

Harry K. McClintock "Haywire Mac"

*To Sam who
- the bird who
passed into our all
rooster too infrequently
Haywire Mac*



M
1629
M137
H323
1972

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FD 5272

Hoboes, Wobblies and Muckers

SIDE 1

- Band 1. Hallelujah, I'm a Bum
- Band 2. Big Rock Candy Mountain
- Band 3. Long Haired Preachers
- Band 4. Casey Jones (I.W.W. version)
- Band 5. Anecdote on Joe Hill
- Band 6. Tale: Marcus Daly Enters Heaven

A Lifetime of Song

SIDE 2

- Band 1. Subic
- Band 2. Casey Jones (Saunders's original
version)
- Band 3. Jordan Am a Hard Road to Travel
- Band 4. Poor Boy
- Band 5. Paddy Clancy
- Band 6. Utah Carl
- Band 7. Uncle Jim's 'Rebel Soldier'
- Band 8. Anecdote on Pete Wells,
Canal Boat Fireman

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

Harry K. McClintock

"Haywire Mac"

RECORDED AND WITH NOTES
AND INTERVIEWS BY SAM ESKIN

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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BY SAM ESKIN

The history of the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.) (Wobblies) has been treated in several books and a number of documents. A great deal of factual material is available to us plus a number of items which are speculative or the product of bad memories or conscious distortions. Their songs have appeared in print, especially in their little red song books, and a few old timers have lived long enough to transmit this important record of protest songs some of which have gone into the folk tradition and are still being sung.

Such a one was Harry K. McClintock, better known as Haywire Mac, a well known busker (hobo singer) who could be seen and heard on many a soap box, in hobo jungles, union halls or wherever the Wobblies had occasion to gather in their struggles. The full wobbly story, as mentioned, must be gleaned elsewhere. But this is Haywire Mac's story, a very human story that gives us a glimpse of the man and his times and perhaps an insight into the larger struggle of which he was a part. It is rare, indeed, to hear the wobbly songs sung by an old wobbly who was an active participant in the movement and sang the songs as they were being made in the heat of the struggle.

As Joyce L. Kornbluh states in her book "Rebel Voices", "The wobblies sang their songs of savage mockery and sardonic humor. They laughed grimly at the evils of the world".

"Mac" sang the songs composed in the heat of struggle, in and out of jails by such notables as Joe Hill and Ralph Chaplin, and he sang songs made up by himself which have become veritable folksongs. But he was a man of broad experience and sang other than protest songs which are included to indicate the scope of his response to his environment.

A brief sketch of some of his activities might fill out the picture. From Knoxville, Tenn. where he was born, he went to Africa and railroaded in Rhodesia. The Boxer Rebellion found him in China and during the Spanish-American War he was in the Philippines as a mule train packer. He was a stevedore in Hawaii and a "Dock Walloper" around the Great Lakes. His activities with the I.W.W. took him to many parts of the country where there was labor trouble. In the mid-twenties he became a radio entertainer during which period

he made the big time and cut a number of phonograph records some of which are collectors items today.

His was a varied career and the gist of it comes out in his songs and stories.

He was seventy-four years old when he died in 1957. As he relates in his story about Marcus Daly, I hope he is equipped with a beautiful harp in good tune.

Sam Eskin
Woodstock, N.Y.

- HARRY McCLINTOCK -
"Haywire Mac" dies at 74. Harry Kirby McClintock pioneer radio hillbilly known to thousands as "Haywire Mac" died April 24, 1957. On hearing about this I looked up some correspondence I had with Harry McClintock in 1953 and found a letter which I am sure all club members will enjoy reading and will give you a lot of information on "Haywire Mac" who put out a bunch of great records back in the golden era of recorded music. The letter follows:

3911 So. Pacific Avenue
San Pedro, California
February 2, 1953

Dear Mr. Nicholas:

Yes, I am the old time Victor recorder - and I'll answer your last question first. Sterling Sherwin, nom de plume of John Milton Hagen gets his mail at Box 339, Mill Valley, California.

Giving a complete list of my Victor platters is beyond me. If you can dig up a 1928 Victor catalog you'll get the dope. At one time I had something like thirty sides listed.

At the time I recorded there was only one collection of cowboy songs in existence - COWBOY SONGS AND FRONTIER BALLADS - by John Lomax. Said book had only one or two tunes in it - Lomax apparently interested only in lyrics.

I made first waxing of such songs as RED RIVER VALLEY, JESSE JAMES, SAM BASS, CHISHOLM TRAIL, WHEN THE WORK'S ALL DONE THIS FALL, COWBOY'S LAMENT, BURY ME NOT ON THE LONE PRAIRIE, TRAIL TO MEXICO and many others. I had plunked a guitar and warbled my ditties for many years in cowtowns and mining camps from Bisbee to Nome and I added to my repertoire whenever possible.

In April, 1925, I got my big break. I was handed a whole hour on radio K-F-R-C, San Francisco, Monday through Saturday. The program was aimed at the children and its immediate success surprised hell out of me - and everybody else.

There never was a kid that didn't like cowboys and Indians and the daddies of my youthful audience had nearly all knocked around this western country in their own youthful days.

Some Indian friends dropped in occasionally and sang their own songs to the thump of a knuckle-drum. There was Tall Pine, a Sioux from the movie lots, Joe Longfeather, a tall handsome Blackfoot who was selling automobiles, Silver Cloud, a Laguna and a copper smith in the Santa Fe railroad shops and Evening Thunder, a Pima who was a pretty good middleweight pugilist.

I had written a few hobo songs in my rambling days and the radio listeners liked them too. I was signed by Victor in 1927 and was under contract for four years.

Well - maybe you remember what things were like in 1931. All the phono companies quit recording and drew on their "backlogs" for a couple of years.

Now for the autobiog you asked for. Born in Knoxville, Tenn., October 8th, 1882. Was a "boy soprano" in choir of St. John's Episcopal church until voice changed.

Ran away from home to join Gentry Bros. Dog and Pony Show - at age 14. When season ended I hoboed to New Orleans. Was lucky enough to meet Captain and owner of a small stern-wheel steamer that was laid up for the winter. The old boy was glad to have a trustworthy person to leave aboard when he stepped ashore to catch up with his drinking. I got comfortable quarters and most of my meals.

One night I edged into a waterfront saloon where the crew of a British steamer were filling themselves with beer and the evening with song - a good old custom that still survives among the Limeys. Someone called on me for a song and I obliged. I scored a hit. I sang it seemed, for hours. I'll never know how I got back to the boat but in the morning I shook something like three bucks in nickels, dimes and quarters out of my pockets. I had made a discovery that shaped my life. No one who can sing need ever go hungry.

When I hit the road again in the spring I faced the world with confidence, movies, juke boxes, radio and TV were far in the future and even a ragged kid, singing without accompaniment, could pick up the price of bed and breakfast in almost any saloon, anywhere.

Came the war with Spain. I latched onto a troop train bound for Chicamauga Park, near Chattanooga, Tenn. Hired by a hustling circulation manager I built up a newspaper route and, as I ate at army chow lines and slept in the hay at the supply base I had no expenses and I prospered.

Army teamsters and packers were civilian employees in the Army of that day. I was fascinated by the packers, a bunch of tough, competent westerners, and I hung around with them until I was a pretty good hand myself. It was claimed that Army chow killed hundreds of soldiers that summer but I thrived on it. And in the autumn of 1898 I was hired as a full-fledged buck packer for the quartermaster Corps and shipped to the Philippines.

For two years I helped freight ammunition and rations to the troops beyond reach of the wagon trains. The going was rugged at times; we were frequently under fire and we carried Colt 45's for defense. But we figured that we were far better off than the soldiers; we always ate and we drew fifty bucks per month instead of the \$15.60 of the buck private.

I was shipped to China and hiked from Tientsin to Peking with the Allied Relief Expedition, composed of American, British, Russian, French Colonial, German and Japanese units. Something like 22000 men were in the outfit and 10,000 were Japs....

Sam Eskin, collector and singer of folk songs, approaches his field from many angles, and, conversely, his interest in folklore leads him into a wide variety of activities.

Eskin's basic concern is with the collection, preservation and evaluation of traditional material which might otherwise never be known outside of the small groups which perpetuate it, or which often fail to perpetuate it unless prodded to do so.

As a singer, Sam picks out those songs which particularly appeal to him, and sings them either in person, on radio, television, or on records for the public and his friends. (Or he just sings them for himself as he works around his country home in Woodstock, New York, or while he drives the thousands of miles annually in his search for more songs.)

Eskin's background is one of urban environment in Baltimore, Maryland, where his father, a Russian immigrant, was a locomotive engineer on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. At 17 he left home to explore the world. He worked on cattle ranches in Wyoming, in logging camps and in Alaskan canneries. He wandered and meandered up and down our entire country by means of any travel available, and later became a merchant sailor and wandered over the globe. He was a taxi driver, a clerk, a photographer, a sandal maker.

In the early 1930's Sam became interested in using a recording machine to gather and preserve the songs he kept finding in every step of life, from people of every class and creed, young and old, rich and poor. His recorded collection is now housed with his folklore library in an old barn in Woodstock, New York, a collection whose importance has now far outgrown his original interest of learning just the songs he desired to sing himself. These tangible results are transcribed on paper and include both discs and tapes of original material which he has built up over the past thirty years. He has made these available to the Library of Congress and provided material for several commercial records, movies and television. His portable tape recorders permit him to collect in the field and his search takes him all through the United States, Mexico, the Carribean, Canada, Europe, The Far East and Israel. In addition to folk songs he also gathers all types of ethnic music, dance music, primitive drumming, stories, interviews and any sound of general culture or aesthetic interest which he feels is indigenous to the peoples of these places.

Eskin has organized folk music programs at the University of California, Columbia University, an annual festival at Woodstock, New York, and many others. His complete

knowledge of his subject is one which occasions scholars and collectors to seek him out for assistance, and the younger folk singers to go to him for guidance. His demeanor, professionally and personally, is unconstrained and flexible so that whenever his enthusiasm is aroused he is ready to pursue any of the ramifications of his subject, through books and records, or by packing his bags and taking off on a trip.

The songs his audiences most often request are the hearty song the cowboy and loggers' and sea songs, which are sung convincingly by the man who has lived the life he sings about. Sam, too, knows others: the long ballads, some tragic, some comic, some heroic, children's songs, game songs, and love songs. They have been given to him through a long line of singers, a line which goes back often many hundreds of years into the past, and he sings them as they have been given him, honestly and seriously, without exploitation.

Eskin has not identified himself with a single region, but draws his songs from the many overlapping cultures of our living folk song traditions, which are many. He sings to his own skillful guitar accompaniment, in a direct and unassuming manner which makes each listener feel that he, too, can sing.

