christ! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Every spoke is a human cry! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Ain't you talkin' about the little wheel running in
 the wheel? } 2
 Judgement ...
 Them folks in Jesus Christ! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't swap my wheel for your wheel! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Wouldn't give you my Lord for your Lord! } 2
 Judgement ...
 Ain't you got on them gospel shoes? } 2
 Judgement ...
 I wouldn't swap my shoes for your shoes! } 2
 Judgement ...
 I wouldn't give you my harp for your harp! } 2
 Judgement ...

SIDE I, Band 5: WONDER WHERE MY
 BROTHER GONE. Sung by Annie Grace Horn
 Dodson at Livingston, Alabama

Wonder where is my brother gone?
 Wonder where is my brother John?
 He is gone to the wilderness,
 Ain't comin' no more.
 Wonder where will I lie down?
 Wonder where will I lie down?
 In some lonesome place Lord,
 Down under ground.
 Wonder where will I lie down?
 In some lonesome place Lord,
 Down under ground.

SIDE I, Band 6: FREE AT LAST. Sung by
 Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward at Tuscaloosa,
 Alabama.

Free at last, free at last, }
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last! } 2
 One day, one day, I was walkin' along,
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!
 I met old Satan on my way,
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!
 What you reckon old Satan said to me?
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!
 Young man, young man, you're too young to
 pray,
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!
 If I'm too young to pray I ain't too young to
 die,
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!
 Oh free at last, free at last,
 Thank God almighty I'm free at last!
 Old Satan mad and I am glad,
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!

Well he missed his soul that he thought he had,
 Thank God a'mighty I'm free at last!

SIDE II, Band 1: JONAH. Told and sung by
 Rich Amerson and Earthy Anne Coleman at
 Livingston, Alabama. The power of the story-
 teller to give the Testament a dramatic and
 living vitality is demonstrated in this recording.
 Rich Amerson first presents the story of Jonah
 in prose with much imaginative detail, and then
 with Earthy Anne Coleman sings the song. In
 the prose narration he endows the scene with the
 feel of real life. Jonah is instructed by God to
 go and preach to the "wild men", instead of
 which he "got him a truck" and helped the
 stevedores of a ship "stack cotton".

Wake up Jonah, you are the man!
 Reelin' and a'rockin' o' the ship so long! } 2
 Captain of the ship got trouble in mind!
 Reelin'... } 2
 Let's go way down in the hull o' the ship!
 Reelin'...
 Let's search this ship from bottom to top!
 Reelin'...
 Then they found brother Jonah lyin' fast asleep!
 Reelin'...
 Layin' way out yonder in the hull o' the ship!
 Reelin'...
 He said wake up Jonah, you are the man! } 2
 Reelin'...

Well they caught brother Jonah by hands and
 feet!
 Reelin'...
 Well they pitched brother Jonah up overboard!
 Reelin'...
 Well the water whale came along swallowed
 him whole!
 Reelin'...
 Then he puked brother Jonah on dry land!
 Reelin'...
 Then the gourd vine grewed over Jonah's head!
 Reelin'...
 Then the inch worm come along cut it down!
 Reelin'...
 That made a cross over Jonah's head!
 Reelin'...

SIDE II, Band 2: LOW DOWN DEATH RIGHT
 EASY. Sung by Dock Reed at Livingston, Ala.

Jes' tip around muh bed right easy,
 Right easy, right easy,
 Jes' tip around muh bed right easy,
 And bring God's servant home!
 Jes' low down the chariot right easy,
 Right easy, right easy,
 Jes' low down the chariot right easy,
 And bring God's servant home!
 Jes' turn muh bed around right easy,
 Right easy, right easy,
 Jes' turn muh bed around right easy,
 And bring God's servant home!
 Jes' turn muh pillow 'round right easy,
 Right easy, right easy,
 Jes' turn muh pillow 'round right easy,
 And bring God's servant home!
 Jes' turn muh cover back right easy,
 Right easy, right easy,
 Jes' turn muh cover back right easy,
 And bring God's servant home!
 Oh low down, death, right easy,
 Right easy, right easy,
 Jes' low down, death, right easy,
 And bring God's servant home!

SIDE II, Band 3: JESUS GOIN' TO MAKE UP
 MY DYIN' BED. Sung by Dock Reed at
 Livingston, Alabama.

Oh, don't you worry 'bout me dyin'!
 Oh, don't worry 'bout me dyin'!
 Oh, worry 'bout me dyin'!
 Jesus goin' to make up muh dyin' bed!
 Oh, I been in this valley!
 Oh, I been in this valley!
 Oh, I been in this valley!
 Jesus goin' to make up muh dyin' bed!
 Ah, when you see me dyin'
 I don't want you to cry.
 All I want you do for me
 Just low my dyin' head.
 Ah I'm sleepin' on Jesus!

Ah, sleepin' on Jesus!
 Oh, I'm sleepin' on Jesus!
 Jesus goin' to make up my dyin' bed!

SIDE II, Band 4: PRAYER. By Dock Reed and
 Vera Hall Ward at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. This
 piece is of special interest for the interplay of
 the two voices, with the woman providing a
 backdrop for the prayer with what is referred
 to as "moaning". Both the prayer and the
 accompaniment are extemporaneous.

SIDE II, Band 5: PRAYER MEETING. Recorded
 in the Shiloh Primitive Baptist Church, Bogue
 Chitto, Alabama. This is a portion of the
 prayer which opens the church service.

SIDE II, Band 6: MOVE MEMBERS MOVE.
 Sung by Rosie Hibler and family at Marian,
 Mississippi. This is the kind of singing which
 is referred to as "rocking and reeling".

Move members move Daniel! (4)
 there
 Move till I get home Daniel! (4)
 Got on my Little John shoes!
 Got on my little John shoes Daniel! (3)
 Shoes gonna rocka me home Daniel! (4)

Move members move!
 Move members move Daniel! (3)
 Who want to buy this land Daniel? (6)
 Who want to buy this land? } 3
 Who want to buy this land Daniel?
 Move members move Daniel! (2)
 there
 Move till I get home Daniel! (2)
 Move till I get there Daniel! (2)
 Move till I get home Daniel! (4)
 Got on my little John shoes!
 Got on my little John shoes Daniel! } 2
 Shoes gonna rocka me home Daniel! (6)

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