

# **DARK HOLLER**

Old Love Songs and Ballads

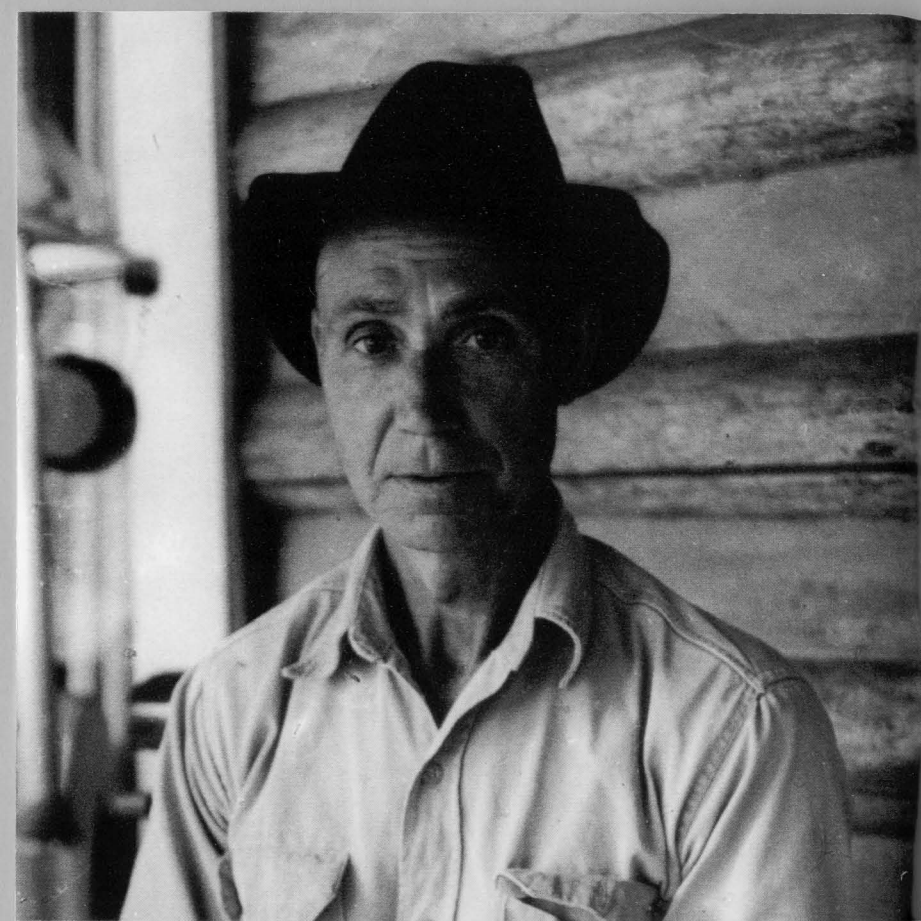


Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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## **DARK HOLLER** Old Love Songs and Ballads

*Featuring Dillard Chandler and other traditional singers  
Compiled and annotated by John Cohen*

### **Dillard Chandler**

1. The Carolina Lady 4:14
2. The Soldier Traveling from the North 3:19
3. The Sailor Being Tired 3:00

### **Dellie Norton**

4. Young Emily\* 2:04
5. Pretty Fair Miss in Her Garden\* 1:32
6. When I Wore My Apron Low\* 0:54

### **Cas Wallin**

7. Pretty Saro 2:57
8. Fine Sally 2:13

### **Lee Wallin**

9. Neighbor Girl 2:11
10. Juba This 0:40

### **Dillard Chandler**

11. Gathering Flowers 1:22
12. Gastony Song 1:30
13. Cold Rain and Snow 2:23

### **Lisha Shelton**

14. In Zepo Town 3:19
15. Don't You Remember 2:35

### **Dillard Chandler**

16. Awake, Awake 4:12
17. Mathie Grove 6:07

### **George Landers**

18. Scotland Man 4:36

### **Berzilla Wallin**

19. Love Has Brought Me to Despair 2:47
20. Johnny Doyle 3:54

### **Dillard Chandler**

21. Short Time Here, Long Time Gone\* 1:29
22. Drunken Driver 4:03
23. Jesus Says Go 2:00
24. Meeting Is Over 2:47
25. Little Farmer Boy 4:26
26. I Wish My Baby Was Born 1:02

*\* Issued for the first time here*

## DARK HOLLER

### Old Love Songs and Ballads

John Cohen

This recording celebrates the singers of the Big Laurel country in Madison County, North Carolina. They sang what we call "unaccompanied ballads," but they knew them as "old love songs." In 1963, when Peter Gott and I first recorded the singers, they were virtually unknown to the outside world, and the tradition of ballad singing was dying out with the older generation; however, the recordings we made over the next five years gave them a certain fame, and my 1972 film, *The End of an Old Song*, brought even greater recognition on a wider stage. These recordings and this film brought new respect for the old traditions. Today, decades later, the people of Sodom, North Carolina, are well known for their ballad singing, and the community takes pride in its tradition as never before.

Dillard Chandler (1907–1992), the source of more than half of this recording, was a powerful singer from the Big Laurel, whose voice still resonates, long after his death. Today it is difficult to find anyone who can sing with his style and authenticity. His way of singing grew out of life experiences and views that are vastly different from ours. His passionate voice dispels the notion that ballad singers are detached, unconnected, and unemotional. He was a mysterious character within his own community: he didn't live in one specific place, but would just show up from time to time; he is remembered as a man who loved to sing.

I began looking for ballad singers such as Dillard in the 1960s because I wanted to know about the people and the way of life that perpetuated this traditional, old-time music. I wanted to experience how the ballads fit into their lives. Literary academic Frances J. Child (1825–1896), pioneer ballad collector Cecil J. Sharp (1859–1924), and other researchers had assigned great importance to the ballads in their connection to ancient English lore.

Madison County singer Berzilla Wallin (1892–1986) remembered Sharp's visit to Big Laurel. Sharp, an Englishman looking for survivals of English folksongs in the Southern Appalachians, collected more than 38 tunes at Big Laurel between 14 and 18 August 1916. People from the area who had seen his book looked on it with a sense of pride; they liked to recognize the names of relatives who were Sharp's informants. But in contrast to literary links to ancient lore, my search led me to the beer joints and log cabins where Dillard hung out. I took tremendous pleasure in the discovery and the contradictions of his life. Most importantly, I found his solitary, plain-spoken singing to be moving and profound; it cast a dark shadow over the past and beamed a new light on the present. Furthermore, Dillard always wore a cowboy hat.

Peter and Polly Gott, with whom I worked to produce the 1964 Folkways LP *Old Love Songs & Ballads* (FW 2309), had introduced me to the singers of Madison County. That album featured six artists from the area that account for 12 of the 26 tracks on this album. The Gotts had moved into the Shelton Laurel region of North Carolina in 1962. Interested in old-time banjo playing, Peter met Lee Wallin (tracks 9 and 10), who was 70 years old at that time. Lee introduced him to the ballad singers in his extended family, whom we subsequently recorded. Most of the singers on this CD are cousins, with shared family ties. These include Lee's wife, Berzilla (tracks 19 and 20); her sister Dellie Norton (tracks 4, 5, and 6); Dellie's cousin Dillard Chandler; and Lee's brother Cas Wallin (1903–1992, tracks 7 and 8). George Landers (track 18) and Lisha Shelton (tracks 14 and 15), who lived close by Peter's house, taught him songs and banjo tunes. Peter recognized the riches of this community, and encouraged the people to rediscover their own wealth of music.

In addition to the tracks from *Old Love Songs & Ballads* and the 1975 Folkways release *The End of an Old Song* (FW 2418, an album of Dillard Chandler's singing I recorded in 1965 and 1968), I offer my film *The End of*

an *Old Song* as a bonus DVD to this CD, in tribute to Dillard and the unique mountain singers of the Big Laurel.

### The Singers

Sodom is an isolated mountain community in Madison County, North Carolina. Its reputation as the home of great ballad singers became established because of the two recordings that comprise this album. None of the singers who appeared on these recordings are alive now, but their voices live on. Peter Gott wrote the following about them in 1963 for *Old Love Songs & Ballads*. His words have been left in the present tense to convey the spirit and times of the singers.

*Dillard Chandler*, 55, raised in an old log cabin in the community of Sodom on Big Laurel, now works in Asheville. Between jobs he usually turns up at Lee's, where they sing and tell stories all night long.

*Lee Wallin*, 75, lives way back in a holler over a rough rocky road, in a pole cabin. He is a favorite at local "frolics" and box suppers, and likes to frail the banjo and dance a jig whenever there is an opportunity. Like nearly all mountain farmers, he raises what food his family eats and his only income is from a small crop of tobacco.

*Berzilla Wallin*, Lee's wife, is the mother of twelve children and at 70 still fires up the wood stove every day to fix a good meal of cornbread and soup beans. She likes to pick a "banjer" and is full of songs and stories that she has heard from her grandparents and parents since she was a little girl. (Her son Doug is a fine ballad singer.)

*Cas Wallin* lives in a little farm on Chandler Cove on Big Laurel. Cas leads the hymns in the local Church of God, but is equally ready to sing a good old ballad or blow a tune on the mouth harp when the preacher is out of earshot. He and Lee are brothers.



Lee & Berzilla Wallin, photo John Cohen





Cas Wallin, photo John Cohen

*Elisha Shelton* lives in the community of Allegheny on Shelton Laurel. He has picked the banjo and danced all night at many a frolic after a corn-shucking or barn raising. He keeps a "tune bow" hanging on the wall beside his banjo, and if no other instrument is handy he will pick up a couple of spoons and rattle out a tune.

*Dellie Norton*, sister of Berzilla, and a cousin of Dillard's. She lives at the end of a holler above Sodom, and welcomes a steady stream of people to share the music at her place. She had a big garden, and other things up in the hills, along with a row of cherry trees from which she made good brandy. She became the inspiration for Sheila Adams' singing style. (Dellie's brother Lloyd Chandler was also a powerful ballad singer and preacher from this community).

*George Landers* lived in a small wood house by the road that leads to Peter Gott's place. Peter encouraged the elderly Landers to pick up his banjo again, and then Landers remembered a wealth of songs and distinctive banjo picking. He had a sharp understated sense of humor and could always be heard from the road, playing and singing. Towards the end of his life when confined to a nursing home, he took his banjo with him and entertained the residents. (JC)

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In 1963, Berzilla Wallin told me: "Well, I'm getting pretty old. I'll soon be 74, and I see the old time all a-dying away and all the old songs, which makes me sad. I'd like to see them go on, and the young rising generation pick 'em up so they wouldn't die out. That's what I got to say about our old songs." Lee Wallin expressed a similar sentiment: "The old songs has mighty good meaning to them.... That makes me think back when I was a young man, away back again when I had such good times, but they passed by and gone, and I like to hear 'em to remember things again by. It makes me think when I used

to go out, an I could get the girls, just about any of them I wanted to. All like that brings it back to me."

### **Singing Style in Madison County**

The singers on this collection have evolved a recognizable style with an exaggerated sense of extended phrasing, distinguished by a pronounced vocal use in the way they throw their voices up into a falsetto, like "yip" at the end of a line. Dillard Chandler described his approach to the music: "There ain't no rhythm to the music I do. I've always heard it called a love song, just a natural love song. Ain't nothin' to it, no rhythm, nothing to dance through. It's just an old-timey love song. Just old flat love song." Sheila Kay Adams says: "Dillard was kind of an anomaly; he was caught in between worlds.... He was a wonderful singer. Now, his voice was odd, and I think that it was from Dillard that I learned that weird phrasing that is so common to these love songs, that sets them apart" (Stamler 2002:63).

Cecil Sharp noticed this special quality in Appalachian traditional singers and wrote about it in 1916: "They have one vocal peculiarity, however, which I have never noticed amongst English folk-singers, namely, the habit of dwelling arbitrarily upon certain notes of the melody, generally the weaker accents. This practice, which is almost universal, by disguising the rhythm and breaking up the monotonous regularity of the phrases, produces an effect of improvisation and freedom from rule which is very pleasing.... [This] method of singing... is quite as traditional as the song itself" (Sharp 1960: xxvii). (For further historical background about ballad collectors Frances Child and Cecil Sharp, go to [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu).)

### **The Ballads and Love Songs as a Living History**

Essentially, the ballads and old love songs are narratives about adventures,



murders, and the perils of love. Listen to their stories: they are not about the lives of the singers, but about the old songs they treasured and passed on. Some people say the ballads are nothing more than 19th-century Romantic literature, fantasizing on medieval myths; sometimes they are called Elizabethan ballads. Others trace the stories to Indo-European sources. The ballads speak in a poetic language from an earlier era. They have no implicit grand scale, other than their antiquity and the occasional reference to a king or a queen, and the rare sword fight. Elisha Shelton's song "Don't You Remember" mentions "my armor shining bright," and Berzilla Wallin sings about her "Waiting Maid."

When Dillard Chandler sings the ballads, his performance exists in the present. He makes the ordinary seem larger than life, yet his storytelling is filled with contradictions. For example, instead of starting a song with the words "The sailor being tired, he hung down his head," he sings "*It's the sailor being tired*" (track 3), as if he were quoting something, or putting a frame around it: "This is how the song goes." Later in this song, he shifts from third person ("The little maid, she showed him the bed") to the first person ("What I did there, I wouldn't tell here"). It is as if he modified the story, hinting that the ballad was as much a confession as it was a narrative.

Some of the images conveyed vividly through the ballads have been transmitted in the oral tradition for more than 500 years. The skill of storytelling was a key to keeping this tradition alive. Good singers would impart their own sense of aesthetics to the narrative; and in the days before radio or phonograph, the ballads sung as home entertainment were an alternative to written texts. People recognized good singers, and got involved in the stories. When Dillard sang "Mathie Grove" on the porch at Lee Wallin's house, everyone there listened intently to the story: they got involved with the singing, though they had heard it many times before. As soon as Dillard was finished, the comments began: one person said, "If it were me, I would have fought

harder"; another said he "would have killed Lord Daniel," and another said he "would have snuck out the back door."

When Berzilla finished a love song in which the narrator plunges a knife into his love because he felt she had betrayed him, her son Doug commented, "No girl was worth all that trouble." Berzilla replied that the song showed "how deep and true love ran in the olden days, and the trouble with people today was that love was no longer so strong, and so children had less respect for their parents, and husbands for their wives.... That's why there's so much divorce now days."

In the eyes of the community, no single aspect of stylization made one singer preferable to another. More often, a "good" singer was one who could sing with full force, and older people often apologized for having voices that had less power than before; however, full force and power are not to be mistaken with loudness of sound, for much of the singing is done with great restraint and a certain quietness.

### A Profile of Dillard Chandler

These recordings of Dillard Chandler, featured here on 14 tracks, were made on the porch of Lee Wallin's house in the community of Sodom in 1963. Later, an interview with Dillard became the narration for the film *The End of an Old Song*, converted to DVD especially for this album. While that interview is quoted in these notes, the film makes it clear that no written text can convey the way he told his story.

Although Dillard Chandler was illiterate, he knew hundreds of songs. Unaccompanied singing was his entire music. He didn't sing at festivals, in shows, or on the radio: he just stayed in the mountains around Madison County and Asheville. The ballads were part of a long continuity, internalized, memorized, and passed on by word of mouth. They didn't need written

texts. He told me: "The reason I like old hymns and such as that, is that they make me think back instead of moving forward into this fast ways of living and times like they are now."

Dillard provides a bit of autobiography: "My name is Dillard Chandler, and I was born in Madison County, number Ten Township, in a old log building. When I was a boy, it was really a rough go in these hills. There wasn't any way you could get back in here with a car. You had to walk footlogs down out of here. When we was little ol' kids, we went to school at the fork of the creek. Several times, I went out of here to school, and the footlogs would be washed away; we couldn't get there. After we got big enough to go to work, we had to get out and look out for ourselves, get jobs, logging jobs at that time. I just went out to work, that's one reason I didn't get no education. I quit reading or anything. I just forgot what I did know about education."

Dillard came from a community of excellent singers, many of them found on this album. He said, "there's a lot of them around here that does sing the old way." A few of them became well-known later in their lives, and appeared at local, state, and national folk festivals. The great singer (and preacher) Lloyd Chandler was Dillard's cousin. He can be heard on *High Atmosphere* (Rounder 0028). Another relation was Doug Wallin, a fine singer and purposeful keeper of ballads, who recorded for Smithsonian Folkways in 1995 on *Family Songs and Stories from the North Carolina Mountains* (SFW 40013). According to Peter Gott, "Doug claimed Dillard was the best ballad singer in the mountains."

Dillard describes how singing was part of his community: "The first singing that I ever heard was old-timey meeting songs, and these old songs like I sing, and these frolics where they get together and pick and sing and drink a little. Maybe a 'lassie makin',' or maybe a corn shuckin', maybe a gallon hid in the corn pile. They'd go ahead an' shuck into that—pick the banjo, have a dance.... The only kind of music I know anything about is old ballads—just learning

songs from somebody else that I've heard sing 'em. I'd rather hear the old songs than the new ones that come out. The way they're sung and the way the music is... in the new songs, they do it so fancy that it ain't got the right sound."

Dillard loved to sing old hymns as well as old love songs; he also sang odd blues, popular country sentimental songs, and bawdy versions of the ballads. Some of his songs are about local events, murders, and hangings, some contain the language of racial prejudice, and some come from early commercial recordings. His repertoire reflected the full range of old-time music, and the way he sang made all the songs sound like old ballads.

Dillard Chandler left the mountains only once, to participate in the University of Chicago Folk Festival in 1967. He made his first public appearance before a large audience in Mandel Hall in the wake of a severe snowstorm. He was a shy man: in person, he would rarely look directly at you, but preferred to speak with his body turned at a right angle to you in profile. I went with him onto the stage at the festival and invited him to sing into the microphone. In the spotlight, he could sense the audience before him. He started his first long ballad staring into the darkness of the auditorium, but as the story progressed, he rocked forward and back, and slowly shifted his stance, and so by the end of the song he was singing to the side of the stage, perpendicular to the audience, who saw him in profile.

Something in Dillard's voice—the assuredness of his expression with its odd musicality, the strong undercurrent of sex in his subject-matter, and the heroic-tragic quality in the singing—reaches contemporary sensibilities. *The Village Voice* writes about "the extraordinary Dillard Chandler [and his] searing unaccompanied vocal performance" (18 August 2004). An executive at Columbia records heard one of Dillard's tapes, cranked up the volume, and commented, "That's a great singer." Dillard's voice has been noticed by contemporary artists in New York. Composer Dick Connette



wrote a song titled "Dillard Chandler," which he recorded with his band, Last Forever; also, he adapted Cas Wallin's version of "Pretty Saro."

Chris Becker, another composer working in New York City wrote: "Dillard... was an incredibly unique and soulful singer.... I transcribed an *a cappella* rendition of [his song].... Trying to notate his singing is a challenge; there are bends, melismas, and weird notes in between notes throughout his 'head arrangement,' and analyzing what he was doing was a lot of fun" (personal communication). Bob Dylan listened to Dillard Chandler. In 1969, he asked if I knew a mountain singer whose songs were preoccupied with sex. Dylan owned the album *Old Love Songs & Ballads*, which introduced Dillard's singing; at that point, it had sold only 50 copies.

Beneath the surface of Dillard Chandler's repertoire is a dark quotation of horrible crimes, violent lovers, forceful sex acts, infidelities, sword fights, naked men, and fair ladies. This passion-driven subject-matter exists within the directory of ballad narratives, but each traditional ballad singer gravitates toward the songs that reflect themselves: each singer finds an aspect of his or her own nature in the lyrics. Berzilla Wallin preferred songs connected with the feminine side of love ("her earrings fell to the floor"), with romantic visions, broken engagements, and forsaken love. Although Dillard sang church songs and sentimental country music (such as "Old Shep"), his repertoire is remembered for the edgy atmosphere it brings to the Child ballads.

### The Film

I wanted to present Dillard Chandler's music to the world, and realized that Dillard wasn't going to travel. He had been invited to perform at the Newport Folk Festival in 1967, but although I had people waiting to assist him at different points along the route, he never got on the bus at Asheville to begin the trip, so in that year I started working on a film about him, aware that

only a few people knew of his singing. Along with seeing Dillard in his community, I wanted to explore any connections between his erotic ballad repertoire and his personal life. During the interview at his log house, he told me: "Well I ain't been in love for 10 or 15 years. I just decided there weren't much to that. When I take a notion for a woman, I get her—just go to town and order 'em up. I go there and pitch me a woman once or twice a month."

I anguished as to whether it was appropriate to include that statement in the film. Was it too revealing? I decided to include it because it brought home the idea that the ballad singers were complex people with individual qualities, and their songs contained reflections of the singer's lives: the singers weren't just carriers of distant, detached stories.

I screened the film for the Sodom community a few years later, and Dillard didn't show up. I was apprehensive about how the audience—who all knew Dillard—would respond to his personal narrative. As his voice was heard on screen talking about his love life, a man in the audience said loudly, "Tell it like it is, Dillard"; another chimed in, "That's right, Dillard." After that, the entire audience sang along with the ballad performances on the screen. It was the only time anything like that could happen, or ever did.

One reason I made the film *The End of an Old Song* was to respond to folklorist Richard Chase's assertion (at the University of Chicago Folk Festival in 1961) about traditional Appalachian singers who sang English ballads: he characterized Appalachian ballad singers as the upright descendants of Anglo-Saxon yeoman farmers transplanted to the Appalachian Mountains, with their culture intact, continuing their pure—white or Anglo—traditions. Dillard Chandler offered an alternative to such stereotyped purity. For more on these issues, read David Whisnant's book *All That Is Native and Fine*.

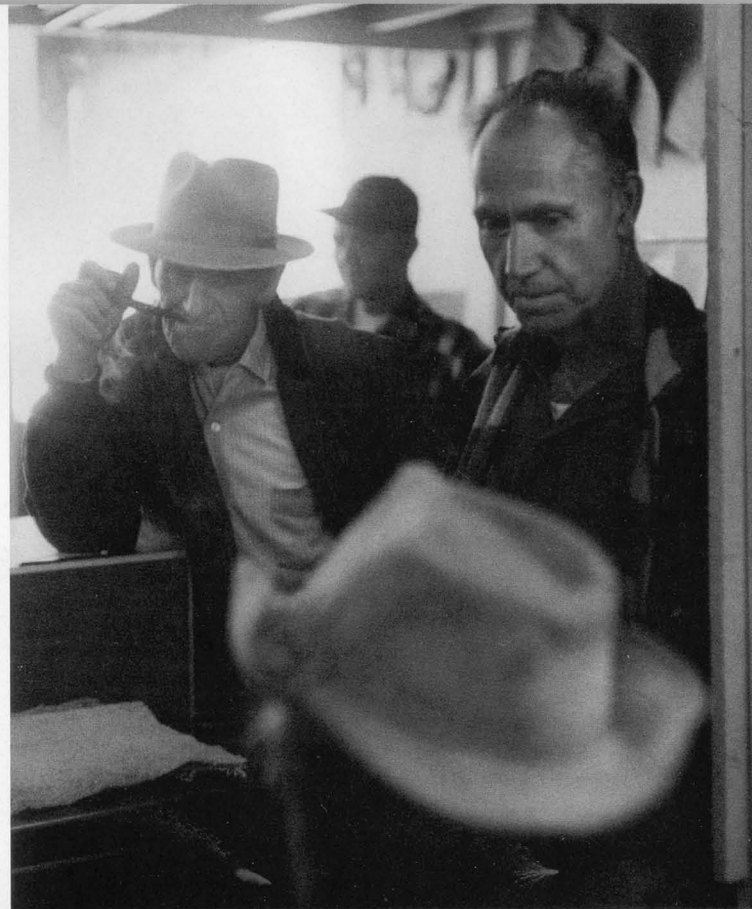
The city-based folk-revival had another agenda for the ballads, stereotyped as being sung by a girl with long hair and in a gingham dress, seated at Granny's feet by the fireside, recalling beautiful, pure songs of knights, elves,

and fairies, the songs accompanied by a dulcimer. It was an unfair characterization of Jean Ritchie's music, and revealed a deep escapist need in the city folks' romanticized vision. Eventually, *Sing Out!*, the folksong magazine, published illustrated depictions of the old ballads as medieval romances in pseudoscience-fictional, pre-Raphaelite costumes, giving its readers an unrealistic, escapist framework to hang their balladic imaginations upon.

Dillard Chandler didn't know about this. He was a man confronting the challenges of modern life, but even though his experiences placed him in continual engagement with present-day America, he knew an ancient world within his head. With the example of Dillard in mind, I could envision ballad singers as impure—rich with contradictions and a new vitality, which could propel the songs to future generations.

#### **Dark Holler: An End Note**

This story of the ballads is not complete. It can never be. Even in this effort to portray and document Dillard Chandler and his local tradition, serious omissions have been made, to accommodate the evolving, subjective tastes of today's sensibilities. Like the Grimms' fairy-tales, which dealt with horrific content, the ballads communicate deeply embedded, troubling ideas. These thoughts may be suppressed in daily life, but they remain alive in folklore, especially in songs. Somehow, stories about violent murder, unmarried pregnant girls, wife shootings, sword fights with a naked man, infidelity, car wrecks, killed children, adultery, seduction, and abandonment are acceptable topics today. What is not acceptable is racial stereotyping, lynching, obscenity, bawdy songs, sex acts, and incest—yet Dillard had songs on all these topics. To the degree possible, this recording and the film are a truthful portrayal of a ballad singer in a community of singers, who lived among us and shared with me his art and his human frailties.





## Song Notes

[Published sources for the ballad numberings—Child, Laws, North Carolina Folklore Brown Collection, and Sharp—are listed in the bibliography below.]

### 1. The Carolina Lady

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*

The song is also known as “The Lady of Carlisle,” “The Bold Lieutenant,” and “The Glove.” Although there is not much documentary evidence of lions’ dens in England, Europe, or America, this story reflects the fantasy of European classical poetry and 19th-century Romantic literary tradition. Supposedly, the ballad started in Spain, and by the 16th century had spread to Italy and France. It was known also in German (as “the Glove,” with a courtly moral). However, most versions in oral tradition came from 19th-century English prints. Sharp collected 4 versions (#66) in Kentucky. It is one of the few ballads with a “happy ending.”

### 2. The Soldier Traveling from the North

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1963*

This ballad is known as “The Trooper and the Maid” in the Child collection (no. 299). Sharp collected three versions of this song (no. 45), one from Mrs. Tom Rice, in Madison County in 1916 and two from nearby locales in 1918. Dillard performs it in the film *The End of an Old Song*. There are memorably risqué but unprintable verses of this song that follow “she took off her blue silk gown and laid it on the table.”

### 3. The Sailor Being Tired

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1963*

Related versions of this song include “Home Dearie, Home” and “Rosemary Lane” (Laws K43). A cleaned-up popular version, “Bell Bottom Trousers,” became a national hit in the 1950s, and another was known as “Never Trust a Sailor an Inch above Your Knee.” Dillard’s final verse, “you can remember me when I am dead” is his substitute for an off-color line he sometimes sang.

### 4. Young Emily

*sung by Dellie Norton, 1967*

Sharp collected eleven versions of this song (no. 56), also known as “Young Edmond in the Lowland Low” and “The Driver Boy”; five are from North Carolina. The man in the story is sometimes named Edward or Edwin. Dellie’s performance here displays her stylized singing, which is more exaggerated than that of her neighbor. Dellie was a feisty and welcoming person, the inspiration for a later generation of ballad singers. Tracks 4, 5, and 6 were recorded on her porch as part of the filming of *End of an Old Song*. She relates: “I really sang, I really had fun. I had no cars. I’d steal horses and ride ‘em out. I had no cars, or nothing like that to ride. I’d go everywhere, me and my boyfriends, steal people’s horses and ride to Marshall, and all over the place and back. Knew we really had times back in the olden times. We’d play twist, had the fiddles and banjers.... Sometimes we’d go up on the mountain, build us up a fire, ‘n’ take banjers ‘n’ fiddles ‘n’ played.... You don’t know what good times we see’d

back them day... Oh, when I get lonesome, by myself, up in there singing a little, singing.”

When asked when she would sing the old “love ballads,” Dellie replied: “Anytime when I be by myself, when I get lonesome, way up in the mountains, a-singing or a-hunting—shoot squirrels, shoot crows in the fields. I’ve had a hard time all my life working now—downed trees in the mountains: ashes, tan bark, hauled ‘em out, sawed them, sold them... most any kind of work to make a living.”

### 5. Pretty Fair Miss in Her Garden

*sung by Dellie Norton, 1967*

This song has been collected widely, and remains popular today. It is often known as “The Broken Token,” and Laws designates it N42. Sharp reported six versions (no. 98), five of them from nearby North Carolina counties, including from singers Mary Sands, Jane Gentry, and Rosie Hensley. Dellie’s abbreviated version gives the core of the song.

### 6. When I Wore My Apron Low

*sung by Dellie Norton, 1967*

This is a fragment of “Love Has

Brought Me to Despair" (track 19), and is heard in the soundtrack to the film *End of an Old Song*, where Dellie sings it while picking flowers from the hillside above her house.

#### 7. Pretty Saro

*sung by Cas Wallin, 1963*

Cecil J. Sharp collected versions of this song (no. 76) from Mary Sands and Rosie Hensley, both of whom Berzilla Wallin knew. Cas Wallin's sense of timing and phrasing is unique, and contributes to the effect of this widely known song. Composer Dick Connette used Cas Wallin's version as the melody for his song "Bachelor's Hall."

#### 8. Fine Sally

*sung by Cas Wallin, 1963*

This song is cross-referenced by Laws to "A Rich Irish Lady," "The Fair Damsel from London," "Sally and Billy," "The Sailor from Dover," and "Pretty Sally" (designated Laws P9). Laws relates it to Child 295 ("The Brown Girl" or "Lord Thomas and Fair Ellen"). Sharp collected seven versions of "The Brown Girl" (no. 44), four of them in North

Carolina, including from Mary Sands and Mrs. Tom Rice. Virginia tenor Andrew Rowan Summers recorded this song (Folkways 2364). In his later years, when Cas Wallin sang his ballads at public festivals, his performance was accompanied by broad hand-gestures, which acted out the story.

#### 9. Neighbor Girl

*sung and played on banjo by Lee Wallin, 1963*

Lee frails the banjo (aka clawhammer style) in a steady loping rhythm behind his irregular singing. He was a big fan of Uncle Dave Macon—a kindred soul, full of jokes and high spirits. Lee made long rifles, and was reportedly a crack shot.

#### 10. Juba This

*spoken and performed by Lee Wallin, 1963*

Juba is a performance where the body is slapped with the hands, creating complicated rhythms. It goes back to pre-Civil-War musical practices done by slaves, and probably has its roots in Africa. Juba is as intriguing to see as to hear.

#### 11. Gathering Flowers

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*

Dillard here sings a few verses of a murder ballad. This could be a retro version or translation of a Carter Family recording, or could indicate a common earlier source. Recorded versions titled "Gathering Flowers from the Hillside" were done by The Carter Family (1935) (Co 20235), J. E. Mainer (1936), and the Delmore Brothers (1940). The song is alive in bluegrass versions today, mostly derived from the Carter family recording.

#### 12. Gastony Song

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*

There is a penitentiary in Gastonia, North Carolina. This prison song is best known in folk-music circles as "The Midnight Special" by Lead Belly. It was released as a 78-RPM record by Bill Cox (1933) and Otto Gray & His Cowboy (1929), and as "North Carolina Blues" by Norman Woodlieff (1930), The Delmore Brothers (1945), and the Blue Sky Boys. There are black recordings of it as "Midnight Special Blues." Carl Sandburg published it in his

*American Songbag* (1927); John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax published it in *Folk Song U. S. A.* in 1947.

#### 13. Cold Rain and Snow

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*

Sharp reported one verse of this song from Mrs. Tom Rice, of Big Laurel, North Carolina, 1916 (no. 116). This is the most widely known song on this CD because of the Grateful Dead version, which came from Orlan Ramsey's 1960s recording on Prestige. Ramsey lived in Marshall, North Carolina, not far from Sodom-Laurel. However, the song is about a local event.

Berzilla Wallin, who also sings the song, explains: "Well, I learned it from an old lady which says she was at the hanging of—which was supposed to be the hanging, but they didn't hang him. They give him 99 long years for the killing of his wife.... I heard the song from her in 1911. She was in her 50s at the time. It did happen in her girlhood... when she was a young girl.... She lived right here around in Madison County. It happened here between Marshall and Burnsville;... that's



where they did their hanging at that time—at Burnsville, North Carolina. That's all I know, except they didn't hang the man."

The initial verses of this song resemble Grayson and Whitter's "Never Be as Fast as I Have Been," Buell Kazee's "Sporting Bachelors," and the song in Alan Lomax's *Folk Song U. S. A.* titled "Sporting Bachelors."

#### 14. In Zepo Town

*sung by Lisha Shelton, 1963*

This song is Child 214 ("Dens of Yarrow"), Sharp 48 ("In Seaport Town"), and Laws M32 ("The Bramble Briar"). It was noted by Sharp in his English collection as "Bruton Town." Sharp collected four versions in North Carolina, from Jane Gentry, Rosie Hensley, and others.

#### 15. Don't You Remember

*sung by Lisha Shelton, 1963*

Sharp collected eight versions as "The Lover's Lament" (no. 110), four of them from North Carolina near Madison County. It is also known as "Charming Beauty Bright" (Laws M3). In this text, Lisha Shelton sings

"I served by my king" and returns home "with my armor shining bright."

#### 16. Awake, Awake

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1963*

Sharp collected ten versions (no. 57), two of them nearby from North Carolina, one from Mary Sands. The song appears as Laws M4, also known as "Silver Dagger." It has been released on 78-RPM records by B. F. Shelton (1927) as "O Mollie Dear," as "Wake Up, You Drowsy Sleeper" by the Oaks Family, as "Oh Katie Dear" by the Callahan Brothers, as "Katie Dear" by the Blue Sky Boys, and as "Who's That Knocking at My Window?" by the Carter Family. Dillard's final verse is unique.

#### 17. Mathie Grove

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1963*

The song is a version of Child 81. Sharp collected seventeen versions (no. 23), five of them from singers living nearby in North Carolina, including Jane Gentry. The song is also known as "Lord Daniel's Wife," or "Little Musgrove." It has been

recorded by John Jacob Niles, Joan Baez, Ralph Stanley, Jean Ritchie, and many others.

A fragment of this ballad is found in John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont's 1611 play *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

*And some they whistled, / and  
some they sung  
Hey, down, down!*

*And some did loudly say / Ever as  
the Lord Barnet's horn blew*

*Away, Musgrave, away!*

Dillard's version is set in the time of sword fights, and concludes with Lord Daniel placing a "special" (pistol) against his wife's head: "Let her have a special ball."

#### 18. Scotland Man

*sung by George Landers with banjo accompaniment, 1967*

Also known as "Young Hunting," this ballad is Child 68. Sharp collected fourteen versions (no. 18), three from nearby informants, including Jane Gentry and Floyd Chandler. George Landers says the little bird in the song is a truth that always escapes from lies. He has

devised a banjo style that accommodates the irregularities and oddities of his singing. His banjo duplicates precisely the sound of the words he sings, rather than setting down a basic rhythm (compare to Lee Wallin's "Neighbor Girl," track 9). Several versions of this ballad were released on 78-RPM records by Jimmy Tarlton (as "Lo Bonnie") and Dick Justice (as "Henry Lee"). Landers's version is on Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*.

#### 19. Love Has Brought Me to Despair

*sung by Berzilla Wallin, 1963*

Laws designated this song P25. Verses float in from other songs, such as "Tavern in This Town," "The Butcher Boy," and "Every Night When Sun Goes In" (Sharp 1960: 189). The Carter Family recorded this song as "Carter's Blues."

#### 20. Johnny Doyle

*sung by Berzilla Wallin, 1963*

The song's story is related to that of Child 239, "Lord Saltoun and Auchanachie," and appears as no. 83

in Sharp's collection. Laws designates it M2, and it appears in the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* (White et al. 1952–1964). Some of the words reveal the song's British origins and its upper-class setting, as when Berzilla sings the phrases "my waiting maid standing," "my father provided above a thousand pound" and "six noble horsemen." It's always a thrill to hear these words in the setting of a log house out in the hills and hollows of North Carolina.

#### 21. Short Time Here, Long Time Gone

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1967*  
I have not found printed versions or other recordings of this song, and Dillard did not provide further information about it. The words and the subject-matter have the feel of a blues, especially the opening line, "Got up this morning"; however, the musical structure does not follow the form of the blues at all. The Carter Family would transform blues songs such as the "Worried Man Blues" into 2/4 time.

#### 22. Drunken Driver

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*  
Dillard's version probably comes from the Molly O'Day recording, but he has cast it into his ballad style. It was released by Molly O'Day on (Col. 37938) and the New Lost City Ramblers on *American Moonshine and Prohibition Songs* (Folkways 5263). "Banjo Bill" Cornett, of Hindman, Kentucky, told me he had composed the song and had given the words to Molly O'Day. I have seen the text included in an anti-drinking pamphlet.

#### 23. Jesus Says Go

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*  
"I like old hymns and such as that," said Dillard in an interview. His cousin Lloyd Chandler was a preacher, and a powerful singer of religious songs. Local community church singing has always been a unifying experience in rural areas of the mountains. NCF lists this song under religious songs, as the Negro fragment "Jesus says Go, I Go Wid You," from 1928.

#### 24. Meeting Is Over

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*  
Many of the Madison County singers started in singing-schools where singing hymns was taught. People said that this old way of singing is gone. I have often wondered how a whole congregation could deal with the extended, individualized timing, sung together.

#### 25. Little Farmer Boy

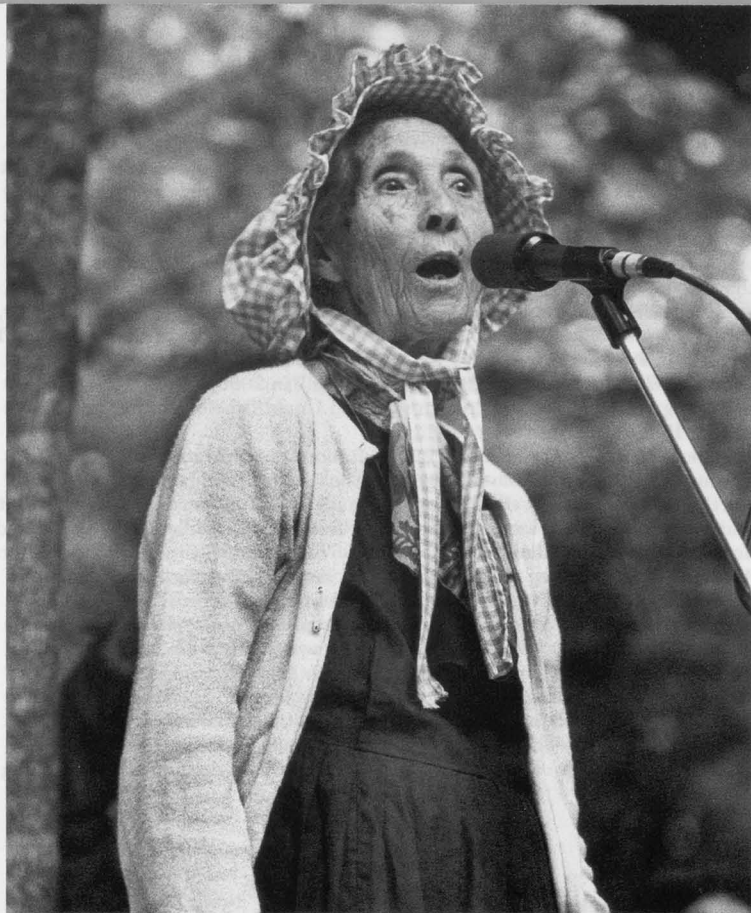
*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*  
This song is Child 243, well known as the "House Carpenter" and "Daemon Lover." Sharp collected 22 versions (no. 35), nine from nearby North Carolina. Locally, Jane Gentry and Mary Sands were among those he collected it from. Clarence Ashley's 1927 recording of "The House Carpenter" is available on the Harry Smith *Anthology of American Folk Music* (SFW CD 40090). Besides adultery, the song deals with sin, redemption, damnation, and worrying about the baby left behind.

#### 26. I Wish My Baby Was Born

*sung by Dillard Chandler, 1965*  
Versions of this song appear elsewhere on this CD ("Love Has Brought Me to Despair" and "When I Wore My Apron Low"). Dillard's recorded performance became the basis for a song in the film *Cold Mountain*, where it was accompanied by fiddle and banjo, with additional verses by the director, Anthony Minghella. The Carter Family recorded their version as "Carter's Blues." In 1995, Jeff Tweedy of Wilco and Uncle Tupelo recorded it.

#### Recording Information

The August 1963 recordings were made on a Tandberg tape recorder with a Tandberg microphone. The 1965 and 1967 recordings were made on a Nagra III recorder (courtesy the Friends of Old-Time Music) with an AKG D 28 microphone. Most of the 1965 recordings were done with Dillard standing on a hillside above Peter and Polly Gott's place, and some were done in their kitchen. The 1967 recordings were made on Dellie Norton's front porch, in conjunction with the filming of *The End of an Old Song*.



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Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York and London: Putnam. This edition, the first, contains 39 tunes contributed by Olive Dame Campbell and represents only the first round of Sharp's collecting in the Appalachians. Maud Karpeles revised the text to incorporate the collecting she and Sharp had done in 1917 and 1918, and the revised version was published as the second

edition by Oxford University Press in 1932 and reprinted in 1952 and 1960; references are to the 1960 printing because it is the most widely available.

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Each collection assigns its own numbers to the songs, but includes the Child ballad numbers. For a thorough ballad bibliography and citations for collections, see *The Ballad Index* at <http://www.csufresno.edu/folklore/BalladIndexTOC.html>. To find more recorded sources for these songs, see *The Folk Music Index* at <http://www.ibiblio.org/folkindex/index.htm>.

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Compiled and annotated by

John Cohen

Photos by John Cohen

Photos on pages 9 and 28 by

Harvey Wang

Sound supervision and mastering

by Pete Reiniger

Production supervised by Daniel

Sheehy and D. A. Sonneborn

Production managed by

Mary Monseur

Editorial assistance by

Stephanie Smith and Jacob Love

Design and layout by

Visual Dialogue, Boston, Mass.

## Additional Smithsonian

### Folkways staff

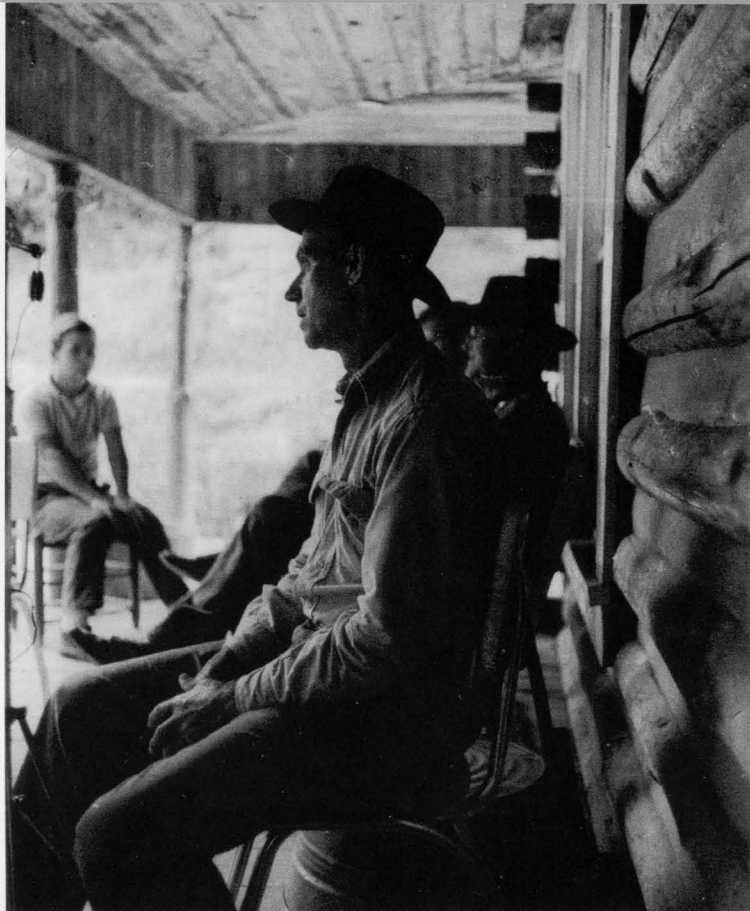
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John Cohen's films are available through Shanachie Video, Berkeley Media LLC, and Mystic Fire Video. See John Cohen's web page, [JohnCohenWorks.com](http://JohnCohenWorks.com) for more of Dillard's singing.





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- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Dillard Chandler</b> | 1 The Carolina Lady 4:14                    |
|                         | 2 The Soldier Traveling from the North 3:19 |
|                         | 3 The Sailor Being Tired 3:00               |
| <b>Dellie Norton</b>    | 4 Young Emily* 2:04                         |
|                         | 5 Pretty Fair Miss in Her Garden* 1:32      |
|                         | 6 When I Wore My Apron Low* 0:54            |
| <b>Cass Wallin</b>      | 7 Pretty Saro 2:57                          |
|                         | 8 Fine Sally 2:13                           |
| <b>Lee Wallin</b>       | 9 Neighbor Girl 2:11                        |
|                         | 10 Juba This 0:40                           |
| <b>Dillard Chandler</b> | 11 Gathering Flowers 1:22                   |
|                         | 12 Gastony Song 1:30                        |
|                         | 13 Cold Rain and Snow 2:23                  |
| <b>Lisha Shelton</b>    | 14 In Zepe Town 3:19                        |
|                         | 15 Don't You Remember 2:35                  |
| <b>Dillard Chandler</b> | 16 Awake, Awake 4:12                        |
|                         | 17 Mathie Grove 6:07                        |
| <b>George Landers</b>   | 18 Scotland Man 4:36                        |
| <b>Berzilla Wallin</b>  | 19 Love Has Brought Me to Despair 2:47      |
|                         | 20 Johnny Doyle 3:54                        |
| <b>Dillard Chandler</b> | 21 Short Time Here, Long Time Gone* 1:29    |
|                         | 22 Drunken Driver 4:03                      |
|                         | 23 Jesus Says Go 2:00                       |
|                         | 24 Meeting Is Over 2:47                     |
|                         | 25 Little Farmer Boy 4:26                   |
|                         | 26 I Wish My Baby Was Born 1:02             |

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