



CLASSIC MOUNTAIN SONGS
FROM SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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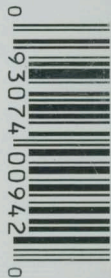
CD 928

Riding the wave of the renewed interest in traditional American music, *Classic Mountain Songs from Smithsonian Folkways* showcases a handful of the greatest mountain ballads as performed by some of the most influential folk singers and songwriters of the 20th century. This collection features many classic performances from a wide variety of regional instrumental and song styles. These diverse styles and song types from the mountain communities of North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee include old-time fiddle and banjo pieces, early bluegrass, traditional ballads, with a special emphasis on Appalachian vocal traditions. Doc and Merle Watson, Roscoe Holcomb, Clarence Ashley, and Dock Boggs are just a few of the revered roots artists who appear on this stellar compilation. This is an essential album for both old and new fans of American mountain music.

Compiled and annotated by Jeff Place.

CLASSIC MOUNTAIN SONGS FROM SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

1. **Doug Wallin** *Omie Wise* 3:03
2. **Dock Boggs** *Sugar Baby* 2:50
3. **Old Regular Baptists** *I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow* 5:24
4. **George Davis** *Sixteen Tons* 3:05
5. **Lesley Riddle** *John Henry* 2:25
6. **Marion Sumner** *Lost Indian* 0:51
7. **Doc and Merle Watson** *Southbound* 2:39
8. **Ola Belle Reed** *High on a Mountain* 3:02
9. **Pete Steele** *Coal Creek March* 1:23
10. **Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard** *Coal Miner Blues* 2:42
11. **Sam McGee** *Railroad Blues* 2:45
12. **Clarence Ashley** *Cuckoo Bird* 2:33
13. **Berzilla Wallin** *Conversation with Death* 5:03
14. **Wade Ward** *Lone Prairie* 0:52
15. **Dillard Chandler** *Rain and Snow* 2:23
16. **Bascom Lamar Lunsford** *Mole in the Ground* 3:19
17. **Roscoe Holcomb** *Moonshiner* 1:59
18. **Kilby Snow** *Wildwood Flower* 1:23
19. **Jean Ritchie** *Barbry Ellen* 5:01
20. **Watson, Price, and Howard** *Daniel Prayed* 2:54
21. **Pop Stoneman** *Wreck of the Number Nine* 2:48
22. **The Phipps Family** *Red Jacket Mine Explosion* 4:00
23. **Norman Edmonds** *Kingdom Come* 2:02
24. **Horton Barker** *Amazing Grace* 4:16





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(arr. Doug Wallin/Smithsonian Folkways, BMI)
2. Dock Boggs *Sugar Baby* 2:50
3. Old Regular Baptists *I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow* 5:24
4. George Davis *Sixteen Tons* 3:05
(Merle Travis/Unichappel, BMI)
5. Lesley Riddle *John Henry* 2:25
6. Marion Sumner *Lost Indian* 0:51
7. Doc and Merle Watson *Southbound* 2:39
(Merle Watson/Ryerson, BMI)
8. Ola Belle Reed *High on a Mountain* 3:02
(Ola Belle Reed-Alex Campbell/Midstream Music, BMI)
9. Pete Steele *Coal Creek March* 1:23
(Pete Steele/Ludlow, BMI)
10. Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard *Coal Miner Blues* 2:42
(A. P. Carter/APRS, BMI)
11. Sam McGee *Railroad Blues* 2:45
(Sam McGee)
12. Clarence Ashley *Cuckoo Bird* 2:33
(Clarence Ashley/Stormking Music, BMI)
13. Berzilla Wallin *Conversation with Death (Oh Death)* 5:03
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20. Watson, Price, and Howard *Daniel Prayed* 2:54
(G. T. Speer)
21. Pop Stoneman *Wreck of the Number Nine* 2:48
(Carson J. Robison/Universal MCA, ASCAP)
22. The Phipps Family *Red Jacket Mine Explosion* 4:00
(A. L. Phipps/Mountain Eagle, BMI)
23. Norman Edmonds *Kingdom Come* 2:02
24. Horton Barker *Amazing Grace* 4:16

This collection introduces the breadth of traditional mountain singing in the Folkways catalog. The Central Appalachian Mountains have for centuries been a hotbed for preserving the old while creating the new. In the 17th and 18th centuries, some immigrants to the colonies set out on their own and moved to what was then the far frontier. They brought with them their songs and stories. The isolation of these mountains forced them to be industrious and led to the mixing of numerous immigrant groups. Folklorists in the early 20th century found many older songs and ballads alive in Appalachia, much the same as they had been on their arrival here. At the same time, music was evolving, and newer forms—such as old-time country music, and later bluegrass—were being created.

Over the years, Folkways Records (now Smithsonian Folkways) has been one of the American record labels that has continuously produced and distributed high-quality recordings of traditional American folk music. Folkways founder Moses Asch (1905–1986) pledged to the artists that their Folkways recordings would never go out of print. Continuing the Asch legacy, this album is made up of traditional songs and tunes from the Southern Appalachians. It gives listeners a chance to rediscover this American roots music, or perhaps to hear it for the first time. This collection primarily consists of vocal music; instrumental and stringband traditions will receive a compilation of their own.

Moses Asch founded Folkways in New York in 1948. He had been involved in the record business since 1939 with his Asch and Disc labels. In 1940, acting on a tip from Broadway producer Sy Rady, he recorded blues songster Lead Belly—his first stab at releasing American vernacular music. During the 1940s, Asch was to release recordings by other well-known American folk musicians, such as Burl Ives, Pete Seeger, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, Woody Guthrie, and Virginia mountain singers Hobart Smith and Texas Gladden.

Asch, throughout the history of his label, released titles of old-time music. One of the first records issued by Folkways was a square-dance album by Paiute Pete (Folkways 2001). In 1952,

Asch's release of Harry Smith's legendary compilation *The Anthology of American Folk Music* made available for the first time in decades vintage commercial recordings of mountain music and stringbands from the 1920s and 1930s. It was no fluke that Asch became involved in releasing traditional Appalachian music. Smith's *Anthology* would have a major effect on a new generation of young folk-music performers and enthusiasts. Previously, the folk-music recordings likely to be found in stores were by urban performers, like Pete Seeger and Burl Ives. To a new audience, craving authenticity, the *Anthology* made available genuine voices from the mountains and a whole repertoire of songs dating back centuries.

In 1953, Asch released Bascom Lamar Lunsford's *Smoky Mountain Ballads* (FW 2040). Lunsford, a singer and ballad collector from Western North Carolina, was one of the stars of the *Anthology*. Later, in 1958, Asch released a recording of songs and interviews with Kentucky singer Buell Kazee, another performer on the *Anthology*.

A major change in the musical landscape happened in the same year, when the folk group the Kingston Trio had a nationwide hit with the North Carolina ballad "Tom Dooley," a song collected by Frank Warner from North Carolina banjo player Frank Proffitt. Soon, to cash in on the folk-music craze, every major record label was looking for its own "Kingston Trio." College students were forming bands, and for material, musicians were going to the great song collections by the Lomaxes, Seegers, Sandburg, Botkin, and others, as well as the venerable *Sing Out!* magazine. Some of the more adventurous of these musicians began to travel in the South and seek out the sources of these songs and singers, including performers who had been recorded in the 1920s, some of whom were on the *Anthology*. It was from these folklorists and collectors that Asch received the recordings that he used to create the vast collection of classic traditional folk albums he was to release in the next eight years.

During the years of the folk-song revival, roughly 1958–1966, he released 44 albums of traditional material, some of which were among the most influential of their time.

These titles included recordings of Dock Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, the McGee Brothers, Jean Ritchie, Doc Watson, Clarence Ashley, Kilby Snow, and others. Folk-music fans in the 1960s would typically have in their collections a copy of a Folkways Jean Ritchie or Doc Watson recording, alongside recordings by Peter, Paul, and Mary and Judy Collins. Singer Eric Von Schmidt, himself from the influential Cambridge, Massachusetts, folk scene, recalled, “No longer are you listening to the Limelitters on Victor, The Brothers Four on Columbia, the Chad Mitchell Trio on Mercury. You are now hooked on Folkways Records. They cost a lot for records back then, but what authority they had! No slick and shiny jackets like the rest, but all pebble-grained and thick matte paper. They even weighed more than the others. Three layers of heavy cardboard, a multipaged booklet of notes and lyrics, and the disc itself a slab of vinyl like we are not likely to see again” (notes to SFW CD 40090).

Several individuals who brought projects to Asch deserve mention. In New York in the late 1950s, a young group on the scene was the New Lost City Ramblers, who made a point of recording older country and mountain songs and staying true to the original sound. Unlike many groups who appropriated older songs and claimed to have written them, the Ramblers always included in their liner notes discographical information on the originals. They educated their fans about the music, and not surprisingly, two of their members, Mike Seeger and John Cohen, have been, and still continue to be, involved in collecting and documenting traditional music.

Mike Seeger is one of the musical Seegers, half brother to Pete and son of the musicologist Charles. As a musician and a member of the New Lost City Ramblers, Mike was one of the more prolific recording artists on the Folkways label. He was involved in producing recordings by the

McGee Brothers, Kilby Snow, the Stoneman Family, Dock Boggs, Elizabeth Cotten, and others. Another member of the Ramblers, John Cohen, a musician, filmmaker, photographer, and musicologist, also traveled south and brought back many classic recordings. His fieldwork enabled him to record Roscoe Holcomb in Kentucky and other singers from the ballad-rich area of Sodom-Laurel, North Carolina. These recordings were later released on Folkways Records.

Mike Seeger got his friend Ralph Rinzler (1934–1994) to help with the notes to a Folkways Scruggs banjo-style album, and Rinzler himself began to produce recordings for Folkways. As a chief talent scout for the Newport Folk Festival, Rinzler was the first to discover and record Doc Watson, in 1960 (Folkways 2355, 1961). Others, like Ed Kahn, Peter Siegel, and Sandy Paton, also produced recordings around 1960. To bring traditional musicians to New York, John Cohen, with Rinzler and Izzy Young, founded an organization called Friends of Old Time Music, which gave urban audiences the opportunity to experience firsthand the music of mountain performers. Some of this material saw release on Folkways in recordings produced in 1964 by Peter Siegel, who for Folkways later produced other collections, including the recordings of Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, two of the first women to front a popular bluegrass band.

In 1966, Eric Davidson, an old-time musician and biologist, traveled south from New York and with the help of his wife, Lyn, and Paul Newman recorded old-time and bluegrass musicians in the rich musical environment around Galax and Independence, Virginia. Davidson provided numerous recordings of old-time music to Asch, both as a recordist and as a performer with the Iron Mountain String Band. After 1966, Asch’s traditional releases slowed in quantity.

In 1987, Ralph Rinzler, then Assistant Secretary for Public Service at the Smithsonian Institution, negotiated the donation of the Folkways label to the museum, and the following year the Smithsonian Folkways record label was founded. From its beginnings, Smithsonian Folkways has set out to reissue

material from its vast archives, with expanded liner notes and updated sound. As the first reissues were being planned, Rinzler made a point of being involved, and with his presence traditional old-time music was guaranteed to be a priority. Frequently after his day job was over, Rinzler would venture over to the archives and help put together reissues of many of the recordings he had initially been involved in. Occasionally present for advice were old friends Mike Seeger and John Cohen. Seeger and Cohen themselves continue to revisit their old recording projects, and have been working to reissue their classic material. 2001 saw the release of Cohen's *There is No Eye: Music for Photographs* (SFW CD 40091), a collection of his recordings of traditional musicians set to accompany the book of the same name. The CD booklet contains some of his stunning photographs from his book.

Apart from work for the Newport Folk Festival, Ralph Rinzler was at one time the manager of Bill Monroe and Doc Watson and a producer of numerous records. During the course of his travels, he recorded more than 800 reels of concerts, back-porch picking parties, and interviews. These recordings now reside in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Smithsonian. Before his death, in 1994, he went through all of his reels of Bill Monroe (with various personnel) and Monroe's duo recordings with Doc Watson, and put together a two-CD series called *Off the Record* (1993).

Since its founding in 1987, Smithsonian Folkways has seen the reissue of the Doc Watson-Clarence Ashley recordings, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Dock Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, anthologies of the New Lost City Ramblers, and the heralded 1997 Grammy-winning reissue of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. A complete list of available recordings can be found on the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings website (www.folkways.si.edu). We will continue to mine the vaults for new collections, and remain committed to this thriving American musical form.

—Jeff Place, August 2002

1. OMIE WISE

Doug Wallin, vocal and fiddle (Also known as "Naomi Wise," "Naommi Wise," "Jealous Lover"; from SFW CD 40013, 1995)

Doug Wallin (1919–2000) was from the area around Sodom, North Carolina, an area rich in ballad singers, and none stronger than the Wallin and Chandler families. His mother, Berzilla (track 13), was recorded by John Cohen years earlier, and it is from her that Doug learned many of his songs. Other songs were collected from Wallin's relatives by British folklorist Cecil J. Sharp in the early 20th century.

Wallin received a National Heritage Award from the National Endowment of the Arts in 1990. He appeared at various festivals, including the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and Wolf Trap Farm Park's Folk Masters Series. A recording of Doug and his brother Jack was released in 1995 by Smithsonian Folkways in conjunction with the North Carolina Arts Council and produced by Wayne Martin.

The ballad "Omie Wise" dates back to the 19th century. It was first published in 1874 in conjunction with a story written by Braxton Craven, president of North Carolina's Trinity College, about Jonathan Lewis's murder of his pregnant lover, Naomi Wise, in Randolph County, North Carolina, in 1808 (*Sing Out!*, 14/2, April 1964).

2. SUGAR BABY

Dock Boggs, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Red Rocking Chair," "Red Apple Juice," "Honey Babe Blues"; from SFW CD 40108, 1996 [Folkways 2392, 1965]; recorded in June 1964)

Moran Lee "Dock" Boggs (1898–1971) was from Norton, a coal-mining town in the Virginia panhandle. Boggs was influenced by the African-American music in his region, and his banjo playing has a blues feel to it. After recording for Brunswick Records, he had hoped a music career

might help him avoid a life in the mines; instead, he worked as a miner most of his life, retiring in 1952. Rediscovered by Mike Seeger in the 1960s, he played at various folk festivals, including the 1963 Newport Folk Festival and the 1969 Festival of American Folklife. Mike Seeger interviewed him extensively in 1963, and excerpts of the interviews were published on Folkways 5458 (Jeff Place, notes to SFW CD 40090).

“Sugar Baby” is a mountain song that exists in many variants. Boggs first recorded it for Brunswick in March 1927.

3. I AM A POOR PILGRIM OF SORROW

The Indian Bottom Association, Defeated Creek Church, Linefork, Kentucky; Elwood Cornett, group leader; Brother Gillis Reedy, song leader. (Also called “City Called Heaven”; from SFW CD 40106, 1997)

The singing style of the Old Regular Baptist denomination goes back many centuries. Lyrics of their hymns are in shared songbooks; however, the melodies are learned orally. Singers line hymns out: the leader sings each line, which the chorus then repeats. Parishioners take turns selecting songs from the book to share their spirituality with fellow church members. In the central Appalachian mountains, there are sixteen associations of Old Regular Baptists (John Wallhauser, notes to SFW CD 40106). The Indian Bottom Association of Linefork, Kentucky, was recorded by musicologist Jeff Todd Titon, and the recordings were released on compact disc by Smithsonian Folkways. The group demonstrated their singing to enthusiastic listeners at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in summer 1997.

The song “I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow” comes from the *Old Regular Baptist Song Book* and shares many elements with the secular song “Man of Constant Sorrow.”

4. SIXTEEN TONS

George Davis, vocal and guitar (Folkways 2343, 1967; recorded in November 1966)

George Davis (1906–1992) was known as the “singing miner of Hazard, Kentucky.” A composer of many mining songs, he was active as a Hazard disc jockey from 1947 to 1969, and at one point did five shows a day. In 1933, after working as a coal miner, he began to compose songs and perform. He became one of the most popular performers in the region. “Ernest Sparkman, who worked for radio stations WSGS and WKIC, recalled that in a murder trial in the 1950s, the prosecutor asked a witness what time the crime had occurred. She said she couldn’t remember exactly, but the Singing Miner was just going off the radio. The attorney had responded, ‘Lady, you ain’t told me nothin’. Any time you turn your radio on, the Singing Miner is either coming on or going off,’ Sparkman recalled the attorney saying” (www.wsgs.com/singing.htm).

Davis asserts that “Sixteen Tons” as copyrighted by Merle Travis was based on his song “Nine to Ten Tons,” which he claims he composed in the 1930s. He says Travis and Tennessee Ernie Ford merely “changed the chords somewhat” (John Cohen, notes to FW 2343). There is debate about who first came up with the idea for the song. Labor historian Archie Green, who interviewed Travis in 1967, dismissed Davis’s claim, believing there is no evidence to support it. He feels, instead, it fits closely into Travis’s writing style, and believes Travis to have been the composer (Green 1972). This version is Davis’s, as recorded by John Cohen.

5. JOHN HENRY

Lesley Riddle, vocal and guitar (Also known as “I’m Gonna Die with a Hammer in My Hand”; from SFW CD 40097, 1997; recorded in March 1965)

Lesley Riddle (1905–1980) was a guitarist and singer from Kingsport, Tennessee. While out collecting songs, A. P. Carter became acquainted with Riddle and learned some songs from him. Riddle's style of playing was adopted by Maybelle Carter, and it had a great influence on future guitarists. On this piece, Riddle plays with a penknife stuck between his fingers (Mike Seeger, notes to SFW CD 40097). In the 1940s, he moved to upstate New York and abandoned his music. Mike Seeger located him and asked to record him. After these sessions, he began to appear at folk festivals, becoming reacquainted with the Carters after many years apart.

John Henry, in all its variants, is arguably the most famous American folksong. A look at the quantity of recorded versions should be a clue. The Smithsonian Folklife Archive has hundreds of versions in our collections. Of African-American origin, the ballad has made John Henry a mythic character in American culture, the image of man against machine. The song deals with the digging of the Big Bend tunnel in West Virginia (Jeff Place, notes to SFW CD 40090).

6. LOST INDIAN

Marion Sumner, fiddle (From SFW CD 40077, 1996 / Folkways 2317, 1960)

John Cohen recorded Marion Sumner (1920–1997) during his 1959 trip to Kentucky, and Sumner's music appears on Cohen's *Mountain Music of Kentucky*. After spending some years in Nashville playing with the country duo Johnny and Jack, Sumner had moved back to Hazard, Kentucky. (John Cohen, notes to SFW CD 40077).

The legend of the fiddle tune "Lost Indian" is that "one day a riverboat fiddler witnessed an Indian drowning in the flood waters of the Mississippi River, as the man went under for the last time he let out his death wail. The fiddler incorporated the sound of the wail into his composition" (Ford 1940).

7. SOUTHBOUND

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Merle Watson, guitar (From SFW CD 40012, 1990)

Arthel Watson was born in 1923 in Stoney Fork Township (later known as Deep Gap), North Carolina. Nicknamed "Doc" as a teenager, he grew up surrounded by music: many members of his family were singers and musicians (see *The Watson Family*, SFW CD 40012). In 1960, Ralph Rinzler traveled to Virginia to record Clarence Ashley and encountered Watson for the first time. Thrilled by his discovery, he went on to manage Watson and introduce him to concert and nightclub audiences around the country. Rinzler produced Watson's first albums for Folkways, starting in 1961 with the *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's* project (SFW CD 40029).

In 1964, Rinzler called Watson on the road to report that Watson's son Merle had taken up guitar. For the next twenty years, Merle accompanied his father in concerts and on recordings. Merle died tragically in a tractor accident on the family farm in 1985. He composed this song after taking a long walk in New York during an early tour, wishing he was home in Deep Gap (Jeff Place, notes to SFW CD 40012).

8. HIGH ON A MOUNTAIN

Ola Belle Reed, vocal and banjo; Kevin Roth, guitar; Bud Reed, guitar (From Folkways 2493, 1976; recorded in summer 1976)

Ola Belle Reed (b. 1916), born in the mountains of North Carolina, learned to play the banjo at an early age and began composing songs about her life there. During the Great Depression, she moved with her brother Alex to Baltimore, where she performed on radio stations. In 1951, with her husband, Bud, she founded The New River Ranch, a well-known country-music venue in Maryland. She has composed more than two hundred songs, including "High on a Mountain" and "The Leading Role." She received a National

Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1986. She is retired and living in Maryland.

Her composition "High on a Mountain" has become a popular song among modern bluegrass groups. It comes from an album of Reed's songs and interviews produced by Kevin Roth.

9. COAL CREEK MARCH

Pete Steele, banjo (From Folkways 3828, 1958; recorded in August 1957)

Pete Steele (1891–1985) was an exemplary banjo player from Kentucky. He spent 18 years working as a miner before ill-health made him look for new ways to support his family. In the 1930s, he relocated to Hamilton, Ohio, where he lived for most of his remaining years, working in various jobs. In 1938, for Alan Lomax and the Library of Congress, he recorded songs including "Coal Creek March." On the strength of those recordings, music enthusiasts in the 1950s and 1960s began to look him up to learn from him. One visitor, the late folklorist Ed Kahn, recorded Steele for his Folkways album in 1957.

"Coal Creek March" was originally associated with the 1891 Coal Creek Rebellion, in Coal Creek (now Lake City), Tennessee, where miners rebelled against the mine owner's use of convict labor.

10. COAL MINER BLUES

Hazel Dickens, vocals and bass; Alice Gerrard, vocals and guitar; David Grisman, mandolin; Billy Baker, fiddle; Lamar Grier, banjo (From SFW CD 40065, 1996 / Folkways 31055, 1965)

In the early 1960s, Hazel Dickens (b. 1935) and Alice Gerrard (b. 1934) joined together as Hazel and Alice. One of the first bluegrass groups to be led by women, they have been very influential on younger musicians. They played concert halls, coffeehouses, and folk and bluegrass festivals.

Hazel Dickens was born and raised in Mercer County, West Virginia, in coal-mining country. Her father was a minister and banjo player. In the 1950s, after moving to Baltimore to find work, she met Alice Gerrard, who had grown up in California. The two shared a love of country and bluegrass music and fell in with a group of musicians who performed together locally.

Growing up in the coal areas of West Virginia, Hazel saw life in the mines firsthand. Not afraid to speak her mind, she has composed important protest songs dealing with struggles in the mines. Her songs are featured in the films, *Harlan County, USA* and *Matewan*, and she can be seen singing "Conversation with Death" in the film *Songcatcher*. Through Rounder Records, she has continued to release solo recordings. She currently lives in Washington, D.C.

Alice Gerrard has continued to perform old-time music. She is the founder and editor of the *Old Time Herald*, a magazine published in Durham, North Carolina. Since the mid-1980s, it has been one of the most important trade magazines for fans of old-time music.

"Coal Miner's Blues" comes from the singing of the Carter Family. A. P. Carter had learned it from several miners in Wise County, Virginia (Green 1972). Peter K. Siegel produced Hazel and Alice's Folkways recordings.

11. RAILROAD BLUES

Sam McGee, vocals and guitar (From Folkways 2379, 1964)

Sam McGee (1894–1975) was one of the best flat-picking guitarists in the history of country music. Born in Franklin, Tennessee, he began to play banjo at square dances while a youth. In 1925, he joined the legendary Uncle Dave Macon's Fruit Jar Drinkers; later, his brother Kirk also joined. Macon (1870–1952) was one of the first stars of the Grand Ole Opry. The McGees recorded with him and as a solo act in the 1920s. They began to play in the band of "Fiddlin'" Arthur Smith in 1931.

Though longtime members of the Opry, they were largely inactive professionally during the 1940s. In the mid-1950s, they reunited. Mike Seeger recorded two albums of theirs for Folkways, again teaming them with Arthur Smith. Sam McGee died in a tractor accident in 1975.

While young, Sam McGee listened to African-American street musicians in Perry, Tennessee, where his father had a store. Their influence on his guitar playing can be heard in his "Railroad Blues," a song he first recorded in the 1920s for Decca. In the song, he makes reference to DeFord Bailey, an African-American harmonica player who was also an early Opry star.

12. CUCKOO BIRD

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Doc Watson, guitar (From SFW CD 40029, 1994 / Folkways 2359, 1962; recorded in February 1962)

Clarence "Tom" Ashley (1895–1967) was from the eastern Tennessee town of Shouns. He recorded for different record companies, as Clarence or Tom. In his early professional career, he traveled with medicine shows. Ever the showman, during the 1920s and 1930s, he acted as front man in many of the groups he played with, mixing humor with music. He played with the Carolina Tar Heels, the Blue Ridge Mountain Entertainers, Byrd Moore and the Hot Shots, and Ashley's Melody Men. After his initial recording career ended, he made a living saw-milling and farming, supplementing his income by what he called "busting," passing the hat for money as he played (Ralph Rinzler, notes to SFW CD 40029).

By the mid-1940s, after suffering a work-related accident to his hand, Ashley had stopped playing banjo. Folklorist and musician Ralph Rinzler ran into him in North Carolina at the 1960 Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention. Rinzler remembered him from the *Anthology of American Music* and asked if he could record him. He encouraged Ashley to resume his banjo playing. The

subsequent recording session brought the brilliant guitarist Arthel "Doc" Watson to Rinzler's attention. One of the chief talent scouts for the Newport Folk Festival, Rinzler saw to it that Ashley and Watson were presented to folk-revival audiences via appearances at festivals and nightclubs.

This song was one of the *Anthology* songs that was influential and frequently covered during the 1950s and 1960s. The cuckoo is meant to represent the coming of spring (Jeff Place, notes to SFW CD 40090).

13. CONVERSATION WITH DEATH

Berzilla Wallin, vocal (Also known as "Oh Death," "Death is Awful"; from Folkways 2309, 1964)

Berzilla Wallin (1892–1986) and her husband, Lee, were recorded by John Cohen in 1963 during a recording trip to Big Laurel, North Carolina. Also a banjo player, she was "full of songs and stories that she had heard from her grandparents and parents since she was a little girl" (John Cohen, notes to FW 2309). She was old enough to remember the visit from noted ballad collector Cecil J. Sharp to record her family in 1916 and 1917.

Other family members—sons Doug (see track 1) and Jack, and brother Dillard Chandler (see track 15)—are also accomplished ballad singers.

"Conversation with Death" is an old mountain song, better known in recent times as "Oh Death," a version of which by Ralph Stanley of Coeburn, Virginia, was included in the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

14. LONE PRAIRIE

Wade Ward, fiddle (From Folkways 2380, 1973; recorded in 1961)

Wade Ward (1892–1971) was a beloved member of the musical Ward family from around the Galax-Hillsville, Virginia, area. He, his older brother, Crockett, his nephew Fields, and neighbor

Eck Dunford were members of the important Galax stringband the Bogtrotters, renowned in the area in the 1930s and 1940s. Alan Lomax recorded them for the Library of Congress in 1937. Because of their recordings, young folklorists began to seek them out in the 1950s.

Working primarily as a farmer, Wade played music on the side and was a frequent participant at regional festivals and fiddlers' contests. For many years, young music enthusiasts traveled to Galax to visit and learn from him. John Cohen and Eric Davidson recorded Ward for Folkways; this recording was made by Davidson.

15. RAIN AND SNOW

Dillard Chandler, vocal (From Folkways 2418, 1975)

Dillard Chandler (b. 1909) was a ballad singer from Sodom, North Carolina, an area known for its traditional singers. In 1967, John Cohen made the documentary film *The End of an Old Song*, which focused on Chandler, portraying him as a "mountain man." He knew many old songs. Among his neighbors were the Wallin family, Berzilla and Doug. Cohen began to promote Chandler's music, getting Folkways to release a full album of his music in 1975. Chandler later moved to Asheville, North Carolina.

16. MOLE IN THE GROUND

Bascom Lamar Lunsford, vocals and banjo (From SFW CD 40082, 1996)

Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882–1973), "The Minstrel of the Appalachians," was a banjo player, fiddler, country lawyer, and avid collector of Appalachian folksongs. He traveled extensively around the area, collecting and memorizing songs from his neighbors. He was from South Turkey Creek, near Leicester, North Carolina. In 1928, he founded the Mountain Dance and Folk Song Festival in Asheville. It was a festival he was involved in for his entire life.

Lunsford composed numerous songs, the most famous of which was "Old Mountain Dew." He had an incredible memory for songs, and frequently recorded them for others. In 1949, he recorded his "Memory Collection" for the Library of Congress. Before each song, he enthusiastically told the history of the song, the identity, and frequently the address of the individual he collected it from. He recorded 350 songs for the Library—but if this sounds extreme, it should be noted that twice before he had recorded more than 300 songs for other collectors. His first recordings were on wax cylinders in 1922 and 1925. He lived to the ripe old age of 91, and could always be found at his festival each year until his death (Jeff Place, notes to SFW CD 40090)

Lunsford learned "Mole in the Ground" in 1901 from Fred Moody, a North Carolina neighbor (Wayne Martin, notes to SFW CD 40082).

17. MOONSHINER

Roscoe Holcomb, vocal (From SFW CD 40104, 1998; Folkways 2363, 1962)

Roscoe Holcomb (1911–1981) has "attained legendary status as a hard-hitting singer and banjo player although he has never been widely known" (John Cohen, notes to SFW CD 40104). Living most of his life around Daisy, Kentucky, he worked in mines and at a lumber mill.

Holcomb's music was a combination of Kentucky mountain music, songs from the church, and the blues. Known for heartfelt singing, he performed at folk festivals in the 1960s, was the subject of John Cohen's film *High Lonesome Sound*, and received a Grammy nomination in 1965 for the album of the same name. His music was even included in the 1966 psychedelic film *Zabriskie Point*.

Sung here unaccompanied, the song "Moonshiner" comes from Kentucky. It appears in the song collections of Alan Lomax and Carl Sandburg. Scholar Todd Harvey believes it was likely composed during the era of Prohibition. It is also an example of reverse migration: in the 1940s, the song

emigrated to Ireland, where it has become a standard, in part owing to the version by the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem (Harvey 2001: 73).

18. WILDWOOD FLOWER

Kilby Snow, autoharp; Mike Seeger, guitar (From Folkways 2365, 1962)

John Kilby Snow (b. 1905) was born in Grayson County, Virginia. He learned how to play autoharp as a child, and soon began to enter local fiddlers' contests. He spent his life entertaining all over the region at parties, schoolhouses, and churches. He later moved to Pennsylvania and performed at the Philadelphia Folk Festival.

The autoharp was invented by Charles F. Zimmerman in 1865. During the years 1900–1920, it began to be sold in the Southern mountain regions through mail-order catalogs and door-to-door salesmen-tuners (Mike Seeger, notes to Folkways 2365). Many were bought and abandoned in exasperation at trying to tune them. They found their way into many Southern musical groups, most notably the Carter Family.

"Wildwood Flower" was made famous through a recording by the Carters in 1928. It is a descendant of the song "I'll Twine 'Mid the Ringlets," composed by Maud Irving and J. P. Webster and copyrighted in 1860.

19. BARBRY ELLEN

Jean Ritchie, vocals (Also known as "Barbara Allen"; Child ballad number 84; from Folkways 2301, 1960)

Jean Ritchie (b. 1922) is probably the person more than any other responsible for popularizing the Appalachian dulcimer in the United States. She is a singer, songwriter, song collector, and author. Growing up in Viper, Kentucky, she was highly influenced by her very musical family. After graduating from the University of Kentucky, she became a social worker in New York City, where

she used music from home in her work. Gradually, she began to perform public concerts.

Over the years, Ritchie has recorded numerous albums for a variety of labels. As a song collector, she traveled to Ireland and England in 1952 on a Fulbright scholarship (with her husband, George Pickow) to record traditional singers. She is the author and editor of songbooks and books on how to play the Appalachian dulcimer. She currently lives in Port Washington, New York.

"Barbara Allen" is one of the most beloved of the Child ballads. Folksong scholar Francis James Child collected hundreds of ballad texts and classified them by number, bringing together variants of the same ballad. Child found "Barbara Allen" published as early as 1740 (Child, 1956:2). It was popular during the folksong revival of the 1950s and 1960s, and can be found all over the United States and the British Isles.

20. DANIEL PRAYED

Fred Price, Clint Howard, Doc Watson, vocals (From SFW CD 40029, 1994 / Folkways 2359, 1962)

Ralph Rinzler recorded this spiritual in April 1962 at the Ash Grove Club in Los Angeles. He had taken on the road a group consisting of Clarence Ashley (track 12), Doc Watson (track 7), and Watson's North Carolina neighbors Fred Price and Clint Howard (b. 1930). It is one of the lovely spirituals they had learned in childhood. It has recently been recorded by Patty Loveless.

The song was composed by G. T. "Dad" Speer, leader of the Speer Family, a gospel group. Speer taught at singing schools and composed almost 600 songs.

21. WRECK OF THE NUMBER NINE

Pop Stoneman, vocals, harmonica, and autoharp (Also called "Wreck of the Old #9"; from Folkways 2365, 1962; Laws G26; recorded 10 December 1961)

Ernest V. Stoneman (1893–1968) was born Carroll County, Virginia. He came from a musical family and grew up learning many of his relatives' songs. He married Hattie Frost in 1918 and settled in Bluefield, West Virginia, where he worked as a carpenter. By his own claim, in 1924 he heard a recording by fellow West Virginian Henry Whitter, and felt he could sing better than that. He auditioned for Columbia and Okeh Records in New York. His repertoire often consisted of songs commemorating news events and disasters. Examples include his hugely popular recording of "The Titanic" and "The Wreck of the C&O." As he said, "Any song with a story will go to the people's hearts because they love stories. They love stories of tragedy, a wreck or something" (*JEMF Quarterly* 7:19). His groups included his wife and often some of the finest musicians from the Galax-Hillsville area of Virginia. Of the latter group, Eck Dunford (track 9), the Ward Brothers, Oscar Jenkins, and Kahle Brewer deserve mention.

Stoneman continued to play music during the 1940s and 1950s, while supplementing his income with other work. During part of this time, he worked at a Naval Ordnance Factory in Washington, D.C., and was involved in the early and growing bluegrass music scene there. His family played together as the Stoneman Family and variously in different bluegrass groups. Mike Seeger recorded the Stonemans in 1957 for Folkways, thereby exposing them to folk revival audiences. The patriarch of a large musical family, Stoneman recorded with the Stoneman Family during the 1960s and made numerous television appearances. The Stonemans were embraced by mainstream country and western music audiences, and one of their LPs calls them "The First Family

of Country Music," though the Carters could make a pretty good case for that honor. Stoneman by then had earned the nickname of "Pop" (notes to SFW CD 40090).

"Wreck of the Number Nine," a fictional ballad written by Carson J. Robison (1890–1957) and first copyrighted in 1927, was recorded by Vernon Dalhart shortly thereafter. Dalhart was the first million-selling recording artist, and his records were hugely influential on singers in the Southern Appalachians. It comes from a collection of autoharp songs produced by Mike Seeger.

22. THE RED JACKET MINE EXPLOSION

The A. L. Phipps Family: A. L. Phipps, vocals and guitar; Kathleen Phipps, vocals and guitar; Helen Phipps, vocals and guitar; Leemon Phipps, vocals and bass (From Folkways 2375, 1965)

Formed in 1943, the Phipps Family consisted of A. L. (Arthur Leroy) Phipps (b. 1916); his wife, Kathleen (1924–1992); and two of his twelve children. They lived in Barbourville, Kentucky, and were best known for their musical similarity to the original Carter Family. One of their relatives, Ernest, had recorded for Victor in 1927, and is on the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Ralph Rinzler recorded the Phipps Family in 1964, and brought them to the Newport Folk Festival the same year. For the next twenty years, they continued to be featured at regional festivals. Additionally, they recorded albums for Starday Records and Pine Mountain, their own label. A. L. Phipps was murdered during the mid-1990s.

The song concerns a mine explosion that took place on Keen Mountain, Virginia on 22 April 1938. It occurred at the Keen Mountain Mine run by the Red Jacket Coal Corporation and 45 miners lost their lives. A. L. Phipps commemorated the event with a song. It uses the melody of "Red River Valley" (originally "Bright Sherman Valley").

23. KINGDOM COME

Norman Edmonds, fiddle (From Folkways 2435, 1964)

Norman "Uncle Norm" Edmonds (1889–1976) was one of the most renowned fiddlers from around Hillsville and Galax, Virginia. With banjo player J. P. Nestor, he recorded four songs in 1927 for the Victor Talking Machine Company. "Train on the Island" is considered a classic, partly because of its inclusion in the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Nestor balked at traveling to make additional recordings, but Edmonds did not. He continued to record, and with his stringband, the Old Timers, was a frequent participant at many fiddlers' conventions in North Carolina and Virginia.

"Kingdom Come" was recorded at the Galax Fiddlers' Convention during the early 1960s.

24. AMAZING GRACE

Horton Barker, vocals (From Folkways 2362, 1962)

Horton Barker (1889–1973) was born in Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee, in the far eastern part of the state, near the convergence of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia. The area is known for its old-time music. Blind since birth, Barker learned many regional ballads and Southern sentimental songs. During the 1930s, Alan Lomax and others recorded him. In 1941, he was filmed for the movie "Hear the Banjo Play," directed by Charles Korvin. At the time of this recording by Sandy Paton, he was living near Chilhowie, Virginia.

"Amazing Grace," among the best known American spirituals, has been credited to the pen of John Newton (1725–1807). It was first published in 1779. Barker sings what he calls the old melody, a tune he learned from a neighbor in his community (Sandy Paton, notes to FW 2362).

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