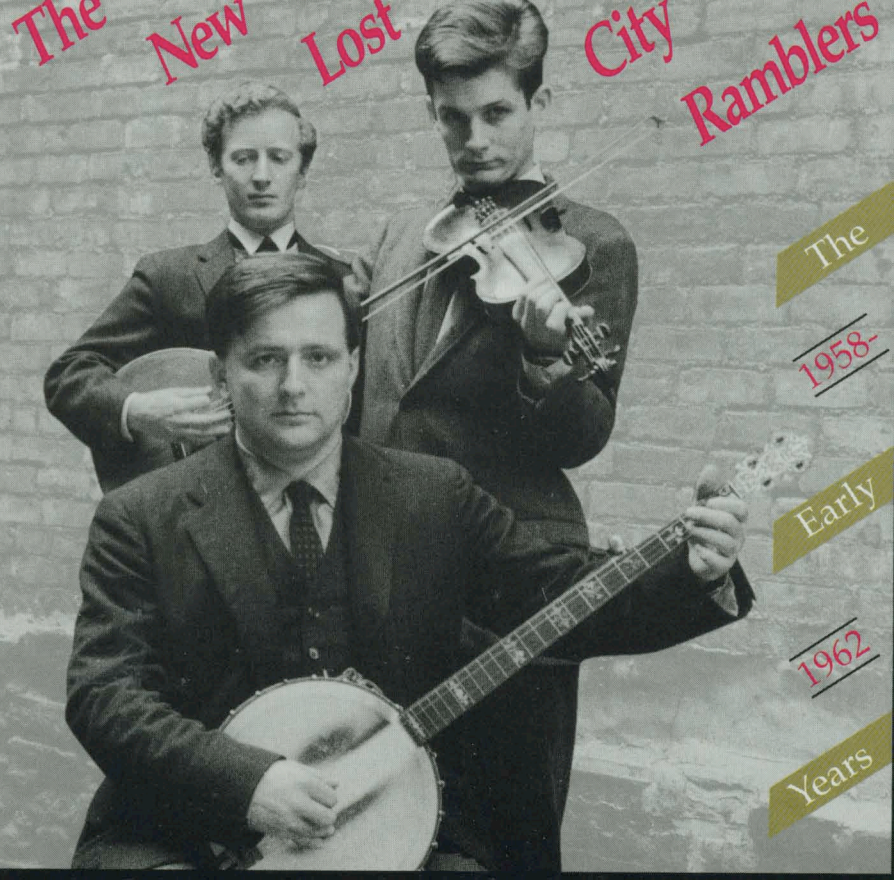




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THE NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS

The Early Years, 1958-1962

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2. **Hopalong Peter** 2:04
3. **Don't Let Your Deal Go Down** 2:26
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This compilation of 26 classic performances by the original New Lost City Ramblers —John Cohen, Tom Paley, and Mike Seeger —highlights the skill and variety of the 12 albums they recorded for Folkways between 1958 and 1962. The lively and extremely musical Ramblers introduced generations to the wonders of "old time" music.

*Extensive notes by Jon Pankake
are enclosed.*

Recorded by Moses Asch, Peter Bartok and Mike Seeger
Compiled and annotated by Jon Pankake
Anthology supervised by Anthony Seeger and Matt Walters
Remastered by Malcolm Addey, Mike Seeger and Matt Walters
Cover photo by Robert Frank
Cover design by Carol Hardy
Special thanks to Mike Seeger



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The New Lost City Ramblers

The Early Years, 1958-1962

This is a compilation of songs from 12 different albums issued between 1958 and 1962. Every New Lost City Ramblers album ever issued by Folkways Records is still available on audio cassette, with the original liner notes. These may be ordered from Folkways Cassettes, (Office of Folklife Programs, 955 l'Enfant Plaza, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560) for \$10.95 each plus \$1.50 shipping for each of the tapes, up to a maximum shipping charge of \$5.00. (Due to inflation, prices are subject to change without notice). Send us your order indicating both the record number and the title (to eliminate confusion) along with your check or money order.

The New Lost City Ramblers,
Folkways FA 2396

The New Lost City Ramblers Volume Two, Folkways FA 2397

The New Lost City Ramblers Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398

The New Lost City Ramblers Volume Four, Folkways FA 2399

The New Lost City Ramblers Volume Five, Folkways FA 2395

Tom Paley, Mike Seeger, John Cohen Sing Songs of the New Lost City Ramblers, Folkways FA 2494.

Old Timey Songs for Children,
Folkways FC 7064

American Moonshine and Prohibition, Folkways FH 5263

Songs From the Depression,
Folkways FH 5264

Short albums (extended play 33-1/3), both provided on a single audio cassette:
The New Lost City Ramblers,
Folkways EPC 602

Earth Is Earth, Folkways FF 869

Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40036

The New Lost City Ramblers

The Early Years, 1958-1962

*Compiled and annotated by
Jon Pankake*

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The New Lost City Ramblers

The Early Years 1958 - 1962

Jon Pankake, July 1990

When some future galactic scholar compiles the history of folklore, our century will be noted as the point at which the locus of collecting, preserving, and disseminating folklore changed from the printed page to the electronic media. In the first half of the twentieth century, folklorists began to use disc, tape, wire, and film rather than writing to collect and preserve sung and played folk music, and a parallel documentation was carried out by the fledgling entertainment industry, which inadvertently preserved some dying folkways among its immense production of ephemera such as films and phonograph recordings.

In the second half of the century, the recorded legacy of our dwindling oral culture, a legacy that had accumulated largely unnoticed in archives, vaults, and private collections, began to come to light and to generate a cultural phenomenon of its own — young musicians, largely college-educated and urban, learning folk music not by hearing and emulating elder musicians within their families or communities in the age-old way, but by hearing and emulating the recorded sounds of musicians often decades and cultures distant from them. The media powering this new transmission of music were the reissue LP (such as the key 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music* on Folkways (2951, 2952, 2953)) and the home tape recorder via which dubs of unissued and out-of-print material could circulate. The face-to-face "oral tradition" had become the ear-to-speaker "aural tradition" of a new century and a new technologically defined community.

The New Lost City Ramblers will leave barely a blip in the history of the entertainment business, as they predicted in their jokes about their "long-playing, short-selling" albums on the Folkways label. But they have nevertheless earned the touch of immortality for their central role in our discovery of the folkloristic riches preserved electronically in the early years of our century. As individual performers, Mike Seeger, Tom Paley, and John Cohen had during the 1950's become interested in performance style in American folk music, exactly that dimension of the music which recordings uniquely capture. In 1958 they formed The New Lost City

Ramblers with the explicit intention of performing American folk music as it had sounded before the inroads of radio, movies, and television had begun to homogenize our diverse regional folkways.

They studied and learned from commercial 78 rpm discs of hillbilly musicians recorded in what has come to be called "The Golden Age" of 1923-1940, from blues and race records of the same era, from the bluegrass recordings of the post-war period, from the field recordings on deposit in the Library of Congress. In turn, they began their own field trips to seek out and record and learn the music of older rural musicians who still played and sang in the old time way. Over the next twenty years, the Ramblers poured forth a steady stream of their own performances live and recorded, albums of their field recordings, and festival performances and workshops in which they introduced musicians they had met in the South to urban audiences of the "Folk Song Revival" of the 1960's and 70's. Their lasting influence was greatest upon a relatively small but important part of that urban audience — those few who wanted not only to study the music seriously, but who also wanted to learn to play the music themselves, actually to be the heirs of a musically rich American culture which by the 1960's largely existed only in the scratchy echoes found on primitive recording discs and in the memories of an ever-fewer number of elders.

Within a couple of years of touring college campuses and coffeehouses, the Ramblers — to their great surprise — began to meet dozens, and eventually hundreds, of young urban musicians who had become inspired by the Ramblers' example to begin to play old time country music learned in the "aural tradition" either from the Ramblers' own performances, from the archival recordings to which the Ramblers had directed them, or even directly from musicians the Ramblers had introduced to urban folk festivals.

The history of this movement is as yet unwritten, but some of its raw material can be found in a remarkable document titled "The Young Fogies Gazette," a newspaper pamphlet included in the 1985 LP *The Young Fogies* (Heritage 056). The "Gazette" contains autobiographical sketches of over a hundred influential amateur and professional musicians, mostly urban

and East or West coast dwellers, who currently play some form of music largely inspired by the example of the Ramblers. These musicians in turn have recorded their own albums (*The Young Fogies* provides an excellent sampling of their music), made their own field trips, produced their own documentaries, and have kept traditional songs, instrumental styles, and vocal techniques alive and evolving. A professor of art carries on the Kentucky banjo styles of Pete Steele which he learned from Steele's Library of Congress recordings; a design engineer plays traditional fiddle styles he learned from rural masters at the Galax Old Time Fiddlers Convention; a woman who works on a word processor experiments with the old time fiddle electronically enhanced with a phase shifter, and the music inspired by the Ramblers begins to take on strange and exciting new configurations.

The Ramblers were terrific stage personalities as well as teachers and disseminators of old time tunes and performance styles. Like all successful professional musical groups, the Ramblers possessed magnetic, individually distinctive personalities that "jelled" in their interplay onstage: like their contemporaries The Beatles, The New Lost City Ramblers were greater than the sum of their individual talents. Though the group had no official leader, Mike Seeger often of necessity functioned as the M.C. in their concerts, introducing the group's numbers while Paley and Cohen retuned. Handsome, with Lincoln-esque shock of hair and cheekbones, he alone of the three seemed somehow Southern and courtly in the gentlemanly manner of older musicians such as Dock Boggs. The group's most versatile musician, he was also their educator, concerned always to provide the insight that would link their music with the culture and the musicians from which it came. In contrast, Tom Paley was the group's Puck, quintessentially witty, thoroughly urban and intellectual, given to outrageous puns and wordplay, a master teller of jokes and a breathtaking showman on fingerpicked guitar and banjo. Of all the Ramblers, he seemed most to savor the incongruity of it all: a Yale-educated college math teacher playing the generations-old music of southern mill hands and farmers for post-Eisenhower urban college audiences. John Cohen was the group's William Blake, a visionary role befitting his artist's training and talents. In retrospect, he seemed most aware of the evolving mission of the Ramblers, most aware that the group was about something more than entertaining, was carving out some yet unknown place in history and inspiring many of its audience to become a new kind of musical community, and he often struggled to articulate this evolving vision both onstage and in the poetic essays he wrote for the Ramblers' albums.

In 1962 Tom Paley left the Ramblers to pursue a teaching and eventually a musical career in England, and the phase of the group's history documented on this disc ended. Within the year, however, the Ramblers regrouped with Tracy Schwarz joining the band and bringing with him skills in ballad singing, fiddling, and bluegrass and Cajun music that would enlarge and enrich the band's repertoire through their twentieth anniversary in 1978 and beyond.

Hearing the Ramblers' earliest recordings in 1990, listeners are less likely to make a mistake common in 1959 when their first album appeared: that of mistaking them for scholarly imitators in the manner of the academic amateur Dixieland bands of two generations ago, who would get together to memorize and play by rote classic early jazz tunes they laboriously transcribed from beloved old 78rpm recordings. Those who in the last thirty years have sought out the original recordings from which the Ramblers gathered their repertoire can best appreciate the astonishing creativity which Seeger, Cohen, and Paley brought to their music. Far from imitating, they managed the feat of learning the musical syntax of old time song — the instrumental attacks and licks, the vocal shadings, the interplay of ensemble lead and support — and then used their mastery of this syntax to recreate in their own voices new performances which boasted all the spirit and sweetness and bite the old masters such as Sara Carter and Charlie Poole bequeathed to history in their recordings.

The first 1958 recordings of The New Lost City Ramblers are now themselves historical documents: older, in fact, than were most of the 78rpm discs the Ramblers resurrected at that time. Logically, as time goes on, the distance between the Ramblers and their sources will diminish in significance, until discographers of the galactic future will simply regard them as just another old time country string band who learned tunes from the recordings of other musicians (as did, in actuality, several 1930's old time bands such as The Blue Sky Boys and Mainer's Mountaineers). Since we are told that history repeats itself, perhaps it is time for The New Lost City Ramblers themselves to be discovered by a new audience exploring their cultural past through the new laser-powered electronic medium of the compact disc. The irony will be most appreciated, of course, by those earlier cultural explorers, The New Lost City Ramblers themselves.

SONG LIST

1. Colored Aristocracy 2:05

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways FA 2396
Source: Sanford and Harry Rich on fiddles, Rensel Rich on guitar, Elmer Rich on mandolin, Arthurdale, WV, 1936. Library of Congress 3306 B2.
Mike Seeger, fiddle; Tom Paley, banjo; John Cohen, guitar.

Illustrative of the "lost" material the Ramblers introduced to urban audiences, this unusual fiddle tune contains remnants of ragtime from early in the twentieth century. Although the Riches were white musicians, the tune's title may indicate an origin in African American musical tradition, possibly as a cakewalk. Tom invented the banjo break out of sheer wizardry, and the Ramblers have added the C chord, changes which perfectly complement the original tune and make the performance the Ramblers' own, a recreation rather than an imitation. In the generation since the Ramblers recorded it, the tune has become a standard in East Coast contra dances.

2. Hopalong Peter 2:04

From: *Old Timey Songs for Children*, Folkways FC 7064
Source: Fisher Hendley and His Aristocratic Pigs, Vocalion 04780
Mike Seeger, lead voice, fiddle, and mandolin; Tom Paley, voice and banjo; John Cohen, bass voice and guitar.

The delightful imagery of this nonsense song becomes nearly surrealistic in its pictorial precision, something of the effect one notes in the early Disney Silly Symphonies animated cartoons. Mike takes advantage of Tom's banjo breaks to change instruments from the fiddle to the mandolin and back again.

3. Don't Let Your Deal Go Down 2:26

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways FA 2396
Source: Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers, Columbia 15038.
John Cohen, lead voice and banjo; Tom Paley, tenor voice and guitar; Mike Seeger, fiddle.

The song's title refers to its origins as a blues about gambling, and a contemporary of Charlie Poole's reported hearing the song before 1911. Poole's string band arrangement, featuring the G-E-A-D ragtime progression and the banjo chordeed up the neck, was innovative to country music in the 1920's and the great popularity of Poole's 1925 recording made the song a standard that survived into the bluegrass era.

4. When First Unto This Country 2:48

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers* Volume Two, Folkways FA 2397.
Source: Maggie and Foy Gant with guitar, Austin, TX, 1935, Library of Congress 65 A2. Mike Seeger, vocal and autoharp; Tom Paley, banjo.

Mike has sung this lovely, sad American ballad for about fifty years, first hearing it as a child when his mother, Ruth Crawford Seeger, transcribed the Library of Congress field recording for publication in John and Alan Lomax's *Our Singing Country* (1941). The voices on the battered aluminum disc of the Gants' performance are difficult to make out. I think I hear the last line of the fourth stanza as "Till I stole a fine gray horse from Captain William White," which reading would explain the pursuit in the fifth stanza. Mike and Tom have created a beautiful and original accompaniment for this ballad, with the banjo gently peppering the sweet lushness of the autoharp.

5. Sales Tax on the Women 3:14

From: *Songs From the Depression*, Folkways FH 5264
Source: The Dixon Brothers, Bluebird 6327. Tom Paley, lead voice and Hawaiian guitar; Mike Seeger, tenor voice and guitar.

The discography of millworker-musicians Dorsey and Howard Dixon contains an unusually high proportion of original songs, among them "Wreck on the Highway." "Sales Tax on the Women" was very likely composed by Dorsey, though the conceit of taxing women was used in at least one earlier country song of humorous protest, Ernest Thompson's peculiar "Don't Put A Tax on the Beautiful Girls," Columbia 168.

6. Rabbit Chase 2:30

From: *Old Timey Songs for Children*, Folkways FC 7064
Source: Charlie Parker, Columbia 15154. John Cohen, vocal and banjo.

The unique charm of Charlie Parker's banjo fable lies in its scaling down the traditional hunting epic and the imitation of the fox chase to the intimate level of a child's excitement over the prospect of catching a rabbit. In an amazing example of the urban folk revival feeding material back into tradition, John reported, "I have performed it for mountain people in Kentucky and they were so amused that they took out a tape recorder and recorded me doing it."

7. Leaving Home 3:05

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*
Volume Two, Folkways FA 2397
Source: Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers, Columbia 15116.
Tom Paley, voice and guitar; Mike Seeger, fiddle; John Cohen, banjo.

In many ways, "Leaving Home" is the definitive "old timey" song, combining elements of many of the popular and folk traditions that found a place in "old time" music. Charlie Poole has taken the Leighton-Shields Tin Pan Alley version of the nineteenth-century "Frankie and Johnny" ballad familiar to both white and black musicians, set it to a twentieth-century string band ragtime accompaniment, emphasized the witty vaudevillian-style patter chorus, and retold the story with knowing editorial comment ("These love affairs/Are hard to bear"). Poole worked similar magic on older material in many of his recordings, notably "The Highwayman" and "He Rambled." The NLCR early on mastered Poole's style of counterpointing banjo and guitar in a pianistic manner against a syncopated fiddle lead, and popularized this infectious string band style among a generation of city players.

8. How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live? 3:34

From: *Songs From the Depression*, Folkways FH 5264
Source: Blind Alfred Reed, Victor 40236. Mike Seeger, voice and fiddle; John Cohen, guitar; Tom Paley, banjo.

The composer-fiddler Blind Alfred Reed was one of the eccentric geniuses captured on early commercial country music recordings, a folk poet whose every song bears the signature of his indignant moral conservatism. Hard-times songs and complaints about merchants and doctors are endemic in the music of poor rural people, but Reed's compositions stand out within this tradition for the mournful loveliness of their tunes and the terseness of their diction: "We can hardly get our breath, taxed and schooled and preached to death. . . ."

9. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Back Again 2:19

From: *Songs From the Depression*, Folkways FH 5264
Source: Bill Cox and Cliff Hobbs, OK 05896. John Cohen, lead voice and guitar; Tom Paley, voice and lead guitar.

The original Cox and Hobbs disc was recorded in 1936, about a week after Roosevelt's re-election, and demonstrates how early country recordings could function somewhat as broadsides, commenting on and conveying popular attitudes about newsworthy events. The Ramblers have substituted Tom's hot picking for Bill Cox's harmonica accompaniment.

10. I Truly Understand You Love Another Man 2:29

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways FA 2396
Source: Shortbuckle Roark and Family, Victor 40023. Tom Paley, lead voice and banjo; Mike Seeger, voice; John Cohen, bass voice.

Although the stanzas of this song are "floaters" which appear and reappear among many lyric country songs, they are here consolidated by the touching chorus into a coherent love lament unique in the Ramblers repertoire. The vocal harmony is perhaps the most complex ensemble singing the Ramblers recorded, and doesn't attempt to reproduce the Roark Family blend of children's and adult voices.

11. The Old Fish Song 4:52

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways FA 2396
Source: Blind James Howard with fiddle, Harlan, KY, 1933. Library of Congress 74 A. Mike Seeger, voice and fiddle.

This performance is one of the most remarkable in the history of the "folk revival." In it Mike introduced to urban audiences the archaic art of ballad singing to one's own fiddle accompaniment and a song as utterly charming as it is rare. The conceit of retelling Bible stories in latter-day vernacular appears commonly in African American tradition, but surprises us in the repertoire of the Anglo-American Kentucky fiddler James Howard. "The Old Fish Song" displays unexpected structural sophistication by setting its ancient story within a frame from which the narrator reiterates Jonah's lesson for both his interior (the "buddy" in his lap) and exterior (the person hearing the song) audiences, a technique of storytelling Melville employs in Father Mapple's Jonah sermon in *Moby-Dick*.

12. The Battleship of Maine 3:05

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways FA 2396
Source: Red Patterson's Piedmont Log Rollers, Victor 20936. Tom Paley, lead voice and banjo; John Cohen, voice and guitar; Mike Seeger, fiddle.

Songs about the Spanish-American War lingered on among rural musicians for a generation, gradually losing their topical relevance until they became, like this one, generally applicable to any war. This comic depiction of a confused country boy dragged into fighting an absurd foreign war came to have startlingly new relevance for Ramblers audiences of the late 1960's and early 1970's.

13. No Depression in Heaven 2:56

From: *Songs From the Depression*, Folkways FH 5264
Source: The Carter Family, Decca 5242. Mike Seeger, lead voice and autoharp; Tom Paley, tenor voice and guitar.

Songs of the Carter Family, with their instantly recognizable guitar and autoharp accompaniment, were from the beginning a mainstay of Ramblers performances and were in turn adopted widely among city musicians following the Ramblers' inspiration. This A. P. Carter composition is among the Carter Family's most poignant songs in its portrayal of the journalistic reality of the Depression against the visionary prophecy of a looming apocalypse.

14. Dallas Rag 2:02

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways FA 2396
Source: The Dallas String Band, Columbia 14290. Mike Seeger, mandolin; Tom Paley, banjo; John Cohen, guitar.

The Dallas String Band recorded this masterpiece of early country jazz for Columbia's "race" series in 1927. The Ramblers discovered the strong African American element in old time stringband music well before scholars such as Tony Russell began formal study of the influence of black musicians on white, and one of the great strengths of the NLCR as teachers of a generation of urban musicians was to make clear and accessible the previously overlooked multi-racial heritage of string band music. Ramblers concerts invariably included songs and musical styles they learned from African Americans, whether from recordings such as The Dallas String Band's or directly from musicians such as Elizabeth Cotten or Mississippi John Hurt.

15. Bill Morgan and His Gal 2:56

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers* Volume Five, Folkways FA 2395.
Source: Buster Carter and Preston Young, Columbia 15758. John Cohen, lead voice and guitar; Tom Paley, banjo and tenor voice; Mike Seeger, fiddle.

This jolly sendup of early credit card materialism is in the "parlor style" of string band music associated with the Virginia-North Carolina border, with very precisely syncopated fiddling backed by fingerpicked banjo and guitar counterpointed somewhat as the right and left hands of a simple piano accompaniment.

16. Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss 2:31

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers* Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398
Source: Samantha Bumgarner, Columbia 146. Tom Paley, lead voice and banjo; Mike Seeger, tenor voice and fiddle.

The guitar became common in southern string bands only in the twentieth century, while the combination of banjo and fiddle may have originated among African American musicians as long ago as the late eighteenth century. Tom and Mike revived this old American sound for their audiences, and Ramblers concerts usually contained a banjo-fiddle duet such as this one. Though they list the Samantha Bumgarner recording as a source, Tom's and Mike's performance reflects the influence of many versions of this popular breakdown.

17. The Lady of Carlisle 3:32

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers* Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398
Source: Basil May, with guitar, Salyersville, KY, 1937. Library of Congress 1587. Mike Seeger, vocal and guitar.

The Seeger family introduced this magnificent ballad to urban audiences. Charles and Ruth Seeger obtained the Library of Congress recording of Basil May in the early 1940's, and sang the song with their children. Mike and Peggy Seeger in turn introduced it to folk revival audiences in America and England in the late 1950's.

18. Brown's Ferry Blues 2:46

From: *Tom Paley, Mike Seeger, John Cohen Sing Songs of the New Lost City Ramblers*. Folkways FA 2494.
Source: The Delmore Brothers, Bluebird 5403. John Cohen, voice and guitar; Tom Paley, voice and lead guitar.

Although the Delmore Brothers' recording career spanned the Golden Age to Rock 'n Roll, from 1931 until 1956, their unique combination of boogie, blues, hot guitar licks, and close harmony was generally unknown to city audiences until the Ramblers introduced this "white blues" on their debut album in 1959. Tom has considerably elaborated on Alton Delmore's original lead picking.

19. My Long Journey Home 2:37

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers* Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398
Source: The Monroe Brothers, Bluebird 6422. Tom Paley, lead voice and guitar; Mike Seeger, tenor voice and mandolin.

Another of the Ramblers' interests lay in discovering and demonstrating the

origins of bluegrass within the older country music recorded before World War II. Here, Mike recreates the innovative pre-bluegrass mandolin picking of Bill Monroe: hotly paced, fluidly picked, and melodically varied in each instrumental break. By comparing this performance to the lead picking in "The Dallas Rag" one can appreciate Mike's mastery of completely different country mandolin styles.

20. Talking Hard Luck 2:40

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*
Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398
Source: Lonnie Glosson, Conqueror 8732. John Cohen, voice and guitar.

The narrator of this talking blues exemplifies the American eiron, a character who pretends to be a hick but who is far cleverer and more sophisticated than he lets us know — the mask worn so successfully by Will Rogers. This mask may be inherent in the form of the talking blues with its laconic stanzas setting up their one-line snappers, a technique used to great effect by Woody Guthrie in his topical talking blues. Here, behind his head-scratching rhetoric, the speaker conceals a cruel misogyny, a knowing sexuality, a cynic's view of government, and a poet's way with words.

21. The Teetotals 1:00

From: *American Moonshine and Prohibition*, Folkways FH 5263
Source: "Teetotalers," Mr. and Mrs. Crockett Ward, Galax, VA, 1937. Library of Congress 1360 B2. Mike Seeger, Tom Paley, John Cohen, voices.

The temperance movement of the mid-nineteenth century generated songs ranging from weepy and moralistic ballads to militant marching anthems, all composed to denounce the evils of drink, extol the fate that would befall drinkers, or pronounce the virtue of those "taking the pledge" of abstinence. The best of these songs survived among rural people long enough to be recorded by both amateur and professional country musicians during this century's Prohibition years of 1917-1932. The Crockett Wards of Galax recorded for John A. Lomax many songs they learned before the turn of the century. "Teetotalers" has the militant air of songs associated with activities of the Prohibition Party or the Anti-Saloon League or the Woman's Christian Temperance Union during their years of influence.

22. Sal Got a Meatskin 3:24

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*
Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398
Source: Cliff and Bill Carlisle, Panacord 25639. Tom Paley, lead voice and guitar; Mike Seeger, tenor voice and (capped) guitar on first and third breaks.

The sung tenderness of this love song (for lack of a better descriptor) contrasts oddly with its bawdy subtext. When the Ramblers interviewed Cliff Carlisle, he confirmed that in Kentucky vernacular "meatskin" is a euphemism for a maidenhead.

23. Railroad Blues 2:41

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*
Volume Three, Folkways FA 2398
Source: Sam McGee, Decca 5348. Tom Paley, voice and guitar.

Sam McGee "from sunny Tennessee" was the most interesting white guitarist to record on old time records. His music combines concepts and picking techniques from both black and white guitar traditions, from the blues and ragtime of street singers to "parlor" styles popular in the nineteenth century among genteel young middle class women. While Tom seldom imitated the licks of the musicians he studied on old recordings, he here recreates very closely the string-popping syncopation of McGee's playing. His revival of McGee's guitar performances popularized masterpieces such as "Buck Dancer's Choice" and "Railroad Blues" among revival guitarists.

24. On Some Foggy Mountain Top 2:25

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways EPC 602 Source: The Monroe Brothers, Bluebird 6607. Mike Seeger, lead voice and mandolin; Tom Paley, lead guitar and tenor voice; John Cohen, guitar and bass voice.

The Ramblers had studied both the 1936 Monroe Brothers and the 1929 Carter Family recordings of this song, and their performance contains elements of both sources, leaning heavily toward the jazzier Monroe version. Again, Tom's guitar break is original with him, and a beautiful example of the way the Ramblers learned to augment creatively the music they heard on old recordings.

25. My Sweet Farm Girl 2:25

From: *Earth Is Earth*, Folkways FF 869
Source: Clarence Ashley and Gwynn Foster, Vocalion 02780. John Cohen, lead voice and guitar; Mike Seeger, tenor voice and banjo; Tom Paley, autoharp.

While many old time musicians knew folk material of hair-curling obscenity, such material didn't find its way into their public performances live or recorded, for obvious reasons. An exception is the occasional double-entendre bawdy song such as Clarence Ashley's "My Sweet Farm Girl," which displaces its sexual references onto an elaborately innocent but equally transparent parallel narrative. The Ramblers recorded four bawdy country songs on an EP titled *Earth Is Earth*, the unsigned, hilarious liner notes for which betray the unmistakable wit of Tom Paley.

26. Crow Black Chicken 2:35

From: *The New Lost City Ramblers*
Volume Four, Folkways FA 2399
Source: The Leake County Revelers, Columbia 15318. Tom Paley, lead voice and guitar; John Cohen, vocal refrain and banjo; Mike Seeger, falsetto voice and fiddle.

The Ramblers customarily ended their shows by busting the place up with a full string band number that allowed them to display all the energy, exuberance, wit, and roaring tunefulness of old time music at its roistering best. The Leake County Revelers were actually one of the more sedate string bands to record in the Golden Age, so the gusto poured into "Crow Black Chicken" here derives not from the old recording but from Paley, Seeger, and Cohen at the top of their form.

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