GONE TO THE COUNTRY

Clint Howard (or was it Fred Price) from the Ashley band in North Carolina, tells this story: he went to visit some people he knew, and it was sort of difficult to get to their house. "After I drove as far as I could along the back roads up into the mountains, then I had to get a horse and ride that as far as it could go, and then I walked through the woods and underbrush, then had to swing across a stream on a rope tied to a tree 'cause there was no bridge, and then crawled up a cliff and through some bushes before I reached the house". "and when I got there", he said, "I saw a note tacked to the door, and it said GONE TO THE COUNTRY."

In the past year, the NLCR, with the addition of Tracy, have expanded their musical range in at least ten years in either direction. On this record there is a taste of the oldest American folk style of unaccompanied ballad singing, as well as the newest, blue grass music. These are areas which we never explored before. It is our belief that the same kind of singing tradition and musical feeling runs through the different 'categories' covered in this record. The bluegrass songs are from the earlier years of bluegrass tradition, and the older styles are still very evident within it. One song, 'Pretty Little Miss', is the result of our combining a tune from Roscoe Holcomb, some words from Cousin Emmy and a style from the bluegrass tradition. We were most pleased when the Stanley Brothers heard us sing this, and asked to learn it themselves.

John Cohen
The country music I used to hear ten years ago, not necessarily bluegrass, but just plain "straight hillbilly" was a lot different than today's country music. It was first of all, not so dominated by the "sound," for Rock and Roll wasn't out yet, and secondly, it still featured the fiddle as a main lead instrument. Today, if it wasn't for the "Cajun," or Ray Price style of fiddling, you wouldn't hear any fiddles at all, except for bluegrass, and not all of the bluegrass bands use fiddle. The sound therefore, is guitar dominated.

This is not to say however that all of today's country music is bad. There are still many artists who have maintained their country sound despite Rock and Roll, and in my estimation are worth listening to if one is interested in learning about country music. The entire picture is often helpful in understanding one part.

Last of all, I'd like to say that it's gratifying to see how hillbilly, old time and bluegrass music is becoming so well appreciated in the cities throughout the country, and Canada too, and I hope our latest effort will give lots of listening pleasure to one and all.

John Cohen

When we seek for personal images which may still be unshaped and vague, and these are encountered in the form of specific sounds and environments, then it can happen that these images will become concrete. When we pursue specific ideas and entertain thoughts which are made more of desires and dreams, rather than of a predilection to material goods, then it can happen that these phantoms become actual.
How often, over the years have we said "If Clarence Ashley was around, if Doc Boggs was alive, if only we could see Maybelle Carter play her guitar, if Eck Robertson, the great fiddler on the Folkways Anthology, could be located" - these are artists whose music we knew from old recordings, and these were the people we talked about in our performances and rehearsals. And it seems that the more we spoke of them, the more actual they became, if only in thoughts. So it has been a curious proceeding as these voices from the past have become rediscovered - and who have entered the musical lives of so many of us, not as sounds, but as individuals with whom we can exchange ideas, share hopes, create music- whom we know as people who have enriched our ideas of life.

It has been an increasing source of pleasure to do concerts with these country people, and to introduce them to our audiences.

A whole new system of tools and guides has evolved to allow the old music to come into its present state. The old forms of academic scholarship have become the point of departure for many of us. The old attitudes of study have been necessarily discarded in order to deal in new terms with the folk music which we believe to be a living and growing thing. Record catalogs, collectors, discographies, master numbers and interviews with country musicians are the new tools we work with. Yet these have only lead us to the music, so that it could be heard, analyzed and acknowledged (and maybe placed in a new catalog); but another vital step has been necessary to understand the music, to allow it a new possibility of life. In part, this has been for us to play and perform the music-to make it part of ourselves. Before one can sing a song, it has to mean something to you - to awake something which is already in you.

The course which has lead to the appearance of Doc Boggs songs on our recent records is a good example of this process; I had known of his singing since 1948 from the Brunswick re-release of Pretty Polly, and the Folkways release of Sugar Babe and Country Blues on the Anthology, and although I was fascinated by his music, I never seriously attempted to understand it in its subtleties or to sing it myself. It was only when I met Roscoe Holcomb in Daisy Kentucky, and heard him singing these songs, that they became real to me. I could see from which part of his own experience that Roscoe sang. This music from commercial records was an old part of a living tradition. Roscoe sang this music for it 'suited' him - his desire was to make music, not to make a 'hit'. It was through Roscoe and the setting around him, that I learned these songs, and when I met Doc Boggs in 1963, I could see how far from the source this music had changed.

It is embarrassing for me to hear how different my version is from the original; it is a sobering experience to hear myself. Although the discrepancy is great, the disclosure reveals a way for one to understand what one has done....

John Cohen

One further note: During the time we acquire the songs used on a record, we deal with a great many different sources, and learn a great deal in the process. On this record there are at least six different banjo styles represented. Starting with the oldest, there is drop thumb frailing on John D., Kentucky style two-finger picking (with thumb leading) on Down - South Blues, and Little Carpenter North Carolina style two-finger picking (index finger leading) on Train 45, Minstrel style three-finger on Tenn. Cat, a more mountain sounding variety of this 3 finger style - via Doc Boggs on Danville Girl, and finally some of Ralph Stanley's early Bluegrass 3 finger picking on Rambler's Blues.

SIDE I, Band 1: HELLO, JOHN D. (Instrumental)

from Lee Sexton, Ulvah Ky., and Roscoe Holcomb, Daisy Ky.

Mike: fiddle
Tracy: fiddle
John: banjo

SIDE I, Band 2: GREY CAT ON THE TENNESSEE FARM

Uncle Dave Macon Voc. 5152

Just look to the man who can if he will The fox run the valley of the Tennessee Hills.

CHORUS: Well the big cat spit in the little kitten's eye, Little cat, little cat don't you cry. I do love liquor and we'll all take a dram I'm going to tell you, pretty Polly Ann.

Cows in the pasture, hogs in the pen, Sheep in the meadow and wheat in the bin.

(CHORUS)

Fruit in the cellar, cheese on the wall, Big sack of coffee and sugar in the gourd.

(CHORUS)

Horses in the stable, money in this pocket, Baby in the cradle and a pretty girl to rock it.

(CHORUS)

John: voice & banjo
Tracy: guitar
Mike: fiddle

SIDE I, Band 3: LIZA JANE

Carter Bros. and Sons - OK 45202 (400331)

Now if I had a scolding wife I'd whip her, sure as you're born, I'd send her down to New Orleans And trade her off for corn.

Yonder stands my own true love, She's all dressed in red, And she's the darling of my life, And I wish my wife was dead.

Friday night my wife died, Saturday she was buried, Sunday was my courting day And Sunday I got married.
If I had a scolding wife,
I sure would whip her some,
I'd run my finger down her throat
And gag her with my thumb.

John: voice and guitar
Mike: low fiddle
Tracy: high fiddle

SIDE I, Band 4: **BUCK DANCER'S CHOICE** (Instrumental)

Sam McGee
John: guitar
Tracy: spoons

SIDE I, Band 5: **LONG LONESOME ROAD**
(Sung by Fields Ward, with fiddles by Uncle Alec Dunford and Crockett Ward. Galax, Va., John A. Lomax, 1937. 1368 A2)

Oh, look up and down that long, lonesome road,
Hang down your head and cry, my love,
Hang down your head and cry.

Oh, I wish to the Lord I had never been born,
Or died when I was a baby,
Or died when I was a baby.

No, I wouldn't a been a eatin' this old cold corn bread
Soppin' in this salty gravy,
Soppin' in this salty gravy.

Oh, you caused me to weep, Lord, you caused me to moan,
You caused me to leave my home, my love,
Caused me to leave my home.

I'd never want to see your red rosy cheeks,
Or hear that flattering tongue,
Or hear that flattering tongue.

Oh, I wish I had some pretty little girl,
To tell my secrets to,
To tell my secrets to.

Cause this old girl I'm goin' with
Tells everything I do,
Tells everything I do.

Now if you don't quit those rough rowdy ways,
Going to be in some county jail, some day,
Be in some county jail.

Just look up and down that long, lonesome road,
Hang down your head and cry, my love,
Hang down your head and cry.

Mike: voice and guitar
John: fiddle
Tracy: fiddle
Penny: autoharp

SIDE I, Band 6: **DANVILLE GIRL**

from Dock Boggs - Brunswick - 132

When I went down to Danville
Got stuck on a Danville girl,
You can bet your life she was out of sight
She wore those Danville curls

She wore her hat on the back of her head
Like high-tone people do
But the very next train come down that road
Gonna bid that girl adieu.

I don't see why I love that girl
For she never cared for me
But still my mind is on that girl
Wherever she may be.

It's forty miles through the rock
Its fifty through the sand
Oh, I relate to you the life
Of a many poor married man.

I was standing on a railroad track
Just a-resting my poor tired feet,
Nine hundred miles away from home
And not a bite to eat

I was standing on a platform
Just a-smoking a cheap cigar
Awaiting for a local
To catch an empty car.

(repeat verse 3)

Oh, I relate to you the life
Of a many poor married man.

I was standing on a railroad track
Just a-resting my poor tired feet,
Nine hundred miles away from home
And not a bite to eat

I was standing on a platform
Just a-smoking a cheap cigar
Awaiting for a local
To catch an empty car.

(repeat verse 3)

John: voice and banjo

SIDE I, Band 7: **TOM SHERMAN'S BARROOM**

Arr. W.M. Devall
Victor Timely Tunes C-1563-B

As I rode down to Tom Sherman's Barroom
Tom Sherman's Barroom one morning in May
It was there I spied a gay handsome cowboy
All dressed in white linen as cool as the clay.

I knew by your outfit that you were a cowboy
That's what they all say as I go riding along
Come gather around me you sad or jolly cowboys
And listen to my comrades said he
If you can only learn and take warning
And quit your wild roving before it's too late.

It is once in the saddle I used to go dashing
It is once in the saddle I used to be gay
But taking to drinking and then the card playing
Got shot through the breast and now I must die.

Go bear the news gently to my grey headed Mother
And whisper then lowly to my sister so dear
And don't forget the words that I told you
For I'm a gay cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

Go beat your drums loudly and play your fifes slowly
And sing death marches as you carry me along
Go take me to the graveyard and roll the sod o'er me
For I'm a gay cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

Six jolly cowboys to balance my coffin
Six pretty girls to sing me a song
Oh take me to the graveyard and roll the sod o'er me
For I'm a gay cowboy and I know I've done wrong.
Go bring unto me a glass of cold water
A glass of cold water this poor boy cried
And when I returned the spirit had left him
And gone to the giver this poor boy had died.

Tracy - voice and unaccompanyment

SIDE I, Band 8: **LITTLE GLASS OF WINE**

Stanley Brothers
Rich-R-Tone 423
(Hillbilly Series 3108)

Come little girl let's go get married
I love you so great how can you slight me
I'll work for you both late and early.
And at our wedding my little bride you'll be.

Oh Willie dear let's both consider
We're both too young to be married now
When we're married we're bound together
Let's both stay single just one more year.

He went to the ball where she was dancing
A jealous thought came through his mind
I'll kill that girl my own true lover
Before I'll let another man beat my time.

He went to the bar and he called her to him
Said Willie dear what do you want with me
Come and drink wine with the one that loves you
More than any one else you know said he.

While they were at the bar a-drinking
That same old thought came through his mind
He killed that girl his own true lover
He gave her poison in a glass of wine.

She laid her head over on his shoulder
Said Willie dear please take me home
That glass of wine that I've just drunken
Has gone to my head and got me down.

He laid his head over on a pillow
Let me read you the law let me tell you my mind
Nelly dear I'm sorry to tell you
We both drank poison in a glass of wine.

They fold their arms around each other
They cast their eyes into the sky
Oh God Oh God ain't this a pity
That the both true lovers are bound to die.

John: guitar
Mike: mandolin and voice
Tracy: fiddle and high voice

SIDE I, Band 9: **SINKING IN THE LONESOME SEA**

(Carter Family - May 5, 1935)

Col. 20333 - Fifth and Sixth verses via Mike Seeger.

There was a little ship and she sailed upon the sea
And she went by the name of the Merry Golden Tree
As she sailed upon the low and lonesome low
As she sailed upon the lonesome sea.

There was a little sailor unto his captain said
Oh captain captain what'll you give to me
If I sink them in the low and lonesome low
If I sink them in the low and lonesome sea.

Two hundred dollars I will give unto thee
And my oldest daughter I'll wed unto you
If you sink them in the low and lonesome low
If you sink them in the low and lonesome sea.

He bowed upon his breast and away swim he
'Til he came to the ship of the Turkish Revelle
As she sailed upon the low and lonesome low
As she sailed upon the low and lonesome sea.

He had a tool that was made for the use
And he bored nine holes in her hull all at once
And he sank her in the low and lonesome low
And he sank her in the low and lonesome sea.

Then he swam back to his ship and he beat upon the side
Crying captain pick me up for I'm weary with the tide
And I'm sinking in the low and lonesome low
And I'm sinking in the low and lonesome sea.

If it wasn't for the love of your daughter and your men
I would do unto you as I did unto them
I would sink you in the low and lonesome low
I would sink you in the low and lonesome sea.

He bowed his head and down sank he
Fare well, farewell to the Merry Golden Tree
For I'm sinking in the low and lonesome low
For I'm sinking in the lonesome sea.

Mike: lead voice and autoharp
Tracy: tenor voice and guitar
John: bass voice and lead guitar

SIDE II, Band 1: **RIDING ON THAT TRAIN 45**

Smokey Mountain Ballads - Victor P79 27493

Oh that black smoke will rise from that train 45
You can hear the whistle blow a hundred miles.

I'm going down the track bring that little woman back
Lord I'm tired of living this old way.

If my woman says so I'll railroad no more
I'll sidetrack my train and go home.

I'm going down the ties with these tears in my eyes
Trying to read a letter from my home.

If I die a railroad man you can bury me in the sand
So I can hear the whistle blow a hundred miles.

Tracy: voice and fiddle
Mike: banjo
John: guitar

SIDE II, Band 2: **WILD AND WESTERN HOBO**

(Western Hobo) The Carter Family-Eb B-6223-A;
Carter Family, Acme

A wild and western hobo, who left his happy home,
Started out on a western trip, all by himself alone.
Upon this western trip, we're going to have lots of fun,
But upon this western trip, this is the song he sung:

I stepped upon a platform, smoking a cheap cigar,
Waiting to catch a freight train, to catch an empty car.

I buttoned my coat up closely, walked off down the track,
I caught the steps of a sleeper car, I never did look back.

They put me off at Danville, got stuck on a Danville girl,
You bet your life she's out of sight, she wore those Danville curls.

My pocket book is empty, my heart is filled with pain,
10 thousand miles away from home, hoboing an old freight train.

Tracy: tenor voice and first guitar
John: bass voice and second guitar
Mike: lead voice and autoharp

SIDE II, Band 4: Rambler's Blues
Pee Lambert
Stanley Brothers
Rich-R-Tone 4128

CHORUS:
I'm just a roaming rambler
I'm always on the roam
I do my sleeping in an old haystack
And a boxcar is my home.

Some folks they love their pleasure
What pleasure do I see
The only girl I ever loved
She's turned her back on me.

(Chorus)

My Mother she's in heaven
And daddy has gone there too
And the reason that I ramble
Is because I'm lonesome and blue.

(Chorus)

My rambling days are over
I have no place to go
Until the angels call me
Over on the other shore.

(Chorus)

Tracy: voice and guitar
John: banjo
Mike: mandolin

SIDE II, Band 5: She Tickles Me
Dorsey Dixon
Montgomery Ward M-7855-A

I went to see my gal one night and I stayed till after theee
The reason why I stayed so late that gal just tickled me
She was so doggone bashful only sixteen years of age
She had the tables all dressed up had britches on the legs.

She pulled down all the window shades so no one couldn't see
Then she crammed a rag in the keyhole and boy that tickled me
I asked her would she marry I'm tired of going free
Then she turned the lights all out and gosh that tickled me.

I fumbled all round to find her the room was dark as night
Then I got my arms around her made everything alright
I hugged her and I kissed her and then the lights went on
I had her mammy in my arms and my old gal was gone.

Then something snapped behind me and I whirled around to see
Her daddy standing in the room had come to tickle me
I jumped right through the window and landing in the sand
Expecting every moment to be shot by her old man.
I've never seen that gal again and I'm still going free
She's fourteen hundred miles away and boy that tickles me.

Tracy: voice and guitar
John: guitar

SIDE II, Band 6: THE LITTLE CARPENTER


I'll tell you a new song
That's lately been made
'Tis of a little carpenter
Who courted a fair maid
He courted her he courted her
He loved her as his life
Oft-times he'd ask her
If she would be his wife

Along come an old man, he came from Noah's Ark
A long ways a-travelling a-courting in the dark
I can't fancy you old man you look too old and grim
Oh, my little carpenter, oh what's become of him

Along come a young man he came from Scarlet Town
With gold chains and finger-rings, he threwed them on the ground
I can fancy you young man you look so neat and trim
Oh, my little carpenter, what would become of him

Along come the carpenter he come so neat and slow
All the money that he makes he brings to me to show
He hews with his broad axe all day and sets by me all night
Oh my little carpenter, my whole hearts' delight.

Mike: voice and fiddle
John: banjo

SIDE II, Band 7: DOWN SOUTH BLUES

Dock Boggs Brunswick 118
banjo from Roscoe Holcomb

Well, I'm going to the depot
Catch the fastest train that blows,
Well I'm going down South
Where the climate suits my clothes.

Well love is like water,
It is turned off and on.
When you think you've got them
They are turned off and gone.

My pappa he told me
And my mamma told me too,
Says you stay home sonny,
Don't let the women make a fool out of you.

I was born in the country
Where the snow it never fell,
Well, I'm going down South
If I don't do so well.
NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS

Mike Seeger * Tom Paley * John Cohen

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