

DOC WATSON AND GAITHER CARLTON



SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS
SFW 40235

SIDE A

1. Double File (1:22)
(Gaither Carlton/Hillgreen Music, BMI, administered by Downtown DMP Songs)

2. Handsome Molly (2:10)
(G.B. Grayson-H. Whitter/Peer International Corp., BMI)

3. He’s Coming to Us Dead (2:50)
(G.B. Grayson/Peer International Corp., BMI)

4. Corrina (2:24)
(Arr. by Doc Watson-Gaither Carlton/Hillgreen Music, BMI, administered by Downtown DMP Songs)

5. Brown’s Dream (1:46)
(Arr. by Doc Watson-Gaither Carlton/Hillgreen Music, BMI, administered by Downtown DMP Songs)

6. Groundhog (Blind Lemon’s version) (2:39)
(Arr. by Doc Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI, administered by Downtown DMP Songs)

7. My Home’s Across the Blue Ridge Mountains (2:29)
(Clarence Ashley/Peer International Corp., BMI)

8. Bonaparte’s Retreat (1:54)
(Arr. by Doc Watson-Gaither Carlton/Hillgreen Music, BMI, administered by Downtown DMP Songs)

SIDE B

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2. The Blue Ridge Mountain Blues (2:58)
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3. Goin’ Back to Jericho (2:09)
(Dock Walsh-Garley Foster/APRS, BMI)

4. Billy in the Low Ground (1:35)
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5. Reuben’s Train (2:37)
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6. The Dream of the Miner’s Child (3:22)
(Andrew Jenkins/Shapiro Bernstein & Co. Inc., ASCAP)

7. Groundhog (F.O.T.M. version) (2:10)
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DOC WATSON AND GAITHER CARLTON

MARY KATHERINE ALDIN

Arthel Lane “Doc” Watson was born in the tiny rural community of Deep Gap, North Carolina, on March 3, 1923. By the time Doc was “discovered” by folklorists Ralph Rinzler and Eugene Earle in the late summer of 1960, he was already a proficient guitarist with a local reputation. Through Rinzler and Earle’s efforts, Doc was brought onto the folk music circuit of coffee houses, colleges, and festivals. He would go on to become one of America’s premier acoustic guitarists, performing at the White House for President Jimmy Carter, and earning eight Grammy Awards (including a Lifetime Achievement Award).

Doc was one of nine children born to Annie Green and General Dixon Watson (General was his given name, not a military rank), but Doc was different from his siblings, as he lost his eyesight before he was two years old. Like his father-in-law Gaither Carlton, Doc came from a musical family, and in addition to the playing of various relatives, he grew up listening to hymns, ballads, and down-home string band music on the radio, and later on 78s on the family’s Graphophone record player. The area of North Carolina where Doc grew up was a fertile one for traditional folk songs, and as such it was often mined for material by collectors like Cecil J. Sharp. From earliest childhood Doc played the harmonica, a “stocking stuffer” present from his mother each Christmas, and at age seven he got a homemade banjo from his father.

I started playing the guitar a little when my first cousin left his guitar at our house; also, I had learned a few chords from an old boy at the Raleigh School for the Blind who played the guitar. I was messing with my cousin’s guitar one morning before my dad went to work, and he turned around to me after

he had finished his breakfast and said, ‘Now son, if you learn to play just one little tune on that by the time I get back, we’ll go to town Saturday and buy you a guitar.’ Well, I knew I had him right there, because I knew almost enough already to play a song, and I knew that I could be singing along with my playing by the time he got back. My dad was just as good as his word. We went to town and found me a little guitar. It was one of those ten-dollar guitars—a pretty good little thing to learn on, but as hard to fret as a barbed wire fence. The first song I learned on the guitar was ‘When the Roses Bloom in Dixieland’ by the Carter Family. A few years later, when I was 16 or 17, I earned enough money to order a guitar from Sears and Roebuck.—Doc Watson

Gaither Carlton was born on February 3, 1901, in Wilkes County, North Carolina, to Dorah (or Dorey) Carlton and Julie Watson Carlton, and was of Scots, Irish, and Cherokee ancestry. He was the youngest of nine children, two of whom died young. His surviving siblings were Tom, John, Mary, Martha, Sarah, and Becky Carlton. There were several musicians in his immediate family; his father played the fiddle, his oldest brother John played banjo, and his grandfather Thomas Robbins was the singing teacher at the local church. Gaither moved his family to Deep Gap, and starting in the mid-1940s, he had a 15-minute radio show on Sundays playing hymns on the fiddle. Doc and Gaither first met when Doc’s cousin Willard Watson walked Doc over to the Carlton home and introduced the two. The Carlton and Watson families, already neighbors, were united when Doc married Gaither’s daughter Rosa Lee on June 8, 1946.



Rosa Lee and Gaither; photograph by John Cohen

The Carltons were singers and musicianers, and my grandpa was a drummer, you know, he was in the Civil War. He played the drum, and old man Cal Miller, he played the fife.—Gaither Carlton, as quoted by his granddaughter Nancy Ellen Watson

Gaither was nine years old when he taught himself to play the fiddle, and he picked up the banjo from his brother John; in later years it was Gaither who would teach his grandson Merle Watson the old-time frailing banjo style. In the Carlton household, unlike the Watson home, there was no radio or record player, so the two men grew up with different musical influences. Gaither created or learned folk songs and banjo and fiddle tunes from the local musicians and older regional styles within his community. He came from the last generation of Appalachian musicians who had no other, outside sources. Doc had a wider repertoire, learned through oral transmission from older musicians (including Gaither) as well as the popular recordings of the day.

Other than his appearances at the Old Fiddlers Convention at Union Grove, North Carolina, the songs and tunes on this recording were among Gaither’s first public performances. And they were also among his last. With the exception of his appearances with Doc and other members of the Watson clan at the Cornell Folk Festival in 1962 and the Newport Folk Festival in 1964, Gaither’s “career,” such as it was, ended almost as soon as it began.



Doc and Gaither; photograph by Bob Yellin

My grandfather Gaither was a shy, retiring man. I am not aware of his playing publicly anywhere except outdoor church affairs, at the Fiddlers Contest at Union Grove, and with my father Doc in the early 1960s.

—**Nancy Ellen Watson**

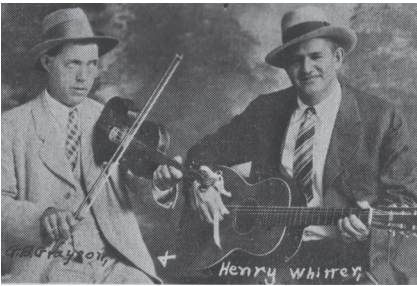
These two men emerged from Deep Gap together, but while one went on to national and international acclaim, the other chose to return home, and spent the remainder of his life playing locally, for friends and neighbors. Gaither died on June 24, 1972, at Doc and Rosa Lee’s home in Deep Gap. Doc died on May 29, 2012, shortly before the passing on November 22 of that year of his beloved wife and Gaither’s daughter Rosa Lee Carlton Watson.

GAITHER CARLTON: AN APPRECIATION STEPHANIE COLEMAN

Over the past year, I had the pleasure of hearing this album in its various states of completion. With each listen, I found myself closing my eyes and imagining I was sitting among the small, rapt audience at Blind Lemon’s in the West Village in 1962, transfixed by this duo and, specifically, by Gaither’s fiddle playing.

To hear Gaither Carlton’s fiddling is to experience a personal, stately presentation of old-time music that is impossible to separate from the musician himself. Gaither’s playing is an extension of who he was as a person—modest and soft-spoken, with the quiet gravity of a lifelong farmer who spent most of his days close to home. Growing up without a radio or record player, he was fully a student of the aural tradition and learned songs and tunes from local and itinerant musicians.

Ralph Rinzler, who made extensive recordings of Doc Watson, wrote in 1960 about the first time he met Gaither and the rest of Doc’s family. In the account, Rinzler remembers introducing himself and sharing a selection from Harry Smith’s *Anthology of American Folk Music*—a haunting version of the ballad “Omie Wise” performed by George Banman Grayson of Grayson and Whitter, who turned out to have been an old friend of Gaither’s. In the quiet lull after the song ended, Gaither sighed, tears streaming down his cheeks, and quietly remarked, “Sounds like old times.”



G.B. Grayson and Henry Whitter

More than half a century later, it is Gaither’s own fiddling that sounds to me like “old times.” His music reflects the region he grew up in, and the influence of G.B. Grayson is unmistakable. There is a clear reverence for the melody, and Gaither plays it simply and straightforwardly with a lilt that brings to mind the music’s Scotch-Irish roots. His fiddling is a humble, balanced partner to Doc’s even vocal and ornamental guitar style. On the instrumental numbers, it marches in a seemingly effortless lockstep with Doc’s accompaniment. When Doc exclaims, “Fiddle it son,” Gaither is characteristically silent, but what stands out is his ability to propel each tune forward with the clarity of a musician who knows exactly how he wants his music to sound. Perhaps, just like “old times.”

Stephanie Coleman is an old-time fiddler and radio producer living in Brooklyn, NY.

HOW THIS ALBUM CAME TO BE

PETER K. SIEGEL

In 1962, I was an 18-year-old banjo player and a big fan of traditional folk music. I was lucky to know some great musicians who were somewhat older than I was: Ralph Rinzler, Art Rosenbaum, John Cohen, Mike Seeger. These guys not only played music, they made tape recordings of the traditional musicians they learned from. Through their recordings, we got to hear Roscoe Holcomb, Clarence Ashley, Elizabeth Cotten, and Scrapper Blackwell. I wanted to emulate that aspect of their musical lives by making tapes myself. At Art Rosenbaum's suggestion, I bought a Tandberg 3B tape recorder. I also bought an Electrovoice 664 dynamic microphone, the only half-decent mike I could afford.

The week I got the tape machine, Doc Watson and two members of his family were scheduled to play a concert for the Friends of Old Time Music at the auditorium of NYU's School of Education. Doc had been to New York once before as a member of Clarence Ashley's group, but this would be his first appearance as a headliner. I called Ralph Rinzler, who was in charge of the concert, and got his go-ahead to record the event. The Friends of Old Time Music didn't have any budget for recording their shows, and Ralph understood that if I recorded the concert, there would be a tape for posterity.

A week later, Ralph called me and told me that Doc and his father-in-law Gaither Carlton would be making a surprise appearance that night at a West Village coffee house called Blind Lemon's. I brought my equipment and recorded their performance. I loved listening to the tapes of both those shows. The music was made all the more memorable by the warmth and sincerity with which Doc approached his first urban audiences.

I think that for a lot of folk music fans in the cities, the arrival of Doc Watson on the scene in late 1962 was the beginning of a new chapter. I and many of my friends had learned about traditional folk styles from Pete Seeger, and about old-time music and bluegrass from the New York-based groups the New Lost City Ramblers and the Greenbriar Boys. These rural traditional music forms seemed to be meaningful and authentic at a time when radio stations were mostly playing blander music, partly in reaction to the emotionally explosive rock 'n' roll of the late 1950s.


We had glimpses of great traditional country musicians, as when Flatt and Scruggs played Carnegie Hall and when Clarence Ashley performed for the Friends of Old Time Music. But when Doc Watson began playing weeklong and even two-week gigs at Gerdes Folk City in New York, the Ash Grove in Los Angeles, and in cities and colleges throughout the country, fans had a chance to get to know a great musician in a different way. Doc was generous with his time. He would speak with people between sets and show aspiring guitarists how he did things. Across the country, old-time music became personal.



Talk to people today about Doc Watson and you will likely find someone who got an informal guitar lesson after a college concert, and another person whom Doc visited for a home-cooked meal while he was on the road.

Until now, there has not been an entire album of Doc and Gaither playing their unique brand of homemade music together. I always wanted one. In 2017, with the encouragement of Mary Katherine Aldin, I started thinking about making an album from my tapes of Doc and Gaither at Blind Lemon's and the Friends of Old Time Music. I restored, edited, and mastered the recordings in my New York City apartment. This record is the result. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings decided to release it not only as a CD but also as a vinyl LP, the format in which Folkways Records originally released Doc and Gaither's first recorded performances as part of the album *The Watson Family*.

THE FRIENDS OF OLD TIME MUSIC
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GAITHER CARLTON
ARNOLD WATSON
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JESSE FULLER
San Francisco Bay blues singer

NYU School of Education 35 W. 4th st.
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110 MacDougal St. GR 7-5987
FRI. OCT. 12 8:30
1962

(top) Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton; photograph by John Cohen.
(above) Friends of Old Time Music poster; photograph and design
by John Cohen. (left) Doc Watson, Clarence Ashley, Gaither Carlton;
photograph by Eugene Earle.



Doc Watson, Gaither Carlton, Merle Watson: photograph by Eugene Earle.



Clarence Ashley, Gaither Carlton, Doc Watson, Rosa Lee Watson: photograph by Eugene Earle.

SONG NOTES
MARY KATHERINE ALDIN

(Doc Watson: guitar, banjo, autoharp, voice; Gaither Carlton: fiddle, banjo; Arnold Watson: banjo on Side B, track 7)

Side A

1. Double File

“Double File” is one of Gaither’s compositions. As performed by Gaither and Doc, it relies heavily on a minor chord (B minor in the key of A), which lends it a distinctive sound, somewhat more modern than other pieces in their repertoire.

2. Handsome Molly

Gaither learned “Handsome Molly” directly from the blind fiddler G.B. Grayson, and Doc learned it from his father. Doc and Gaither later performed “Handsome Molly” as a duet at the 1964 Newport Folk Festival, introducing it to a more contemporary audience.

3. He’s Coming to Us Dead

“Handsome Molly” and “He’s Coming to Us Dead” were two songs from the extensive repertoire of Grayson and Whitter. Both were recorded by them at an October 1927 session for Gennett in New York City.

4. Corrina

“Corrina,” a 12-bar blues, was frequently performed and recorded by old-time, blues, and western swing artists. It was first recorded in New Orleans in 1928 by Bo Chatmon (better known as Bo Carter), later of the Mississippi Sheiks. Clarence

Ashley, one of Doc’s most important influences, recorded it in New York City in 1931. The song was also recorded by Clayton McMichen and Bob Wills.

5. Brown’s Dream

“Brown’s Dream” was first recorded by Fiddling Powers and Family at a 1924 session for Victor, but was unissued at the time. Gaither learned it from his uncle, Ben Miller, who was an old-time fiddler and banjo player. It was also recorded by Tommy Jarrell.

6. Groundhog (Blind Lemon’s version)

“Groundhog” was first recorded in Atlanta, Georgia, by Land Norris in 1924 and was issued on the Okeh label. It was later part of an Ashland, Kentucky session by Jack Reedy in February of 1928. Doc learned to play it on banjo from his cousin Willard Watson. Note Doc’s use of the Appalachian English pronunciation “bile,” meaning “boil.”

7. My Home’s Across the Blue Ridge Mountains

“My Home’s Across the Blue Ridge Mountains” has a long history. Among the best-known early versions are those by the Carolina Tar Heels, the Carter Family, and the Delmore Brothers.

8. Bonaparte’s Retreat

Two of the best-known recordings of “Bonaparte’s Retreat” are those by Gid Tanner, who recorded it (with Clayton McMichen on fiddle) in Atlanta for Columbia on October 29, 1929, and Fiddlin’ Arthur Smith, backed by the Delmore Brothers, who recorded it in Charlotte, North Carolina, in February of 1936 at a session for Bluebird. There’s also an Irish variant called “The Eagle’s Whistle.” Today it’s a staple at fiddle contests around the country.

Side B

1. Willie Moore

The famed old-time duo of Burnett and Rutherford recorded “Willie Moore” at a Columbia session in Atlanta on November 3, 1927.

2. The Blue Ridge Mountain Blues

Another legendary blind guitarist, Riley Puckett, actually recorded this song twice, first for Columbia in September of 1924, and then over a decade later at a 1935 Atlanta session for Bluebird. There were also popular recordings of it by Vernon Dalhart, Sid Harkreader, and Ernest V. “Pop” Stoneman.

3. Goin’ Back to Jericho

This song is from the repertoire of Dock Walsh, who recorded it in Atlanta on April 17, 1926, for Columbia. In 1930, Walsh and Garley Foster recorded it as “Back to Mexico.” under the name the Carolina Tar Heels. Doc learned it from his father, and Gaither learned it from a neighbor.

4. Billy in the Low Ground

Another staple of every fiddle contest, “Billy in the Low Ground” was recorded by Burnett and Rutherford, Dr. Humphrey Bate, Fiddlin’ John Carson, Doc Roberts, and Lowe Stokes, among many others.

5. Reuben’s Train

Doc often described “Reuben’s Train” as one of the earliest banjo tunes he learned from his father. There are a number of titles and variants of this old mountain tune.

6. The Dream of the Miner’s Child

A popular ballad recorded by Vernon Dalhart, “The Dream of the Miner’s Child” descends from an old British music hall song called “Don’t Go Down in the Mine, Dad.”

7. Groundhog (F.O.T.M. version)

The set ends with another version of “Groundhog.” While the Blind Lemon’s version is played on banjo by Gaither accompanied by Doc’s guitar, this Friends of Old Time Music version features Doc on autoharp, Gaither on fiddle, and Doc’s brother Arnold on banjo.



Gaither Carlton, Doc Watson with unidentified guitar player; photograph by John Cohen.

Credits

Produced by Peter K. Siegel
Recorded, edited, and mastered by Peter K. Siegel
Side A Track 1 and Side B Tracks 1,4,7 recorded October 12, 1962 at a concert presented by the Friends of Old Time Music at NYU School of Education, NYC
Side A Tracks 2,3,4,5,6,7,8 and Side B Tracks 2,3,5,6 recorded October 18, 1962 at Blind Lemon’s, NYC
Vinyl mastering by Chris Muth at Taloowa
Consulting audio engineer: Edward Haber
Annotated by Mary Katherine Aldin, Stephanie Coleman, and Peter K. Siegel
Fiddle music consultant: Stephanie Coleman
Cover photograph by Eugene Earle; all Eugene Earle photos courtesy of John Edwards Memorial Collection, Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
Executive producers: Huib Schippers and John Smith
Production manager: Mary Monseur
Production assistant: Kate Harrington
Editorial assistance by Carla Borden
Art direction, design, and layout by Cooley Design Lab

Special thanks to Doc’s daughter and Gaither’s granddaughter Nancy Ellen Watson for help with her family’s history. Thanks also to Mitch Greenhill, Mark Humphrey, and Tony Russell.

The estates of Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton are represented by FLi Artists/Folklore Productions, on behalf of Nancy Ellen Watson. www.fliartists.com

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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States.

Our mission is to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In this way, we continue the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding among peoples through the production, documentation, preservation, and dissemination of sound.

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DOC WATSON GAITHER CARLTON

Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton is a new album of old-time music produced from archival recordings by two legendary musicians. These largely unheard tapes were recorded at Doc Watson's two earliest concerts, presented in New York City's Greenwich Village in 1962. Those shows were among the rare appearances Doc's father-in-law, fiddler Gaither Carlton, made outside of North Carolina. The instrumental pieces, including Gaither's signature tune "Double File," include intricate musical interactions developed through years of family music-making. On the songs and ballads, Doc's instantly recognizable baritone voice is accompanied by his own guitar and Gaither's fiddle, or by the traditional combination of fiddle and banjo. Shortly after these recordings were made, Doc Watson embarked on a career as one of America's premier acoustic guitarists, earning the National Medal of Arts and eight Grammy Awards.

Produced and recorded by Peter K. Siegel

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE

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