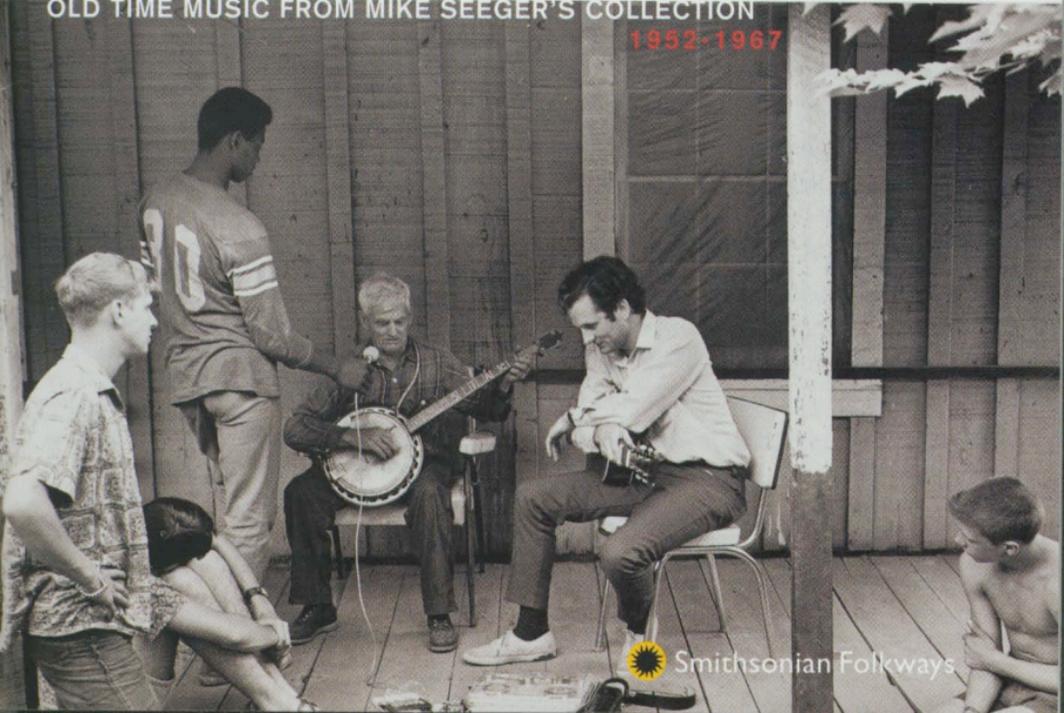


CLOSE TO HOME

OLD TIME MUSIC FROM MIKE SEEGER'S COLLECTION

1952-1967



Smithsonian Folkways

CLOSE TO HOME OLD TIME MUSIC FROM MIKE SEEGER'S COLLECTION 1952-1967

In the 1950s and sixties musician-collector Mike Seeger, inspired by the great folksong collectors of the 1930s, visited traditional musicians of the rural South. This is his handpicked selection of the recordings made during those visits. Included in the 38 selections are previously unreleased recordings by the well-known Sara & Maybelle Carter, Arthur Smith, Elizabeth Cotten, and Dock Boggs, as well as treasures by lesser-known artists. The enclosed booklet contains photographs and notes on the performances, which include virtuoso fiddle, banjo, and guitar music, unaccompanied ballad singing, and a storyteller entertaining his buddies in a fiddler's convention parking lot.

1. IN THE SWEET BYE AND BYE Elizabeth Cotten
2. TIE YOUR DOG, SALLY GAL Will Adam
3. BANJO INSTRUMENTAL J. C. "Cleve" Sutphin
4. LOST TRAIN BLUES V. L. Sutphin
5. SHORTENING BREAD Vernon and Cleve Sutphin
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34. POOR ORPHAN CHILD Kate Peters Sturgill
35. MY VIRGINIA ROSE Scott Boatright
36. I'M LEAVING YOU Sara Carter Bayes and
Maybelle Carter
37. HE SAID IF YOU LOVE ME, FEED MY SHEEP
Stancer Quartet
38. I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAYS Clarence Ferrill



Smithsonian
Folkways

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COLLECTOR'S CHOICE

As I try to think of what formed my love for and preoccupation with the sounds, the people, and the stories of Southern traditional folk music, I return to my earliest years. I was the son of two modernist composer-musicologists, who with great joy had just discovered the wonders of traditional Southern rural music. Their preoccupation as musicians was naturally with sound, and they were intrigued with the complex sounds made by musically sophisticated (though not musically literate) people throughout the South. In that politically and socially charged time they felt a mission to work on behalf of people's culture, to counter commercial domination of it, and to try to build and maintain its continuity. So they started in our home.

I was singing "Barbara Allen" and "Cindy" by the time I started school. My mother was transcribing folk songs from field recordings for her publications, so we heard that music around home. When I was about 7, my parents showed me how to operate the precious variable-speed phonograph that my mother used for her transcribing and how to sharpen the cactus needles used to play the aluminum field recordings that comprised about 90% of our family's collection of recorded music.

I'm thankful we didn't have a radio—our parents didn't want us to be influenced by

commercial media—because I spent many hours listening to field recordings of the Galax, VA, Bogtrotters string band, Blind Jimmie Strothers, Lead Belly, and one of the few commercial recordings we had, "A Fiddler's Contest in Georgia" by Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers. I absolutely loved that music then, and I still do.

There's something about the music, the value of being able to hear it when I was young, and my parents' mission to carry it on that motivated me to act in a similar direction. When our family got a tape recorder, I wanted to use it to record traditional musicians. When my mother died and I received my first royalty check for her folksong collections, I spent it all on a tape recorder. (It cost about a quarter of the price of a new automobile, and so few people knew how to adjust and operate it I had to figure that out myself.)

I was just starting to play banjo and fiddle then, in the mid-fifties, and I wanted to learn from traditional musicians. Finding musicians to record and learn from around Washington DC was no problem. Elizabeth Cotten was in our household. When I had my banjo with me, live musicians or word about them would appear.

Soon I started going to country music parks to record bluegrass and country music shows. It seemed to me that bluegrass and several other commercial forms were extensions of the traditional music I was reared with, and there

was nearly always some old-time music on the programs too. So before a show I would ask promoters' and musicians' permission, put my one microphone as near as I could to the single public address system mike, and record. Bluegrass was very much in a formative, improvisational state then, and it was exciting to hear Monroe, Scruggs, and the Osbornes challenging one another and themselves, the soulful sounds of the Stanley Brothers, and the down-home neighborly music of Alec Campbell and Ola Belle Reed. I was working for minimum wage and going to technical school during much of this time and could scarcely afford fuel for my always troublesome car or tape for my recorder. Time and money resources scarcely improved when in 1960 I started playing music for a living and started a family. From then on I've been a full-time performer of traditional music and have spent much of my spare time on collecting projects, most done before the era of corporate and federal folklore grants.

In late 1956 Moses Asch of Folkways Records asked me if I would make a record of Scruggs-style banjo picking, and I assumed that he wanted me to record traditional players. This started me on the path of making occasional documentary recordings, mostly for Folkways. Each collection usually had a theme or concept: the music contributing to and influenced by Earl Scruggs's style of

banjo playing; Southern autoharp playing; a fiddler's Convention at Union Grove, NC; several exceptional Southern musicians: Elizabeth Cotten, Dock Boggs, Kilby Snow, and Lesley Riddle. All were recorded and produced in my spare time on a budget of about \$100 each, in people's homes or any quiet location, often with recording machines of marginal quality. About the time that I got a good machine (in 1966, thanks to the Newport Folk Foundation), other collectors appeared. In the 1970s I did less collecting and spent more time presenting and touring with traditional musicians. In the mid-1980s, I put together several grants and produced what I expect will be my last piece of field collection, "Talking Feet," a video documentary and book on Southern step-dancing. I think that monumental project cured me.

The musicians I've recorded and learned from are all, in a sense, collector-performers. They collect by learning the songs that appeal to them. Then they shape them individually and perform them around home for themselves and others. I'm a collector-performer, too, but with an urban perspective and a slightly different agenda.

Perhaps not that different. A friend of mine, the West Virginia fiddler Wilson Douglas, told me about learning from the great fiddler French Carpenter. Carpenter would exert considerable effort to teach Wilson his tunes. If

Wilson would get frustrated and say, "I just can't do it," Carpenter would urge him on, saying, "You've got to." Carpenter knew those old tunes were a valuable heritage and was determined to have them live on. That's how I feel about this whole body of music, and today recordings and stage performances are part of the means to that end.

So I will continue to produce occasional compilations like this one from my old tapes. I'll be spending most of my time touring and recording my own music, which is based on what I've picked up from traditional musicians in the many visits and workshop sessions I've participated in over the years.

This Compilation

This is a small sample of the recordings I made over a fifteen-year period, from 1952 to 1967. It is focused on the type of old-time music that thrived up to (perhaps) 1940. Most of it is home-style music, but I've included a few musicians such as Snuffy Jenkins and Arthur Smith and the McGee Brothers, who developed their music into a stage performance just prior to the advent of bluegrass. Later collections will feature my recordings of bluegrass shows.

All recording was done with a single microphone, usually of the non-directional variety. My intent was usually just to make a copy of the sound, not to record for commercial release.

This is a long recording; I want to give you

as much music as possible. You may want to listen in more than one session, perhaps two or three, as there is a wide variety to take in. Some pieces are frustratingly short, and I try to explain why in the song notes. They're included because I think you'd rather hear them short than not at all.

Please read the notes and, if you especially like something, look up the performer's full recording. Several artists on this CD had Folkways LPs, which are now available only through Smithsonian Folkways mail order. Order through the Smithsonian address in the back of this booklet.

Mike Seeger
Rockbridge County, VA
April, 1997

THE RECORDINGS

1. IN THE SWEET BYE AND BYE

Elizabeth Cotten, at the Seeger home, Chevy Chase MD, 29 November 1952.

Around Thanksgiving in 1952 my brother Pete came for a visit. Elizabeth Cotten had been working for our family for several years on Saturdays while our mother taught piano. Peggy had recently discovered that Libba (our sister Penny's childhood name for her) could play guitar, and we were very much taken with her style and touch. We asked her to play for us and Pete after she'd done a full day's work—no fewer than 10 hours and at least an hour bus trip to and from her home. Our father just happened to have brought a new tape recorder from his office and showed me how to operate it. I hand-held the microphone and we recorded 15 pieces, including "Freight Train." She didn't own a guitar and had little time to play on ours during her busy day's work. I'm amazed at her rock-solid, graceful music after she'd had a long day and must have wanted to get home to her family.

This is the first piece I had ever heard her play and the second piece she recorded for us that evening. It was my first time to operate a recording machine.

She plays the tune—first in "church time" and then in "rag time." Other recordings by Ms. Cotten are on Smithsonian Folkways SF

40009 and Folkways 31003 and 3537.

2. TIE YOUR DOG, SALLY GAL

Will Adam, fiddle. At his home in Kengar, part of Kensington MD, probably late 1953.

In my early days of playing banjo, I'd take it nearly everywhere with me so as to practice and pass the time. While hanging out with a friend who was cleaning out his horse's stall at a stable near Rock Creek Park, I sat on a hay bale and picked a few tunes. I noticed a Black stable hand, probably about 50 years old, noticing me and the banjo. We got to talking, and I asked him if he played, and he said not much and hadn't since about 25 years ago, when he used to play with a string band. I handed him the banjo, and though he was out of practice, he still had a solid, hard-as-nails clawhammer style. He played several tunes, and I asked him if I could come visit and record him. He said sure, that I could find him at Kengar, near Kensington—the next town over from where I was living in Chevy Chase. His name was Sam—I never saw him again. But I still remember one of his tunes.

I asked after Sam at the neighborhood market run by a Benny Houghton, who didn't know his whereabouts. But he told me of Will Adam, the fiddler Sam used to play with, who lived just around the corner. (I should mention that Kengar was, and still is to some extent, a primarily Black section of Kensington.)

Will Adam was about 60, was reared in the area, and mentioned having to do laboring work to earn a living. He was a dignified, well-spoken, countryish man. He had played for both Anglo- and African-American country dances, and his repertoire was quite broad. He played his own versions of Irish tunes as well as other pieces that might be unique to his regional rural African-American culture. He had a distinctive repertoire and had certainly been a really good fiddler. He was out of practice, didn't own a fiddle, and hadn't played for 25 or so years. On the several times I visited him, he'd play my fiddle, which I had put together from parts I found in a friend's trash barrel. I tuned it a whole tone low for lack of confidence in my glue job on the neck.

Melodically, Will Adam's tunes were unusual, and this one is full of archaic-sounding double-stops (two-string harmonies). He had a limber bowing wrist, and I'm amazed at his ability to play tunes as difficult and unusual as this, not to mention his feat of simply remembering them after such a long time. I don't recall having heard a tune quite like this one anywhere else and include it in its entirety. I wish I'd spent more time with him. He was a really good fiddler and had a special musical sense.

3. BANJO INSTRUMENTAL

J.C. "Cleve" Sutphin, banjo. At his home near Wittman MD, probably 8 January 1956. Banjo



J.C. Sutphin, Wittman MD, 1957. Photo by Mike Seeger

tuned gDGBD

J.C. Sutphin was born in Patrick City VA, 14 February 1885 and was playing fiddle and banjo by his teen years. He played for dances and knew early recording artists such as Charlie Poole and Henry Whitter. He worked as a laborer in coal, iron, and timber and met Hazel Dickens' father Hillory on a timber job in 1915. He had also been sweethearts briefly with Hazel's mother Sarah before her marriage. He moved north to Wittman in 1939 to be with his son.

Sutphin played fiddle and banjo left-handed, using a thumb pick and a finger pick for banjo. He used standard instruments. I can't

remember how I heard of the Sutphins. Wittman is on Maryland's Eastern Shore, several hours drive from Mt. Wilson, near Baltimore, where I was living at the time. On a couple of occasions Hazel Dickens, Bob Baker, and I went together to visit with them. I've included six recordings here from my several visits with this musical family. Music seemed a large part of their home life. Other recordings by this family are available on Folkways 2315 and Smithsonian Folkways SF 40037.

4. LOST TRAIN BLUES

V. L. Sutphin, harmonica. At his home near Wittman MD, early winter, 1956.

Vernon Sutphin, J.C.'s son, was given his first harmonica by Henry Whitter, whose version of this tune, either on his 1920s record or in person, was probably his model. The sound closely mimics the rhythms and whistle of coal-burning steam locomotives.

5. SHORTENING BREAD

Vernon Sutphin, harmonica; Cleve Sutphin, banjo, at the home of Vernon Sutphin, early 1957. Banjo probably tuned gCGCD

In earlier days this would be a fiddle-and-banjo tune, but here the harmonica takes the place of the fiddle. As is usual when a harmonica plays fiddle tunes, the melody is played in the key of the instrument primarily by "blowing out," in this case a "C" harmonica played in

the key of C. "Shortening Bread" is done usually in G on the banjo; the instrument's C tuning gives it an unusual sound. The harmonica gets some great expression into the tune.

6. THE TRAIN THAT CARRIED MY GIRL FROM TOWN

Vernon Sutphin, harmonica; Cleve Sutphin, banjo. Recorded at same session as #5.

This song is from a 1920s recording by mountain bluesman Frank Hutchison. Vernon Sutphin plays "cross-harp" in the blues fashion on this one. He's pulling a "C" harp in the key of G to get the slurs or blue notes.

7. OLD GAMBLING MAN

J.J. Neece, vocal and fiddle. Same session as #5.

An archaic performance of this well-travelled song by Vernon's father-in-law. Neece



J.J. Neece, Wittman MD, 1957. Photo by Mike Seeger

was born in 1871 in Marshall County TN and played fiddle since about age 10. He worked as a farmer, blacksmith, and carpenter and played on the Grand Old Opry in its early years. He was living with his daughter at the time of this recording.

8. JOHN HENRY

J.J. Neece, fiddle; Vernon Sutphin, harmonica; J.C. Sutphin, banjo; unknown guitar player in background. Same session as #5.

What a wonderful, rare sound! For some reason, I decided to hand-hold the mike and move it occasionally closer to each seated player so as to have him predominate a little, and I made some noise doing so.

9. SHOUT, LITTLE LULU

Louise Foreacre, vocal and banjo. At her home near Elkton MD, late 1956.

Ms. Foreacre was originally from the Waynesville NC area. I met her at New River Ranch, a country music entertainment park near Rising Sun MD. This was a gathering place for people like Ms. Foreacre who had moved up from the North Carolina and Virginia mountains and who loved Southern music. She was about 50 at the time of this recording. Other recordings by Ms. Foreacre can be heard on Folkways 2315.



Louise Foreacre, near Elkton MD, 1957. Photo by Mike Seeger

10. HE WILL SET YOUR FIELDS ON FIRE

Kilby Snow, autoharp; with Mike Seeger, guitar. At home of Wade Ward, near Independence VA, August 1957.

Ernest Stoneman suggested that, if I really liked autoharp music, I should go listen to Kilby Snow, of Fries VA. So on a trip south, Hazel Dickens and I went to look for him. It took some searching, from Fries to Galax, to a construction job near Wade Ward's home near Independence. It was easy to get him to take a break and reach his autoharp out of the back of his little Henry J automobile, and with his foot propped on the back bumper, he played a tune. There was no one I'd ever heard make music like that, and I asked him if we could record some. There was no electrici-

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ty there, so we drove over to Wade Ward's to ask if we could bring Kilby over for some music. He said it was okay. Wade knew Kilby and was always easy-going and hospitable. His mother-in-law, Granny Porter, especially loved his autoharp playing. It was a wonderful few hours, with Hazel Dickens, Wade, Kilby, and me making music and Wade's wife Molly and her mother listening intently and making comments and requests between songs.

John Kilby Snow was originally from around Galax VA and was reared with the rural music of the area. Although he played other instruments, the autoharp was his main musical focus. He evolved a left-handed playing technique which enabled him to play slurs, or as he called them, "drag notes," by playing 2 or 3



Kilby Snow, Grayson County VA, 1957. Photo by Mike Seeger

adjacent open strings upward in pitch very accurately with the chord bar released. No one else has been able to match the driving speed, accuracy, and hard touch of his virtuoso style. He was about 50 years old at the time of this recording.

I hope to compile most of the recordings from that session on a Smithsonian Folkways CD in about a year. Other recordings include a few of Kilby's songs on a videocassette, Vestapol 13071, and a full recording devoted to him, Folkways 3902.

11. GATHER IN THE GOLDEN GRAIN

Ernest and Hattie Stoneman, vocal duet with parlor organ and guitar. At their home in Carmody Hills MD, 22 June 1962.

Ernest Stoneman was one of the most active old-time music recording artists of the late 1920s. He was originally from the Galax VA area and helped arrange the participation of regional musicians in the important Bristol recording sessions in 1927. Hattie Stoneman sang and played banjo, fiddle, and other instruments and occasionally performed in groups with her husband, Ernest. They moved to the Washington DC area during the Depression, where they reared their 13 children, all of whom also played music. They were well known around the area, performed a lot, and participated in music contests. I first heard them at a contest in Gambrills MD and started visiting



Hattie and Ernest Stoneman, Carmody Hills MD, ca 1962. Photo by Mike Seeger

them soon after, eventually recording them for a couple of Folkways LPs, 2315 and 2365.

Ms. Stoneman was always reluctant to record, but we got her to play the organ and sing a verse and chorus with Ernest. She played an old foot-pump parlor organ given to her by Ernest when they married. They sing the melody in octaves. Unison and octave singing were once part of family singing traditions but are now heard mostly in congregational religious singing. I wish this had lasted longer.

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12. GOING TO LAY DOWN MY BURDENS

Elizabeth White and Gideon Craig, autoharps, with vocal by Ms. White. At her home in Greenville SC, 29 June 1963.

I can't remember where I heard that Josh White's mother could play autoharp. My nephew, Dan Seeger, and I visited and recorded her and her grandson playing autoharps while she sang. She was around 80 at the time. She strummed the

autoharp with a clothespin.

13. JOHN HENRY

Lesley Riddle, vocal with guitar. Recorded 8 March 1965, at a Rochester NY barbershop where he was working.

In 1963 the New Lost City Ramblers performed several engagements with Maybelle Carter, the influential guitar player and harmony singer of the original Carter Family. We had a great time rehearsing and travelling with her; she was a good driver and conversationalist.



Lesley Riddle, Rochester VA, 1963. Photo by Mike Seeger/John Cohen

We had many talks about the early days of the Carter family, about how and where they learned their music. She told us how A.P. Carter visited some African American musicians in nearby Kingsport TN searching for songs and had met Lesley Riddle among others. Riddle and A. P. Carter became friends, and they sometimes travelled together. The Carters learned a number of

songs from Lesley Riddle, and Maybelle picked up the country blues technique of guitar picking from Lesley. She hadn't seen him in years, but I eventually tracked him down in Rochester, NY. Though he wasn't playing much anymore, I kept on bothering him until he took it up again.

Lesley Riddle (1905–1980) was originally from Burnsville, in northwestern North Carolina, and came from a musical family. On this well-known song he plays slide guitar with a penknife held between two fingers. He also played mandolin and piano. Riddle has a full

CD on Rounder (0299) with excellent notes by Barry O'Connell.

It should be remembered that John Henry was a legendary African American man who won an 1870 contest with a machine at a railroad tunnel in West Virginia.

14. PRETTY FAIR DAMSEL

Tom Ashley, vocal. Recorded at his home near Shouns TN, 13 April 1961.

Tom Ashley recorded some beautiful old-time music around 1930. He worked as a medicine show entertainer and in the forties and fifties performed with country music groups such as Charlie Monroe and the Stanley Brothers. Ralph Rinzler spotted him rehearsing Clint Howard and Fred Price at a Union Grove Fiddler's Convention in 1960, recorded him for Folkways, and helped him reach urban audiences eager for traditional music. John Cohen and I visited him and recorded just a few songs. As far as I know, this is the only recording of Tom singing unaccompanied. He was 65 at the time.

A 2-CD set of Tom Ashley with Doc Watson and others is available on Smithsonian Folkways 40029/30.

15. IT'S THESE HARD TIMES

Pearly "Grandma" Davis, vocal and guitar. Recorded 5 April 1961 at her granddaughter's house near Roaring River NC.

Grandma was one of the few truly old-time musicians who in the early 1960s still came to Union Grove Fiddler's Convention, where I first met her. John Cohen and I visited her shortly after one of the Conventions and had an afternoon and evening visit with her and her exuberant, friendly family. She didn't trust (and therefore didn't have) electricity in her house, but she did have two prominent pictures on her mantelpiece: one of Fiddling John Carson, the first recorded (1923) rural fiddler, and one of Elvis Presley.

The song was certainly once sung without accompaniment. It sounds to me like its rhythms are almost in 6/8 time while the guitar is in 2/4. Like many old-time musicians, she plays the melody on the instrument while she sings. Although I didn't ask, I'd guess she was in her late 70s.

16. OLD-TIME REEL

Pearly "Grandma" Davis, fiddle and (probably) Oliver Davis, guitar. Recorded at the same session as # 5.

Grandma Davis played fiddle and banjo too, and, though not fancy, she's good. The tune is from the "Flop Eared Mule" family, and I'm sure she moved many a dancer with it.

17. JACKSON SCHOTTISCHE

A. L. Hall, fiddle, with group. Recorded 4 April 1961 at Oak Ridge NC Fiddler's Convention.

I heard A. L. Hall at several central North Carolina fiddler's conventions during the early 1960s. His repertoire was one of the oldest that I'd heard, and I include this piece because it was very unusual to hear a schottische at a Southern fiddler's convention, especially with three parts, in three keys, and with picked strings. Hall was from Trinity NC and probably in his seventies. His group here includes a couple of teen-age boys.

Mr. Hall and Ms. Davis can also be heard on Folkways 2434, The 37th Old Time Fiddler's Convention at Union Grove, NC.

18. LONE PRAIRIE

Wade Ward, fiddle. At his home near Independence VA, August 1957.

Some of my favorite music when I was growing up was the Lomax recordings of Wade Ward and the Bogtrotters Band. I visited and recorded Wade on my first recording trip South in 1956. This recording was from my second visit, along with Hazel Dickens. "Lone Prairie" is the melody of the well-known cowboy song sung by Wade's nephew, Fields Ward. Although known mostly for his banjo picking, Wade was also a first-class fiddler.

This piece was previously released on Folkways 2363. An entire recording, Folkways 2380, is devoted to his music.



Wade and Molly Ward, Peach Bottom Creek, 1957.
Photo by Mike Seeger

19. MOLLY, PUT THE KETTLE ON

Wade Ward, banjo. At his home near Independence VA, April 12, 1961.

A sparkling performance of this locally well-known tune during a visit by John Cohen and me. We played music together, took part in a fox chase (sitting by the fire one night 'til the dogs got lost), and went to one of the farm auctions, where Wade and a couple of other musicians played to attract the crowd.

Wade always welcomed visitors, but sometimes his dry wit would take us by surprise. After playing one of the tunes on this session he let the music die down and then proceeded to interview himself for us, folklorist-style, to entertain and possibly provide a little perspective to his Northern visitors.

20. LAST GOLD DOLLAR

Edsel Martin, dulcimer, and Bill McElreath, guitar. In Swannanoa NC, 8 November 1967.

From the mid-1960s through the eighties, singer and civil rights activist Anne Romaine arranged tours of Southern traditional musicians to perform for colleges and community groups in the South. Her mission was new and ambitious: to present a range of Anglo- and African-American Southern traditional music to Southern audiences, while at the same time raising progressive political issues. Artists included Pete Seeger, Doc Watson, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Elizabeth Cotten,

Sarah Gunning, Dock Boggs, and the Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers. I made this recording on one such tour at Warren Wilson College during an informal morning jam session before we travelled on to the next engagement. The chording style of dulcimer playing was new to the South at that time, and I thought it worked really nicely with McElreath's old-time finger-picking guitar style.

At this time, Edsel Martin was a dulcimer maker as well as player, and he also carved wooden birds. Bill McElreath was best known for his flatfoot dancing, which he was great at. As well as I can remember, he and Martin joined our tour for this one engagement in western North Carolina.

21. JOHN HENRY

Bill and Jean Davis. During a performance of the Appalachian Mountain Festival, Morristown College, Morristown TN, 10 November 1967.

Bill and Jean Davis play two dulcimers here featuring their unique slurred note, which they get by filling the space between two frets with a popsicle stick. This is the third version of John Henry on this recording, only three of the many ways to play this durable melody.

This recording was made during the same tour as the previous selection.



Hazel Dickens, Orna and Estil Ball, Rugby VA, 1957.
Photo by Mike Seeger

22. THREE NIGHTS DRUNK

The Blue Ridge Buddies: Estil Ball, vocal and guitar, Orna Ball, vocal and banjo, Blair Reedy, mandolin. At home of Estil and Orna Ball near Rugby VA, August 1957.

Estil and Orna Ball were first recorded by John Lomax in 1937, and it was because of those recordings that Hazel Dickens and I visited them in 1957. After we had been there only a short time, I asked if we could record, and they not only said "sure" but asked Blair Reedy, Orna's old-time mandolinist brother, to join us. An evening of old-time music, including Hazel's and my singing, followed.

The Balls were somewhat familiar with early folksong-revival collections and performers as well as country music artists from the

1930s to the 1950s. They were experienced local professionals with a radio program and performances in regional churches. As I recall, that's why they wished to be called the Blue Ridge Buddies for these recordings.

23. JIMMIE SUTTON

The Blue Ridge Buddies. Same session as #22.

This is a regional favorite of old-time instrumentalists that has many words not sung here. Orna has a couple of unusual clawhammer licks. I wish that Blair Reedy had played a little longer; good, straight-ahead mandolin playing of old-time tunes was rarely recorded.

24. GOING TO LAY DOWN MY OLD GUITAR

Snuffy Jenkins, banjo; Ira Dimmery, guitar. At WIS radio studio, Columbia SC, 26 September 1956.

Snuffy Jenkins was one of the best and probably the most influential of the three-finger-style banjo players who preceded Earl Scruggs. This recording was made at the session for Folkways 2314, a record documenting several early three-finger-style players and others who were very much influenced by Scruggs's then-revolutionary style. Jenkins's playing of this Delmore Brothers song on a 1940s 78rpm record with Byron Parker made me want to include him on the Folkways LP. Folkways 2314 is now Smithsonian Folkways SF 40037, *American Banjo, Three Finger and Scruggs Style*.

25. BLACK MOUNTAIN RAG

Arthur Smith, fiddle; Sam McGee, guitar; Kirk McGee, 5-string banjo. At Kirk McGee's Nashville TN home, November 1957.

Arthur Smith (1898-1971) was the most influential and innovative old-time fiddler of the 1930s. He made up new tunes and had a driving, fluid bowing style. His influence spread in the mountain South through his appearances at the Grand Ole Opry and fiddle contests, his recordings, and his tours, often with the McGee Brothers in the early days. He was originally from central Tennessee.

The McGee Brothers toured and recorded with Uncle Dave Macon in the late 1920s. Ralph Rinzler and I were amazed to see them in 1955 as part of Grandpa Jones's show at the New River Ranch, near Rising Sun MD. Later, I approached Kirk about making a record of him and Sam; he asked if it would be okay for Arthur to come along too, and of course, I jumped at the chance. Alyse Taub-



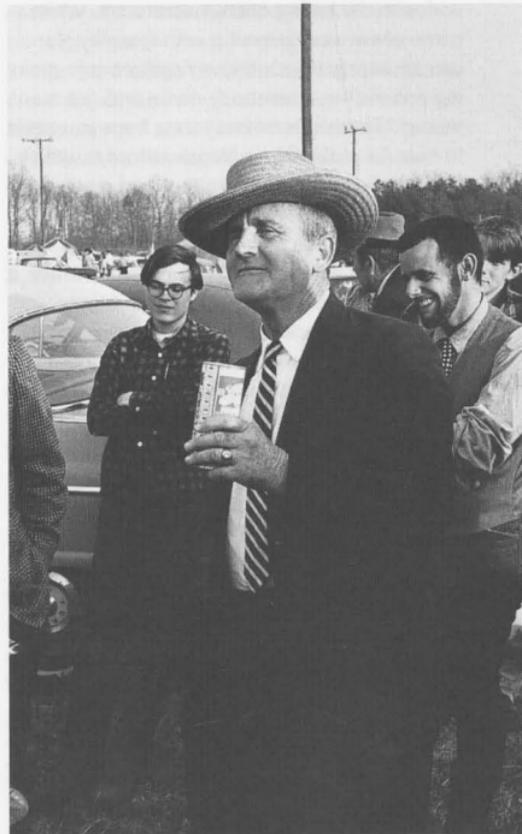
Arthur Smith with Jeremy Seeger, Roosevelt NJ, 1965. Photo by Mike Seeger.

man and I drove to Nashville and spent an afternoon and evening recording enough material for an LP, which was eventually released in the 1960s (Folkways 2379). This is an out-take from that session. At the time I considered the tune too familiar and the playing a bit ragged in places. Now it seems wild and woolly. The tune was a favorite among fiddle contestants, partly because of the fiddle-picking part, partly because of the special tuning (AEAC#).

26. A TALK ON THE WORLD

Clyde Lewis. In a parking lot at Union Grove Fiddler's Convention, probably April 1967.

My recollection is uncertain, but I think we were on one of Anne Romaine's tours with Bessie Jones, Babe Stovall (a Louisiana singer), the New Lost City Ramblers, and a few others. We stopped off for a few hours at the Union Grove Fiddler's Convention, which was getting huge and more than a little wild in the late 1960s. It was quite a scene. As I recall, Bessie Jones stayed in the car, probably a wise decision for an elderly Black woman. Stovall was a very dark-skinned man. He was fearless; he performed in this otherwise all-White place, playing blues guitar sometimes in back of his head to entertain the folks. He knew just how to fit in, and they loved him. People were playing fiddles, banjos, and guitars all over the place, some drinking, others



Clyde Lewis, Union Grove Fiddler's Convention, Union Grove NC, 1967. Photo by Mike Seeger

undoubtedly taking other substances. While some of us were jamming with Dorothy Rorick, an energetic southern-Virginia banjo-picking entertainer, somebody came and got me, saying "There's somebody over here you need to hear." I grabbed my Nagra recorder, which fortunately had fresh batteries, and went out into the parking lot where Lewis was holding forth. I asked him if I could record one of his pieces, and although he'd just done this one a few minutes before, he repeated it for me and then listened back to it. In between pieces by fiddler "Lost John" Ray, he did a few more skits. The ambience of motorcycles and high spirits is quite clear. Judging from the photograph, I'd guess he was about sixty years old.

27. RED WING

"Lost John" Ray, fiddle, Walt Koken, 5-string banjo, and unidentified guitar player. At the same location as the previous track, a few minutes after another skit by Clyde Lewis.

"Lost John" Ray was one of the favorite fiddlers at Union Grove and was playing informally with Walt and occasionally others in the parking lot. This was Walt's first trip to Union Grove; he later became well known as lead fiddler for the Highwoods String Band.

I believe the voice at the end belongs to Clyde Lewis.



*Eck Robertson "reflecting," Amarillo TX, 1963.
Photo by Mike Seeger*

28. LEATHER BREECHES

Eck Robertson, fiddle and spoken introduction, with the New Lost City Ramblers: John Cohen, banjo, Tracy Schwarz, guitar, and Mike Seeger, mandolin. At a home in Newport RI, during the Newport Folk Festival, 25 July 1965.

A.C. "Eck" Robertson (1887–1975) was the first traditional fiddler to be recorded, in 1922, and his solo version of "Sally Goodin" with its many variations and superb playing is still the best. He was one of the most influential of the Texas fiddlers and a frequent winner at contests well into the fifties.

One of folklorist Roger Abrahams's students led John Cohen, Tracy Schwarz, and me to Eck, whom we visited and recorded in 1963

and 1964, recordings which were issued on County LP 202. I also got him to come to the UCLA Folk Festival in 1964 and the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, just before he stopped playing. One of my favorite recollections is from Newport, when he was warming up in a



Sherman Lawson, Switzer WV, ca 1964. Photo by Mike Seeger

backstage tent surrounded by Bill Monroe, some of Monroe's band members, Arthur Smith, the McGee Brothers, and a few others. We were all fans of great fiddling. This is one of four songs I asked him to record before he went back to Texas. It was probably his last recording session. Eck Robertson can be found on Folkways 2952.

29. BLACKBERRY BLOSSOM

Sherman Lawson, fiddle. At his home, Switzer WV, 8 June 1964.

I met Sherman Lawson while searching for the mountain blues player Frank Hutchison. They had recorded together in the 1920s. We had a couple of really nice visits, talking about Hutchison, about Lawson's first fiddle, which was a gourd, about how and from whom he had learned, fiddler's contests, and so forth.

Lawson learned this tune, one of his favorites, from the legendary fiddler Ed Haley. It's obviously not the "Blackberry Blossom" made popular by Arthur Smith, but a different tune, full of unexpected West Virginia twists and turns. Lawson was 70 in 1964.

30. ALABAMA GALS

Emmett Cole, fiddle. At his home near Cartersville GA, 12 November 1967.

I wanted to meet with Fiddling John Carson's daughter, Kate, but it didn't work out and she suggested that I talk with Emmett Cole.

He had known and played with many of the older Georgia musicians such as Clayton McMichen, John Carson, Gid Tanner, Fate Norris, and Land Norris to name just a few. He was in the studio in the mid-1920's when A. A. Gray recorded his beautiful, archaic version of "Bonaparte's Retreat." His wife was equally knowledgeable about old-time music. Cole had taken violin lessons but also had a distinctive Georgia sound when he played old-time fiddle tunes like this one. He also played banjo. I would have guessed his age to be about 70.

31. OLD JOE CLARK

George Landers, banjo. At his home in Madison County NC, 15 August 1967.

Peter Gott, best known for building log houses, is also a good old-time musician. In the 1960s, he and his wife Polly settled in then-remote Madison County, in western North Carolina and built their log home on a mountainside. He got to know all of his neighbors and in conversation learned that his closest neighbor had played the banjo years ago. He got George Landers a banjo and encouraged him to play again.

I had met Peter and Polly in 1960 in California, and when I first went to see them in Madison County, the road was too rough for my car, so I had to walk the last half mile. It was pretty quiet, and as I walked I soon heard the sound of a banjo.

As I got closer, it really sounded good, and I thought to myself, "Peter has really got it right." I rounded a bend in the road, and there was George Landers, age about 80, sitting in the doorway of his weathered board-and-batten house playing the banjo, neat, rhythmic, and driving. I acknowledged him as I walked by, and he didn't even stop playing. Peter and I visited him a little later and recorded him for about an hour. He had some unusual variations on the western North Carolina up-picking style on this well-known tune. You can hear more of George Landers on *High Atmosphere*, Rounder 0028.

32. SUGAR BABY

Dock Boggs, vocal and banjo. At his sister Laura Hunsucker's house, Guest's River, Wise County VA, 4 June 1964.

Dock Boggs (1898–1971) was one of the most distinctive old-time Southern musicians in both repertoire and style. His 1920s recordings caught the ear of mountain music enthusiasts in his native region, southwestern Virginia, and those further distant such as Tom Benton, my parents, and Alan Lomax. In the 1950's, Harry Smith chose two of Boggs's early recordings, including one of this song, for his pioneer reissue, *Anthology of American Folk Music*, Folkways 2953.

Boggs's sound intrigued me too, and with some help from collector Gus Meade I located



Dock Boggs, Cambridge MA, ca 1965. Photo by Mike Seeger

him in Norton, Virginia—a retired coal miner who had just reclaimed his old Gibson banjo and was starting to play again. This is an outtake from one of the four records I made of him in the 1960s. His complete recordings are on Folkways RF 54, 2351, 2392, 3903, and 5458.

33. QUEEN SALLY

Archie Sturgill, vocal. At the home of Archie and Kate Peters Sturgill, Norton VA, 7 January 1967.

In the late 1960s Dock often had Kate Peters Sturgill back him on guitar. Dock Boggs wanted to help get some of his friends recorded, and so we went to the Sturgills' to record him and Kate.

During the recording session at Archie and Kate's home, Archie mentioned that he knew

an old song and sang this for us. Of this song he said, "My sister and my aunt sung that back when I was a kid, about 11 or 12, 13 years old...That's all [there was to it]." It's a combination of two old English ballads, "Queen Jane" and "Poor Sally."

34. POOR ORPHAN

Kate Peters Sturgill, vocal and guitar. Same session as #33.

Kate's father, a son of Irish immigrants who had settled in New York State, and her mother, from Wise County, Virginia, brought a love of music to Kate and her 12 brothers and sisters. Kate belonged to several groups of musicians, including the Lonesome Pine Trailers, who formed in the 1920s and still occasionally performed as a group into the sixties, and the Cumberland Valley Girls during the forties and fifties. She broadcast on regional radio stations as early as 1928 and helped A. P. Carter collect songs for the Carter family to record. At about the same time, she taught guitar and gave school programs as part of a W.P.A. program. She was nearly sixty at the time of this recording.

She said of this text and tune:

"Well, I found [the words] in an old book that'd come down through the generations... about the time that folk music became famous again [in the 1940s]. I was trying to hunt up some of the old songs that had been put back

and forgotten...Mostly, I kind of revised the tune from other songs I'd heard...just kind of made up the tune."

35. MY VIRGINIA ROSE

Scott Boatright, vocal and guitar. At his home in Coeburn VA, 21 August 1967.

Scott Boatright was born and reared on a farm in Scott County, in southwestern Virginia. In the late 1920s he was part of Dock Boggs's band. Dock and I visited Scott a couple of times during the 1960s, and this 1920s-style piece was recorded during one of those reunions. Scott learned the song from a neighbor of his, a Mr. Griffith, who had composed it and sold it to A.P. Carter. The Carter Family recorded it in 1935.

36. I'M LEAVING YOU

Sara Carter Bayes, lead vocal and second guitar, and Maybelle Carter, harmony vocal and lead guitar. At the home of Coy and Sara Bayes, Angel's Camp CA, 24 April 1963.

As I mentioned before, Maybelle Carter was on the West Coast for a while, touring with the New Lost City Ramblers. Folklorist Ed Kahn and I offered to drive her up to visit her cousin Sara with whom she had performed for so many years as the Carter Family. We had a two-day visit with these two exceptional women, and we enjoyed the close, warm relationship between them as they



Sara Carter Bayes, Maybelle Carter and Coy Bayes, Angels Camp CA, 1963. Photo by Ed Kahn or Mike Seeger

talked about their families, made music, played cards, and recalled their adventures in the 1920's and 30's.

This is one of the few songs that we had full takes of, and you can hear their ad lib but totally musical togetherness. As I recall, there was no rehearsal or re-takes. Maybelle plays this song with a flat pick, which she did occasionally. I believe she's playing in F, with a capo. I remember my surprise at her easily playing two different B flat chords on her trusty Gibson L-5 guitar.

This song was composed by the Delmore

Brothers in the 1930s and was not previously recorded by Sara and Maybelle.

37. HE SAID IF YOU LOVE ME, FEED MY SHEEP

Stancer Quartet, vocal quartet, personnel unknown. Recorded from WBBI radio, Abingdon VA, 2:30 PM, 8 January 1967.

If you want to hear old-time family and community singing in the South, tune in to small-town Sunday morning religious programs. Sometimes they're broadcast direct from services in small, informal churches, sometimes from radio studios, and sometimes pre-recorded in a home. I heard a beautiful solo unaccompanied singer on such a broadcast from Stuart VA only ten years ago.

For this recording I set up my Nagra machine at the Sturgills' home one Sunday while they were at church and recorded several programs off the air. This song was part of the "Community Revival Hour" with pastor Jim Nunley (I'm guessing at the spelling). The much better known Chestnut Grove Quartet had broadcast immediately before.

Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find anyone in the Abingdon area who has knowledge of the group. I can only guess that they were not together for very long. This quartet is unusual in that they have one, possibly two, women members and they occasionally sing in unison. Gospel quartets are usually all men.

38. I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAYS

Clarence Ferrill, vocal and fiddle. At his home, near Alpine TN, 13 November 1967.

On one of Anne Romaine's music tours, we took a narrow back road through north-central Tennessee. On the front of what had once been a crossroads store, in tiny Alpine, Tennessee, we spotted a homey-looking sign for a chairmaker. We stopped and talked with Mr. Sidney Cantrell, and Alice Gerrard and I asked him if he would make us a couple of rocking chairs. It would take a little time, he said, and we'd have to come back, which we did. On our return visit, I asked him if there were any musicians around, and he directed us to the Ferrill home nearby.

Clarence Ferrill was a quiet, soulful man, in his sixties, I'd say, and it wasn't long until he and I went into the bedroom to record a few tunes, while Alice and Ms. Ferrill talked in the main room. It was a subdued, brief music session. He played a couple of familiar fiddle tunes and then several hymns including this one. The playing of slow, free-rhythm tunes on the fiddle is not very common, especially with this kind of ornamentation. When we played a few of the pieces back for Ms. Ferrill, she asked why he didn't sing the rest of the song. The second part was very high, he said, and he was afraid he couldn't make it. On later visits he'd sometimes play and sing the song, but the mood was never the same.

DISCOGRAPHY

Related Recordings:

American Banjo: Three Finger and Scruggs Style, Smithsonian Folkways SF40037.
Anthology of American Folk Music, Vol. 1: Ballads, Folkways 2951.
Anthology of American Folk Music, Vol. 2: Social Music, Folkways 2952.
Anthology of American Folk Music, Vol. 3: Songs, Folkways 2953.
Dock Boggs, Folkways 2351.
Dock Boggs, Vol. 2. Folkways 2392.
Dock Boggs, Vol. 3. Folkways 3903.
Excerpts from Interviews with Dock Boggs, Legendary Banjo Player and Singer, Folkways 5458.
Elizabeth Cotten: Freight Train and other North Carolina Folk Songs and Tunes, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40009.
Elizabeth Cotten: Vol. 2: Shake Sugaree, Folkways 31003.
Elizabeth Cotten: Vol. 3: When I'm Gone, Folkways 3537.
High Atmosphere: Ballads and Banjo Tunes from Virginia and North Carolina Collected by John Cohen in November of 1965, Rounder 0028.
Kilby Snow: Country Songs and Tunes with Autoharp, Folkways 3902.
Lesley Riddle: Step By Step—Lesley Riddle Meets the Carter Family: Blues, Country, and

Sacred Songs, Rounder 0299.
McGee Brothers and Arthur Smith: Old Timers of the Grand Old Opry, Folkways 2379.
A Memorial to Wade Ward: Old Time Virginia Banjo Picker, 1892–1971, Folkways 2380.
Mountain Music Played on the Autoharp, Folkways 2365.
Music of Roscoe Holcomb and Wade Ward, Folkways 2363.
Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley, 1960–1962, Smithsonian Folkways SF40029.
The 37th Old Time Fiddler's Convention at Union Grove, NC, Folkways 2434.
Stoneman Family, Sutphin, Foreacre, and Dickens: Old Time Tunes of the South, Folkways 2315.

Mike Seeger's Recordings:

American Folk Songs for Children, with Peggy Seeger, Rounder 8001-2.
American Folksong for Christmas, with Mike, Peggy, and Penny Seeger and their families, Rounder 0268-9.
Animal Folksongs for Children—and Other People, with Mike, Penny, Barbara, and Peggy Seeger and their children, Rounder 8023-4.
Solo Old-Time Music, Rounder 0278.
Third Annual Farewell Reunion—with many guests, Rounder 0313.

Way Down in North Carolina, with Mike Seeger and Paul Brown, Rounder 0383.
 The above are available on Rounder Records, One Camp Street, Cambridge, MA 02140

Folkways Titles:

American Folk Songs Sung by the Seegers, Folkways 2005.
New Lost City Ramblers, The Early Years: 1958–1962, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40036.
New Lost City Ramblers, Out Standing in Their Field, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40040
New Lost City Ramblers, There Ain't No Way Out, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40098
Old Time Country Music, Folkways 2325.
Tipple, Loom and Rail: Songs of the Industrialization of the South, Folkways 5273.

Also suggested—a video/book field documentary:

Talking Feet—Solo Southern Dance: Flatfoot, Buck, and Tap.
 Flower Films/North Atlantic Books, 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito CA 94530.

CREDITS

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