



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SFW CD 40110 ©© 2004 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

CLASSIC FOLK MUSIC

from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

1. **PASTURES OF PLENTY** Woody Guthrie 2:25
(Woody Guthrie/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)
2. **WE SHALL OVERCOME** Pete Seeger 4:39
(Ziphilia Horton-Pete Seeger-Frank Hamilton-Guy Carawan/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)
3. **ROCK ISLAND LINE** Lead Belly 2:02
(arr. by Huddie Ledbetter/Beachwood Music, BMI)
4. **NO MORE AUCTION BLOCK** Paul Robeson 2:09
5. **DEPORTEES (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)**
Barbara Dane 5:44
(Woody Guthrie-Martin Hoffman/Ludlow Music, BMI)
6. **JOHN HENRY** Doc Watson 3:41
7. **JOHN HARDY** Mike Seeger 2:40
8. **BETTY AND DUPREE** Brownie McGhee 3:58
9. **GALLIS POLE** Fred Gerlach 3:43
(arr. by Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Inc., BMI)
10. **POLLY VON** Paul Clayton 3:09
11. **BUTCHER BOY** Peggy Seeger 2:17
12. **DUNCAN AND BRADY** Dave Van Ronk 3:00
13. **RAILROAD BILL** Hobart Smith 2:35
14. **WAYFARING STRANGER** Burl Ives 1:12
15. **BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN**
Haywire Mac 2:06
(Harry McClintock/Villa Moret Inc, ASCAP)
16. **BORN 100,000 YEARS AGO** Cisco Houston 1:07
(H. C. Verner-Harry C. Clyde, arr. Lomax-Lomax/TRO-Ludlow, BMI)
17. **SUGAR BABE, IT'S ALL OVER NOW**
Mark Spoelstra 1:58
18. **CHANGES** Phil Ochs 4:16
(Phil Ochs/Barricade Music, ASCAP)
19. **BLACK AND WHITE** Earl Robinson 2:56
(Earl Robinson-David Arkin/Templeton, ASCAP)
20. **MOST FAIR BEAUTY BRIGHT** Jean Ritchie 2:17
21. **CIELITO LINDO** Pete Seeger 2:31
(Q. Mendoza y Cortez)
22. **TOM DOOLEY** The New Lost City Ramblers 2:52
23. **FREIGHT TRAIN** Elizabeth Cotten 2:43
(Elizabeth Cotten/Sanga Music, BMI)
24. **DOWN ON ME** Mary Pickney and Janie Hunter 3:02
25. **THIS TRAIN (Bound for Glory)** Big Bill Broonzy 2:58

INTRODUCTION

JEFF PLACE

Over the years, Folkways Records (now Smithsonian Folkways Recordings) has continuously produced and distributed high-quality recordings of American folk music. The label made a commitment to artists that their Folkways recordings would never go out of print. This recording is intended as an introduction to many of the recordings on the label, and a chance for listeners to experience them, perhaps again, perhaps for the first time. The Smithsonian has acquired other fine small labels, and this recording includes recordings from the Monitor and Paredon labels. This set is made up of songs predominantly from the 1940s to 1960s.

Moses Asch (1905–1986) founded Folkways in 1948 in New York. He had been involved in the record business since 1939 with his Asch and Disc labels. In 1940, acting on a tip from Broadway producer Sy Rady, Asch recorded blues songster Lead Belly, which was his first stab at releasing American vernacular music. During the 1940s, Asch was to release recordings by other well-known American folk musi-

cians, including Burl Ives, Pete Seeger, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Woody Guthrie, Bess and Butch Hawes, and Virginia mountain singers Hobart Smith and Texas Gladden.

Asch released folk-music titles throughout the history of his label. This recording primarily consists of recordings by urban folksingers or singers who grew up in non-traditional environments or were traditional singers, like Jean Ritchie, who made their careers in urban environments. Traditional rural singers can be found on the associated disc, *Classic Mountain Songs from Smithsonian Folkways*.

The “folksong revival” is often thought to have started with the release of the Kingston Trio’s hit recording “Tom Dooley” in 1958 and to have ended when Bob Dylan plugged his guitar in at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. In reality, it goes back much before that, perhaps, as Robert Cantwell has suggested, into the 19th century, but for the sake of this recording, let’s pick it up in the 1920s. The seeds of the scene that sur-

rounded Moses Asch in the small Asch studio were beginning to be sown. At the Library of Congress, 1928 saw the founding of the Archive of American Folk Song (later renamed the Archive of Folk Culture), and in subsequent decades Robert Winslow Gordon and John and Alan Lomax collected American folksongs for the archive. The 1920s and 1930s also saw the publication of folk-song collections by the Lomaxes, and by Carl Sandburg. New York City was the most active location within the revival. Much of the music promoted left-wing causes. Alan Lomax and others through New York radio programs like “Back Where I Come From” helped spread the awareness of key performers of the day: Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Lead Belly, Josh White, and others. Some folksingers who had been recorded by the Library of Congress found New York a more hospitable place than the Southern towns they had come from, and Alan Lomax helped promote their careers.

The revival was tied to the left-wing intellectual community in New York, made up of writers, playwrights, musicians, and academics. Its earliest roots in the late 1930s were multicultural and multiracial in both character and content. This was the environment in which Moses Asch worked, and the

source for many of the recordings he made, whether they are music or spoken word. For musicians in this movement, Asch was a key publisher. He did not believe in dictating content, and preferred to be “the pen with which the artists wrote.” He believed in the necessity of the distribution of ideas.

Asch worked in his early days in New York for WEVD (named for Eugene V. Debs) and WNYC radio, stations that produced the bulk of the folk and political music programming in the city. He had access to the musicians, and his studio was in the same building as WEVD. Musicians would drop by the studio, record, and get paid a small amount of money. It was a relationship that worked for both. On a given day, the studio might see a combination of musicians such as Woody, Cisco, Pete, Sonny, Brownie, or Lead Belly playing together and coming up with songs they knew (Asch referred to some of these sessions as his Folksay sessions). He recorded hundreds of glass acetate discs during the 1940s, and these became some of his key recordings for the Asch and Disc labels, which preceeded Folkways.

One interesting fact about Asch and like-minded folk labels was that in an era when American “roots” music catalogues had been segregated into race records and

"hillbilly" records, Asch's studio always welcomed integrated groups of musicians. Southern African-American blues musicians like Sonny and Brownie or Lead Belly were welcome members of the group, treasured for their knowledge of songs and company. Later, in the 1950s, Bluesman Big Bill Broonzy joined this group. One might question the inclusion of these "blues" performers on a disc claiming to represent classic folk, but in reality they have to be there: they were a crucial part of the scene.

Asch began to fill his catalogue with folk recordings. By 1958, it was one of the strongest folk catalogues in existence. One group that recorded as individuals for him were the Almanac Singers, who included Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays, Bess Hawes, Sis Cunningham, Butch Hawes, Arthur Stern, Pete Seeger, and Millard Lampell. They were the model for later groups, like the Weavers, which also included Seeger and Hays. Folk music was performed in concerts, rallies, colleges, schools, and, importantly, children's summer camps. Many of the performers who would be popular during the height of the revival ten and fifteen years later learned the music as youngsters at these camps. Folkways released albums of children's folksongs and summer-camp

albums during this period. It is interesting to note that the popularity of the song "This Land is Your Land" grew more because of exposure in camps and schools than by any recorded version. Through the 1940s and 1950s, Folkways issued folk albums at the same rate, whether the popularity of the music rose or fell.

A key release was the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, edited by Harry Smith (1952), a six-record reissue of 78-rpm recordings from 1926–1934 of classic blues, folk, Cajun, and country performers. This recording was extremely influential on many later performers, such as Bob Dylan, John Cohen, Ralph Rinzler, and Mike Seeger. It still is, earning two Grammy Awards in 1998. During the 1950s, Asch recorded and released dozens of 10-inch LPs, which frequently featured revival performers and focused on particular U.S. states or regions. Examples of these include Joan O'Bryant's *Folk Songs of Kansas*, Paul Clayton's *Folk Songs of Virginia*, and Gale Huntington's *Folk Songs of Martha's Vineyard*. These recordings were marketed to schools and libraries.

From 1958 to 1965, every record company in the land recorded and released folk records. Some groups were new groups,

made up of college students who made clean, smooth-sounding arrangements of the songs; other performers, like Pete Seeger, had been around for years. Folkways albums came in thick cardboard sleeves with heavy vinyl records enclosed. These things looked like they should be in a library; of course many were. They looked authoritative, and they were a source of repertoire for many new groups. Asch sold more records than ever during this period, but true to form, he continued to release the same types of music he always had, and eschewed the big new stars of the folk movement. He had learned his lesson in the mid-1940s, when his signing and producing of Nat King Cole had resulted in the sale of more records than ever but had caused huge problems with his cash flow, ultimately helping bankrupt Disc Records. He was used to working on the margins and wanted to stay there. When Pete Seeger started selling boxes and boxes of records, Asch let him go to Columbia with his blessing, and welcomed him back when the run was through.

In 1987, Ralph Rinzler, folk musician, record producer, and talent scout for the Newport Folk Festival, then Assistant Secretary for Public Service at the Smithsonian Institution, negotiated the

donation of the Folkways label to the museum, and the following year the Smithsonian Folkways record label was founded. Rinzler had been involved in earlier Folkways albums and knew the value of the collection. From its beginnings, Smithsonian Folkways has set out to reissue material from its archives, with expanded liner notes and updated sound. The Smithsonian has since acquired other, smaller, like-minded record companies, including Cook, Paredon, Dyer-Bennet, Fast Folk Musical Magazine, Monitor, Collector, and MORE. These labels comprise what is called the Smithsonian Folkways collection, and they include folk recordings in their catalogues. More than 3000 titles are available through the Smithsonian on on-demand compact disc, and are soon to be available as on-line digital downloads. This recording is an introduction to the riches that live in this collection.

Jeff Place, 2004

SONGS



Lyrics for this recording can be found on the Smithsonian Folkways Web page (www.folkways.si.edu).

1. PASTURES OF PLENTY

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar
(from Folkways 31001, 1967 / *This Land is Your Land*
SFW CD 40100, 1997)

When one thinks of the classic image of a folksinger, with a harmonica rack and a guitar slung over his shoulder, it is the image of Woody Guthrie they are thinking of. Guthrie (1912–1967) was a prolific songwriter, author, and artist. He composed more than 2000 songs, including the American classics “This Land Is Your Land” and “So Long, It’s Been Good to Know You.” He made the vast majority of his recordings for Moses Asch in Asch’s cramped little New York studio, albeit only ultimately recording about one tenth of the songs he wrote. Guthrie was a fine interpreter of traditional American folksongs and country songs, and

a marvelous composer of topical songs commenting on political issues of the times. “Pastures of Plenty” is one of Guthrie’s other classic compositions. In 1941, the Bonneville Power Administration commissioned him to write songs championing the use of hydroelectric power. He wrote 26 songs in 26 days, including this song about migrant workers, set to the tune of the Kentucky mountain ballad “Pretty Polly.”

2. WE SHALL OVERCOME

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar
(from Folkways 2456, 1964 / *If I Had a Hammer*
SFW CD 40096, 1998)

Pete Seeger (1919–) is the dean of 20th-century American folksingers. As of this writing, he has been performing and lending his ener-

gies to causes he believes in for more than sixty years. Born into a musical family, Pete grew up surrounded by music. His father was the eminent musicologist Charles Seeger, and his mother, Constance, was a concert violinist. His siblings, Mike, Peggy, and Penny, and various cousins and relatives by marriage, have had successful recording careers.

Pete began to record for Moses Asch in 1943. Over the next 40 years, he recorded more than five dozen albums for Asch. Seeger is a fine interpreter and presenter of traditional folksongs and an important composer of topical songs. During the folksong revival, Seeger was one its major figures and a major influence on other musicians. Much like Woody Guthrie, Seeger believes strongly in the use of his music for the betterment of mankind. His influence was powerful, despite having suffered the effects of blacklisting during the McCarthy era. He simply found other outlets in which to perform, visiting college campuses and staying under the political radar. He was actively involved in the civil rights movement and the fight for equal rights for African-Americans. This song evidently comes from the hymn “I’ll Be Alright.” Ziphilia Horton, of the Highlander School in Tennessee, heard black tobacco workers singing the song,

and one of the workers changed the “I” to “We.” Since 1946, verses have been added by Ziphilia Horton, Pete Seeger, and Guy Carawan to make the song less union-specific. Carawan introduced it to the civil-rights movement (Mark Greenberg, notes to SFW CD 40096), and it became the movement’s most important song.

3. ROCK ISLAND LINE

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar
(from Folkways 2014, 1956 / *Where Did You Sleep Last Night* SFW CD 40044, 1996)

Huddie Ledbetter (Lead Belly) (1888–1949) was one of the 20th century’s most important repositories of traditional American song. He would hear a song, commit it to memory, and adapt it to make it his own. He performed blues, spirituals, pop songs, children’s games, work-songs, and a myriad of other genres. Lead Belly was discovered in prison by John Avery Lomax, a collector from the Library of Congress, and much mythology exists as to the extent that a song he wrote for the governor of Louisiana, delivered by Lomax, earned him an early release. Moving to New York, Lead Belly was

introduced to Northern folksong audiences, and he fell in with a group of musicians that included Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Aunt Molly Jackson, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, and Josh White. Also operating in the same circle was Moses Asch.

Moses Asch was the perfect person for Lead Belly to record for, and their relationship benefited both of them. Asch allowed Lead Belly to record a wide variety of music. As a result of Asch's encouragement, Lead Belly recorded the bulk of his material for Asch Records. Other record companies had difficulty understanding the marketing of Lead Belly's music, for he was more than a blues singer. The recording of his first album expanded Asch's scope from being purely a label of ethnic recordings, an event that would have far reaching consequences. In October 1934, Lead Belly was traveling with John Lomax and his son Alan, acting as their driver. During a trip to record convicts at Cummins State Farm, in Gould, Arkansas, Lead Belly first heard "Rock Island Line," a song later to be closely associated with him. It became a hit in the late 1950s for British skiffle musician Lonnie Donegan.

4. NO MORE AUCTION BLOCK

Paul Robeson, vocal
(also known as "Many Thousand Gone," "Many Thousand Go"; from *Favorite Songs, Vol. 2* Monitor 581, n.d.)

Paul Robeson (1898–1976) was a great American musical figure of the 20th century. He was an accomplished singer, actor, and athlete, and a champion of civil rights. A graduate of Columbia University Law School and the owner of more than a dozen varsity letters in sports (Baggelaar 1976:320), Robeson was not content to be accorded second-class-citizen status. After spending the 1930s living abroad to escape social conditions in the United States, he became deeply involved in politics and the fight for progressive causes. During the 1950s, the House Un-American Activities Committee persecuted him. At the end of the decade, he was again allowed the use of his passport, and he left for England. In 1963, he returned to Harlem. It has only been in recent years that Robeson has finally started to achieve the historical recognition he has long deserved.

This song comes from the catalog of Monitor Records, an independent label,

which mainly issued classical and world-music titles. It was founded in 1956 by Rose Rubin and Michael Stillman, and was donated to the Smithsonian in 2000. Monitor issued two LPs of Robeson's work. "No More Auction Block" (also known as "Many Thousand Gone") is a song composed as a marching song for black soldiers during the American Civil War. It takes on extra power when performed by Robeson. As an historical footnote, Bob Dylan would end up using elements of its melody in his song "Blowing in the Wind"—a great melody, reinterpreted for a new time.



5. DEPORTEES (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)

Barbara Dane, vocal and guitar
(from *I Hate the Capitalist System* Paredon 1014, 1973)

Barbara Dane (1927–) is a self-described "people's singer" (personal communication, 1990), whose repertoire includes jazz, blues, and folk music. An activist, she has used music as a vehicle to promote social change. Dane was raised in Detroit, Michigan. In her late teens, she became aware how the Great Depression had affected local workers and she began to sing for justice and against racism. She moved to San Francisco in 1949, and performed with many of the giants of the blues and jazz world, including Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Memphis Slim, Earl Hines, Willie Dixon, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Roosevelt Sykes. Dane continued to perform folk music, singing in support of the civil-rights movement and women's rights and against the conflict in Vietnam. Against the wishes of the U.S. government, she was the first American singer to tour Cuba after Fidel Castro's revolution. She continues to perform in the San Francisco Bay area.

To document the musics of political

movements worldwide, Dane and Irwin Silber founded the Paredon record label in 1970. They produced fifty albums, and this track comes from that label.

"Plane Wreck at Los Gatos" or "Deportees" came from a set of lyrics written down by Woody Guthrie but never recorded by him. In 1948, Guthrie had read of a plane crash that had killed migrant laborers being deported to Mexico. A teacher, Martin Hoffman, set it to music a decade later, and it became one of Guthrie's better-known songs (Klein 1980:349–350). For more information, see www.barbaradane.net.

6. JOHN HENRY

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Arnold Watson, banjo
(From *The Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley* SFW CD 40029/30, 1994)

Arthel Watson (1923–), nicknamed "Doc" as a teenager, was born in Stoney Fork Township, North Carolina (later known as Deep Gap). He was surrounded by music as a child. Many of the members of his family were singers and musicians; see *The Watson Family* (Smithsonian Folkways 40012). In

1960, Ralph Rinzler traveled to Virginia to record Clarence Ashley and encountered Watson for the first time. Thrilled by his discovery, he went on to manage Watson and introduce him to concert and nightclub audiences around the country. Rinzler produced Doc's first albums for Folkways, starting with the *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's* project (Smithsonian Folkways 40029) in 1961.

Over the next 40 years, Watson has achieved a status as one of the finest acoustic guitarists alive. He has continued to perform, recording dozens of albums and winning numerous awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences in 2004.

"John Henry" is probably the most famous and frequently recorded American folksong. As of this writing, the Smithsonian folklife archive holds more than 180 different renditions of it. The words deal with the legendary John Henry and the digging of the Big Bend Tunnel in West Virginia. The song has been interpreted many ways, and some of the variants include "Gonna Die with a Hammer in My Hand," by West Virginia's Williamson Brothers and Curry; "The Death of John Henry," by Uncle Dave Macon (1870–1952); "New John Henry

Blues," by Bill Monroe (1911–1996); and "Spikedriver Blues," by Mississippi John Hurt (1893–1966). Folksinger Josh White devoted an entire side of one of his LPs to versions of the song.

7. JOHN HARDY

Mike Seeger, vocal and banjo
(from *Old Time Country Music* Folkways 2325, 1962)

Mike Seeger (1933–) is a member of the musical Seeger family, half-brother to Pete and son of the musicologist Charles. As a musician and a member of New Lost City Ramblers, Mike was one of the more prolific recording artists on the label. He was also involved in recording and producing recordings by the McGee Brothers, Kilby Snow, the Stoneman Family, Dock Boggs, Elizabeth Cotten, and others.

He has had a long career as a performer and documenter of American music, becoming proficient at numerous instruments in the process. He is one of the nation's authorities on American vernacular music. In recent years, he has again begun to record new collections of his music for Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

"John Hardy" is a ballad of African-American origin, first popular around 1900. It has become one of the most frequently performed American folksongs, in both black and white traditions. It is based on an actual murder case, in which, in Welch, McDowell County, West Virginia, Hardy was tried for murder, found guilty, and hanged on Friday, 19 January 1894 (Logdson, notes to SFW CD 40101, 1997).

8. BETTY AND DUPREE

Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar
(from *Blues* Folkways 2030, 1955 / SFW CD 40034, 1991)

Walter "Brownie" McGhee (1915–1996) is well known for his decades-long partnership with harmonica player Sonny Terry. Originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, McGhee was part of a group of folk and blues musicians who played together in New York in the early 1940s and came to the attention of Moses Asch. McGhee went on to have an illustrious career as a blues singer and guitarist, recording with Terry, and solo for numerous labels. He spent his final years in California.

9. GALLIS POLE

Fred Gerlach, vocal and guitar
(also known as "Maid Freed from the Gallows,"
"Hangman," and "Hangman's Song"; from *Twelve-String Guitar* Folkways 3529, 1962)

Guitarist Fred Gerlach (1925–) recorded this album of songs played on 12-string guitar for Folkways in 1962. The album contains interpretations of songs from Lead Belly's repertoire, including "Gallis Pole." A highly respected 12-string guitarist during the folk-song revival, Gerlach was a guitar teacher, and his students included Ry Cooder. He spent his later years working with wood and building instruments. He still plays at local music festivals in Southern California.

From Lead Belly to Led Zeppelin, the song "Gallows Pole" has had many lives. Descending from the old British ballad "Maid Freed from the Gallows," the song took its most frequent current form from the playing of Lead Belly. Gerlach's version shows Lead Belly's influence. It became a well-known song in the rock canon when Led Zeppelin recorded it, in 1970. Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page credits the version from Fred Gerlach's album as the source for the band's version: "I first heard

it on an old Folkways LP by Fred Gerlach, a 12-string player who was, I believe, the first white to play the instrument. I used his version as a basis and completely changed the arrangement" (<http://www.wirz.de/music/gerlafrm.htm>). Listeners will hear the similarities.

10. POLLY VON

Paul Clayton, vocal and guitar
(also known as "Molly Bawn," "Polly Vaughan"; from *Bay State Ballads* Folkways 2106, 1956)

Paul Clayton (1933–1967) was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Trained as a folklorist at the University of Virginia, he traveled extensively, collecting songs. He was a major figure in the 1950s Greenwich Village folk revival. He influenced Bob Dylan, who modified the tune to Clayton's "Who'll Buy Your Chickens When I'm Gone" into his classic "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright." Clayton recorded for six record companies and the Library of Congress. Although his career was short, he left behind a strong recorded legacy of the songs he had collected all over North America.

The song itself is a version of "Molly Bawn," a ballad from Ireland. Clayton traced

its first appearance in print back to the late 18th century but believed the story dated back to Greek mythology, wherein the hunter Cephalus hears his wife, Procris, in the bushes, and mistaking her for an animal, kills her with his spear (Clayton, notes to 2106, 1956).

11. BUTCHER BOY

Peggy Seeger, vocal and guitar
(also known as "Railroad Boy"; from *Songs of Courting and Complaint* Folkways 2049, 1955)

Peggy Seeger (1935–) was born in New York to a musical family: her father, Charles, and mother, Ruth Crawford, were eminent musicologists, and Pete is her half-brother. During her childhood, her parents were at work creating anthologies of folksongs, so she was exposed to countless tunes. Starting with piano, she gradually learned to play a host of folk instruments: guitar, banjo, Appalachian dulcimer, autoharp, and concertina. In 1956, she traveled to England to perform in a television production of "Dark of the Moon." While there, she joined the Ramblers, a folk-group that also included Ewan MacColl. The two started performing

as a duo, and were married two years later. As central figures in the British folksong revival, Seeger and MacColl were involved in many projects, including, with Charles Parker, "The Radio Ballads," a beloved British radio series.

Peggy has written and performed many songs and recorded dozens of albums, solo, with Ewan, and with others. Since the early 1990s, she has sung with Irene Scott under the name "No Spring Chickens." She has continued to tour and sing. She currently lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

The song "Butcher Boy" occurs in many forms in the United States and goes by many titles ("Railroad Boy," "In London City Where I Did Dwell," "In Tarrytown"). The geographical locations vary, but the circumstances surrounding the girl's death stay the same. The Library of Congress has recorded versions from all over the South and Midwest.

12. DUNCAN AND BRADY Dave Van Ronk

Dave Van Ronk, vocal and guitar
(from Folkways 3818, 1959 / *The Folkways Years* SPW CD 40041, 1991)

Dave Van Ronk (1936–2002) was the Grand Old Man of the Greenwich Village folk-world. He was an influence to many, including Bob Dylan and others. A wonderful folk, blues, and jazz guitarist, Van Ronk recorded albums for many labels, and was a guitar teacher and mentor to many.

During the revival, “Duncan and Brady” was performed by many others, including Tom Rush and Paul Clayton.

13. RAILROAD BILL

Hobart Smith, vocal and guitar
(from *The Asch Recordings Folkways AA4*, 1967)

Hobart Smith (1897–1965) was a multi-instrumentalist from Saltville, Virginia. A lifetime musician, he played locally in south-west Virginia, including the well-known White Top Festival during the 1930s. He and his sister, Texas Gladden, were invited to perform at the Roosevelt White House. Alan Lomax recorded both Smith and Gladden for the Library of Congress in 1942. There is no evidence that Smith and Gladden went to New York to record for Moses Asch in the early 1940s, and it is likely that Asch got the recordings of the

pair from Alan Lomax. Although not an urban performer like the majority of the others on this set, Smith is included because Moses Asch’s release of *Blue Ridge Ballads* on Disc Records was one of the significant “folk” releases of his career. Smith lived long enough to be rediscovered by the folk revival of the 1960s, when he appeared at festivals and coffeehouses.

According to Alan Lomax, “Railroad Bill” was an African-American turpentine worker from Alabama, whose real name was Morris Slater. The terrible conditions in which turpentine workers lived drove him to a life of crime; typically, he would break into railroad cars and steal the goods (Lomax, *Sing Out!*, vol. 6, no. 1, Oct.–Nov. 1961). Slater’s life has become legend in this song.

14. WAYFARING STRANGER Burl Ives

Burl Ives, vocal and guitar
(from *The Asch Recordings Folkways AA3*, 1967)

Burl Ives (1909–1995) was one of the first major performers to record for Moses Asch, recording an album of folksongs in 1941, produced by Alan Lomax. Ives was a

well-known actor and singer, who appeared in film, radio, theater, and television. His 1940–1942 radio program was entitled “The Wayfaring Stranger,” and the song was known as his theme and the title of his biography. Ives had tremendous crossover appeal, and became one of the best-known folksingers to those who normally did not listen to the genre. He is also known for his recordings of songs for children.

“Wayfaring Stranger” (“Wayfaring Pilgrim”) is a well-known older American hymn.

15. BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN Haywire McClintock

Harry “Haywire Mac” McClintock, vocal and guitar
(From *Haywire Mac Folkways 5272*, 1972)

Harry K. McClintock (1882–1957), known throughout his career as “Haywire Mac,” spent his life as a hobo, singer, and composer. He performed for meetings of the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) union, and on the radio. He is best known for his compositions “The Big Rock Candy Mountain” and “Hallelujah, I’m a Bum.”

Haywire Mac had a brief moment of

exposure to modern audiences when his voice was heard singing during the opening scene of the acclaimed film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

16. BORN 100,000 YEARS AGO

Cisco Houston, vocal and guitar
(Also known as “I’m a Highly Educated Man,” “I Was Born 10,000 Years Ago”; from *The Folkways Years SFW CD 40059*, 1994)

Cisco Houston (1918–1961) was another character in the cast who recorded for Moses Asch in his early years. Houston spent his youth working various jobs in the West, including that of a ranch-hand, picking up songs along the way. During World War II, he served in the Merchant Marine, along with his frequent musical partner, Woody Guthrie. Houston and Guthrie recorded many duets for Asch, and it was Houston whose keener sense of musical time would keep Woody in rhythm. Unfortunately, Houston lost his battle with cancer at the age of 42, too early to enjoy the fame he would likely have had during the folk revival of the 1960s.

17. SUGAR BABE, IT'S ALL OVER NOW

Mark Spoelstra, vocal and guitar
(from *The Songs of Mark Spoelstra* Folkways 2444, 1963)

Mark Spoelstra (1940–) was a major figure in the folk-music scenes in Greenwich Village and Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the 1960s. He recorded a live record at Cambridge's Club 47 in 1963.

Born in Kansas City, he was raised in California, where he currently lives. In his early twenties he moved to New York, where he played for tips in coffeehouses, solo and in a duo with Bob Dylan. He recorded albums for Folkways, Elektra, and Fantasy. Among his well-known compositions are "White Winged Dove" and "5 and 20 Questions."

Mark moved back to California in the late 1960s and joined the band Frontier Constabulary with Mitch Greenhill. In the early 1970s, he moved to Palo Alto, California, and began to study the Bible. From 1974 to 1979, he used his music as part of a music ministry. He continues to perform both religious and secular music (from the liner notes to SFW CD 40130).

In 2001, after decades of making no recordings, he recorded his first new album, *Out of My Hands*, for the Origin Jazz Library label.

This song comes from the repertoire of Texas songster Mance Lipscomb.

18. CHANGES Phil Ochs

Phil Ochs, vocal and guitar
(from Folkways 5362, 1980/*Broadside 1* SFW CD 40008, 1989)

Phillip David Ochs (1940–1976) was one of the most important and certainly one of the most prolific songwriters to record during the 1960s and 1970s.

Phil was born in El Paso, Texas, but found himself frequently moving as the family followed his father's medical career. Phil attended Ohio State University, where he was first exposed to folk music, and especially Woody Guthrie. Influenced by his guitar-playing roommate, Jim Glover, Phil turned more and more to political activism. He began to write articles for the campus newspaper, *The Lantern*. Eventually disillusioned with *The Lantern*, he started an underground newspaper, *The Word* (Mark Kemp, notes to Rhino 73518).

Phil found journalism to his liking and enthusiastically wrote articles while beginning to play guitar and write songs. His songwriting became an important conduit for his journalism. With Glover, he formed a folk group called the Sundowners, but after an argument with Glover, he went out on his own. Shortly before graduation, he left Columbus and headed off to New York City, where he quickly fell in with the folk scene around Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park. He began to have his songs published in *Broadside* magazine, beginning with "Billy Sol" in issue thirteen. Ochs recorded dozens of his songs for *Broadside* on their home tape recorder. Folkways issued 15 albums from the *Broadside* recordings (see *Best of Broadside*, SFW CD 40130).

Next to Bob Dylan, Phil was the most important topical songwriter who came along in the early 1960s. He recorded albums for Elektra, and later A&M, the latter being a lot more introspective, with lush arrangements. He continued to be heavily involved in causes he felt strongly about, but became increasingly disillusioned with the small amount of change effected by these movements. Because of a combination of personal problems and manic depression, his career took a turn for the worse. On 9

April 1976, he committed suicide. There continue to be Phil Ochs song nights, run by his sister Sonny, where many musicians get together to keep his memory alive (from liner notes to SFW CD 40130).

19. BLACK AND WHITE

Earl Robinson, vocal and piano
(from *Earl Robinson Sings* Folkways 2324, 1957)

Earl Hawley Robinson (1910–1991) was an activist, musician, and prolific composer. He is credited with writing the music for the songs "Joe Hill," "The House I Live In," "Free and Equal Blues," and "Hurry Sundown," and the musical *Ballad for Americans*. The song "Black and White," as covered by the rock group Three Dog Night in the 1970s, sold a million copies. Callers who telephoned Robinson during the late 1980s were treated to a lovely answering-machine performance of this song by the man himself. He was a trained classical composer who studied in New York with Aaron Copland and Hanns Eisler and was a member of the Workers Laboratory Theater, the WPA Federal Theater Project, and the Composers' Collective of the Pierre

Degeyter Club. Robinson was severely affected by the 1950s blacklist, but resumed writing film scores in the 1960s.

The lyricist for this 1956 song is David Arkin, a songwriter and the father and grandfather respectively of actors Alan and Adam Arkin.

20. MOST FAIR BEAUTY BRIGHT

Jean Ritchie, vocal and Appalachian dulcimer (also known as "Fair Beauty Bright," Charming Beauty Bright"; Laws M3; from *Precious Memories* Folkways 2427, 1962)

Jean Ritchie (1922–), a native of Viper, Kentucky, is probably the person most responsible for popularizing the Appalachian dulcimer. She is a singer, songwriter, song collector, and author. Growing up in Viper, she was highly influenced by her the musicianship of her family. After graduating from the University of Kentucky, she became a social worker in New York City, where she used music from home in her work. Gradually she began to perform concerts for the public.

Ritchie has recorded numerous albums for

a variety of labels. In 1952, with her husband (George Pickow), she traveled to Ireland and England on a Fulbright scholarship to record traditional singers. She is the author and editor of numerous songbooks and books on how to play the Appalachian dulcimer. She lives in Port Washington, New York.

"Most Fair Beauty Bright" is a Kentucky mountain folk-song. She welcomed its inclusion in this set: "Fair Beauty Bright" is one of my favorites, and doesn't get sung often enough" (personal communication, 2004).



21. CIELITO LINDO

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (from Folkways 2320, 1957/*American Favorite Ballads*, Vol. 1 SFW CD 40150, 2002)

A song from Mexico, possibly dating as far back as the 1830s, this was copyrighted by Quirino Mendoza y Cortez in 1929. Its title translates as "Lovely Little Heaven" (Logsdon, notes to SFW CD 40150).

22. TOM DOOLEY

The New Lost City Ramblers: John Cohen, vocal and guitar, Mike Seeger, fiddle (from *The New Lost City Ramblers*, Vol. 2 Folkways 2397, 1960)

The New Lost City Ramblers came together in mid-1958, dedicated to preserving and performing the old-time American music that all three members had grown to love. Membership included Mike Seeger (1933–), John Cohen (1932–), and banjoist Tom Paley (1928–). The group was formed at a time when many young musicians were turning to American folk music. Influenced by Harry Smith's *The Anthology of American Folk Music* and classic recordings from the 1920s and 1930s, the Ramblers began to seek out older recordings, taking part in exchanging reels of tape through a network of collectors who held dubs of vintage 78-rpm recordings. To attain access to these sounds,

Mike Seeger and his friend Ralph Rinzler offered to help catalog Harry Smith's record collection, which by 1958 had been sold to the New York Public Library. There was no such thing as too many good songs!

During a time when hundreds of urban folk groups were coming into being, there was a constant search for older songs to fill out set lists. Songs were appropriated by groups and singers who often claimed to be the author or arranger. The Ramblers made a point of including in their notes rich discographical information on the source of their songs, giving full credit and helping educate their fans about their musical forefathers. They revived the older country humor of earlier recordings by groups like the Skillet Lickers and mixed it into their performances. Paley left the group in 1962, and was replaced by Tracy Schwarz (1938–).

The song "Tom Dooley" is most often credited with kicking off the great folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1958, the Kingston Trio released a version that became a hit. The song had been collected by Frank Warner from North Carolina musician Frank Noah Proffitt (1913–1965), and had appeared in songbooks; however, it is not this version the New Lost City Ramblers cite as their influence, but a version learned

from the recording by fiddler G. B. Grayson and Henry Whitter (Victor 40235). Grayson was related to Sheriff Grayson in the song.



23. FREIGHT TRAIN

Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten, vocal and guitar
(from Folkways 3526, 1958 / *Freight Train and Other North Carolina Folk Songs and Tunes* SFW CD 40009, 1989)

Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten (née Nevills) (1895–1987) was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to a musical family. In 1940, after living in North Carolina, the District of Columbia, and New York City, she

settled in D.C. for good. By 1946, she had not played guitar in years, and was working at Lansburgh's department store. After returning a lost child—Peggy Seeger—to her mother in the store, she was hired by the Seeger family as a housekeeper.

Living in the Seeger household gave Libba the opportunity to pick up the guitar again. Her first album, made by Mike Seeger, was recorded at her home in 1957, and became her first Folkways album (SFW CD 40009). She began to play concerts and folk festivals, and became a beloved figure of the folksong revival. Cotton performed at the Newport Folk Festival, the Philadelphia Folk Festival, the University of Chicago Folk Festival, and the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife. She received many honors, including a Grammy award, a Grammy nomination, and a National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. She composed several well-known songs, including "Freight Train," "Shake Sugaree," and "Babe, It Ain't No Lie." She spent her last nine years in Syracuse, New York.

She composed "Freight Train" when she was a child. It has been her best-known song, and was covered by dozens of artists.

24. DOWN ON ME

Mary Pickney and Janie Hunter, vocals
(from Folkways 3842, 1967 / *Been in the Storm so Long* SFW CD 40031, 1990)

This recording comes from a series of recordings made by Guy and Candie Carawan in the Gullah community on John's Island, South Carolina, in the early 1960s. The Gullah are one of the oldest surviving African-American cultures in the United States (Carawan, notes to SFW CD 40033, 1990). This is a recording of Mary Pickney and Janie Hunter at home. Both are members of the Moving Star Hall Singers, musical descendents of Joe Bligen (Hunter's father), one of the great singers in the community (Carawan, notes to SFW CD 40033, 1990). Janie Hunter (1918–1997) led the group for many years; considered a national treasure, she was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship in 1984.

"Down on Me," an African-American spiritual, was performed all over the South, including the Sea Islands. A powerful song, it became a rocker in the hands of Janis Joplin.

25. THIS TRAIN (Bound for Glory)

Bill Broonzy, vocal and guitar
(from Folkways 2328, 1962 / *Bill Broonzy Sings Folk Songs* SFW CD 40023, 1989)

William Lee Conley "Big Bill" Broonzy (1898–1958) was one of the most frequently recorded blues artists in the United States from the 1920s until the late 1940s. The postwar years saw the rise of electric country blues in Broonzy's adopted hometown of Chicago, and Broonzy's music came to be considered old-fashioned. He switched his marketing strategy and found a home among the folk-music enthusiasts who for years had embraced country blues performers like Josh White, Lead Belly, and Sonny and Brownie. Many country-blues artists of this period began to add the phrase "Folk Blues of" to their album titles, and many toured Europe with the American Folk Blues Festival. During this period, Broonzy was also quite popular in Europe. In his last few years, he recorded projects for Folkways with the help of Studs Terkel.

Other Recordings In The Smithsonian Folkways Classic Music Series

Classic Bluegrass from Smithsonian Folkways. 2002. SFW CD 40092.

Classic Mountain Songs from Smithsonian Folkways. 2002. SFW CD40094.

Classic Old-Time Music from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. 2003. SFW CD 40093.

Classic Blues from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. 2003. SFW CD 40134.

Classic Blues Vol. 2 from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. 2003. SFW CD 40148.

Classic Maritime Music from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. 2004. SFW CD 40053.

For other recordings of folk music on Smithsonian Folkways go to www.folkways.si.edu

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- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 PASTURES OF PLENTY Woody Guthrie 2:25 | 15 BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN Haywire Mac 2:06
(Harry McClintock, Villa Moret Inc, ASCAP) |
| 2 WE SHALL OVERCOME Pete Seeger 4:39 | 16 BORN 100,000 YEARS AGO Cisco Houston 1:07 |
| 3 ROCK ISLAND LINE Lead Belly 2:02 | 17 SUGAR BABE, IT'S ALL OVER NOW
Mark Spoelstra 1:58 |
| 4 NO MORE AUCTION BLOCK Paul Robeson 2:09 | 18 CHANGES Phil Ochs 4:16 |
| 5 DEPORTEES (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)
Barbara Dane 5:44 | 19 BLACK AND WHITE Earl Robinson 2:56 |
| 6 JOHN HENRY Doc Watson 3:41 | 20 MOST FAIR BEAUTY BRIGHT Jean Ritchie 2:17 |
| 7 JOHN HARDY Mike Seeger 2:40 | 21 CIELITO LINDO Pete Seeger 2:31
(Q. Mendoza y Cortez) |
| 8 BETTY AND DUPREE Brownie McGhee 3:58 | 22 TOM DOOLEY The New Lost City Ramblers 2:52 |
| 9 GALLIS POLE Fred Gerlach 3:43 | 23 FREIGHT TRAIN Elizabeth Cotten 2:43 |
| 10 POLLY VON Paul Clayton 3:09 | 24 DOWN ON ME Mary Pickney and Janie Hunter 3:02 |
| 11 BUTCHER BOY Peggy Seeger 2:17 | 25 THIS TRAIN (Bound for Glory) Big Bill Broonzy 2:58 |
| 12 DUNCAN AND BRADY Dave Van Ronk 3:00 | |
| 13 RAILROAD BILL Hobart Smith 2:35 | |
| 14 WAYFARING STRANGER Burl Ives 1:12 | |



Compiled and annotated by Jeff Place

SFW CD 40110 SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS



ERRATA

SFW40110 - *Classic Folk Songs from Smithsonian Folkways*

In the track listings, the artist name on Track 24 “Down on Me” incorrectly states the artist as “Mary Pickney and Janie Hunter.” The correct spelling is “Mary Pinckney and Janie Hunter.”

