

Volume Two

REGIONAL AND PERSONALISED SONG

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This is one good, long look at the guts of America - songs sung by the people who make them up and pass them along, showing the character of themselves, the flavour and spirit of their lives, singing about things that bear on their thoughts ... courting ... cattle herding ... murder ... atomic energy ... hunting ... growing old ... feeling young ... whiffin' cocaine ... being in love and doing something about it ... things that are under people's skin and naturally come out in their songs.

Saying something about folk songs always comes to saying it's people expressing themselves honestly.

- JOHN LOMAX JR.

The idea of it is that everybody round here plays music or makes songs or something. That's white peoples, coloured peoples, that's them funny French-talking peoples, that's everybody, what I mean - they all of 'em got music.

You see the fact of it is when they got to express what they be feeling or what they be thinking, they liable to produce music out of it.

And that's what it is here. It's all different kinds of the music put down on record so's you can hear and know 'bout the things going on. You listen and you'll know. It's sounding out to give you an understanding.

- 'LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

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The collector of folk song veers dangerously close to performing a disservice to the music itself, for the product of his work is the frozen document tending to imply hard and fast characteristics to what is actually a shape-shifting, word-of-mouth flow. He is carefully preserving on record and manuscript an art that only obtains life through direct human contact.

His only justification is that these services are directed to that group of citizens who have little practical opportunity to hear a variety of traditional song in its native habitat. Like the zoo-keeper, the folklorist offers a display that is necessarily second best, though through skill of presentation he may achieve some suggestion of how the fleet-footed creatures he has caught exist and thrive on their own.

A folk song is in no way enhanced by the scholarly collecting of it, nor does it gain in dignity by the resultant wider range of attention. It is the listener who is enhanced, by his discovery of an expression fulfilling a fundamental human need, an art whose self-sufficient values are spontaneity and truth.

In this collection of field recordings made in South Texas, no academic definition of oral tradition has intruded in the collecting and the editing. The only definitions of the folk art which have been given weight are those of the folk here represented. "If I get an idea on it, I'll make one out of it" ... "and of course I had to make it up" ... "I heard it going there. I caught it in my ears".

There are no boundaries to folk music except in such clues as the singers themselves offer. The 36 selections heard here are those which each performer acquired through his own ears, made over to his own liking, and chose to sing for a stranger who came around asking after songs. Some are purely traditional, some little altered from other versions collected at different times and places, while others are entirely of the singer's own making - and all are felt to be vivid reflections of the singer and his cultural heritage.

Some songs are as long-lasting as a single performance, an improvisation of the moment by a singer whose force of personality outweighs what is often a faulty memory. Others are from those that, like the workman who find interest in a routine job by constant efforts to improve his skill, prefer bringing a song into sharp focus with its remembered lines polished to a satisfying and exact degree.

In all cases, the code of Survival of the Fittest applies, for oral tradition is above all a harsh, discriminating process that only retains what has worth; the judgement of those who either hear and forget, or hear and pass it along.

Except for one bilingual selection the collection is limited to English language secular song (-1). It is therefore by no means a comprehensive study of the traditions to be found in so rich and varied an area as Houston.

The city of Houston is, in fact, less a city than it is an amalgam of villages and townships, surrounding a cluster of skyscrapers. Each section of the city tends to reflect the region which it faces - usually being settled by people from that region. Thus, the Louisiana French-speaking people are to be found in the northeast of Houston, the East Texas people in the northern fringe which itself is the beginning of the piney woods, the German and Polish peoples are in the northwest "Heights", and so on. The city geographically lies where the cotton-rich blacklands give way to the sand flats bordering the Gulf, where the swamps give way to river bottoms and then to the grass plains. Each area surrounding the city has gathered its own, and each group has in turn established a community within the city. And so the city which in itself has no cultural traditions, is rich in those it has acquired.

The 36 selections contained in this set were drawn from over 400 items recorded over a nine year period. (The originals have been duplicated and filed at the University of Texas Folklore Archive in Austin and will be duplicated and filed at the Archive of American Folk Song in the Library of Congress, Washington - when that contribution-dependant library is able to set aside tape for the purpose.

The various collecting projects which have funnelled into this final selection were initiated in 1951 when Pete Seeger visiting Houston, bringing together Ed Badeaux, John Lomax Jr., Chester Bower and Harold Belikoff, resulting in the founding of the Houston Folklore Group. At that time recordings were made at two of the Texas prison farms, and a short time later Badeaux and Belikoff recorded two reels of tape at the Houston Folk Festival.

The Group held a fund-raising program at which \$150 was gathered from the audience, due in large measure to the combination of John Lomax Jnr.'s singing of "John Henry" and the eloquent appeal of attorney Ben Ramey, and set aside for field recording.

In 1958, with equipment borrowed from Mary Badeaux and tapes supplied by Ed Badeaux, I began collecting songs from people I had encountered. Being seriously hampered by lack of funds, I applied to the Houston Folklore Group for the funds collected. This money, given as a grant-in-aid, was instrumental in making possible the continuation of my recording.

A short time later, the Texas Folklore Society made available a quantity of raw tape for recording.

Although these contributions helped greatly in offsetting what had become a large drain on my own resources, the greater thanks are due those whose contributions were not only material but personal.

Firstly, unqualified thanks are due Mary Badeaux for use of the recording equipment, and such varied, and tedious tasks as that of the detective, proof reader, editing adviser, recording assistant, photographer, and consultant throughout the entire project.

And secondly to Ed Badeaux whose contributions include his own collecting work, singing, essential supplies and advice.

A large measure of thanks is due Andy Hanson, a photographer for the Houston Post, who supplied many of the shots which accompanied the original booklet to this collection.

And appreciation is due Chris Strachwitz, George Cook, and Paul Oliver for their discographical data and general information on recordings mentioned in the notes.

- MACK McCORMICK  
Houston March 1960

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HAMMER RING . . . . .

R. G. WILLIAMS and GROUP

Antiphony - the call and response pattern - is a West African tradition. The songs sung in this fashion have only starting points, basic motifs such as calling a dog with "Here, Rattler, Here" or echoing the ring of a tool, or perhaps only the elaborate grunt. From the starting point the song may go in any direction. To hear two different versions of the song, you need only hear it twice. Like the jazzman who first sets the fundamental melody and then elaborates on it, the work song is liable to both progressive change in the melody and infinite, associative weaving of ideas, letting the same word suggest a variety of images - usually with an immediate literal meaning evident - and beyond, spiralling off in all directions, other interpretations.

It is easy to understand, impossible to analyse without reducing the ideas to mere words.

In such a song the essence of the folk process can be heard, the experimental reshaping of traditional themes, rejecting, accepting, returning to the source and building out in another direction. More than this, one gets a glimpse of myth-makers at work, weaving relationships between the actual scene at hand and marvellous deeds of the Wonder Child:

A-well, the Brazos wouldn't drown me.

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Ignoring the conventional rigidity of the English language, these men say as much as they feel. They use the word "roll" not simply to mean work, not simply to mean fornication, and not simply to mean travel, but to suggest the rhythmic identity between all three labors. A line in which they sing "get to rolling" is pointing out, among other things, work to stay alibe, work to wear off the sexual energy, work to point out where you can travel away from here.

In the song they never mean "hammer, ring" and they never mean "hammering" - they mean both. They never mean a particular hammer (it is, in fact, an axe-chopping song) but all the possible tools of which a man is proud.

The work song tradition of the Texas Prison has developed an extensive, largely independent mythological cast of characters: Miss Rosie, Long John, Shorty George, Grizzly Bear, Grey Goose, Ol Hannah, Ol Riley, Jack O'Diamonds, Rattler, Black Betty, Uncle Bud, The Rider. Although Hannah is usually the sun and Ol Riley is usually a legendary escapee, they are first of all shape-shifting symbols which recur in the various songs. Black Betty may be hunted in the bottom, may be the guard's whip, or an evil woman; Long John may be "long gone" or he may be listening to the Midnight Special blowing its "lonesome horn", all according to the singer and his moment to moment impulses.

At one time or another most of these characters drift into "Hammer Ring", as do several in this version. Like the preacher who takes a few lines of scripture and begins elaborating it, the legend grows for so long as he continues, and so it is with these songs which continue, growing from line to line, from leader to leader, for most of the daylight hours, day after day.

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NIGHT-HERDING SONG . . . . . HARRY STEVENS

This's Harry Stephens. I'm from Denison, Texas. I made up a night-herding song in 1909 up in the northwest and sent it to my old A & M professor, John A. Lomax, that was collecting cowboy songs. He put it in his 1910 songbook and it was on the last page and had my name to it - the only one that had the author's name to it.

This is the way I sent it to John Lomax, wrote out on a piece of shoebox. Forty some odd years ago. I never heard anything like it. I just kept making it up along like my old school professor asked me to do. Send him stuff ... and of course I had to make it up.

I's in Idaho, worked out in the dry beds of Snake River an lots a night herdin' and went pretty near a year thru' the northwest. I never saw a place nor face I'd ever seen before. Just wandering cowboy kid a-workin' on the big ranches and big spreads ... that's all I'd do is ride ...

Harry Stephens unaccompanied vocal. Recorded by Ed Badeaux and Harold Belikoff, 1951 Houston.

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ANYTHING FROM A FOOTRACE TO A RESTING PLACE . . . . . JEALOUS JAMES STANCHELL

Jealous James is an unrelenting cynic about the ways of woman. Most of his songs advocate violent means of overthrowing their tyranny:

Make me some changes, Gonna make me some changes soon,  
Stop whipping you in the morning, and go to whipping you in the  
afternoon.

Evenings he goes from bar to bar along Dowling Street singing for tips, some songs like "Jambalaya" derived from the jukeboxes, but mostly his own personal observations.

The song is Jealous James' own composition, well known around Houston and Kansas City from his own singing, but not previously recorded or published.

The recording came about one afternoon when Lightnin' Hopkins was scheduled to make some tapes but, as usual, found himself without an acoustical guitar. He went out and found Jealous James inviting him and his guitar to come along. After finishing "Corrine, Corrina" - in Volume I of this set - Lightnin' turned things over to Jealous James who sang several of his own songs, including this. Lightnin' was so delighted with it that he promptly recorded a boogie which he dubbed "The Footrace is on" which takes its inspiration from Jealous James' song. Lightnin's song, elaborating on the foot-race idea, is in his Autobiography in Blues, Tradition LP 1040.

Jealous James Stanchell, vocal and guitar. Recorded by Mack McCormick, July 13, 1959, Houston.

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THE SLOP . . . . . JACK JACKSON and LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

When his wife's away at church, Jack Jackson will sit down at the piano and sing "sinful" songs. Sometimes when she has an evening prayer meeting, he'll invite someone like Lightnin' over to "kick it around".

After World War II it became the fashion for blues singing guitarists to get an amplifier and begin playing for dancers rather than listeners. Blues-singing pianists had been doing this all along and had the advantage of working for a kitty or perhaps even a salary rather than for handouts on which the street singer depends. Lightnin' took to this and began working with various pianists, Amos Milburn, Thunder Smith, and Jack Jackson.

Lightnin' has ceased working with pianists (though he stills plays primarily in jook joints for dancing) and Jack has established himself in business on the corner of Milam and Barie in Houston's downtown business district:

JACKSON'S SHOE REPAIR  
SHINE PARLOR

Melvin Jackson, prop.

News - Novelties - Records  
Magazines - Whatnots

The spot is a gathering place for musicians, singers, and taxi drivers who come in to pass the time of day and get a shine.

Although this number, being an informal chopsticks kind of improvisation, is not in itself an example of it, the piano and guitar traditions have both grown up on Texas, borrowing from each other. Max Harrison, writing on "Boogie Woogie" has said: "This crystallisation between blues and guitar music on the piano keyboard probably took place in the Midwest, because it was there that so many of the logging camps and turpentine camps were situated. The earliest references we have to boogie tend to confirm this. Huddie Ledbetter said he first heard it in 1899 in Caddo County, Texas, and Bunk Johnson apparently first encountered it in the lumber camps of western Louisiana. Richard M. Jones remembered a

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pianist known as 'Stavin' Chain', who played it around Donaldsville Texas in 1904, during the building of the Texas-Pacific railway. At approximately the same time and in the same area, Jelly Roll Morton heard Buddy Bertrand, whose "Crazy Chord Rag" he re-created in his Library of Congress recordings. (Note: As there is no Caddo County, Texas, it would have to be either Caddo Lake, Texas, or Caddo Parish, Louisiana. The town on the T & P route was probably Douglassville, not "Donaldsville".)

The early predominance of "Fast Western" piano, as boogie was first known, is confirmed by Andrew Everett - heard in Volume I of this set - who worked in turpentine camps at the time, and identifies various pieces he plays on guitar as "Now this is one I picked off'n a piano - heard it going there, I caught it in my ears."

The Lomaxes collected songs from "Ivy Joe White, barrelhouse pianist extraordinary of Wiergate, Texas" and William Owens has written of "Grey Ghost, a Negro piano player I discovered in a skating rink in Navasota, Texas ...". An early recording comparable with "The Slop" is Sylvester Palmer's "Do It Sloppy" on Columbia 14524-D, which likewise has a loose narrative.

Melvin "Jack" Jackson and Sam Lightnin' Hopkins, piano. Recorded by Mack McCormick, 25th January, 1960, Houston.

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DEEP ELLUM BLUES . . . . . PAUL ELLIOTT

Paul Elliott is a professional musician and barber whose barber shop is a gathering place for musicians who sit around jamming, exchanging job information, and listening to Paul's unique tales of the outlandish people he's encountered in his rambling 43 years. Some of them concern the far-out alto-saxophonist known locally as "the Great White Bird" and some of them concern the wandering singers around his birthplace in East Waco and the exotically named Texas towns - Energy, Nix and Ding Dong - he came across as an itinerant barber in his youth. They taught him a galaxy of songs like "Fort Worth Jail" and "Going Down the Road Feeling Bad" and "Uncle Bud" and they taught him the lore of still other Texas towns celebrated in crap game incantations. The call foreight-the-hard-way (double-fours) celebrated four towns in East Texas that form a square, and the skilled player will accompany his roll with the cry "Timpson, Tenaha, Bobo and Blair!". Paul explains about the well known "Eighter from Decatur": "Most people think that's in reference to the town in Illinois, but actually it's a spot in north Texas, for the whole thing is "Eighter from Decatur, the County seat of Wise".

Three parallel streets - Elm, Main, and Commerce - form the business district of Dallas. Deep Ellum, or Upper Elm, near the junction of Central, was in past years a fabulous gambling and whorehouse district fabled in many songs.

As in many such districts, racial barriers were less distinct and a variety of musical traditions mingled in Deep Ellum: Evangelists, blues singers, and string bands worked on the streets; barrelhouse pianists and jazz bands worked indoors. They all played "Deep Ellum Blues" and taught it, in time, to nearly every adult male who ever visited Dallas on cotton or cattle business. In recent years a morality purge closed the district and the building of the Central Expressway obliterated it.

song has been mentioned but never printed by collectors working in Texas, though a number of recordings of it have been issued over the years. It and its relatives include "Deep Elm" by the Tennessee Tooters, Vocalion 15109 - this may be Willard Robison's sentimental composition which he derived from the blues song in 1925; "Elm Street Blues" by Texas Bill Day and Billiken Johnson, Columbia 14227; "Elm Street Blues" by Ida May Mack, Victor 38030; "Elm Street Woman Blues" by the Dallas Jamboree Jug Band, Vocalion 03092; "Deep Elm Blues" by Cliff Bruner, Vocalion; and "Deep Ellum", "Just because you're in Deep Ellum", and "Deep Ellum No. 2" all by the Shelton Brothers on Decca.

An instrumental arrangement was popularised by trumpeter Harry James - recorded by him with both Ben Pollack's and Benny Goodman's orchestras - in 1936. James learned the song while with the Christy Brothers Circus, where his father was bandmaster, which used to winter in South Houston.

Paul Elliott, vocal and guitar. Recorded by Mack McCormick October, 1959, Houston.

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ATOMIC ENERGY . . . . . JIMMY WOMACK

Jimmy Womack was born in St. Joseph, Missouri in 1921 and very nearly died in the European Theater of Operations when an ammunition truck he was driving was ambushed and exploded by a German patrol. His back muscles were badly torn and many vital organs damaged, one kidney entirely destroyed, the other severely damaged, and he has since been in steadily failing health.

Nonetheless he keeps at work as a TV repairman and occasionally returns to his original trade as auto mechanic, though the wrenching and lifting usually proves too great a strain. He has given serious consideration to offers he's had to join the Louisiana Hayride - a group of country music artists who play dances and shows within the radius of their KWKH broadcasts out of Shreveport.

And too he's given thought to pushing some of the hundreds of songs he's made up, most of them forgotten. "Sitting around here, not doing much, I'll make up some stupid song nearly every evening," he says. "Then, too, I'll get to thinking on the old songs I've known once and can't remember. Start in singing those and forget one of my own. Fellow like me ought to have a recording machine around to get it when I think of something worth remembering. Now there was one song about 'Dupree' I used to hear from a tall, slender fellow that played 12-string guitar on Fannin Street up at Shreveport That was about 1936, in there, before I went in the Army. He was around therefor a couple years I guess, and I started singing 'Dupree' but now I've forgotten it\*. Course, too, I can make it up. If I get an idea on it, I'll make one out of it. Never can tell what I may start singing about next".

Like Jealous James Stanchell, the singer is a folk poet - one leaning on traditional forms for his own personal expression, though in this case the comment is social.

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\* The description fits Barbecue Bob (Robert Hicks) and there is vague information from another source that places Barbecue Bob in Shreveport at this time. Oscar Buddy Woods who recorded for Decca and Vocalion was a native of Shreveport and it is equally possible that it is he that Jimmy Womack recalls.

A song such as this is of course completely distinct from the self-conscious propoganda which is often distributed as if it were part of the folk process. Jimmy Womack's own attitude makes this clear. He was rather shy about recording this song, saying, "Nobody' be interested in me saying what I think - that's just a song I made up to sing for people around here."

The social comment songs which are actually made up and sung by traditional singers, and in some few cases carried along, reflect all kinds of thinking. At times they are a cry against injustice, at other times they are a cry for injustice such as "Little Mary Phagan" which advocates a lynching, the racial insults which are part of much bawdy lore and children's game rhymes.

However, "Atomic Energy" lies outside the area of protest one way or the other, being not a message but Jimmy Womack's whimsical viewing of the times.

Jimmy Womack, vocal and guitar. Recorded by Mack McCormick, April 1959, Houston.

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THIS OLD WORLD IS IN A TERRIBLE CONDITION . . . GEORGE COLEMAN

Every big city has its cast of "characters". Houston has a Santa Claus-bearded oldster who sells newspapers on a downstreet corner, a wild-eyed fellow who scavenges from trash cars and rides around in a truck emblazoned with signs like "Blood and Evil your Judgment?", and Houston has George Coleman.

He's a sight familiar to most Houstonians, riding the main through-fares on a bicycle topped by a gigantic steel umbrella and with three 55-gallon oil drums chained to its sides. The whole affair is painted fire-engine red and George always looks amused as people stop and stare at him, and he'll often cackle out some startling comment and retreat under the torn straw hat that cascades over his head in long, dangling strips.

When the mood is upon him - and only when the mood is upon him - he'll set up shop on a streetcorner and begin plying his trade. Sometimes he tunes the oil drums in order to play a melody - a technique he apparently picked up from West Indian seamen who come into Galveston on the banana boats, from islands where the steel band tradition reigns. But for the most part he simply uses the drums as engaging rhythmic accompaniment to long, acidly humorous monologues on the state of the world, with a dash of mysticism and prophecy thrown in. Among his repertoire are such incantations as "A Whistling Adaptation of Gene Krupa's Disc Jockey Jump' with Saxes, Trombones, and Trumpets in that order" and "George Coleman for President, Nobody for Vice-President".

His manner defies any attempt to learn anything of his background. He will hold out his arm, gaze at the black skin and say "If you think I was ever a Negro, it is only because you are color-blind and do not see my true color." Or he will say "I was born and raised in Florida - my home is in Nassau - but I find myself here". Or he will end all discussion of music by saying "Drums are a universal language - I can speak to anyone living or dead".

During the winter he appears irregularly at a beatnik coffee house, rucho's Purple Gion, in Houston, and waits for the lucrative summer when he sets up shop on the seawall in Galveston - usually just outside Murdoch's pier - with a three-foot washtub to accept the contributions of strolling tourists. Apparently nothing delights him more than to gather a crowd - half of whom are likely to be staunch members of the Baptist church - and happily scald them with his own interpretations of the Baptist viewpoint.



He is in suspicious retreat from the society around him and his response to the world is anonymity mingled with exhibitionism. However much he encourages one to laugh at him it is impossible to overlook the fact that his expression and his personality have a courageously sharp definition.

This selection was recorded on an EMI battery operated machine which performed beautifully at the time and has not worked since. The roar heard throughout is that of the wind coming in from the Gulf which, together with the passing hot rods, are attributes of the location.

In earlier forms, this piece has taken two distinct directions, one a church song bewailing the hypocrisy of the congregation, the other a general statement of the world's poor condition. Both share a number of sentiments in common which Geroge Coleman utilises as the basis for his highly personalised commentary.

Exsmples of the first are "Does yo' Call Dat Religion?", collected at Lexington, Kentucky, 1913, and published in Niles' "Seven Negro Exhaltations", and "God Don't Like It" from the Pearson Funeral Home Choir, Columbia, S.C. in 1937 in the Library of Congress files AAFS 1026 and transcribed in Lomax' "Our Singing Country". Also the recordings "God Don't Like It" by Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Decca 2328, and "Do You Call That Religion?" by the Birmingham Jubilee Singers, Columbia 14163.

Examples of the latter - still a church song but pointing to world's rather than church's ills - are "I just can't feel at Home in this World any more" by the Two Gospel Keys, Folkways LP 53; and the same title recorded by a Negro Church Congregation, Cockrus, Mississippi, in the Library of Congress files AAFS 3009; "This Old World's in a Hell of a Fix" by Black Billy Sunday (Calvin P. Dixon) Paramount 13052, "This World is in a Bad Condition" by Golden Gate Quartet, Victor 20-3159, and "This World is in a Tangle" by Jimmy Rodgers, Chess U-7309.

Coleman is an accomplished piano player, taught by his mother who, he admits, was a devout churchgoer. It's a safe assumption that he learned the song as a child at his home, which he says was between Tampa and Jacksonville, Florida.

George Coleman, monologue, barking and whistling; rattles and oil drums. Recorded by Ed Badeaux and Mack McCormick, June 12 1959, outside Murdoch's Pier, Galveston, Texas.

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GOIN' TO THE RIBER . . . . . GOZY KILPATRICK

A young man, in his early 20's, Gozy Kilpatrick is a self-made musician who, unlike many of his age, is not susceptible to imitating the slicked up jukebox music he hears. His tendency is towards the individual and personal expression, toward what he calls "Getting an idea of it out of my head and putting it with music."

Gozy often visits R. C. Forest to sit around learning tunes from him. Gozy is far the more creative of the two, and somehow manages to obtain some compatibility, despite the fact that he has only a key of G harmonica and Forest is unable or unwilling to play in any key but C. The song is Gozy's reshaping of traditional forms.

Gozy Kilpatrick, vocal and harmonica. Recorded by Mack McCormick, March 1959, Houston.  
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OH, WHAT A TIME ( A HISTORY OF WORLD WAR II) PERCY WILBORN QUARTET

There is probably no more persistent musical group than the gospel quartet. Every Baptist church and every 250-watt radio station in the South has a list of such groups waiting to perform. It is remarkable that most of these groups are quite good, spontaneous and spirited in their handling of old gospel songs, making up new ones and occasionally a secular song. Not only are such groups eager to record, they will usually when faced with a microphone launch into compact fifteen and thirty minutes programmes which could be broadcast without editing. It is only one indication of how in the past several decades the phonograph records sold to country people, and the small radio stations dedicated to this audience, have become part and parcel of traditional music - however commercial may be the intent - and occupy a position comparable to the broadsides and "ballets" which once both borrowed from and contributed to tradition.

Percy Wilborn was formerly a member of the Friendly Five Gospel Singers in Gladewater, Texas, a group specialising in such material as "Job" and "Long, Rocky Road" and "I Saw a Man", with the emphasis on talking-time solos. In 1951 Wilborn was serving time in the Texas prison, and had surrounded himself with other singers forming one of the several quartets at Retrieve Farm which entertain on Sundaus, and beldn with the workgang for the rest of the week.

Percy Wilborn and the other members of the Friendly Five Gospel Singers made up this song for their broadcasts in Gladewater, Texas just following the war. The basis for it is of course the spiritual "Oh, What a Time", which supplies the chorus to this song.

The topical song has always been a large part of the songs offered by traditional singers. Those which apply to World War II would themselves constitute a sizeable list, including Doctor Clayton's "Pearl Harbor", John Lee Hooker's "Questionnaire Blues", Roosevelt Sykes' "Training Camp Blues", Champion Jack Dupree's "F. D. R. Blues", Sonny Boy Williamson's "Win the War Blues", and Lightnin' Hopkins' "European Blues". The wide distribution of records gives such individual compositions a maximum opportunity to be picked up and passed along by other singers. Most are forgotten, but at least two of those mentioned have in the past year been sung by artists represented in this set.

Percy Wilborn and others, vocal. Recorded by John Lomax, Jr., and Pete Seeger, 12 March, 1951, Retrieve State Farm, Snipe, Texas.

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TOM MOORE'S FARM . . . . .

ANONYMOUS

Tom Moore is a lean, sunburnt man with an office in the First National Bank building at Navasota, Texas. It's an office dedicated to brisk conversations with the freight agents, gin operators and cotton brokers that handle the tons of maize and cotton that flow from the Moore plantation. Displaying aerial photographs of his holding, he shows the enthusiasm of a stamp collector as he points out the cluster of neat aluminium outbuildings, the checkerboard of fields that border the Brazos river, and the landing strip for his crop-dusting planes. It's a modern mechanised farm with slavery-like traditions still in force: the big bell that calls the workers to the field where it's a 7-hour stretch from breakfast to midday, a system of threats- and indebtedness to hold the workers, a method of recruiting workers with a sense of duty by having the Texas Prisons parole men to his charge, and a feudal landlord determined to being the final authority in his own domain.

"I got 30 families on my place - and they're happy people", is Tom Moore's response when he's asked to explain why he and his farm have been bluntly accused by a famed song. "You go out there and you'll see they're happy people". But a moment later he squirmed suspiciously evading a direct request to visit his farm. "It looks just like it does in those pictures I showed you. They're happy people - they don't always mean what they sing". He laughed deprecatingly, "Only I best never catch one of them singing that song."

Tom Moore is rich and powerful a man whose power of life and death over his workmen has only in recent years been curtailed. He is probably sincere in his beliefs that Negroes are invariably lazy, happy, cowardly, and faithless, and in his feeling that the only way to handle them is to provide a few necessities, a few pleasures, and use the whip: "How else do you think I'd get them to do the work - that's what makes 'em respect me".

Not many miles from Tom Moore's farm, and well within his sphere of influence, there lives a man of larger dimension than Mr. Moore: a 65-year old Negro who's spent his life sharecropping a 20-acre patch of Brazos bottoms, raising a son and two sets of grandchildren and making music for his neighbours - all with boundless energy and a rare warming spirit. His songlore is remarkable in its range from ballads to breakdowns to blues. It is too an index to his character: ballads which reach far back into the traditions of his people, breakdowns played by old fingers racing with undiminished inventiveness, and blues notably free of self pity, showing a blunt, honest appraisal of life. He has been burdened but not lessened by his circumstances, and by some innate culture, has risen above the mould of caste with quiet natural grace.

In order to protect him and his family, his name is withheld from his recording of "Tom Moore's Farm". Though the likelihood of this release ever reaching Mr. Moore is slim, so long as the possibility does exist there is no reason or need to take that risk with the singer's welfare\*.

It is sufficient to say that he is a man clearly superior to the feudal landlord in whose shadow he lives.

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\* Other recordings of this singer will be released in future, at which time the collecting fraternity will be able to identify him. Those who do so are urged never under any circumstances to use his name in connection with the song "Tom Moore's Farm", however slight the likelihood of its coming to the attention of Mr. Moore. The simple fact is that the singer and Tom Moore are neighbours, the one a poor laborer, the other a powerful and vindictive man who has long felt the song to be a thorn in his side.

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All right, there's a boy went down there to work for him and he treated him brutish you know and wouldn't pay him good and he beat him - aw, he just shipped him around there terrible over there. Kinda like a little penitentiary, what you might say a second penitentiary. And so this boy got out in the field - he's a good songster - he got out in the field plowing his mule and he seed Mister Tom way across over yonder, he say, "Yonder big boss!" and he commence to mumbling a song about him and he just made up an own song of his own and rimed it up and put verses to it and when I seed him that Saturday night, he was singing it ...

Got a great big plantation out there, man, I reckon it's 18 miles wide! He got everything he need out there, and he got some people come out of the penitentiary. Paroled 'em out. But see them kinda places, people just you know go out there and they might not never come to town in two months - cause they got stores, clothes out there. Ah-hah, you get in debt, they say you never get off, less you run off. Now I can borrow money from him or anybody, but you got to go out there and work.

Two versions of this song are included because of the worth of the contrasting versions and also to suggest how widely known in Texas is this indictment of Tom Moore and his brothers.

Thus far a total of 27 distinct verses to this piece have been noted from such varied singers as barrelhouse pianist Edwin Pickens of Houston, guitarists T. Lipscomb of Galveston, Dennis Gainus of Houston, Jewell Long of Sealy, and the two whose recordings are included here. It is one of the most fully developed narrative or ballad-like pieces yet encountered in the blues idiom, and probably the most important traditional song which escaped the grasp of the Lomaxes and other early collectors in Texas.

The origin of the song has been fairly conclusively placed as having been in the mid 30s, at which time the song was one of the most frequently requested pieces at country suppers and dances throughout the Texas cotton belt - a unique position for a song to attain in modern times, without benefit of radio and records to establish it as a "hit". The present singer feels quite certain the song was actually originated by a field hand named Yank Thornton who worked on the Moore plantation (and who is now believed to be in Wichita Falls, Texas). Thornton was a good "songster" but he played no instrument, so his first act was to take the song to one of the most respected people and best guitarist in the region - the man who is heard on this recording - and thru' him the song was widely disseminated to other singers, one of whom carried it to Grapeland, Texas where Lightnin' Hopkins learned it about 1939. Thus in these two recordings one has the raw folk product much as it probably originated, from a man who is essentially a sharecropper, contrasted with the song as developed by an effective stylist who has come to depend on his voice and guitar for his living. Though neither man has worked for Tom Moore, both are singing of conditions with which they are intimately acquainted.

This is a true song of protest, but it is important to appreciate exactly what it is protesting. It is not protesting the evils of sharecropping system on any broad economic level. It is not protesting Tom Moore's wealth gained from the sweat of others. It is simply a brutally truthful characterisation of one particular hardened opportunist who has taken advantage and mistreated his laborers. It is a protest against "them bad farms" where a farmer can get started with only a borrowed five or ten dollar bill, the ease of which duped him into working against an ever increasing debt, his life circumscribed by fear of the big boss, and the bells which call him from the field to meals and then call him back to the field where the landlord stands with "spurs in his horse's flank" and the "whip in his hand".

And, most pointedly, it is protesting the landlord's philosophy by throwing back in his face his own words to the men who work his land: "Keep yourself out of the graveyard and I'll keep you out of the penitentiary."

This is a traditional phrase used - in all seriousness - by Southern planters. More than any other single statement it characterises the relationship between landlord and fieldhand, which the property owners hope to preserve. It implies the essential bargain struck following abolition: work and loyalty from the Negro, subsistence and protection from the white man.

Having no choice but to enter this bargain, the Negro has adjusted to its terms, accepting to an enormous degree the idea of his own inferiority, clinging to and often reluctant to alter his dependency status. An insight into how deeply rooted is this acceptance is given by Alan Lomax' documentary L.P. "Blues in the Mississippi Night" in which a noted blues singer comments on one of the "mercy men", saying "He was really a friend - ". Immediately the speaker realises his statement reflects only his youth, when he accepted and depended on the relationships of the caste system, and bringing in what later experience had taught him, he shifts gears to qualify the statement, saying " - at least we thought so then".

This factor, the Negro's own acceptance of the white man's terms, is a major force in forcing integration to a painfully slow pace. Of the Negro artists represented in this set, most are of this attitude, being the older rural people. Joel Hopkins has commented: "White peoples has fair got more knowledge than some coloured people." Dudley Alexander has said, "I tell you the trouble these days is all out of us not doing what white folks say for us to do. That'd how I was raised and taught, and that's the way I believe." Both statements were in conversation with other Negroes. Like all men who have come to accept a simple scheme of things, they resist change.

The Negro has even characterised his own sense of incompetence and inferiority in this verse from "The Dirty Dozens":

White man was born with a veil over his face,  
Hr seen the trouble before it taken place;  
Nigger was born with a rag in his ass,  
Never seen trouble till it done pass'd.

While the burden of caste is never absent, personal relationships between the races grow up with strong individual affection as there must be between strong, expressive people living an inter-dependent life. Some men, as the singer heard here, are sufficiently endowed with nobility to live in the rural South and yet remain free of hate or obsequiousness: he is calmly assured of his own dignity and while in his life-time he will never earn a fair day's pay, only the occasional tyrant or pervert fails to respect him.

Other strong willed, proud persons - as Lightnin' Hopkins, George Coleman, or Andrew Everett - prefer to avoid contact with whites so as to escape the possibility of any situation demanding subservience. Yet a man like Dennis Gainus who is amiably willing to adopt any fawning attitude required may establish a paradoxical relationship. Dennis and his wife live in a garage apartment in a white neighborhood and frequently entertain the two young white girls who occupy the next door garage apartment, responding to each other as neighbors and friends.

In view of the complexity of relationships briefly hinted at, Tom Moore's Farm must be seen as the singers intend it, It comes from people born and raised in the rural South, people who have remained there accepting to some degree the conditions imposed and the attitudes required. It comes from people who expect to be treated

unjustly, with cruelty and contempt, asking in turn protection and survival. Tom Moore is castigated not because he is cruel and unjust, but because he is too cruel and too unjust, more so than the status quo permits. His actions have been extreme, else he would not have achieved this kind of recognition from the people of the tenant-farm culture.

The joke, finally, is on Mr. Moore himself, for everyone in the Brazos bottoms knows this song, and Mr. Moore knows the community is filled with accusation and harsh laughter at his expense.

... .., vocal and guitar. Recorded by Chris Strachwitz and Mack McCormick, June 30 1960, Navasota, Texas.

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TOM MOORE'S FARM

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Joel Hopkins has said of his younger brother's song about the Moore brothers, "Well, they was kinda rough guys you know. Lightnin' jumped up half-high one night and made him up a song about them and then got scared."

Lightnin's singing of the piece has forced him to give up playing in towns near the Moore brothers' territory and he was extremely reluctant to make this recording, remembering the night in Conroe Texas when Tom Moore came into a dance hall and told him, "Boy! I don't wanna hear no more about that song outa you."

Altho he has added to it and been associated with the song, Lightnin' does not claim it as his own. "That's one that everybody sings." Shortly after he made this recording Lightnin' suggested a visit to a jook joint on Scott street where another guisarist was working. At Lightnin's request the man played his version of "Tom Moore's Farm" which related still other incidents about the Moore brothers. "See," Lightnin' explained, "It's all the same, but it's different. And most of all the fella that sings that song is a guy that used to work for Tom Moore and was crippled up. Now he could sing that song. They did it to him, them Moore brothers."

The only previous recording seems to be Lightnin's own version recorded in 1947 on Gold Star 640 which he sang as "Tim Moore's Farm (which may rank as the thinnest disguise ever employed). The limitations of the 3-minute record did not allow him to include four of the verses heard here.

Altho the song may have reached records earlier, no listing is found in the standard discographies nor in the Library of Congress files. The reference to the 1936 Texas Centennial suggests the song was in circulation at that time.

There is an analogue in white country tradition, "Down on Penny's Farm", which makes interesting comparison. See the Bentley Boys' recording on Columbia 15565 or its transcription in Lomax "Our Singing Country".

Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins, vocal and guitar. Recorded by Mack McCormick, July 16 1959, Houston.

John Lomax, Jr. is a person of enormous physical capacity - one whose presence tends to dominate a roomful of people although there is no specific thing which seems to bring it about. To glance at him, one would never guess that he was a travelling bank auditor at one time. One might accurately guess that he's bossed construction crews and swung tools himself. As a young man he learned about cotton picking and railway tie-tamping the hard way. During the war years he served in the U.S. Navy "muscle buster" program training recruits, and has always crammed sports like handball and swimming into every spare hour. At a party he'll be sitting quietly off to the side, slowly crushing an empty beer can in his hands just to keep his body aware of itself. He works as a real estate developer and builder but, in song, his identification is wholly with the music that has sprung from hard-laboring people.

In the 1820's planters from the Mississippi Delta began moving to Texas. It was easier to move, to chain their slaves and load them on wagons, than to buy fertiliser and replenish the soil burned out by cotton. They settled in the Brazos Bottoms where the soil and climate duplicated that of the Delta. Mexico which then ruled the area had forbidden slavery but the law was easily ignored. The "Deep South" is more a state of mind, the mind of the feudal landlord, than it is a geographic location and Brazos Bottoms were quickly converted to the system.

After the Civil War, carpetbaggers and Negroes ruled the state for a brief period - Negro rule, or even the very existence of the people is seldom mentioned in local histories, making it difficult to gather information about the period - and encouraged the freedmen to move to the piney Woods area of the state where the lumber camps and railroads were hiring. When the plantation owners reasserted their rule, the state established a policy of renting out gangs of convict labourers to maintain the plantations in the old fashion. Texas sheriffs saw to it that the supply of convicts met the demand.

With "slaves" again in supply the plantation system spread north along the Brazos nearly to Central Texas. The system still survives no longer with hired convict labor - but with the old plantations turned into prison farms and with others operating as tenant farms. Today the surge-singing of the Brazos Bottoms is a direct survival of slavery times, telling simple, straightforward history.

"Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos" as sung by Lightnin' Washington, Dave Tippen, and Mexico at Central farm is published in Lomax' "American Ballads & Folk Songs". The Library of Congress has issued Ernest Williams and group's singing of it on ~~LP~~ 3 and LP ~~LP~~ 3. Related recordings are "Ol Hannah" by Doc Reese, Folkways LP 53; "Go Down Old Hannah" by Andrew Crane and group at Retrieve Farm, Folkways LP 475; "Go Down old Hannah" by James "Ironhead" Baker, Library of Congress ~~LP~~ 38; and Lightnin' Hopkins use of lines from the songs in "Penitentiary Blues", Folkways LP 3822, and in "Go Down Ol Hannah", in Tradition LP 1035.

"Ain't No more Cane on the Brazos" and "Go Down Old Hannah" share a number of verses which occur in these two as well as other songs from the Texas prisons.

John Lomax Jr., unaccompanied vocal. Recorded by Mack McCormick, July 1, 1959, Houston.

In the early 1800's, German nobles began settling in Texas, followed by people from Poland, Bohemia, and Austria, who now compose a string of homogenous communities in Central Texas lying between Houston and San Antonio.

It resembles the Negro population of East Texas in that it is an area in which a singer or country dance group can disappear, returning weeks later to report that an enthusiastic audience was found in every hamlet and town.

Obviously such a community will produce artists and songmakers who reflect the distinctive culture, and its symbol of succulent well-being, the sausage.

William Spross is such a songmaker, whose letterhead identifies himself:

William Spross, Piano Tuner, Zither Player  
Song Writer and Recording Artist  
Heard Sundays at 12:30 P.M. over KWHI  
Brenham, Texas.

He plays an ancient Schwarze Table Zither which he believes to be the last one built in America before the makers all passed away. "This instrument was built in 1903 and when my mother's cousin died who owned it in 1917, I bought it and have played it ever since ... I have been writing songs, all kinds for many years. I have 100 compositions of my own."

The singer, Harvey Krueger, is a teenager of the community.

The term "boogie woogie" is not a musical reference but an outgrowth of bogie or boogie man. Here the Boogie Woogie man is the owner of a sausage shop and inventor of a grinding machine. The subject has been given fascinated attention not only in children's songs but in the world's chief literature. Shakespeare has written, in "Titus Andronicus", of two children chopped into a meat pie and served to unwitting mother, echoing legendary incidents in the house of Atreus where "A father feasted - and the flesh his children. Not only cannibalism, but the subject of ground meat is of endless concern to children, as indicated by one of their jump rope rhymes.

My father owns the butcher shop,  
My mother cuts the meat,  
And I'm a little meatball  
That runs around the street.

And in "Children's Dreams: an Unexplored Land", C. W. Kimmins reports a child's dream: "There was a fire, and a kettle over it full of boiling water. They throw me into it and once in a while the cook used to come over and stick a fork into me to see if I was cooked."

The curiosity and suspicion attached to sausage meat once gripped the nation with rumor. One such tale was to the effect that a midwestern sausage maker's wife had disappeared, that he had confessed to her murder but was free of prosecution as no body was ever discovered. During World War I when this rumor circulated, while other meats were rising in price, the price of sausage was sorely depressed.

William Spross, zither; Harvey Krueger, vocal. Recorded 1957,  
Brenham, Texas.

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The doctors at Jeff Davis, the city-county hospital, have told R. C. Forest he'll soon be dead if he doesn't cut down on his drinking. This song is his reply.

The burial-ground theme runs strong in the blues tradition, usually with a sense of trying to grasp the reality of "marble town". It is an effort to project into the event, rising above the impulse which Lightnin' Hopkins characterises in "Death Bells".

Other songs in which the singer looks towards his own personal death are Robert Johnson's "Me and the Devil Blues", Bukka White's "Fixin' to Die Blues", Leroy Carr's "Six Cold Feet in the Ground", and Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See that my Grave is kept Clean".

"Tin Can Alley" is related to most of these, most of which employ images from the hymn "Two White Horses In a Line" (sometimes "Four White Horses in a Line") and is widely known in its own right. The first recording was probably Lonnie Johnson's Okeh 8524, whilst his "Death Valley is just Half Way to my Home" OK 8768 and Arthur Big Boy Crudup's "Death Valley Blues" Bb 8858 are closely related.

R. C. Forest, vocal and guitar; Gozy Kilpatrick, harmonica. Recorded by Mack McCormick, March 1959, Houston.

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THE WACO GIRL . . . . .

JOHN Q. ANDERSON

Altho Dr. Anderson has achieved literary attention with two volumes served as president of the Texas Folklore Society, and is presently Professor of English at Texas A & M College, his lore derives not from his scholarly pursuits but from his own youth in the Texas Panhandle.

His songs, learned from older singers, include "Patonie, Pride of the Plains" and "Cotton-Eyed Joe" and "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" - allsung with a trace of the bleak winds that howl across the plains, the quality that gets into the voice of someone used to talking above the whine of a "blue norther".

"The Waco Girl" was sung and accepted in the Texas Panhandle as the story of a young man who murdered a girl in Waco, Texas. The singer's sister learned it as early as 1910 from an aunt. It was only later that Dr. Anderson discovered the ballad was one of a series in the United States, variously known as "The Oxford Girl", "The Knoxville Girl", "The Shreveport Girl" and so on, all of which go back to a British broadside of about 1700 known as "The Berkshire Tragedy"; or "The Wittam Miller", which was published in Volume VII of the Roxburghe Ballads collection.

Of course it is quite possible that this variant did concern an actual murder in Waco. There are many instances in both songmaking as well as mythmaking in which a pre-existing narrative is slightly adapted to apply to some contemporary incident, thereby giving a structure of universality and tested dramatic impact to the telling of what appears a local event. For example, two of the best known American folksongs - "Casey Jones" and "Frankie & Johnny" - were in existence (with different names employed) before the historical events with which they are now associated.

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"The Waco Girl" is only a light adaptation of the older songs, omitting the motive - the girl's pregnancy - which the British broadside explicitly states ... "By you I am with child".

A broadside sold in Boston about 1810, "The Lexington Girl" is in the Harvard College collection. Publications include "The Miller's Apprentice" or "The Oxford Tragedy" in Sharp's English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Vol. I (5 versions); "The Wexford Girl" in Cox's Folk Songs of the South; "The Oxford Girl" in Owens' Texas Folk Songs; "The Noel Girl" in Randolph's Ozark Folk-songs; "The Lexington Murder" in Lomax' Our Singing Country; and "The Knoxville Girl" in Botkin's A Treasure of Southern Folklore.

Recordings of the variants are "The Knoxville Girl" by George Peagram, Riverside LP 12-617, and by Arthur Tanner, Columbia 15145; and "Expert Town (The Oxford Girl)" by Mildred Tuttle, issued by the Library of Congress, ~~44~~57 and LP ~~44~~12.

Although "The Waco Girl" does not seem to be on any previous record or published in any general anthology, there are two versions in the Library of Congress files, and Dr. Anderson has heard another version of the ballad.

John Q. Anderson, vocal and guitar. November 1959 College Station, Texas.

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