

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4445

SONGS & DANCES of the FLATHEAD INDIANS

LOVE SONGS

SWEATHOUSE SONGS

OWL DANCE SONGS

SNAKE DANCE SONG

SCALP DANCE SONGS

CANVAS DANCE SONG

GIFT DANCE SONG

WAR DANCE SONGS

JUMPING DANCE SONG

HARMONICA SONGS

STICK GAME SONGS

WAKE-UP SONG

LULLABY

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R 59-29

©1953 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE Corp.
701 Seventh Ave., New York City
Distributed by Folkways/Scholastic Records.
906 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4445

SONGS AND DANCES OF THE FLATHEAD INDIANS

FOLKWAYS FE 4445

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4445

Recorded by Alan P. Merriam

SONGS and DANCES of the FLATHEAD INDIANS



FOLKWAYS ETHNIC LIBRARY

FOLKWAYS ETHNIC LIBRARY Album No. FE 4445
© 1953 Folkways Records & Service Corp., 43 W. 61st St., NYC, USA

SONGS & DANCES OF THE FLATHEAD INDIANS



Introduction by Alan P. Merriam

The Flathead Indian Reservation, approximately 65 miles long from north to south and about 35 miles wide, lies roughly between Evaro and Kalispell in Western Montana. The total Indian population listed on reservation rolls is 4,031 people of the Flathead, Kalispell, Kootenai, Coeur d'Alene and Pend d'Oreille tribes of which approximately 2,500 live on the reservation proper. The Flathead group at present is centered around Arlee, Montana. Formerly hunters and gatherers, they have more recently turned to agriculture and cattle raising as a means of subsistence; part time labor for various industries also provides cash income. At the same time hunting, fishing and gathering are still of importance in obtaining food supplies.

As the younger members of the tribe have turned to Western economic pursuits so have they turned away from the customs of their own people. Traditional modes of behavior are disappearing among the Flathead, both because of the indifference of the young people and because the functions which they served no longer find a place in the changed way of life induced by the white man. Among those cultural aspects which do persist, however, none is stronger than the indigenous musical patterns which tend to continue long after the actual situations in which they arose have disappeared. Indeed, the music of the Flathead retains its individuality almost completely in the face of white intrusion; virtually no traces of Western music can be found in the traditional songs. The exception to this musical integrity is found in borrowing from other tribes; songs of the Blackfeet, Shoshone, Nez Perce, Chippewa, Cree, Kootenai, Coeur d'Alene and Snake have been integrated into the music of the Flathead. These intrusions, however, are recognized as such by the singers, and in this respect serve only to enhance the variety of Flathead musical expression.

Flathead music is mainly vocal in character, the only purely instrumental music being represented by the end-blown flageolet. The melodic line is descending as in Plains music, and no harmony is used. Each musical category and each song within each category is an entity in itself never confused with another song or category. Very few of the songs have texts; rather the majority employ nonsense syllables usually beginning with the consonants "h" and "y". The vocal quality employed by the singers is fairly typical of the generalized American Indian voice production. Using a tight, though open throat, but without employing the full resonance possibilities of the upper nasal cavities, a penetrating quality is produced in the style often labeled as the "clenched-teeth" or "ventriloquistic." At the same time this particular voice production is not so pronounced as among many other Indian groups.

The flageolet and the drum represent the instruments of Flathead manufacture. Although the bone whistle and the rattle once played some part in the musical culture, these instruments are not found in use at present; the Flathead still speak of the rattle made from deer hooves, but do not recognize the whistle. The flageolet is of a pattern fairly typical and widespread in American Indian cultures. End-blown, its mechanism for sound production consists of a slit at the upper end of the instrument which is partially stopped, at present either with pine pitch or with chewing gum. Six finger holes, with a seventh added toward the lower end of the instrument, are used; metal or wood is employed in construction. The scale is pentatonic. Two types of drums are in use, the war drum and the hand drum. The former is most often a European bass drum, the latter a circular fir frame with a single head of deer hide. Wild cherry wood is preferred for drumsticks; a cloth pad tied with thongs serves as the head.

Music serves in at least three spheres of activity -- entertainment, religion and personal power. The musician in Flathead culture is in no respect a true specialist supported by the society, although outstanding singers are recognized as such. Nor does the musician receive formal training, learning instead by imitation. The Flathead feel that music originates from three sources -- from other tribes, from individuals who make up songs, and from the vision quest, of which the last is most important. It is in connection with the vision quest that the only direct ownership of songs is found.

The songs presented in this album were recorded by Alan P. and Barbara W. Merriam in the Arlee area of the Flathead Indian Reservation during the summer of 1950 under a grant from the Music Foundation of Montana State University. During the summer's work a total of 226 songs was recorded giving a reliable cross section of the music of the Flathead tribe.



Adolph (Happy) Nine Pipe
 Tony (Buck) Finley
 Paul Finley
 Louie Nine Pipe
 Molly Big Sam
 (Missoula, Victory Field)

Side I, Band 1: WAR DANCE SONG -- As the Snake Dancers approach the dance ground the musicians leave the group and settle themselves in a circle about the war drum which is placed on the ground. A spot to the east of the dance ground is usually selected, and from four to nine musicians participate, each with a drumstick. War dancing is done by men and is basically individualistic and exhibitionistic with each dancer striving to present the most complex steps; movement is counterclockwise around a center pole. In this song, typical of the present Flathead War Dance songs, the song leader calls the attention of his helpers by tapping the basic rhythm lightly on the edge of the drum, finally beginning the first phrase alone; the supporting singers join in at the end of the phrase. The drum pattern is in eighth notes almost to the end of the song when it is halved in tempo and increased in volume; this change is a signal to the dancers. After a brief pause the drumming is suddenly recommenced and the identifying phrase of the song repeated. The singers here are led by Louie Nine Pipe assisted by Paul Finley and five others.

Side I, Band 2: WAR DANCE SONG -- Two types of War Dance songs are differentiated by the Flathead singers, those which have been borrowed from other tribes, of which the previous piece is an example, and those which are the true Flathead War Dance songs. This differentiation is based upon the presence or absence of the coda, the true Flathead songs being of the latter type. The singer here, Louie Nine Pipe, is handicapped by the fact that he is singing alone, but the song is traditional. The singer accompanies himself with a hand rather than a war drum.

Side I, Band 3: WAKE-UP SONG -- The Wake-Up song was used by the Flathead in that capacity which its name implies. Early in the morning -- some say at about 4:00 A.M. and others at the time of false dawn generally -- a group of singers made the round of the camp waking those who were still asleep; this special song was accompanied by bells and rattles. It has been said with some irony by the Flathead that those in the party were "the ones who stayed up all night." While some informants deny the existence of this song type, it was recorded by three different informants; the fact of denial, however, raises the possibility that its use has been learned from neighboring people. In this version the singer is Jerome Vanderburg accompanied by his wife Agnes. He is also playing the hand drum in a basic 4/4 meter with duple accent in eighth notes: At the same time, the accent is more broadly divided into groups of four:

ᑭᑭ

ᑭᑭᑭᑭ

Side I, Band 4: LOVE SONG -- Love songs among the Flathead are more or less the personal property of the individual; such is the case with this song, sung by Paul Finley. He says about it: "There's two little marriage birds; you see them way down in the meadows, in the hay fields, in the grain fields. That's where they hang around in the summer. They're nice little birds. They sound lonesome when the sun is going down; they sing this song. I learned this from the marriage birds." The song is distinctly minor, and downward slurs both between two notes and in the release are used; upward slurs and releases do not occur. At the end of the song the singer says: "This is my own love song."

Side I, Band 5: LOVE SONGS, with Flageolet -- Among the Flathead, as among a good many other Indian tribes, the flageolet is virtually restricted to a repertoire of love songs. For the most part these songs are public property in the sense that anyone may play them; at the same time certain songs are known to be the property of the individual and, in some cases, songs of personal power are assigned to the flageolet. At present the techniques of construction and performance on the instrument are restricted to a small number of older men, a restriction due mainly to lack of interest among young men, which in turn is a source of bitterness to the traditionalists of the tribe. These two songs are played by Jerome Vanderburg on a flageolet made by the musician from a short piece of nickel tubing. The first is a song which the player "learned from the old timers" when he was "about sixteen or seventeen" (some 45 years ago); the second is a song with no special reference. Both are pitched in a pentatonic scale based on AB.

Side I, Band 6: LOVE SONG -- This song, sung by Catherine Nine Pipe, was her mother's personal love song. In singing it the performer underwent a trying emotional experience, for it reminded her of her parents. Much of the deep emotion it elicited is apparent to the listener.

Side I, Band 7: SNAKE DANCE SONG -- The Snake Dance functions as the introduction to both the War and Owl dances. There is a single song used for this purpose, one version of which is here sung by Louie Nine Pipe, one of the finest singers in the tribe, his brother, Andrew and wife, Catherine. The participants in the Snake Dance gather at a designated spot removed from the general dance grounds and, led by a chosen man, form in a single file and proceed to the dance area. The dance form is almost identical with the contemporary American snake dance, weaving in serpentine fashion and doubling back on itself through camp. Men are the participants in the dance; the musicians follow in a group singing to the accompaniment of a war drum, and the women and children usually group themselves behind the musicians and follow the course of the dancers. It is probable that this dance is derived from a more complex form described by earlier observers.

In this particular rendition, the singers are accompanied by a hand rather than war drum; as is frequently the case the drumming is not exactly in tempo with the melodic line.

Side I, Band 8: OWL DANCE SONG -- At present four songs constitute a complete War Dance, after which the Owl Dance is sung four times; during an evening's entertainment the two dance types are alternated. It seems reasonable to assume that the Owl Dance has been borrowed from another tribe, for it is not described in any of the older works on the Flathead, and informants declare they can remember its introduction among their people within recent times. It is danced by couples who move clockwise around a circle side by side. The step is a shuffle in which the dancer places one foot forward for two beats of 2 6/8 rhythm, drawing the other foot even on the third. The musicians move to the center of the dance floor and stand, holding the drum off the ground while singing and playing. This Owl Dance song is sung by Louie Nine Pipe with his brother Adolph, the two men beating time with their feet since no drum was available at the time of recording. The singers declare the song was learned from the Nez Perce a few years ago. It is marked by the introduction of a short verse in English in each chorus:

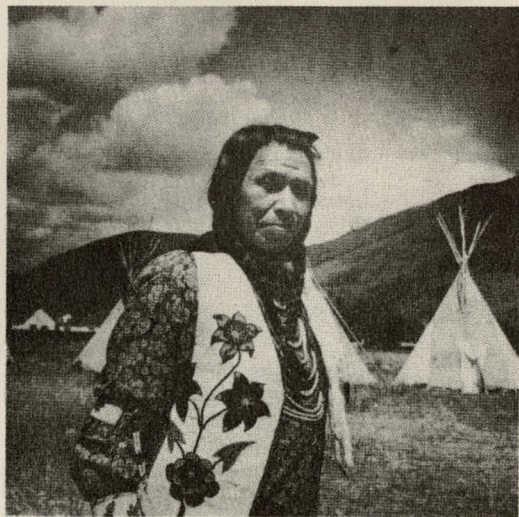
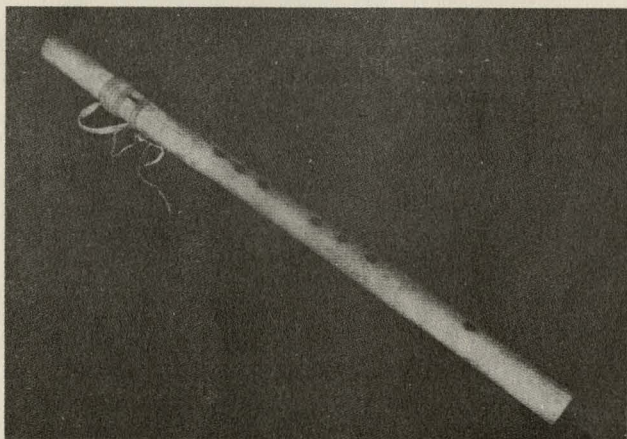
If you'll marry me
Then I will love you.
If you know me once
Then I'll never go.

The introduction of English words into an otherwise meaningless or Indian text is a fairly widespread phenomenon in Indian songs in this country.

Side I, Band 9: SWEATHOUSE SONG -- Sweating is a common practice among the Flathead. For this purpose a low framework of willow branches is covered with blankets or canvas, heated stones introduced into a special pit and covered with cold water while the bather sings. This song, sung by Ellen Big Sam, is one of seven given her uncle by spirits in order to cure an eye affliction. In a vision he saw seven men, each of whom represented a part of the sweathouse -- the frame, the rocks, the stick used to pound the rocks while singing, the hole in which the rocks are placed, the fork used to bring the rocks inside, the grass strewn on the floor, the fire -- and each of whom taught him a song representing one of these parts. The singer cannot now remember which song is which.



Owl Dance with Hildegard Adams, Pete Beaverhead and Mitch Small Salmon. Arlee, Montana.



Louie Nine Pipe

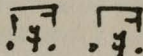
Side II, Band 1: CANVAS DANCE SONG -- The Canvas Dance was traditionally performed by the Flathead in anticipation of the departure of a war or hunting party from an advance camp, and while it is still carried on today its form has changed and its function is no longer important except in prolonging a traditional part of Flathead life. In the Canvas Dance, the last of the day, a small group of people started at one part of the camp circle and sang their songs from teepee to teepee. The occupants of each teepee then joined the singers and went on around the camp circle with them; thus the group grew larger as it progressed. Today this custom is not preserved, although the group may fluctuate in size. The singers carry with them a piece of canvas perhaps eight feet square, each person holding it with one hand and pulling until it is stretched tight. With the free hand the performers then strike the canvas to produce a rhythmic accompaniment to the singing. Formerly the members of the war or hunting party made their preparations and departure by the time the singers had completed the circle. This song was recorded late at night during a performance of the Canvas Dance led by Eneas Conko and Baptiste Pichette. The accompaniment on the canvas may be heard clearly, the sound of the war drum in the background more faintly.

Side II, Band 2: STICK GAME SONGS -- The stick or hand game is the most popular gambling game among the Flathead. A complex guessing game, it involves choice between a marked and an unmarked bone held by the opponent. In play two sides are seated opposite each other behind parallel poles placed on the ground; the side in possession of the bones sings constantly while at the same time beating a strong rhythm on the pole with short sticks. This recording was taken during an actual stick game; much laughter can be heard when the bones are lost, and then a new song is begun by the opposing team. The leader of the first song is Adolph Nine Pipe, that of the second Pete Charley.

Side II, Band 3: LULLABY -- The lullaby is not a song type frequently recognized among the Flathead as such; while songs are sung to soothe children there seems to be no direct translation of the word in Salish. This lullaby, sung by Jerome Vanderburg, is one which he learned from his father who in turn learned it from the wild doves. The melody is charming, the second section sung in high voice but not falsetto.

Side II, Band 4: LIFE SONG -- Again an unusual song type among the Flathead, this is best described in the words of the informant who said that it "expresses a joy of living." Sung by Madeline Charley, it is divided in the middle by a spoken section in which the singer says: "This is my heart as I travel all over; my spirit, my life and living." Musically the downward slurs between tones and as a release, as well as the diminution at the end of the song, are to be noted.

Side II, Band 5: SCALP DANCE SONG -- The Scalp Dance as described and danced by the Flathead today apparently combines elements of the old Scalp Dance and the Marrying Dance, of which the latter is no longer to be found. As described by various informants the first part of the dance was performed by the women who dressed in men's clothing and danced in a circle to celebrate the return of a victorious war party. In the present dance, which seems to incorporate more elements of the Marrying Dance, the men form a long line parallel to a similar line formed by the women. These lines are then brought together and back by a dance leader, and in theory, at least, each man carries his coup stick with recently taken scalps. Should he lay this stick over the shoulder of the woman, it signified that he desired her for his wife. Should she accept, the stick was allowed to rest on her shoulder; should she refuse she brushed it away. Despite the apparent present-day confusion as to dance form, the Flathead still claim the Scalp Dance and its music as one of considerable past importance. This song, sung by Jerome and Agnes Vanderburg, is accompanied by a hand drum with the following basic meter:



Side II, Band 6: SCALP DANCE SONG -- While also a Scalp Dance song, this is of more specialized application than the previous piece. It is sung by the men while waiting for the women to prepare for the Scalp Dance, and also by both men and women when the latter are walking to the dance ground. Informants indicate that this special kind of song is seldom sung at present; Jerome and Agnes Vanderburg are the performers here. The song is divided into four phrases in pairs of varying length; the meter is 4/4 with the last measure of each phrase 5/4. The hand drum accompaniment is evenly spaced and accented.

Side II, Band 7: GIFT DANCE SONG -- The dance designated as the Gift Dance by the Flathead exists in memory only, yet many songs for it are still sung. Descriptions of the dance form are neither clear nor concise, but basically it seems to have been a circular dance during which men of the tribe gave gifts to the women for the privilege of dancing with them. This song, sung by Jerome Vanderburg, shows the dissociation between melodic and percussion tempi, a trait often encountered in Flathead music. In this case the melodic line progresses at approximately 96 beats per minute while the hand drum is played at approximately 108 beats per minute. The decrease in volume of the drum toward the end of the song is again the indication that the final measures are near.

Side II, Band 8: JUMP DANCE SONG -- It is difficult to ascertain either the character or function of the Jump (or Jumpin') Dance, partly because it was a winter ceremony and partly because the Flathead themselves are vague in their descriptions. The Jump Dance seems to have been held in January and to have been a dance of thanks for the blessings of the past year and of prayers for a prosperous new year. It is probable that a dance chief was appointed to lead both the singing and dancing. Men, women and children participated and people were called upon to sing individually. The particu-

lar character of the dance step seems to have given the name to the dance. A specific song opened the ceremony, at which time the dance chief led the participants in a circle while the entire group sang. This was followed by the main body of the dance. The Jump Dance song here recorded is sung by Paul Finley.

Side II, Bands 9 and 10: HARMONICA SONGS -- While clinging with varying degrees of tenacity to their traditional instruments, the Flathead have also learned to play the instruments of the white man. Some of this has been accomplished through formalized training and some, as in the present instance, informally. These two songs were learned by Jerome Vanderburg approximately fifty years ago when he was in school; he suggests in fun that the first might be called "Indian Waltz." Both songs suggest an old country dance flavor.

Harold Courlander, Editor
Moses Asch, Production Director
Photographs by Alan P. and Barbara W. Merriam

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Merriam, Alan P. "Flathead Indian Instruments and Their Music," Musical Quarterly, XXXVII (July, 1951), 368-75.
-----, and Barbara W. Merriam. Flathead Indian Music: Report on Field Research. Missoula: Montana State University Music Foundation, 1950. 66 pp.
Teit, James A. "The Flathead Group," in James A. Teit. The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus. Washington: Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology. 1927-28. pp. 295-395.
Turney-High, Harry Holbert. The Flathead Indians of Montana. Menasha: Memoir 48 of the American Anthropological Association, 1937. 161 pp.
Wright, C. C. General Information About the Flathead Indian Reservation in Western Montana. Mimeographed MS, 1945. 10 pp.



Annie Vanderburg



Jerome Vanderburg

For Additional Information About
FOLKWAYS RELEASES

of Interest

write to



**Folkways Records
and Service Corp.**

43 WEST 61 ST STREET NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10023

