

there ain't no way out

# New Lost City Ramblers



Smithsonian Folkways

# NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS there ain't no way out

Almost 40 years ago the New Lost City Ramblers began their campaign of appreciation for Southern string band music, performing traditional music in traditional ways. Their vision and talent helped broaden popular music styles. In this, their first new recording in over 20 years, they offer a fresh look at old-time, early bluegrass, and Cajun music played on a variety of acoustic instruments. A booklet by this historic trio contains essays, notes, discography, and photos.

- 1 Buck Creek Girls 2:57
- 2 Skip To My Lou 2:56
- 3 Jolie Petite Blonde 2:56
- 4 God's Gonna Ease My Troublin' Mind 4:26
- 5 Anchored in Love Divine 2:38
- 6 Last Chance 1:53
- 7 Weave Room Blues 2:34
- 8 Sugar Baby 2:39
- 9 Oh Death 3:50
- 10 Cumberland Gap 2:34
- 11 Do You Call That Religion? 3:01
- 12 Crapshooters Hop 2:58
- 13 Brown Skin Gal 2:17

*(Intermission)*

- 14 Abe's Retreat 2:43
- 15 Big Ball in Town 3:09
- 16 Colored Aristocracy 2:19
- 17 Treat My Daughter Kindly 2:46
- 18 I'm On My Way to the Old Home 3:08
- 19 Farewell Sweet Jane 2:40
- 20 The Girl I Left Behind 2:59
- 21 Miner's Lament 2:44
- 22 Shady Grove 1:55
- 23 Free Little Bird 2:56
- 24 Rabbit in the Pea Patch 2:23
- 25 One-Step de Riché 2:23
- 26 Tom & Jerry 1:52

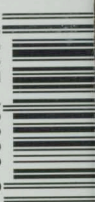


Smithsonian  
Folkways

Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies | 1955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600 MRC 914 | Smithsonian Institution | Washington DC 20560 | SF CD 40098 © © 1997 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

LC 9628

0 9307-40098-2 6



## NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS there ain't no way out

1 Buck Creek Girls 2:57

2 Skip To My Lou 2:56

3 Jolie Petite Blonde 2:56  
(Frank Maihes)

4 God's Gonna Ease My Troublin' Mind 4:26  
(trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian  
Folkways Pub., BMI)

5 Anchored in Love Divine 2:38  
(A.P. Carter, Peer Int. Music, BMI)

6 Last Chance 1:53

7 Weave Room Blues 2:34

8 Sugar Baby 2:39

9 Oh Death 3:50

10 Cumberland Gap 2:34

11 Do You Call That Religion? 3:01

12 Crapshooters Hop 2:58  
(Joe Werner, Berwick Music, BMI)

13 Brown Skin Gal 2:17

(Intermission)

14 Abe's Retreat 2:43  
(Harvey Sampson)

15 Big Ball in Town 3:09

16 Colored Aristocracy 2:19

17 Treat My Daughter Kindly 2:46

18 I'm On My Way to the Old Home 3:08  
(Bill Monroe, Unichappell Music, BMI)

19 Farewell Sweet Jane 2:40

20 The Girl I Left Behind 2:59

21 Miner's Lament 2:44

22 Shady Grove 1:55

23 Free Little Bird 2:56

24 Rabbit in the Pea Patch 2:23

25 One-Step de Riché 2:23  
(L. Aguillard, TEC Publishing)

26 Tom & Jerry 1:52

## 23 YEARS BETWEEN RECORDINGS MIKE SEEGER

It's been twenty-three years since we last produced a NLCR recording. Twenty-three years is the long stretch between midway through the LP era and what is now probably mid-way through the CD era. It's been an eventful time, especially in the field of traditional Southern rural music. In roughly that period a serious revival of Southern string band music—mostly early 20th Century fiddle and banjo music—has taken place. It is part of a world wide revival of interest in roots musics. I use the word "revival" to mean a restoration to life of the songs, performance style and social use of Southern vernacular music. I do not refer to the folksong "revival" of the sixties which was largely a brief use of traditional song to make new urban popular songs and commercial music product.

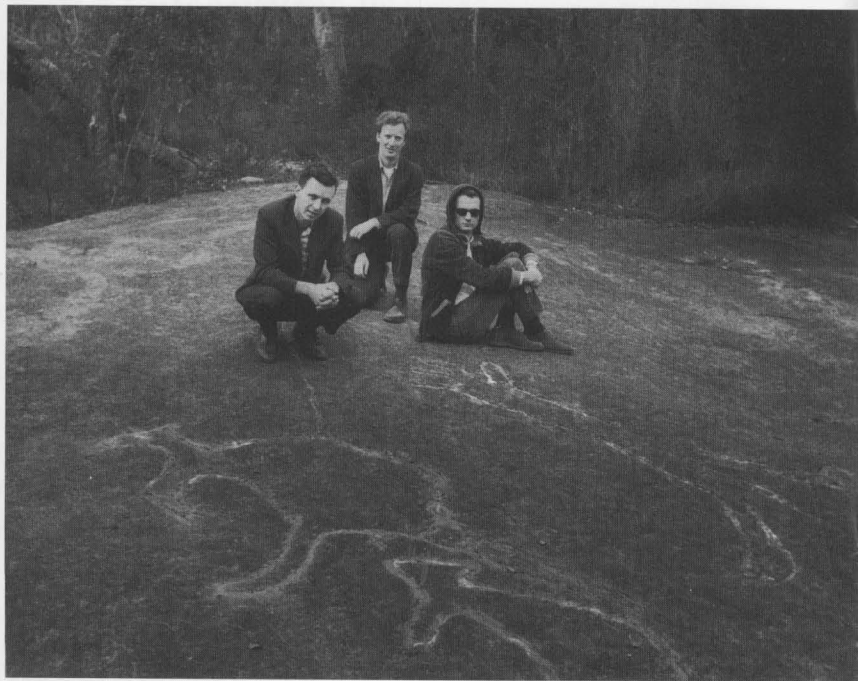
This revival or renewal has taken place for a lot of reasons that I can only touch on here. The newspaper-length notes for Ray Alden's original two-LP set "Young Fogies" certainly give the best portraits of the younger (than us) generation of musicians of the 1970s and early 80s who form the largest part of this revival. I would like to add some of my own observations about the whys of this revival.

First and most important, we all love to play string music—socially and mostly without any expectation of public performance.

Most members of our community do other things to make a living. That's a whole lot like the way vernacular music has always been, although we, like most Americans, don't farm as much as we might program computers, run a nursery or pursue the career of a radio announcer, television producer or carpenter. There are other similarities to traditional practice: some players are recreational and enjoy making music informally, while some are more proficient. Some have interesting, unique qualities, while some are truly outstanding in every way. Some are motivated to perform in public while others don't care to. Some feel a mission to see the music expand and possibly change, while others may want to keep it for themselves and let nature-versus-modern life take its course.

In early 20th century rural Southern homes, fiddling and banjo picking thrived alongside a vigorous vocal tradition. In the current revival, playing fiddle tunes socially is more important than the singing of songs the instrumentalists used to complement. A nation-wide, and to some extent world-wide, community has developed around playing these tunes. We meet at one another's houses, at fiddler's conventions, at music camps, or other such public places. I consider myself a senior part of this community and have spent some of the most pleasurable days of my life listening to and playing in these informal





NLCR in Australia, 1965 (L-R Tracy, John, Mike). Photo by John Cohen

music sessions. It's a great bonus for a life-long commitment to attempting to further the music and play it for a living.

External factors have certainly affected this renewal. The reaction against passive, market-driven modern culture, the back-to-the-land movement, the cassette recorder, rock 'n' roll rhythms, earlier forms of the revival, and other forces have had a positive effect. On balance, public funding of folklore activities has had little effect on this part of the revival. And in the short term, the CD has unfortunately made many of the best recordings of traditional music on LP unavailable.

The narrow spectrum of music available on radio and television and at retail stores has reduced most people's access to this music. Yet there are thousands of people playing old-time music, and enrollment in old-time music summer camps has increased markedly in recent years. Old-time music in one form or another will certainly continue for at least another 30 or 40 years, as today's players are sure to keep it going the rest of their lives. I believe that society's adjustment to electronically reproduced music has begun, and that the tradition of home- and hand-made traditional music, though it has skipped a stitch or two, will remain alive.

But to get back to the events of our past 23 years, the New Lost City Ramblers have pretty much settled into playing gigs a few times

each year, except for a few years' vacation in the early 1980s. We've toured to Finland, Japan, the West Coast a few times, played at a wedding in Ohio, and nearly every time we get together we seem to come up with another song or revive some song we haven't done for a while.

We've also come to realize that although there are many better and younger musicians around, our approach to styles and repertoire is unique. It can still be fun and creative. So even though we're kind of ragged at times, perhaps we're worth one more recording.

I'd like to add a personal note to end. I love this music as much as ever. When Richard Nevins, record collector and owner of Shanachie and Yazoo Records, played me the original recording of "Brown Skin Gal" a few months ago, and also when I heard the energetic young string band The Freight Hoppers at a recent contest, I had some of the same feeling that I had on making other "discoveries" when I was much younger. Old-time rural music remains at the center of my life. Playing it is my reward for the long hours I spend at the desk or on the phone, the necessary chores that make it possible for me to play old-time music for a living. It's a tactile, emotional, aural pleasure—the words are my Shakespeare and my mysteries, the music is my Bach, my pastime, and it makes me want to dance. I have some nostalgia for music I've



NLCR in Switzerland, 1966. Tour with Cajun Band, Stanley Brothers, Cousin Emmy, Roscoe Holcomb, NLCR to Germany, England, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark (L-R Cyp Landreneau, Adam Landreneau, Mike Seeger, Carter Stanley, Roscoe Holcomb, George Shuffler, Ralph Stanley, Cousin Emmy, Don Miller, Revon Reed, Tracy Schwarz, John Cohen-kneeling).

heard and musicians I've been friends with who are now gone, but mostly my feelings are simply enjoying today and leaning towards tomorrow. More than ever, truly traditional music is not commercially successful; I feel some of the same forces my old-time music heroes—Dock Boggs, Tom Ashley, Bill Monroe—felt as their music briefly went out of fashion. But this body of musical traditions gives us a great opportunity, a great bottomless source, a great accumulated continuity to be part of. I love to think of all the people, including ourselves, who've gotten pleasure from singing "Wind and Rain" or playing, listening, or dancing to "Shady Grove." And how many more will. Classic, timeless qualities in this music endure. For me, there ain't no way out but nature, and I'll make the most of it.

## MUSINGS ON THE MUSIC TRACY SCHWARZ

The New Lost City Ramblers have evidently found themselves back in the studio again—seems like there's no way out after all. While the recording technology has become more intrusive, there have been some good changes also: the field may be boundless but the soil's much more familiar. Despite physical frailties the shovel digs easier, seeds are more likely to sprout, the harvest is likely to be abundant enough to share. Needed technique is mostly in place, supported solidly by knowledge. That used to be all, but now there's another key ingredient in the cuisine: *emotion*, born of long, careful observation in homes, on farms, on back porches, and with our old and new heroes. The original recordings, inspirational and essential, underlined a need for personal contact to discover the principles to keep the music sounding real. So we asked for the keys to making true sounds, which our heroes graciously granted. Too bad, in a way; we now know all too soon if something's not working; the age of innocence is past. Moreover, we don't dare forget the sub-cultural crossover's aesthetic mandate to maintain musical excellence as well as accuracy. Sometimes we decide to stick close to the original out of fondness and respect—and sometimes we take intuitive liberties; but always there's the feeling of guidance by a



NLCR at Winfield, Kansas, probably 1977 (L-R Mike, Tracy, John). Photo by Glenn Godsey

master's invisible hands. Phew! It could so easily have been otherwise, but who wants a weak and watery gumbo?

It's intriguing to observe our effect or lack of effect on the many musicians, dancers, and followers of the old-time music movement. Whatever it is, I think all of us have contributed to shaping a musical community that serves the needs of several sub-cultures better than what was at hand 30 years ago. I can see this music joining in the future with many other sub-styles under a common heading of, say, classical American Traditional Music, winning legitimacy, longevity and a position of honor among the many other classical musics of the world. This course is suggested by the growing numbers of students at the many traditional music and dance schools around the country—a potentially exponential growth considering that our children are now having children who may soon participate. And believe it or not, we learn from these generations as they learn from us. I think that we're developing nothing less than a valid therapy for post-industrial-revolution shock.

Thirty years ago I was asked if I meant to make those "noises" on the violin; today most of us live within an hour of a fiddler. Why quit?

There's no way out because the music will never stop and nobody wants to leave.

## THE LOST YEARS JOHN COHEN

In winter 1958, as Mike Seeger and I sat around in my loft on Third Ave in New York City playing banjo and fiddle tunes, a mouse came across the floor to listen. Moving always closer, it ran back the instant we stopped playing. Over the din of truck traffic outside, the mouse had heard something it liked.

Forty years later we still play banjo and fiddle music but have arrived at a different sound from the one that intrigued the mouse. Back when the New Lost City Ramblers first came together, we were making music that wasn't available elsewhere. We called it old-time music: mostly string band music from the Southern Appalachians, widespread in rural America through the 1930s, now out of print.

In 1958 the landscape of "folk music" was missing fiddles, mandolins, and autoharps; no Cajun music, no old-time string bands, and bluegrass had just begun to appear. Even outside the city, fiddlers conventions were few, and country music, blues and 'rhythm & blues,' though vibrant, weren't included within the horizon of folk music. Interest in world and ethnic musics was confined to ethnomusicologists, while a commercialized brand of professional folk music was being sold in the entertainment marketplace. This was the bleak panorama in which the NLCR set out. A lot has changed since then, and I'd like to



NLCR in Japan, 1991 (L-R Mike, John, Tracy). Photo by John Cohen

explore some of the reasons for these changes and our contribution to the process.

In the beginning, we had more of an agenda than we realized. We were looking forward at what was directly in front of us, playing music we enjoyed. We didn't define it or think about the implications of what we were doing. Yet over time, the idea carried within our approach has helped shape the direction that that music has taken. We became advocates for playing music in a traditional way, and subsequently were dubbed crusaders. Some called us purists, or musical archaeologists. But despite these labels, the music was taken up by young musicians who enjoyed playing it our way.

#### With Hindsight Looking Forward

Our initial musical inspiration was old 78 rpm commercial recordings from the 1930s, along with Library of Congress field recordings from the same time. The NLCR's, plundering of the past was not indiscriminate—it was guided by our musical intuition and our (urban) hunger for rural verities. But we were also “retro” historians discovering musical precedents and commentaries on current music. Searching through the musical past we'd pluck from it what seemed pertinent... we'd select musical elements from old records that predicted bluegrass. We'd choose old songs that had currency today. If we found a

hillbilly record that Burl Ives had made popular as a folk song, we'd sing it the old country way. We'd feed old songs to bluegrass musicians. On this new record you will find some retrohistory, where we take a bluegrass song and perform it in Carter Family style. Besides having a good time, we have been busy mucking around with history, disseminating perceptions, creating dialog, and challenging the commercialization around us all.

With the appearance of the New Lost City Ramblers, a public idea of listening to and respecting the sources of traditional music came into broader focus; it made other approaches to adapting folk music seem like compromise at best and commercial exploitation at worst. Mike Seeger used to joke that 'folk' groups had tried all the different ways of playing this music so we were doing it the only way that was left: the original way.

We drew strength from our opposition to the kind of approach embodied in the Kingston Trio, who seemed more interested in popular entertainment values and mass market appeal. They had moved good songs away from their natural environment and converted them into amusement for college fraternities. The New Lost City Ramblers were on a different track.

Jeff Rosen, who is Bob Dylan's manager, told me recently that our chief contribution has been to create the possibility for urban



NLCR 1995 (L-R Tracy, Mike, John). Photo by Ed Grazda

musicians to perform traditional styles. The Irish musician Paul Brady commented that when he was starting out the NLCR showed him a way to hear and to perform in the traditional styles of his own country. Our example reaches beyond the revival of old time country music.

Earlier, The Weavers began a successful folk-song revival which unfortunately failed to notice something significant that was emerging in the popular music of that time. As Alan Jabbour of the Library of Congress noted, although the 50s are sometimes thought of as a culturally stagnant and deadening period, it was during the decade following WW II, that new musical amalgamations—bluegrass, rhythm & blues, and Native American pow wow songs—were making their first appearances. The Weavers made no reference to hillbilly, bluegrass, or blues. Before they were silenced by the blacklist, Carl Sandburg was quoted as saying of them, “when I hear the Weavers, I hear America singing,” but it was not the America I was discovering for myself.

Raised in the suburbs where the Hit Parade (the top forty) dominated musical taste, I first became aware of a world outside my musical milieu when I heard the old commercial records on Harry Smith’s *Anthology*, issued by Folkways in 1953. The *Anthology*, along with Alan Lomax’s *Listen To Our*

*Story, Mountain Frolic & Smoky Mountain Ballads*, made me more receptive to the sounds that spawned bluegrass, Cajun, and rhythm & blues. It was very different from what filled the folk song marketplace of the 60s. Listening to country radio stations where the music came along with commercials for the Lord’s Last Supper on a plastic tablecloth, I discovered America.

Touring the NLCR at colleges, festivals, and clubs across America, we could see the musical picture change. Old-time string bands were springing up everywhere we played. With the appearance of Highwoods and under the influence of Tommy Jarrell, a whole network of fiddle bands developed. Today there are a multitude of bands, festivals, workshops, and a magazine, *The Old Time Herald*—dedicated to this music. The phenomenon is documented in Ray Alden’s four-CD set entitled *Young Fogies: String Bands across America*. The level of musicianship throughout the old-time revival is high, especially amongst the fiddlers. There are an overwhelming number of musicians who can polish off performances better than we ever could. To quote the banjo player Stringbean on the Grand Ole Opry, “I feel so unnecessary.”

When the NLCR set out to record *our first album in twenty years*, I asked myself



whether there was anything else we could contribute. I started at the core of what I liked about old-time music, the spirit generated by Uncle Dave Macon & the Fruit Jar Drinkers on their recordings from 1927. I steered the project in that direction, while Mike and Tracy steered us according to their own musical sense of direction. On this CD are some songs we never got around to doing earlier. Other tracks present music we have moved into, odd extremities developed from branching musical pursuits. Tracy turned to overlooked aspects of Cajun music; Mike looked for songs he could only perform with the NLCR. Our agendas still make as curious a mixture as they did when the NLCR started.

-----

We have practiced and preached for so many years, it seems impossible to change even if we needed to. We have lived with some of the songs for almost 50 years. (I first heard Dick Rinehart's recording of "The Girl I Left Behind" in 1948). Too many years of our own musical idiosyncrasies make it difficult at times to record songs which seemed fresh years ago. Stuck with being the musicians we have become, old-timers ourselves, we found resonance in our project's title, "There Ain't No Way Out."

### Original Music

In the banjo and fiddle music I think we

have captured something very alive, performances which happened once, not worked out but discovered as they were played. The music has taken me here—far from a duplication of an authentic source—to where the performance becomes the art.

There are other places on this record where I cannot escape the force of the original, and feel no need to. I am privileged to become Dock Boggs briefly (as in "Sugar Baby"), or a least to revisit the impact of his music. But there are three interpretations of Dock Boggs on this record. We have each taken a different inspiration from him.

In "Buck Creek Girls," built from a fragment of Banjo Bill Cornett's performance on *Mountain Music of Kentucky*, the music has moved far from his interpretation. I found his timing so intriguing that in trying to take it apart, I got sidetracked and put it together another way. Communicating this idea to Mike proved impossible, so I had to systematize my non-rational intuitions. What you hear on the record is the remains of the struggle that took place. I am fascinated with this somewhat unintended music.

### Reflection

Over the life of the NLCR, we have changed as musicians, and the world has also changed and views our music differently. But the source of our inspiration—those old

recordings—has remained the same. Their beauty reminds me it's impossible to assume a distant person's form of expression. To the degree we deviate from the original, the more original we become. At the outset, the NLCR navigated to the fixed star of the 1930s recordings. It provided us a clear sense of direction but could lead to an ancestor worship that sometimes made it hard to enjoy the present. So in one sense, this record could be seen as one more attempt to become what we can't be. We can't be Charlie Poole, or Dock Boggs, or the Carter Family. It all sounds like the New Lost City Ramblers to my ears.

-----

It seems to me more people have heard of the NLCR than have actually heard them. Cultural artifacts, we have been around for nearly 40 years, our position intact and of service. Culturally literate people may not know our music, but are cognizant of what we stand for. Our point has been made, our "message" received—but music is not composed of points and messages. So this album is an opportunity to explore and perform music that means a lot to us...as pointless as that may seem in the present landscape.

NLCR's impact has always been greater than its income. Our real achievement has not been in the number of records we sold, but in the proliferation of string bands who have found their own ways to enjoy and per-

petuate this music. Our fame (notoriety) has perhaps outdistanced us. A few years ago at a literary gathering in New York City I was introduced to a music publisher. He remembered the New Lost City Ramblers he said and then asked, "What was the band's big hit?"

-----

Since our last recording more than twenty years ago, in addition to occasional NLCR concerts we have each pursued our own careers. Mike has been a tireless performer/documenter/presenter of old time music. Tracy has followed his interest in Cajun music, as a promoter of Dewey Balfa's message and a teacher of fiddle, along with developing his powerful singing style as a soloist and together with Ginny Hawker. I have continued making documentary films about traditional music, writing liner notes and editing records, exhibiting my photographs, and teaching Visual Arts at Purchase College. Mike and I both received Guggenheim Grants to continue our work, and Tracy was given the best non-Cajun singer award by the Cajun Music Association. Between us we have produced a great many recordings of traditional music.

## ABOUT THE SONGS

Notes by JC=John Cohen, TS=Tracy Schwarz, MS=Mike Seeger

### 1. Buck Creek Girls

Source: derived from Banjo Bill Cornett's performance on *Mountain Music of Kentucky* on Folkways SF CD 40077.

John Cohen, banjo, tuned f#dgdcd; Mike Seeger, mandolin; Tracy Schwarz, sticks beating on fiddle

I met Cornett briefly at his home and recorded him in 1959. John Hartford had also met him briefly in St. Louis where he was performing at the National Folk Festival in the early 1950s. We both remember him with great clarity. Cornett was from Hindman, Ky. JC

### 2. Skip To My Lou

Source: from Uncle Eck Dunford's 27 July 1927 recording on Victor 20938. Dunford was accompanied by Hattie and Ernest Stoneman and Iver Edwards. Dunford's recording is available on a Country Music Foundation, CMF-011-D.

Mike Seeger, lead vocal, harmonica, and concert ukelele; Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal and fiddle; John Cohen, bass vocal and guitar

This play-party song was supposed to be sung unaccompanied without the use of "sinful" instrumental music, but instrumentalists liked it too much. We enjoyed the Dun-

ford/Stoneman recording and tried playing our version a few other ways, but except for adding a few verses and singing the last line together, we ended up being fairly close to the original. Some have called this "slavish imitation," but we prefer to call it creative fidelity to tradition. For us it's the way the song goes and it's a pleasure to make this music together. And no matter what we do, it's unmistakably us. MS

### 3. Jolie Petite Blonde (Frank Mailhes)

Source: *The Alley Boys of Abbeville*, Vocalion (unissued), reissued on *The Cajuns: Songs, Waltzes and Two Steps*, Folkways RBR 21: also *Cajun, Vol. 1, Abbeville Breakdown, 1920-1939*, CBS Roots 'N Blues, C 46220. Tracy Schwarz, vocals and fiddle; Mike Seeger, dobro; John Cohen, guitar

Sounds derived from the blues and western swing have been a favorite part of Cajun music for many years. The Alley Boys of Abbeville, headed up by fiddler Frank Mailhes, were a hot group of musicians between the ages of 17 to 24 when they recorded this tune in 1939 in a bluesy, early western swing style. They applied their amazing musical skill to making new songs with non-Cajun influences and translating current pop tunes into Cajun French, helping to forge a new direction for the Cajun string band style of the 1930s that lives on. The CBS *Roots 'N Blues* provides, in

the notes written by Lawrence Cohn, several paragraphs of very interesting history on the group. TS

### 4. God's Gonna Ease My Troublin' Mind (T.C. Ashley)

Source: Tom Ashley, *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40029.

Mike Seeger, lead vocal and mandolin (FFC-CGGAD); Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal and fiddle (DCGD); John Cohen, bass vocal and guitar

Tom Ashley could sing a good lonesome tune, including this one here that sounded like a prime candidate for an early-bluegrass treatment with tenor and bass harmony in New Lost City Rambler style. Personal contact with Tom, Bill Monroe, the Stanley Brothers, and others supplied the inspiration for this vocal and instrumental construction. TS

### 5. Anchored In Love Divine (A.P. Carter-Peer Int)

Source: *The Carter Family*, Victor 40036; reissued on *The Carter Family; Anchored in Love*, Rounder 1064.

Mike Seeger, lead vocal and autoharp; John Cohen, bass vocal and lead guitar; Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal and rhythm guitar

According to Sara and A.P.'s daughter, Jeanette, this was her mother's favorite. It was originally published in the book *Crowning Praise*, dated 1911, and credited to James Vaughan and James Rowe. The Carters'

recording closely follows the book, including the harmony lines. Since hymns, sacred songs and gospel music play a major role in traditional southern rural music, it's fortunate the New Lost City Ramblers have now added another song of this type to their repertoire, inspired both by its beauty and by the excellent singing of the Carter Family. TS

### 6. Last Chance

Source: from Hobart Smith's banjo playing. John Cohen, banjo, tuned dfcd; Tracy Schwarz, fiddle, tuned fcgd

Smith was from Saltville, Va. I first heard this at a Friends of Old-Time Music concert. Hobart Smith was one of the most intense and spirited banjo players I ever met. His performance is available on Folk Legacy FSA-17. JC

### 7. Weave Room Blues

Source: from *The Dixon Brothers*, Bluebird B-6441.

John Cohen, lead vocal, guitar; Mike Seeger, tenor vocal, dobro slide guitar

Essentially a depiction of life in the cotton mills, this song combines the standard Jimmie Rodgers sound with the Dixon Bros. unique idea of going up to a F chord in the key of D. I once sang this backstage to the Mainer Band who understood the weaving terminology better than I could. They had all worked in North Carolina textile mills. JC

## 8. Sugar Baby

Source: from Dock Boggs on the Harry Smith *Anthology of American Folk Music*, Folkways (reissued on LP in 1953).

John Cohen, vocal, banjo, tuned gdgd; Mike Seeger, guitar

Boggs was from Norton, Va. He recorded in the late 1920s and was re-discovered by Mike Seeger in the 1960s. A former coal miner, Boggs had a big impact on us in person. *JC*

## 9. Oh Death (traditional)

Source: *Dock Boggs, Legendary Singer and Banjo Player*, Folkways 2351.

Tracy Schwarz, vocal and guitar (DGCGBD); Mike Seeger, fiddle (GDGD)

Despite the hair-raising moral of this song, it seems to have been a longtime favorite of many people in the South. Dock Boggs' version excels in its clarity and effective streamlining, and it seemed an eminently qualified candidate for a Roscoe Holcomb style back-up on the cross-tuned guitar. Tracy considers Roscoe's singing one of his major influences, and would never have been able to tackle this extremely moving piece without it. *TS*

## 10. Cumberland Gap

Source: from George Lander's banjo playing on *High Atmosphere*, Rounder 0028.

John Cohen, banjo tuned fcfcd; Mike Seeger, fiddle

Landers was a wonderful home musician from Madison County, North Carolina. You can see him in my film, *The End of an Old Song*. *JC*

## 11. Do You Call That Religion? (traditional)

Source: *The Monroe Brothers*, Bluebird B7055. Mike Seeger, lead vocal and mandolin (FFCCF-FCC); Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal and guitars

Mike and Tracy have always been intrigued by the Monroe Brothers recordings, especially this unique song which apparently hasn't gotten much attention in either the bluegrass or old-time fields. Judging from Bill Monroe's description of African American congregational singing, it's probably safe to say that the Monroe Brothers got their inspiration, if not the song itself, in an African American church. We followed the original vocals pretty closely, but took liberties with the rhythm, instrumental leads and background. *TS*

## 12. The Crapshooter's Hop (Joe Werner)

Source: *Joe Werner and Ramblers*, Bluebird 2075; reissued on Folkways RBF 21; also on Country Music Foundation no. 13. Tracy Schwarz, vocal and fiddle; John Cohen, guitar; Mike Seeger, banjo-uke

During the 1930s, Joe Werner played a year or two with the Hackberry Ramblers, a popular Cajun string band that still makes appearances with two of its original members. Later, at the head of his own band, he set his sights on audi-

ences beyond Cajun country. He succeeded with his song, "Wondering, Wondering," which country star Webb Pierce revived in the 1950s and made into an even bigger hit. *TS*

## 13. Brown Skin Gal (Dillon)

Mike Seeger, fiddle and vocal (fiddle: GDGD); Tracy Schwarz, guitar

The original recording of this song is mysterious. It was a 78rpm recording (Eagle 116A) by Jabe Dillon released by a small recording company in Los Angeles about 1950. Was it made by a fiddler from Louisiana, Arkansas, or Texas who had come to California to get in the movies? Or to work for an oil company? Was he part of the lively L. A. country music scene? And where did the song come from, and what is its meaning? Now it's up to you. *MS*

(Intermission)

## 14. Abe's Retreat (Harvey Sampson)

Source: *Harvey Sampson and the Big Possum String Band*, Augusta Heritage Records AHR 004.

Tracy Schwarz, fiddle (GDGD); John Cohen, guitar; Mike Seeger, banjo

In central West Virginia the name Harvey Sampson has become legendary among old-time enthusiasts, a true representative of a fiddling style from bygone days with a person-

ality to match. Fortunately, some of his music was captured on record, but you'll have to ask Big Possum String Band members Larry Rader, Charlie Winter, and Frank George for personal memories of Harvey to get the complete picture. Harvey has unfortunately passed away, but these other musicians can be found at most of West Virginia's old-time music gatherings, which are well worth attending. *TS*

## 15. Big Ball in Town

Source: From "Big Ball Uptown" by Taylor-Griggs on *Louisiana Melody Makers*, Victor 21768.

John Cohen, lead vocal, banjo; Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal, fiddle; Mike Seeger, lead vocal in chorus, cello

The banjo part and the first verses came from Thaddeus Willingham of Gulfport Miss. on a Library of Congress Recording. The remaining verses were from J.E. Mainer. The Taylor-Griggs version introduces a unique second part to Big Ball while the cello introduces a new instrument to our recorded arsenal. *JC*

## 16. Colored Aristocracy

Source: from a field recording of Sanford and Harry Rich, fiddles, with Hensel Rich, guitar, and Elmer Rich, mandolin. Recorded by Charles Seeger during the Arthurdale Festival, Arthurdale, W.V., Archive of Folk Culture,

Library of Congress, AFS3306 B2 (1936).  
Mike Seeger, fiddle; John Cohen, mandolin;  
Tracy Schwarz, guitar

This has been one of my favorite tunes ever since I found it in my parents' collection of field recordings when I was about eight. The Ramblers put it on our first recording in 1958 and we added a couple of chords, a "C" and an "A". Since then the tune has become a standard amongst fiddlers and banjo pickers and somehow along the way the melody got changed, too. Here we try to play it straight, with nearly the original chords and predominant mandolin. On the original recording I can only hear one fiddle and mostly the mandolin. The recording was made by my father while he was working for the Resettlement Administration, creating programs to celebrate and revive traditional culture at its roots to foster cultural pride.

According to a 1960s interview, the Rich Family was from Morgantown, West Virginia, and were hired to play at the Arthurdale event, which was said to have been attended by Eleanor Roosevelt. Ever since we recorded this in 1958 we've been sensitive to the possibly pejorative overtones of the title. In preparing these notes, I've spoken with a few of my African American friends, and I'll try to express my very brief distillation of those talks.

Understandably, people of African American descent have been searching over the years for a satisfactory and accurate term for their iden-

tity in the changing context of American life. Since the early 1800s these terms have included Anglo-African, Colored (in the late 1800s to about WW I), Negro, Black, Afro-American and recently African American. Because the title for this instrumental reflects non-pejorative usage during the time that this instrumental was probably composed, we have decided not to "fiddle with tradition" by renaming it. *MS*

### 17. Treat My Daughter Kindly

Source: from Arthur Smith & the Delmore Brothers, Bluebird B7893, who called it "The Farmer's Daughter."  
John Cohen, vocal, guitar; Tracy Schwarz, fiddle

This song contains the American dream we all know about and never experienced. The Waterson's sing an English version of this sentimental song. It is a good one to do at your daughter's wedding. *JC*

### 18. I'm On My Way to the Old Home (Bill Monroe)

Source: From a February, 1950, recording by Bill Monroe, Decca 28045.  
Mike Seeger, lead vocal and semi-diatonic autoharp; John Cohen, bass vocal and guitar; Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal and fiddle

One of Monroe's earliest compositions, this largely autobiographical piece seems very much like a Carter Family song, so that's the way we try to sing it, with the addition of a fid-

dle. Early bluegrass songs are a lot like old-time songs, and in a sense we reverse the usual practice of taking older songs and putting them into a newer musical style. For me it's at least as up-to-date as trying to play it in Bill's 1950 style. *MS*

### 19. Farewell Sweet Jane

Source: Aunt Molly Jackson, Library of Congress, Archive of Folksong Number 2573 B2, 1939, recorded in New York City by Alan Lomax; two verses from "Johnson's Boat," The Lewis Watson Chapel Archives, The West Virginia and History Collection at West Virginia University, sung by Sarah Workman, 1940, in Harts, Lincoln County, West Virginia.  
Tracy Schwarz, unaccompanied vocal

Aunt Molly Jackson came from the coal mining country of eastern Kentucky, but had to leave there in 1931 to escape anti-union reprisals. While in New York City, she recorded this ballad no more than a year after Tracy Schwarz (the singer here) was born, and at the most a year before Sarah Workman recorded her version in West Virginia. In order to clear up some confusion over one line in Aunt Molly's version, Tracy, now living in West Virginia, enlisted the aid of two more newcomers to the state, Helena and Jimmie Triplett, who, building on a clue from old friends Liz and Lyle Lofgren in Minneapolis, supplied two verses from Sarah Workman's

version, housed in West Virginia's Lewis Watson Chapel Archives. Things like this make you realize the old-time music scene definitely is a community effort. *TS*

### 20. The Girl I Left Behind

Source: from Dick Justice heard on A. Lomax's 1948 anthology *Listen To Our Story*.  
John Cohen, vocal, guitar; Mike Seeger, banjo, Tracy Schwarz, fiddle

The original 78 was titled *Always Marry Your Lover*. Old-time music often has major and minor keys sounding simultaneously. I've sung this to Scottish Gypsies who considered it a very sad song. *JC*

### 21. Miner's Lament

Source: from an LP *Home on the Range: Folksongs from the University of Arizona Archive 1945-1955* produced by Keith and Kathryn Cunningham for the Arizona Friends of Folklore. Mike Seeger, lead vocal and banjo, tuned d#b (in key of B); Tracy Schwarz, vocal and guitar; John Cohen, vocal and guitar

On our source recording the singers were two University of Arizona anthropology graduate students, Bob Thomas and Barton Wright, recorded in the late 40s or early 1950s by Frances Gillmor. They sang the song in unison without any accompaniment. They sang well and to me it sounded like it could



have been a couple of young miners. Nothing is known of the origin of the song or what became of the lead singer, Thomas, although we do know he was part Cherokee and had a repertoire of southern mountain-type songs. Wright finished his PhD and became a leading figure in southwestern anthropology. The opening line of this song is melodically and textually similar to "Which Side Are You On?" which was composed during the 1930s campaign to organize labor unions in the eastern Kentucky coalfields. Since there are areas of heavy mining in Arizona and there were similar attempts at union organizing there in the thirties, I think it's possible that the Kentucky song was known by the writer of this song. Perhaps not. Though we'll probably never know who wrote the song, it is as strong and eloquent as any song by the great Kentucky song writers, Aunt Molly Jackson, Sarah Ogan Gunning, or Florence Reece, the latter being the composer of "Which Side Are You On?" *MS*

## 22. Shady Grove

Source: from a 1988 Lee Sexton LP, *Whoa Mule*, June Appal 0051.  
Mike Seeger, fretless banjo (tuned d#CFA#C); Tracy Schwarz, fiddle (tuned FCGD)

Lee Sexton plays this unusual variant of a well-known tune very fast and hard-as-nails. We added a fiddle. *MS*

## 23. Free Little Bird

Mike Seeger, lead vocal, rack-mounted quills (panpipes) and fretless gut-string banjo tuned eAEAB; Tracy Schwarz, tenor vocal and fiddle; John Cohen, bass vocal and guitar

"Free Little Bird" is a mixture of many tunes and versions of this well-known song. The second verse comes from a 78rpm record by William Price, and the third from a Cousin Emmy recording. They both sang it as a vocal solo. *MS*

## 24. Rabbit In The Pea Patch

Source: from *Uncle Dave Macon & his Fruit Jar Drinkers*, Vocalion 5165. Reissued on County CO-3505 *Go Long Mule*  
John Cohen, lead vocal, banjo; Mike Seeger, fiddle; Tracy Schwarz, guitar

Thanks to Pat Conte for use of his vintage banjo. *JC*

## 25. The One-Step de Riché (Lawrence Aguillard)

Source: Ambrose Thibodeaux, *French Acadian Music*, La Louisiane LL-112.  
Tracy Schwarz, D accordion; Mike Seeger, fiddle; John Cohen, guitar

A very unusual old-time Cajun tune, somewhat different from the two-step of the same title. Both are found in Raymond Francois' book *Yé Yaille, Chère!*. There are words to this tune but we left them out, as did Ambrose

Thibodeaux. Riché, a little town southwest of the Prairie Cajun Mecca, Eunice, is pronounced "reetchay." *TS*

## 26. Tom & Jerry

Source: from *Uncle Dave Macon & His Fruit Jar Drinkers*, Vocalion 5165. Reissued on *Go Long Mule*, County CO-3505.

Tracy Schwarz, fiddle; John Cohen, banjo; Mike Seeger, guitar

This fiddle piece is one of several which were on the Uncle Dave recording. A version of the tune can be heard on *Texas Fiddle Tunes*, a County record, and R.P Christeson reports in *The Old-Time Fiddler's Repertory* that "only limited changes have occurred since 1864 when Howe published Tom & Jerry." Uncle Dave Macon's indomitable spirit spills over here, and we had to dub the sound of his fancy footwork with Tracy banging on the guitar while Mike & John alternate shouting some of Uncle Dave's raves. *JC*

## DISCOGRAPHY

### New Lost City Ramblers:

*American Moonshine and Prohibition Songs*, Folkways 5263 (1962).

*Modern Times*, Folkways 31027 (1968).

*New Lost City Ramblers with Cousin Emmy*, Folkways 31015 (1968).

"New" *New Lost City Ramblers with Tracy Schwarz, Gone to the Country* Folkways 2491 (1963).

*The New Lost City Ramblers, The Early Years*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40036 (1991).

*The New Lost City Ramblers, Out Standing In Their Field*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40040 (1993).

*The New Lost City Ramblers, 20th Anniversary Concert*, Flying Fish FF70090.

*The New Lost City Ramblers & Friends at Newport Folk Festival*, Vanguard 77011-2.

*Old Timey Songs for Children*, Folkways 7064 (1959).

*On the Great Divide*, Folkways 31041 (1975).  
*Remembrance of Things to Come*, Folkways 31035 (1973).

*Rural Delivery Number One*, Folkways 2496 (1964).

*Sing Songs of the New Lost City Ramblers*, Folkways 2494 (1978).

*Songs from the Depression*, Folkways 5264 (1959).

*String Band Instrumentals*, Folkways 2492 (1964).

*Vol. 1*, Folkways 2396 (1958).

*Vol. 2*, Folkways 2397 (1960).

*Vol. 3*, Folkways 2398 (1961).

*Vol. 4*, Folkways 2399 (1962).

*Vol. 5*, Folkways 2395 (1963).

*20 Years—Concert Performances*, Flying Fish 102 (1978).

Cohen, John, Mike Seeger, and Hally Wood, eds. *Old-Time String Band Songbook*. Oak Publications, 1964.

#### **Selected recordings by John Cohen:**

*Mountain Music of Kentucky*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40077 (1996).

*High Atmosphere—Recordings of Ballads and Banjo from North Carolina and Virginia*, Rounder 0028.

*Roscoe Holcomb The High Lonesome Sound*, Folkways 2368 (1965).

*Mountain Music of Peru Vol. 1*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40020 (1991).

*Mountain Music of Peru Vol. 2*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40406 (1966).

*Huayno Music of Peru Vol. 1*, Arhoolie Cd 320.

*Huayno Music of Peru Vol. 2*, Arhoolie Cd 338.

*From the Mountains to the Sea...Music of Peru*, Arhoolie Cd 400.

#### **Documentary films by John Cohen:**

*The High Lonesome Sound*.

*The End of an Old Song*.

*Musical Holdouts*.

*Mountain Music of Peru*.

*Sara and Maybelle*.

*Q'eros: The Shape of Survival*.

They are distributed by University of California Media Extension Service, Berkeley. (Ph:510-642-0460) Several are also available on home video from Shanachie Video and Mystic Fire Video.

#### **Selected recordings by Tracy Schwarz:**

*Cajun Practracs with Tracy Schwarz*, no label or number, cassette only (1992).

*Come All Ye Tenderhearted*: Ginny Hawker, Kay Justice with Tracy Schwarz, June Appal JA0069 (1993).

*Dancing Bow and Singing Strings*, Folkways 6524 (1979).

*Deep Hollows and High Ridges*: Tracy Schwarz and Ginny Hawker, Marimac 9063 (1995).

*Family Reunion, The*: Heidi Christopher, Ginny Hawker, Ben Hawker, Jimmy Martin Productions (1992).

*Fiddler's Companion*, Folkways 8350 (1981).

*Look Out Here it Comes*, Folkways 2419 (1975).

*Mes Amis! The Tracy Schwarz Cajun Trio*, Swallow SW6131 (1996).

*Quatre Vieux Garçons, Les Dewey and Tony Balfa, Tracy and Peter Schwarz*, Folkways 2626 (1984).

*Signs and Wonders*, Kay Justice and Ginny Hawker, June Appal JA0060 (1990).

*Souvenirs*: Dewey Balfa, Swallow LP-6056 (1985).

*The Strange Creek Singers*, Arhoolie reissue 9003 (1972).

*The Tracy Schwarz Cajun Trio*, Swallow 6106-2,-4 (1993).

*Traditional Cajun Fiddle: Instruction Dewey Balfa and Tracy Schwarz*, Folkways 8361 (1976).

#### **Video by Tracy Schwarz:**

*How to Play Cajun Accordion*; with Marc Savoy and Tracy Schwarz, Bluebird Films.

#### **Selected recordings by Mike Seeger:**

*American Folk Songs for Children with Peggy Seeger*, Rounder 8001 (1977).

*American Folk Songs for Christmas* (with Peggy, Penny, and their families), Rounder 0268 (1989).

*American Folk Songs—The Seegers*, Folkways 2005 (1957).

*Animal Folk Songs for Children* (with Peggy, Penny, Barbara, and their families), Rounder 8023 (1992).

*Lesley Riddle Meets the Carter Family*, Rounder 0299

*Mike Seeger: Collector's Choice*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40097 (1997).

*Mountain Music Bluegrass Style*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40038 (reissue 1991).

*Old Time Country Music*, Folkways 2325 (1962).

*Solo Old-Time Country Music*, Rounder 0278 (1991).

*Strange Creek Singers*, Arhoolie 9003 (1972).

*Third Annual Farewell Reunion*, Rounder 0313 (1994).

*Tipple, Loom and Rail: Songs of the Industrialization of the South*, Folkways 5273 (1965).  
*Way Down in North Carolina*, Rounder 0383 (1996).

#### **Video by Mike Seeger:**

*Old-Time Banjo Styles* (with Doc Watson, Etta Baker, Joe and Odell Thompson, others), Homespun Tapes VD-SEE-BJ01 (1994).

*Talking Feet* (Videocassette/book documentary of Southern flatfoot, buck, hoedown, and tap dancing), Flower Films FF1150 (1992).

## CREDITS

Recording and mixing:

Cumberland Gap—recorded by Ray Alden  
Brown Skin Gal—recorded and mixed by Jim  
Martin at his studio in St. Albans, WV.  
Other tracks recorded either by Bob Read at  
his studio in North Garden, VA or by Bart  
Reardon at Electric Arts Recording,  
Harrisonburg, VA

All other mixing by Bob Read, North Garden,  
VA with Mike Seeger and Tracy Schwarz  
Mixing supervised by Mike Seeger and Tracy  
Schwarz

Sequencing by John Cohen

Mastered by David Glasser at Airshow,  
Springfield, VA

Production supervised by Amy Horowitz and  
Anthony Seeger

Audio supervision by Pete Reiniger

Production coordinated by Mary Monseur and  
Michael Maloney

Text edited by Peter Seitel

Cover photo: FSA photo by Russell Lee, 1939;  
NLCR image from a Robert Frank photo,  
1966; computer imaging by Leonard Stokes;  
cover concept by John Cohen

Rear card photo by Ed Grazda

Inside tray card photo by John Cohen

Design by Visual Dialogue, Boston, MA

Thanks to: Pat Conte, Keith Cunningham,  
Luderin Darbone, James Early, David Gris-  
man, Ginny Hawker, Joe Hickerson, Peter  
Hoover, Adles Joubert, John McCutcheon,  
Richard Nevins, John and Marcia Pankake,  
Alexia Smith, Sule Greg Wilson, and fellow  
musicians and singers past present and  
future.

## ABOUT SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Folkways Records was founded by Moses  
Asch and Marian Distler in 1948 to document  
music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds  
from around the world. In the ensuing  
decades, New York City-based Folkways  
became one of the largest independent record  
labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly  
2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired  
Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987 to  
ensure that the sounds and genius of the  
artists would be preserved for future genera-  
tions. All Folkways recordings are now avail-  
able on high-quality audio cassettes, each  
packed in a special box along with the origi-  
nal LP liner notes.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings was  
formed to continue the Folkways tradition of  
releasing significant recordings with high-  
quality documentation. It produces new  
titles, reissues of historic recordings from  
Folkways and other record labels, and in col-  
laboration with other companies also pro-  
duces instructional videotapes, recordings to  
accompany published books, and a variety of  
other educational projects.

The Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways,  
Cook, Dyer-Bennet, and Paredon record  
labels are administered by the Smithsonian  
Institution's Center for Folklife Programs &  
Cultural Studies. They are one of the means

through which the Center supports the work  
of traditional artists and expresses its com-  
mitment to cultural diversity, education, and  
increased understanding.

You can find Smithsonian Folkways  
Recordings at your local record store. Smith-  
sonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook, Dyer-  
Bennet, and Paredon recordings are all avail-  
able through:

Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order

414 Hungerford Drive, Suite 444

Rockville, MD 20850

phone (301) 443-2314

fax (301) 443-1819

orders only 1-800-410-9815

(Discover, MasterCard, and Visa accepted)

For further information about all the  
labels distributed through the Center, please  
consult our internet site (<http://www.si.edu/folkways>), which includes information about  
recent releases and a database of the approxi-  
mately 35,000 tracks from the more than  
2,300 available recordings (click on Data Base  
Search).

Or request a printed catalogue by writing  
to Catalogue, Smithsonian Folkways Record-  
ings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 2600,  
Smithsonian Institution MRC 914, Washing-  
ton, DC 20560, USA. Or use our catalogue  
request phone: (202) 287-3262, or e-mail  
[folkways@aol.com](mailto:folkways@aol.com)



# Smithsonian Folkways

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560 © © 1997 Smithsonian Folkways Records

