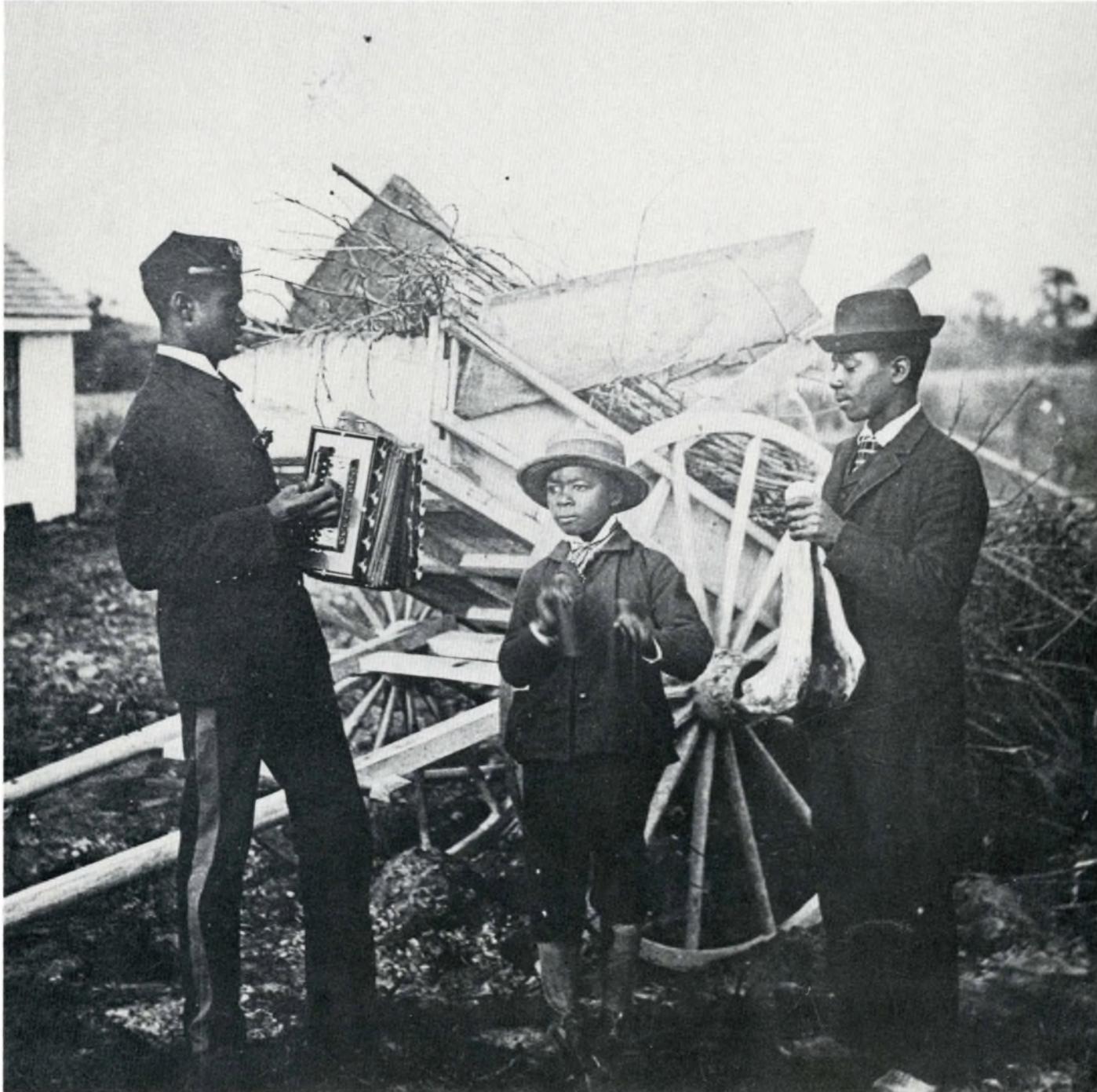




# VIRGINIA TRADITIONS

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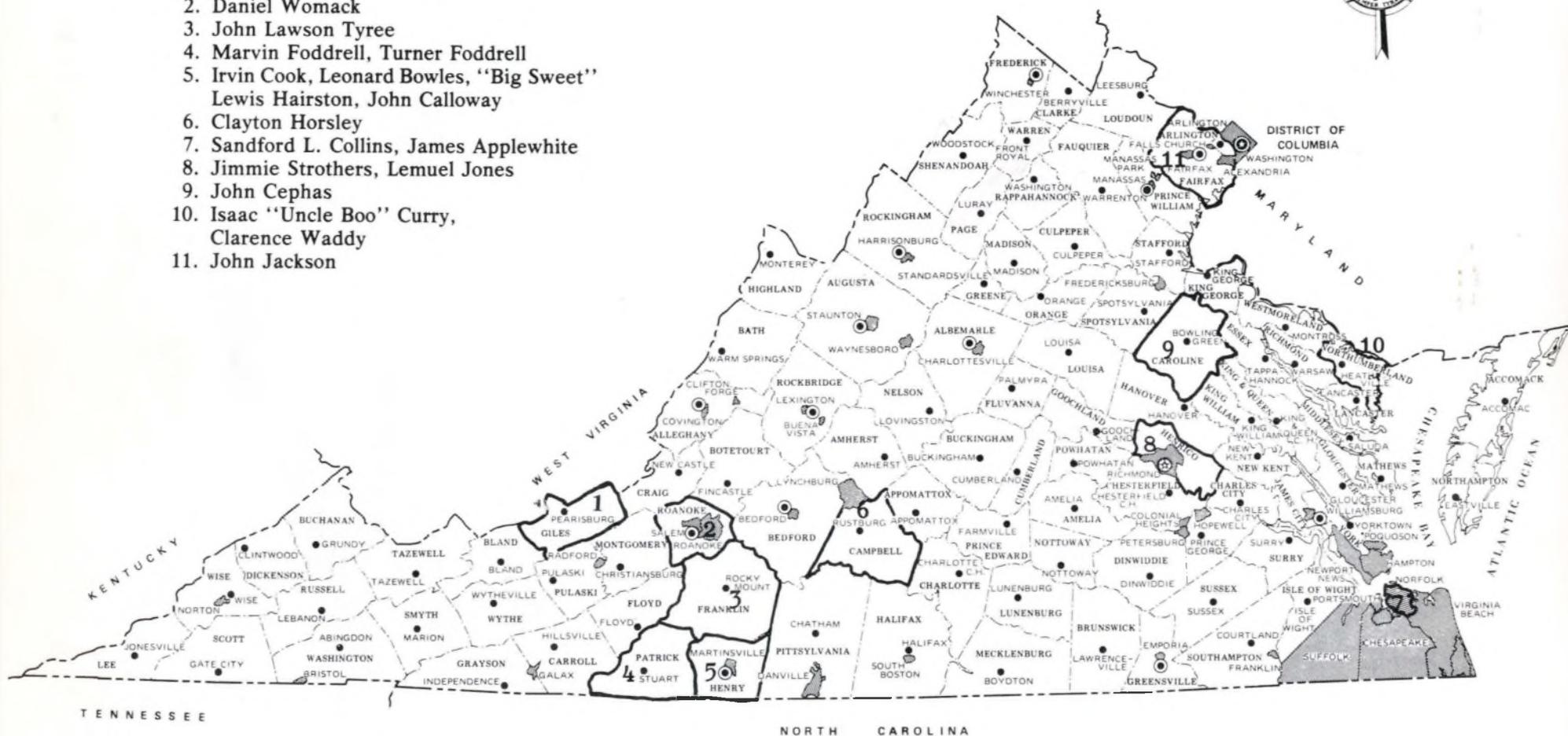
NON-BLUES SECULAR BLACK MUSIC

THREE MUSICIANS PLAYING ACCORDION, BONES, AND JAWBONE AT AN OYSTER ROAST, CA. 1890.  
(Courtesy Archives, Hampton Institute)

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

## HOME AREAS OF THE SINGERS

1. "Uncle" Homer Walker
2. Daniel Womack
3. John Lawson Tyree
4. Marvin Foddrell, Turner Foddrell
5. Irvin Cook, Leonard Bowles, "Big Sweet"  
Lewis Hairston, John Calloway
6. Clayton Horsley
7. Sanford L. Collins, James Applewhite
8. Jimmie Strothers, Lemuel Jones
9. John Cephas
10. Isaac "Uncle Boo" Curry,  
Clarence Waddy
11. John Jackson



## NON-BLUES SECULAR BLACK MUSIC IN VIRGINIA

Non-blues secular black music refers to ballads, dance tunes, and lyric songs performed by Afro-Americans. This music is different from blues, which is another distinct form of Afro-American folk music that developed in the deep South sometime in the 1890s. Blues is characterized by a twelve or eight bar harmonic sequence and texts which follow an A-A-B stanza form in the twelve bar pattern and an A-B stanza form in the eight bar pattern. It is very emotional music and serves as one of the emotional releases for members of the black community. Blues, however, is just one component of the musical network of the Afro-American community; the others are religious music and other forms of secular music. A comprehensive study of non-blues secular black music in America has yet to be written. Although scattered oral resources are available, they have never been properly compiled and analyzed. This essay gives a brief overview of these materials emphasizing oral documentation and provides a more thorough examination of the non-blues secular black music found in Virginia, while the recordings on this album specifically focus upon such performances recorded within the state.

### Research In America

Recorded documentation of non-blues secular black music in America is incomplete. The pioneer written collections of black secular folk music offer ballads, song texts, and fragments but they are not satisfactory substitutes for recorded documents.<sup>1</sup> When Afro-American folk musicians first appeared on records in substantial numbers during the mid-1920s, the record companies concentrated on blues and gospel performers. A number of musicians were recorded, however, whose repertoires relied heavily on non-blues material. Guitarist John Henry Howard, for example, recorded "Little Brown Jug," "The Old Gray Goose," "Gonna Keep My Skillet Cool and Greasy," and "Where Have You Been My Pretty Little Girl?" for Gennett Records in 1925. In 1931 the American Record Company brought Joe Evans and Arthur McClain in to their studio. The duo accompanied themselves on a variety of instruments—guitar, piano, fiddle, and mandolin—and waxed traditional tunes like "Old Hen Cackle" and "Sourwood Mountain" amidst a group of blues, gospel, and popular songs. These examples suggest that a "songster" tradition existed among Afro-American musicians who recorded commercially during this time. "Songster" in this context refers to older rural musicians whose repertoires included a wide range of materials: blues, dance tunes, hymns, and ballads.

It was not until the mid-1930s, however, that intensive efforts were made to document through recordings this "songster" tradition that had only

been hinted at by commercial discs. John Lomax and his son, Alan, two folksong collectors with a longstanding interest in American folk music, began this documentation for the Library of Congress in 1933 with a trip to the State Penitentiary in Nashville, Tennessee. On subsequent trips to the South between 1934 and 1942, the Lomaxes cut numerous recordings, often at state prisons, from Texas to Virginia.<sup>2</sup> They found a surprising variety of both Afro-American and Anglo-American music on their trips and recorded black examples of Child ballads, play party songs, blues, cowboy songs, spirituals, native American ballads, ballads from British broadsides, and reels. This material remained in the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song for many years, but most of it has not been generally available until recently when an English company, Flyright-Matchbox, initiated a comprehensive reissue program of all of the Lomaxes' field recordings of black musicians from this era. These recordings are available on the Flyright-Matchbox Library of Congress Series: Volumes One through Thirteen.

Along with the Lomaxes, other field researchers were recording throughout the South. They included Herbert Halpert, a field worker with the W.P.A. in the late 1930s, and Zora Neale Hurston, a black woman novelist whose folklore research was concentrated in Florida between the late 1920s and mid 1930s. Another field researcher was Lawrence Gellert who concentrated on collecting songs in North and South Carolina and Georgia. Gellert was active between 1933 and 1937 and his particular interest was protest songs. Recording on aluminum discs,<sup>3</sup> he documented more than 300 Afro-American folk songs including both solo and group work songs, blues, and unaccompanied solo protest songs. He focused on songs protesting the cultural, economic, and social ill-treatment of southern blacks and some of the best of these songs have been reissued by Rounder Records as *Negro Songs of Protest* (Rounder 4004).

The first conscious effort by a commercial record company to document non-blues secular black music came in the late 1940s when Folkways Records issued a series of recordings by Huddie Leadbetter, otherwise known as Leadbelly. This series included *The Legacy of Leadbelly, Volume Three* (Folkways 2024) and *The Legacy of Leadbelly, Volume Four* (Folkways 2034). These records were followed in the mid-1950s by another Folkways series produced from field recordings by Frederick Ramsey. Ramsey concentrated his field work in Alabama and his efforts resulted in *The Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volumes One Through Six* (Folkways 4417-18, 4471-74). In the late 1950s, Alan Lomax was back in the field recording material that appeared on the Atlantic label (Southern Folk Heritage Series) and on the Prestige International label (Sounds of the South). These series included records devoted to blue-

grass, white and black gospel music, songs for children, blues and one anthology, *Roots Of The Blues* devoted primarily to non-blues secular black music (Atlantic SD-1348). More of Lomax's recordings from this period are now being issued on New World Records, including *Roots Of The Blues* (New World Records NW-252).

In recent years the emphasis of most field researchers traveling through the South in search of Afro-American secular music has been on blues, although recorded examples of non-blues black music have frequently cropped up on many so-called "blues anthologies" issued by small independent labels.<sup>4</sup> There have been several albums, however, dealing specifically with non-blues secular black music. One unusual style of Afro-American music found primarily in the deep South, fife and drum band music, has been well documented on records, film and print by David Evans, George Mitchell and Bill Ferris.<sup>5</sup> There has also been some documentation of Afro-American fiddle and banjo playing, particularly in North Carolina. Several full-length albums devoted to non-blues secular black music from Piedmont and western North Carolina are available and feature examples of guitar playing as well as fiddle and banjo tunes. For a listing of these records check the annotated discography at the end of this essay.

### Previous Research In Virginia

Virginia, like other southern states, holds a wealth of non-blues secular black music. This music has gone largely undocumented orally, but many historical references to it exist. Foremost among these references are reports from colonial Virginia of blacks playing banjo. The banjo is an instrument of African origin and it is not surprising that there are numerous reports in early personal journals and travel accounts of black banjo players. The first known account of a black playing banjo in Virginia is from a journal entry dated 1774.<sup>6</sup> Colonial Virginia newspapers also contain allusions to black banjo players. For example, the February 18, 1775, issue of the *Virginia Gazette* carried an advertisement for a runaway slave "who plays exceedingly well on the Banjar, and generally carries one with him."

Accounts of Afro-Americans in Virginia playing fiddle, a European instrument, occurred earlier but less frequently than reports of black banjo players. The first such account dates from the 1690s in Accomac County. A dance started in the home of Reverend Thomas Teakle one Saturday night during his absence. According to the county records, the dance continued until nearly eleven o'clock the next morning and the music was provided by a slave fiddler. This event so infuriated Reverend Teakle that he brought legal action against his daughter's friends, an act that provided us with this documentation.<sup>7</sup>

Accounts of Afro-Americans using the fiddle and banjo continued to be written throughout the

American and American Indian student body, a great deal of emphasis was placed on Afro-American and, to a lesser degree, Indian folklore. Numerous articles on black folklore appeared in the *Southern Workman*, a magazine produced by Hampton Institute. The *Southern Workman* published articles by students and faculty on subjects such as "Conjuring and Conjure Doctors" (p. 209, December 1895), "Brer Rabbit's Box" (p. 25, January 1899), and "Popular Signs and Superstitions" (p. 15, January, 1894).

During this same period, the Hampton Folk-Lore Society, along with numerous other folklore groups across the country, was flourishing. The society contributed a regular column to the *Southern Workman* and in the July 1894 issue the transcript of an address to the Hampton Folk-Lore Society by William Wells, "The Importance and Utility of the Collection of Negro Folk-Lore," was published on pages 131-132. The Hampton Folk-Lore Society was also interested in music. Occasionally one of its members contributed an entire article on folk music to the *Southern Workman*. One such example, "Negro Folk Songs," by Harris Barrett (exact date unknown, circa 1896) deals with spirituals but also includes sections on "Cradle Songs," "Labor Songs," and "Dance and Game Songs."

Hampton Institute's interest in Afro-American folk music manifested itself in other ways. For

example, the Institute sponsored a touring group, "Hampton Negro and Indian Folk-Lore Concert," which gave performances all over the country. According to one of their programs dated March 7, 1892, the concert consisted of, among other things, "game and dance songs" and "labor songs." The group toured with a "Jaw-bone orchestra, bird whistler and quartette." The inclusion of the "Jaw-bone orchestra" is particularly noteworthy as it bespeaks the continued importance of the jawbone in black music. Their performance apparently consisted at least in part of traditional music, for the program further states that "these students, both negro and Indian, give simply and naturally, without special training, the folk songs of their people as they have learned them at their homes, hoping to make their concert not only unique but instructive and interesting."



JIMMIE STROTHERS AND JOHN LEE, CA. 1936.

Courtesy Library of Congress

## Open-Air Folk Festival

FOR THE BENEFIT OF HAMPTON INSTITUTE



Friday Evening, August 23, at 8 o'clock  
THE WILDMERE, MINNEWASKA

Twenty-six Negro and Indian boys will sing the melodies of their people, giving the vividly beautiful tribal dances of the Indian and the race chants and measures of far African tribes with songs and scenes of the long struggle up from slavery. It is their plea for Hampton.

Courtesy Archives, Hampton Institute

In addition to the traveling concerts, Hampton Institute was also the center for other research relevant to the study of non-blues secular black music in Virginia. Around the turn of the century, a group of cylinder recordings were made at Hampton Institute. These cylinders, discovered in the Hampton Institute Library in 1976, have not yet been restored to playing condition but their accompanying field notes indicate they contain performances by local Afro-American folk singers. These recordings are especially important because they are among the earliest known recordings of black folk music in the country.

Hampton Institute's active interest in black folk music continued until at least World War I when the traveling folk music concerts ceased. At approximately the same time, the Institute published a series of four short monographs on black folk music under the editorship of Natalie Curtis Burlie.<sup>12</sup> Hampton Institute's interest in black folklore and folk music during this period was unusual and probably unparalleled anywhere in the country. It deserves in-depth research that is beyond the scope of this booklet.

The significant work at Hampton Institute had ended by 1920 and it was not until 1936 that the next important work with non-blues secular black music was undertaken within the state. In 1936 John Lomax and Harold Spivacke, working for the Library of Congress, conducted an extensive series of recordings in the State Penitentiary in Richmond. They collected a large body of work songs, spirituals, and blues as well as twelve songs from a four-string banjo and guitar player, Jimmie Strothers. Two of Strothers' recordings, "Tennessee Dog" and "I Used To Work On The Tractor" appear on this record. Horace Beck and

MacEdward Leach recorded two black Rappahannock County songsters, Silas Pendelton and Willie Hunter, in 1948. Their repertoire is probably typical of black singers of the day and included native American ballads and lyric songs such as "Frankie and Johnny" and "Wish I Had Some One To Love Me." A more recent discovery is John Jackson, of Fairfax, who plays the guitar and the banjo and who has recorded several albums for Arhoolie.<sup>13</sup>

Documentary sources amplify the recorded evidence for non-blues secular black music in 20th-century Virginia. Arthur Kyle Davis' *Folk-songs of Virginia: An Index and Classification* lists forty-seven songs — ballads, lyric songs, etc. — either sung by blacks or learned from blacks during the 1930s. More recently Charles L. Perdue, Jr., a folklorist at the University of Virginia, listed twenty non-blues secular songs collected from blacks in Rappahannock County during the 1960s in his dissertation "Movie Star Woman in the Land of Black Angries: Ethnography and Folklore of a Negro Community in Rural Virginia" (University of Pennsylvania, 1971).

#### Non-Blues Secular Black Music In Virginia Today

Secular black folk music in Virginia includes a wide variety of styles from native American ballads to instrumental march pieces performed on the banjo, which is the predominant instrument on this record. Many of Virginia's black banjo players grew up in an era when the differences between black and white folk music were less clearly defined. They tended to see their music as "rural" or "country" and they did not impose the racial connotations on music that it has today. Most of the banjo tunes by black performers that have been collected in Virginia cross racial lines—that is, they cannot be labeled either black or white. The instrumental performance or vocal style may contain typically Afro-American or Anglo-American mannerisms or traits, but the tunes themselves are shared by both races and have been labeled "common stock" tunes.<sup>14</sup> These songs include traditional tunes like "Bile Them Cabbage Down," "Leather Britches," "Old Joe Clark," "Old Blue," and songs from the minstrel show stage like "Tennessee Dog."

The banjo players on this record, with the exception of Jimmie Strothers about whom virtually nothing is known, are for the most part middle-aged or elderly men who learned to play from relatives or older members of the community. Traditionally they performed mostly for square dances, both black and white, and for neighborhood parties. Three of them, Irvin Cook, "Big Sweet" Lewis Hairston, and Jimmie Strothers, employ a two-finger style of picking, while the others use the claw-hammer style which is also called frailing. All of the banjoists that I located still own instruments and play occasional-

ly although the social institutions that supplied them with musical outlets have, for them, died away. These outlets were usually square dances or weekend parties, but most blacks I spoke with stopped having these events twenty or thirty years ago.

Much of my research has been concentrated in Franklin, Patrick, and Henry Counties. These counties are on the border of the Piedmont and Blue Ridge Mountain sections of Virginia and maintain a strong black and white stringband tradition. Up until about fifteen years ago, blacks still gathered for square dances on a regular



Photo by Pete Hartman

basis. Even more surprising was the black-only fiddlers' contest held in the auditorium of the hospital of Dr. Dana Baldwin, a prominent Martinsville physician and entrepreneur. This yearly event was held between approximately 1928 and 1945. Leonard Bowles relates some history of the contest:

*They held it in the gymtorium—what the black people used to call the gymtorium. It was owned by a doctor, Dr. Baldwin. He's dead now but he was the only doctor black people used to have around here. He used to give what they called the fiddlers' convention. That was a great thing! It was something that people looked for every once a year. People from Danville, what we used to call far away—thirty, forty miles away—would come and stay all night. It was held after Christmas, sometime around February or the last part of January. Hundreds of people would come. Black people*

*would look forward to the fiddlers' convention every year. They had harp players, piano players, the best buck timing, straight fiddle, and the best banjo. We also had the best guitar along with the fiddle and banjo. We had little prize money, win a dollar; two dollars for the winner. It wasn't much money but it was good for that time. They'd judge the winner by the applause you'd get. They'd start around 8:30 or 9:00 in the evening and wouldn't stop until they finished around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. There was a little admission charge at the door, 50 cents, and all the money would go for the musician.*



DR. DANA BALDWIN, CA. 1930s.

As far as I know, this was the only all-black fiddlers' contest in America. It shows, I believe, the cohesiveness of the black community in Henry County and demonstrates the importance of stringband music for local blacks.

The accordion is another instrument that served much the same function as banjo and fiddle/banjo combination. The accordion was invented in Vienna, Austria, in 1829 and it probably entered the Afro-American musical tradition sometime after the Civil War. Accordions are very rarely heard in black folk music today outside the Cajun country of East Texas and western Louisiana and recorded examples of non-Cajun black secular accordion playing are difficult to come by. The only commercially recorded example known to me is a 1927 disc by Mississippian Walter Rhodes, "The Crowing Rooster" and "Leaving Home Blues." Many of the Virginia musicians I've interviewed recall black accordion players from their youth. Daniel Womack, who was raised in Pittsylvania County, knew several and he used to "fool around" with the accordion as a child. The only surviving accordion players performing secular music that I

Photo Courtesy Dr. John Bing



OYSTER ROAST, 1890.

found, however, live further east near the coast.

Issac "Uncle Boo" Curry and Clarence Waddy live near each other between Wicomico Church and Browns Store on the Northern Neck of Virginia. Both men are in their early eighties and have always lived in Northumberland County. The tradition of accordion playing was passed down from their fathers and in that section of the county at the turn of the century the accordion was the predominant instrument. Mr. Waddy says: "Accordions were the only kind of music we had back then, weren't nothing else. Boy, that's years ago back." Isaac Curry describe the earlier days like this:

*The first accordion I got, bought it from a white woman. Cost five dollars. I was sixteen then. My daddy owned an accordion, too: Daddy played "Home Sweet Home," "Old Black Joe," and "Old Kentucky Home." My mamma'd sing "Nearer My God To Thee" when daddy'd play the accordion, but she wouldn't sing them jigs. Church people won't sing them jigs. Mostly we played them dances—set dances, waltzes, two steps, all such as that.*

It is difficult to determine precisely when the Afro-American accordion playing tradition began to fade in Northumberland County, but from what Curry and Waddy said, it seems to have almost disappeared by the 1930s. This decline was probably at least partially due to the

introduction of radios and phonographs that placed more popular musical forms, such as blues, ahead of the set dance music played on accordion. This same period saw the decline in Virginia of another form of black music which is also extremely difficult to locate today—fife and drum band music.

Afro-American fife and drum band music, a blend of African polyrhythms and European fife playing, has been previously recorded in Mississippi and Georgia. Although it may exist elsewhere, I am not aware of any substantial reports of this type of music in areas outside the deep South.<sup>15</sup> My recent field research indicates this tradition probably was not very widespread in Virginia and I've encountered only one man, James Pilson, who played in such a group. Even though Mr. Pilson has not played fife and drum band music for over forty years, his account is significant enough to recount here.

Fife and drum band music, unlike accordion playing which also had an outlet at home, was performed only on public occasions. Mr. Pilson, who was born in Patrick County in 1893, played fife in a family band that included his older brothers — William Green (bass drum) and Benjamin Harrison (kettle drum). The brothers purchased their instruments from white musi-

cians in their community of Woolwine in about 1910 when the whites stopped playing. Mr. Pilson is not certain why the whites in Woolwine stopped playing but he and his brothers were the only blacks in Patrick County who picked up the idea. Within the last several years, however, Fred Clifton of Woolwine has resurrected the all-white Ballard Fife and Drum Band Corps by recruiting high school students who play, among other occasions, at the yearly Fourth of July parade in Stuart.<sup>16</sup> The Pilsons continued to play until about 1935 when they quit because "we felt like we wouldn't go no further, so we stopped playing." James Pilson still owns his fife, which is a six-hole metal instrument. He remembers learning about five or six tunes, including one entitled "Used To Live In The Country, Sometimes I Live in Town," but he is totally unable to play it now. The Pilsons played only once a year and that was at the local Fourth of July gathering:

*On the Fourth of July we'd have a celebration. They'd climb the greasy pole, all sorts of carrying on. We'd have a picnic with lemonade, food and all such as that at the church. They would get to marching. They'd march around the Liberty Churchyard. We'd be leading them. Then they'd go down so far, about a mile to the store near Woolwine and then back to the church. There was a gang of them black people and we played the same tune all the way. That's all we played, march tunes.*

Photo Courtesy Archives, Hampton Institute



MR. JAMES PILSON

Another event at which people gathered to march was school closings, or breakings. In the past, the end of the school year was often marked by ceremonies that were different from those today. In many southern rural schools, the end of the school year was marked by a formal closing

Photo by Kip Lornell

that included having the children march around the grounds in disciplined order. I have spoken with many rural musicians, both black and white, who played regularly for these events up until about twenty years ago. The instrumental, "Come, Let's March," performed by Daniel Womack on this record, illustrates this march time. This example is similar to marches he played forty years ago for school closings around South Hill, Virginia.

Events such as square dances, round dances, marches, picnics and school closings called for group participation. Solo dancing, such as buck dancing or flat footing, is performed more spontaneously. Since this dancing is often done to the sound of a single instrument, the settings were usually more informal and could occur almost anywhere. The instrument most often used for this kind of solo dancing in Afro-American tradition is the guitar, which set up a repetitious pattern, while the dancer taps in counterrhythm. This sets up a syncopated pattern that is extremely complex. As the musician alters the instrumental part, the dancer responds. Within the black community this is generally called buck dancing. In addition to these buck dances, there were also other popular solo dances like the "Shimmie-She-Wobble," "Black Bottom" and "Shim-Sham-Shimmie." On this record, John Jackson performs a medley of such pieces on guitar, while Sanford L. Collins shows how he used to accompany buck dances on harmonica.

Harmonicas are often used by musicians to accompany guitarists, but they are also effective solo instruments. The harmonica remains a favorite instrument of many rural musicians, both black and white, who perform breakdown tunes like "Sally Ann," specialty numbers such as train imitations and animal imitations like "Old Hen Cackle." These are quite often performed on harmonica, but they are often played on banjo and fiddle as well. The fox hunt imitations are extremely exciting visually and the audience is intrigued as much by the visual effects as by the uncanny imitations.

This essay has dealt so far with songs in which the text is either non-existent or subordinate to the music. In Afro-American secular music, as in Anglo-American folk music, there are songs in which the text is quite important and relates a story. Narrative folk songs that dramatize a memorable event are called ballads and there are several on this record.<sup>17</sup>

The ballad scholar, G. Malcolm Laws, felt that approximately one-twelfth of all native American ballads were either of black origin or had been perpetuated primarily by blacks. Recent field recordings of southern blacks have yielded relatively few native American ballads, but the early text collections by Scarborough, Odum and Johnson, White, and others contained many examples. One native American ballad of Afro-American origin, "John Henry" (Laws I 1), is one

of the most widespread of all ballads and has entered Anglo-American tradition as both a ballad and instrumental tune. A number of other native American ballads which probably are of black origin, such as "John Hardy" (Laws I 2), "Bad Lee Brown" (Laws I 8), "Frankie and Albert" (Laws I 3), and "Bully of the Town" (Laws I 14), have also crossed into Anglo-American tradition, but the remaining fifteen black ballads listed in *Native American Balladry* have remained primarily within the Afro-American community.

Native Afro-American ballads differ from Anglo-American ballads in several important ways. For example, few can be traced to known historical events and it appears that native Afro-American ballads rarely circulated via printed broadsides. They also emphasize and develop characters, in contrast to white ballads which often concentrate specifically on the events and tend to moralize on their consequences. The themes of most Afro-American ballads are violence, murder, and other crimes, and three-fourths of these ballads in *Native American Balladry* deal with these topics. Finally, the language in Afro-American ballads utilizes less concrete terms and tends toward lyrical rather than journalistic description.<sup>18</sup>

This record provides an examination of the non-blues secular black music tradition in Virginia. Several traditions, fife and drum band music, quill playing and dulcimer playing, were not recorded while they were still being practiced and are probably no longer available for recording. Another important genre, the work song, has not been included since it will be covered separately later in this series. This record demonstrates the range of musical expressions which still exists within Virginia's black communities. It emphasizes the resilience of folk tradition and culture as well as the importance of fundamental field research in determining which elements of the culture remain vital.



#### FOOTNOTES

1. Early collections include: Howard Odum and Guy Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: UNC Press, 1925, 1968); Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: UNC Press, 1926); Dorothy Scarborough, *On The Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925); and, Newman Ivey White, *American Negro Folk-Songs* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1928).
2. For a listing of the recordings done by John and Alan Lomax of black musicians, consult Robert Godrich and William Dixon, *Blues and Gospel Records 1902-1942* (London: Storyville Press, 1969).
3. Prior to the invention of portable magnetic tape recording equipment, several methods were used to record performances outside of studios. The earliest method was to preserve these performances on tube-shaped wax cylinders. Cylinder recordings were widely used from the turn of the century until the early 1930s when aluminum disc recording was introduced. Aluminum discs look very much like the long playing records of today except they are made of aluminum and recording is done on only one side. In addition, the aluminum is protected by a plastic-like coating. The first wire recorders appeared in the early 1940s and replaced the aluminum discs. Wire recorders are similar to today's recording equipment except they are much bulkier and use wire instead of magnetic tape to preserve the sound. It was not until the early 1950s that portable magnetic tape recorders suitable for field recordings were produced.
4. For example, the Waverly Hall Fife and Drum Band, *Georgia Blues*, Rounder 2008; "Pork and Beans" by Rosa Lee Hill, *Delta Blues—Volume Two*, Arhoolie 1042; or "Ida Red"/"Sally Goodin" by Eli Owens, *South Mississippi Blues*, Rounder 2009.
5. *Traveling Through The Jungle: Negro Fife and Drum Band Music From The Deep South*, Testament T-2223; David Evans, "Black Fife and Drum Band Music in Mississippi," *Mississippi Folklore Register*, 6 (1972), 94-107; George Mitchell, *Blow My Blues Away* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: LSU Press, 1971); and, *Gravel Springs Fife and Drum Band*, a film by Judy Peiser, David Evans and Bill Ferris, Center for Southern Folklore, 1971.
6. Philip Fithian, *Journals & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg, 1957); quoted by Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 360.
7. Accomac County Records, v. 1690-1697, related in Epstein, p. 80.
8. William B. Smith, "Persimmon Tree and Beer Dance," *Farmer's Register*, 6 (April 1, 1836), p. 58-61; quoted from Epstein, p. 143.
9. [William Ferguson Goldie], *Sunshine and Shadow of Slave Life: Reminiscences as Told by Isaac D. Williams to "Tege"* (East Saginaw, Michigan: Evening News Printing and Binding House, 1885), p. 62; quoted in Epstein, p. 146.
10. Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas Barden and Robert Phillips, *Weevils In The Wheat* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia), p. 135.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
12. Natalie Burlie, *Hampton Series of Negro Folk-music, Volumes One-Four*, (New York City: G. Schirmer, 1918 & 1919).
13. John Jackson: *Blues and Country Dance Tunes From Virginia*, Arhoolie 1026; *More Blues and Country Dance Tunes From Virginia*, Arhoolie 1035; and *Live In Europe*, Arhoolie 1047.

14. For a full discussion of this concept see Tony Russell, *Blacks, Whites and Blues* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), pp. 25-48.
15. The fife and drum have been recorded in Georgia and Mississippi. I have had personal communications with Pete Lowry (1976) and Bengt Olsson (1975) who report that fife and drum bands still exist to a slight extent in Tennessee. Glen Hinson (1978) also reports that a black fife and drum band tradition existed in Macon County, North Carolina, until the 1920s.
16. For an example of Anglo-American fife and drum band music recorded in Patrick County in 1974, listen to "Old Virginia March," by the New Ballard Fife and Drum Band, Rounder 0057.
17. Consult G. Malcolm Laws, *Native American Balladry* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964), Chapter one for further information on ballads.
18. *Ibid.*, Chapter seven goes into a detailed explanation of the differences.



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1. Courlander, Harold. *Negro Folk Music U.S.A.* Columbia University Press, New York, 1963. Courlander gives an overview of Afro-American folk music and includes chapters on worksongs, blues, and ballads.
2. Epstein, Dena. *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War.* University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1977. Epstein uses primary historical sources to recount the history of Afro-American secular and sacred folk music from Colonial days until the Civil War.
3. Lornell, Christopher. "Pre-Blues Black Music in Piedmont North Carolina," *North Carolina Folklore Quarterly*, XXIII: 1 (February, 1975), 26-32. This article discusses some aspects of black secular folk music found in the southeastern United States prior to 1900, and focuses upon several Afro-American musicians in Orange and Alamance Counties who still perform this music.
4. Lornell, Christopher, and J. Roderick Moore. "Clarence Tross: Hardy County Banjoist." *Golden-seal* II: 3, (July-September 1976), 7-13.
5. Odum, Howard and Guy Johnson. *The Negro and His Songs.* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1925, 1968. Odum and Johnson offer many song texts of ballads, worksongs, and lyric songs primarily collected in piedmont North Carolina during the early 1920s. They also include some information about the songs' social context.
6. Russell, Tony. *Blacks, Whites and Blues.* Stein and Day, New York, 1970. Russell gives many song texts and historical information about non-blues secular black music in this study of the interrelationships between black and white folk music.

7. Scarborough, Dorothy. *On The Trail of Negro Folk-Songs.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1925. This book contains several chapters citing numerous examples of non-blues secular black music, including many ballads. Most of the songs were collected in the deep South between approximately 1910 and 1923.



#### SELECTED ANNOTATED DISCOGRAPHY OF SOUTHERN NON-BLUES SECULAR BLACK MUSIC

1. *Jack O' Diamonds*, Flyright-Matchbox, Library of Congress Series: Volume Six, SDM 265. Side one is devoted to guitar-accompanied performances including several native American ballads, a square dance instrumental, a cowboy song, and one song, "He Rambled," derived from British sources. These songs were recorded by the Lomaxes in two Texas penitentiaries in 1934. Includes booklet.
2. *Music From The Hills Of Caldwell County* Physical Records 12-001. These five performers (3 women and 2 men) live in Caldwell County, North Carolina and were recorded in 1964 and 1974. The songs include traditional banjo tunes, guitar instrumentals and one unaccompanied vocal. Three of the musicians also appear on another record, Traditional TLP 1007.
3. *Negro Songs Of Protest*, Rounder Records 4004. Lawrence Gellert recorded these songs in North and South Carolina and Georgia between 1933 and 1937. With the exception of one guitar-accompanied blues, these are unaccompanied lyric protest songs, several of which are part of the prison worksong tradition. Includes booklet.
4. *Orange County Special*, Flyright Records 506. This record focuses upon musicians in Orange County, North Carolina and was recorded in 1972 and 1973. The selections include guitar and banjo instrumentals and several vocals accompanied by banjo. Includes booklet.
5. *Traveling Through The Jungle: Negro Fife and Drum Band Music from the Deep South*, Testament Records T-2223. This record samples a variety of fife and drum bands recorded in Georgia and Mississippi in 1942, by Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress, and 1969 and 1970. The songs include dance tunes, marches, spirituals, minstrel pieces, and one native American ballad.
6. *Ain't Gonna Rain No More*, Rounder Records 2018. Several of the musicians who appear on *Orange County Special* also appear on this record. The selections trace the evolution of a blues tradition in piedmont North Carolina from solo banjo tunes and banjo tunes adapted to guitar, to straight blues performances.

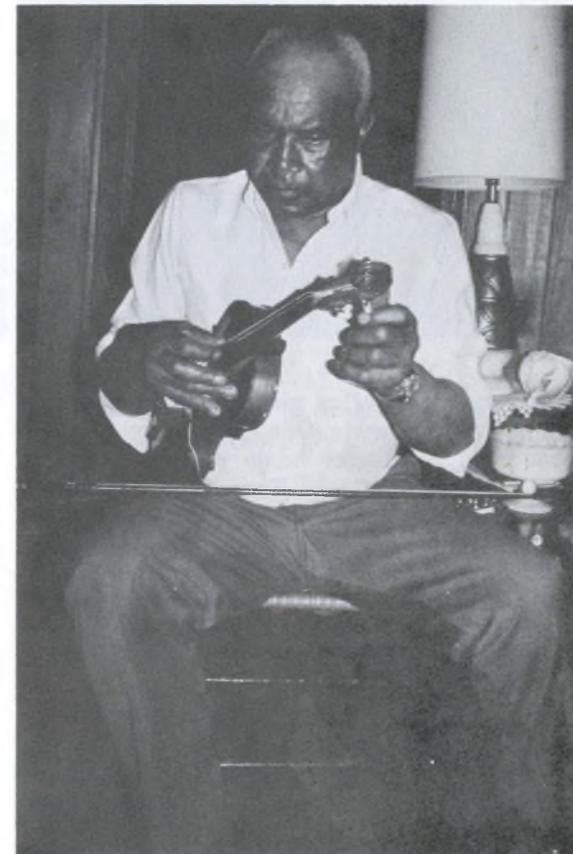
These records may be difficult to purchase in local record stores. I suggest using either of the following mail-order firms if you cannot locate these records:

Southern Record Sales  
5001 Reynard Avenue  
La Crescenta, California 91214

Roundhouse Records  
P. O. Box 474  
Somerville, Massachusetts 02144



#### SIDE ONE



LEONARD BOWLES

**1. WISH TO THE LORD I'D NEVER BEEN BORN**—Irvin Cook, vocal and banjo; Leonard Bowles, fiddle. Recorded in Martinsville [Henry County], Virginia, on October 10, 1976, by Kip Lornell. 3:30.

There are several recordings from the mid-1920s that incorporate the themes found in this rendition ("The Longest Train I Ever Saw" by the Tenneva Ramblers and "Been To The East, Been To The West" by the Leake County Revelers) but Cook and Bowles said they learned this tune from local blacks during the 1940s. The reference to "old black Annie" in stanza four is unique and may stem from local black sources, and Clayton Horsley can be heard on side two of this record performing a guitar instrumental "Poor Black Annie." Leonard Bowles (b. 1919) and Irvin Cook (b. 1924) were both born and raised in eastern



Photo by Pete Hartman

IRVIN COOK

Henry County. Bowles picked up some of his fiddling from his uncle, Odell Bowles, while Cook learned his two-finger banjo playing from his father, Sylvester Cook. They play frequently together and are often joined by "Big Sweet" Lewis Hairston who lives several miles away.

*I wish to the lord never been born or died when I was young.*

*Oh, I'd never been here to shed no tears or heard your lying tongue.*

*Oh, the longest train there ever was was on the Georgia line.*

*Engine come along quarter past four and the cab about a quarter past nine.*

*Look down, look down that lonesome road that I never traveled before.*

*Pray each day and pray each night, oh lord have mercy on me.*

*See old black Annie down the road she had forty men hanging around.*

*Dirtiest man in the crowd, he had his face all in a frown.*

*Oh, went to the East, went to the West; I've been to the North and the South.*

*Oh, I'm looking for me a pretty little girl, what she didn't have so much mouth.*

**Selected Discography:** Luther B. Clarke—"I Wish To The Lord I'd Never Been Born"—Columbia 15, 069—(County 407)

Leake County Revelers —  
"Been To The East, Been To  
The West"—Columbia 15,  
318

Tenneva Ramblers — "The  
Longest Train I Ever Saw"—  
Victor 20861—(Puritan 3001)

**2. I USED TO WORK ON THE TRACTOR—Jimmie Strothers, vocal and banjo. Recorded at the State Farm in Richmond [Henrico County], Virginia, on May 31, 1936, by John Lomax and Harold Spivacke. 1:25.**

While the title for this song is descriptive and intriguing, it is also incorrect. A transcription of the lyrics (see below) reveals that Strothers is singing "I used to work [for a] contractor." Despite that, the song remains a powerful agrarian protest similar to "Poor Farmers" (heard on Side Two of this album) and some of the songs on the Lawrence Gellert recordings *Negro Songs of Protest* on Rounder Records. In addition, "I Used To Work On The Tractor" involves the issue of exploitative capitalism where the laborer works arduously for low wages. This theme recurs in songs of mill workers and coal miners and has been dealt with in John Greenway's *American Folksongs of Protest* (Philadelphia, 1953). Jimmie Strothers played four-string banjo and guitar and recorded a dozen songs for the Library of Congress, including a blues, some religious pieces, several banjo instrumentals, and a minstrel show song, "Tennessee Dog," which also appears on this album.

*Used to work [for a] contractor, Mike Hardy was his name.*

*Wanted me to make four loads a day, doggone mule was lame.*

*Went out early in the morning, got started and stayed all day.*

*When I returned in the evening, these are the words he say.*

*"Where in the world is you been all day, here's your money, get away.*

*With that mule and the four bushels of corn."*

*Old Mike Hardy, he was mad, give me my money and he got bad.*

*With that mule and that four bushels of corn.*

*Used to work [for a] contractor, Mike Hardy was his name.*

*Wanted me to make four loads a day and doggone mule was lame.*

*Went out early in the morning, got started and stayed all day.*

*I returned in the evening, these are the words he'd say.*

*"Where in the world you been all day, here's your money, get away.*

*With that mule and that four bushels of corn."*

*Worked for his brother, he had the same doggone name.*

*Went out early in the morning, got started and stayed all day.*

*I returned in the evening, these are the words he'd say.*

*"Where in the world is you been all day, here's your money, get away.*

*With that mule and that four bushels of corn."*

**3. COME, LET'S MARCH—Daniel Womack, guitar. Recorded in Roanoke [Roanoke County], Virginia, on December 16, 1976, by Douglas Day and Kip Lornell. 3:33.**

Daniel Womack claims that this march tune was typical of the music he played for school closings in Pittsylvania County during the late teens and early 1920s. At the end of the school year there was an official ceremony in which the children marched in time to the music. This

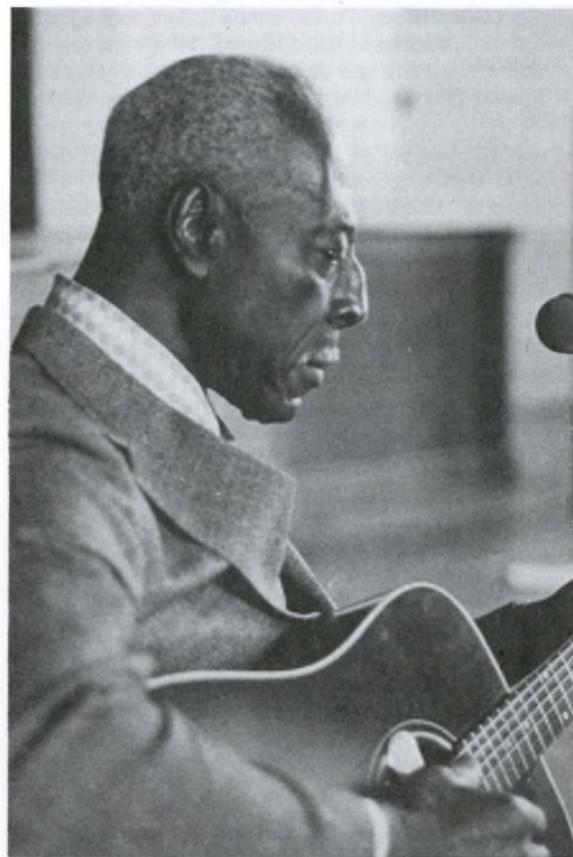


Photo by Pete Hartman

DANIEL WOMACK

practice was common, at least in the rural South, until about thirty years ago. Many of the musicians I've spoken with in the southeast played for these assemblies. Mr. Womack was born in 1904 in Pittsylvania County and was educated at the State School for the Blind in Portsmouth after he lost his sight in his mid-teens. He has lived in various places around the state but settled in Roanoke in the middle 1950s. Although he was once a blues player, Daniel has renounced this "worldly" music and only plays gospel piano and guitar in church.

*K.L.: Where would you have played a piece like that, Daniel?*

*D.W.: Where would I? I play that anywhere.*

*D.D.: Is that a tune that people could dance to?*

*D.W.: Well you know that people will dance off of church songs just as quick as they will others. But that's a—as I was explaining to Kip, that's a march. It's—such as entertaining, for a group you know. Like they are marching, a drill, you know. Like you get so many, about ten or twelve or maybe twenty or more and they're all lined up. And everybody's stepping together. It's a march.*

*Selected Discography:* Gary Davis — "Soldiers Drill"—Transatlantic 249)

Fisher Hendly and his Aristocratic Pigs—"Shuffle Feet, Shuffle"—Victor 23,528-(County 515)

**4. CASEY JONES—Isaac "Uncle Boo" Curry, vocal and accordion. Recorded in Browns Store [Northumberland County], Virginia, on April 6, 1977, by Roddy Moore and Kip Lornell. 1:55.**

Along with "The Wreck of Old 97," the best known disaster ballad in America is probably "Casey Jones" (Laws G1). It has been collected all over the country from both black and white musicians. The historical incident behind the ballad occurred on April 30, 1900, in Vaughan, Mississippi, when an Illinois Central Railroad train on which John Luther "Casey" Jones was the engineer crashed into a freight train which had extended from its siding onto the main line (see Laws, p. 212 for more complete details). This version of "Casey Jones" seems to have been derived from the copyrighted vaudeville version by Newton and Seibert that circulated via a phonograph record by Billy Murray (see the discography below). It is very fragmentary and



Photo by Roddy Moore

ISAAC "UNCLE BOO" CURRY

more lyrical than narrative. Isaac Curry (b. 1894) is known around Browns Store as "Uncle Boo" and is a lifelong resident of southeastern Northumberland County. He plays guitar and piano in addition to accordion. This version of

"Casey Jones" was learned from his father, William Curry, who also played it on accordion.

*Casey said before he died, there were two more roads he wanted to ride.*

*Woman asked what could it be, he said San Francisco and the Santa Fe.*

*He looked at the water and the water was low;  
Looked at his watch and his watch was slow.  
He looked at the fireman with the hungdown head,  
Said we might make it in but we'll all be dead.*

*Now Mrs. Jones was sitting on a bed sighing,  
She just got a letter her husband was dying.  
She said "Go to bed children, stop your crying,  
Cause you got another pappu on the Salt Lake [Line]."*

*Selected Discography:* Furry Lewis—"Kassie Jones"—Victor 21664—(Yazoo 1050)  
Billy Murray and the American Quartet—"Casey Jones"—Victor 16483  
Riley Puckett—"Casey Jones"—Columbia 113-D

**5. CRIPPLE CREEK—"Uncle" Homer Walker, banjo. Recorded in Roanoke [Roanoke County], Virginia, on March 15, 1977, by Gary Anderson and Kip Lornell. [Studios courtesy of WVWR-FM]. 1:55.**

Of all the common stock banjo and fiddle tunes, "Cripple Creek" is one of the most ubiquitous. It appears in the repertoires of string-bands all over the country and many traditional bluegrass bands still perform it. In this version "Uncle" Homer substitutes the tune to "Ida Red" in the B section creating a unique variation. Mr. Walker (b. 1904) lives in Glen Lynn, Virginia. He resided for many years in nearby Summers County, West Virginia, where he performed for black and white square dances and frolics. "Uncle" Homer has been playing banjo for nearly 60 years and picked up tunes from both black and white musicians in West Virginia and Virginia.



Photo by Carl Fleischauer

HOMER WALKER

*Selected Discography:* Fiddlin' John Carson—"Cripple Creek"—Okeh 45,214—(Vetco 102)

Tommy Jarrell — "Cripple Creek"—(County 717)

Fiddlin' Powers and Family—"Cripple Creek"—Victor 19449



Photo by Pete Hartman

MARVIN FODDRELL

**6. RENO FACTORY—Marvin Foddrell, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Stuart [Patrick County], Virginia, on November 17, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 2:10.**

This lyric song is very close to blues in some of the verses and in its emotional impact. Lines like "Oh some old stranger came last night. . . and he took my gal and gone" are similar to those sentiments found in blues. "Reno Factory" cannot, however, be considered a blues because the verse structure does not fit into the conventional A-A-B verse form and more importantly because Marvin Foddrell considers it "an old country song" as opposed to "a straight blues." I have not been able to trace the reference to the Reno factory in the song, and neither Marvin nor his father Posey, from whom Marvin learned this song, was able to tell me where the Reno factory was. Instrumentally the song is related to one found in local white tradition, "Riley and Spencer," which has been recorded by Tommy Jarrell and Fields Ward. I have also collected this same tune from a black guitarist in Elliston, Virginia, who calls it "West Virginia." Howard Twine's version is a lyric song about a mistreating woman but it shares no verses in common with "Reno Factory." Marvin Foddrell (b. 1923) and his brother Turner are members of a highly talented musical family that has been in the Stuart area for several generations. Marvin and Turner's father, Posey, is a multi-instrumentalist who played fiddle, mandolin, piano, banjo, and guitar both with blacks and in integrated groups. Marvin now plays guitar for his own entertainment but used to perform for weekend gatherings and dances around Stuart during the late 1930s and 1940s.

*Oh lordy me, lordy my, oh lord what have I done?  
And oh lord what have I done?  
Oh some old stranger came last night,  
And he took my gal and gone, and he took my gal  
and gone.*

*Well the last time I seen my gal,  
She was standing in the freight train door.  
She was standing in the freight train door.  
She waved her handkerchief back at me,  
And it made me want to go, and it made me want to  
go.*

*Well that Reno factory burning down.  
And it ain't no water 'round.  
And it ain't no water 'round.*

*Oh lordy me, lordy my and oh lord what have I done?  
And oh lord what have I done?*

**Selected Discography:** Tommy Jarrell—"Raleigh and  
Spencer"—(County 756)  
Fields Ward — "Riley and  
Spencer" — (Biograph  
RC-6002)  
Paul Sutphin—"Ryland Spen-  
cer"—(Heritage X)

**7. BUCKDANCE—Sanford L. Collins, harmonica. Recorded in Norfolk [Norfolk County], Virginia, on February 15, 1977, by Kip Lornell. :50.**

The term "buckdance" refers to a dance step that is usually performed solo. Buckdances are performed both by men and women and are somewhat similar to "clogging." Most of the instrumental buckdance pieces I've heard were played either on guitar or banjo and Mr. Collins' version on harmonica is an uncommon recorded example. As with buckdance pieces performed on stringed instruments, Mr. Collins leaves space for



SANFORD L. COLLINS

Photo by Kip Lornell

the dancer to perform the intricate syncopated dance steps alone. Buckdancing can still be seen when older rural musicians gather and was part of the minstrel show tradition that continues today. Mr. Collins was born in 1919 near Bellhaven, North Carolina, and moved to the Norfolk area in the late 1940s. He has played the harmonica since childhood and his repertoire includes popular songs like "You Are My Sunshine" in addition to folk songs such as the "Buckdance" heard here and the "Fox Chase."



"BIG SWEET" LEWIS HAIRSTON

Photo by Kip Lornell

**8. BILE THEM CABBAGE DOWN — "Big Sweet" Lewis Hairston, vocal and banjo. Recorded in Martinsville [Henry County], Virginia, on September 28, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 2:35.**

A number of fiddle and banjo tunes exist that betray no identifiable racial origin. "Sourwood Mountain," "Old Hen Cackle," and "Bile Them Cabbage Down" are three such examples. "Bile Them Cabbage Down" is quite well known in the southeastern United States and I've encountered a number of versions performed by blacks in Virginia and North Carolina since the early 1970s. Some of the couplets, especially the second and fifth stanzas of this rendition, are often heard in other fiddle and banjo tunes. The tune is similar in most versions of "Bile Them Cabbage Down" and is traceable to an English

tune called "Smiling Polly." "Big Sweet" Lewis was born in 1929 in McDowell County, West Virginia, but has spent most of his adult life in Henry County, Virginia. He was lured to Martinsville in the early 1950s by the jobs available in the numerous furniture factories in Henry County. Besides playing traditional banjo pieces like "Cotton-Eyed Joe" (on side two of this record), Mr. Hairston is a bluegrass fan and many Bill Monroe and Flatt and Scruggs numbers are included in his repertoire. In addition to the

banjo, "Big Sweet" also plays guitar, fiddle, and mandolin.

*Bile them cabbage down, babe, turn your hoecakes  
brown,  
Last word I hear him say, bile them cabbage down.*

*I wished I had a nickel, I wished I had a dime,  
Wished I had a pretty little girl, kiss her and call her  
mine.*

*Bile them cabbage down, babe, turn them hoecakes  
brown,  
Last word I heard him say, bile them cabbage down.*

*Some gives a nickel, some gives a dime,  
But I ain't giving nothing, she weren't no girl of  
mine.*

*Bile them cabbage down, babe, turn your hoecakes  
brown,  
Last word I hear him say was bile them cabbage  
down.*

*Mama sent me to the spring one day, she told me  
not to stay,  
Fell in love with a pretty little girl, stayed till  
Christmas day.  
Bile them cabbage down, babe, turn them hoecakes  
brown,  
Last word I hear him say, bile them cabbage down.  
Raccoon up the 'simmon tree, Possum on the  
ground.  
Raccoon say, you darn fool shake them 'simmons  
down.  
Bile them cabbage down, babe, turn them hoecakes  
brown.  
Last word I heard him say, bile them cabbage down.*

**Selected Discography:** Earl Johnson & His Dixie Entertainers—"Bile Dem Cabbage Down"—Okeh 45,112  
Uncle Dave Macon — "Bile Them Cabbage Down"—Vocalion 14849  
Ernest V. Stoneman — "Bile Them Cabbage Down"—(Folkways FA 2315)

**9. JOHN HENRY—John Cephas, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Bowling Green [Caroline County], Virginia, on September 17, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 5:22.**

Of all native American ballads, "John Henry" (Laws I 1) is probably the most popular. Many black and white musicians recall it as the first piece they learned and "John Henry" is still in the repertoires of many traditional stringbands. It is not certain whether there is a factual basis for "John Henry," although there is strong evidence that he was a black steel driver who worked in the Big Bend Tunnel on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in West Virginia during construction in 1870-1872 (see Louis W. Chappell, *John Henry: A Folklore Study*, Germany, 1933, and Guy B.



JOHN CEPHAS

Photo Courtesy National Council for the Traditional Arts

Johnson, *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*, Chapel Hill, 1929, for further discussion). John Cephas (b. 1931) grew up near Bowling Green and lives there on weekends while holding down a job in nearby Washington, D.C. during the week. John learned much of his music from local musicians like James Talifarro but was also influenced by 78 recordings of musicians as diverse as Blind Boy Fuller and Grandpa Jones. He began playing guitar as a child and recently started learning to play the pedal steel guitar.

*John Henry was a little boy,  
No bigger than the palm of your hand.  
By the time that boy was nine years old,  
He was driving spikes like a man.  
Lord, Lord, driving spikes like a man.*

*Well now, John Henry was a little boy,  
Sitting on his mammy's knee.  
Well he picked up a hammer and a little bit of steel,  
He said "This hammer goin' to be the death of me,  
Lord, Lord, hammer goin' be the death of me."*

*Well now John Henry said to the captain,  
"Captain, you oughta see me swing.  
I weigh forty-nine pounds from my hips on down,  
And I love to hear that cold steel ring.  
Lord, Lord, I love to hear that cold steel ring."*

*Well now, John Henry said to the captain,  
"A man ain't nothing but a man.  
But before I let this steamdrill beat me down,  
I'm goin' die with the hammer in my hand,  
Lord, Lord, die with that hammer in my hand."*

*Well now, John Henry went to the tunnel and drive,  
The steamdrill was by his side.  
Well now, John drove steel to the end of the tunnel,  
He lay down that hammer and he died.  
Lord, Lord, lay down that hammer, Lord he died.*

*Well now, John Henry went to the tunnel,  
By that steamdrill he did stand.  
He beat that steamdrill three inches down,  
Lord, lay down that hammer and, Lord, he died.  
Lord, Lord, lay down that hammer and he died.*

*Well now, John Henry had a little wife,  
Her name was Polly Anne.  
Well now, John got sick and he couldn't get well,  
Polly drove steel like a man.  
Lord, Lord, Polly drove steel like a man.*

*Well now, John Henry told the captain,  
"Captain you ought to see me sing.  
I weigh forty-nine pounds from my hips on down.  
Lord, I love to hear that cold steel ring.  
Lord, Lord, I love to hear that cold steel ring."*

*Well they took John Henry to the graveyard,  
They buried him six feet in the sand.  
Everytime a locomotive passed by,  
They said that there lies a steel driving man,  
Lord, Lord, there lies a steel driving man.*

*Well now, John Henry drove steel in the tunnel,  
Till his hammer it caught on fire.  
Well he looked at the water boy and he said,  
"A cool drink of water 'fore I die.  
Lord, Lord, cool drink of water 'fore I die."*

**Selected Discography:** John Jackson—"John Henry" (Arhoolie F-1025)  
Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers—"John Henry"—Columbia 15, 142 (Rounder 1005)

Henry Thomas—"John Henry"  
—Vocalion 1094 (Herwin 209)

**10. FOX CHASE—James Applewhite, vocal and harmonica. Recorded in Norfolk [Norfolk County], Virginia, on January 31, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 1:00.**

The harmonica is a versatile instrument. It is a favorite among both black and white folk musicians and is used by blues, stringband, and Cajun performers. Folk musicians usually use harmonicas in a background role but occasionally the harmonica will be featured performing imitations of trains, escaped convicts, birds, fox hunts, chickens, and other barnyard animals. In the hands of a virtuoso, it can be a remarkably expressive instrument. Mr. Applewhite was born in 1929 and raised in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. He has lived in many places throughout the southeast, from Georgia to Washington, D.C., and plays his music mostly for his own amusement and for friends in informal settings. His uncle, the late well-known medicine show performer, Peg Leg Sam (Arthur Jackson), was Applewhite's seminal influence and it was from Sam that he learned the "Fox Chase," "Greasy Greens," and many of his narrative "toasts."

**Selected Discography:** Deford Baily—"Fox Chase"—Brunswick 149  
Peg Leg Sam—"Fox Chase"—(Trix 3302)  
Henry Whitter—"Fox Chase #2"—Victor V-40292

**SIDE TWO**



TURNER FODDRELL

Photo by Roddy Moore

**1. RAILROAD BILL—Turner Foddrell, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Stuart [Patrick County], Virginia, on November 17, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 3:17.**

While "Railroad Bill" (Laws I 13) is not as widespread as "John Henry," it is very popular in the southeastern United States. The ballad is based on the story of Morris Slater whose nickname was "Railroad Bill." Slater was a black train robber who terrorized Florida and Alabama from 1894 to 1897, when he was shot and killed in Atmore, Alabama. This version of "Railroad Bill" lacks the narrative structure to be considered a ballad but is a lyric song that portrays the protagonist as a low-down rounder. Turner Foddrell (b. 1928) has lived in Stuart all his life, except for a three-year army enlistment. He is the middle child in a family blessed with a large amount of musical talent, and plays banjo-guitar (an instrument with a guitar neck and a banjo head) as well as guitar. Turner learned this version from his father, Posey, who gave up secular music when he joined the Primitive Baptist Church.

*Railroad Bill standing on a hill.  
Think he's working when he's standing still.  
Ain't it hard, oh lord, ain't it hard.*

*Rubber tired buggy, rubber tired hack;  
Take him to the graveyard but don't you bring him  
back.*

*Say ain't it hard, ain't it hard, ain't it hard.*

*Railroad Bill, he was all bad.  
Stole everything that the farmer ever had.  
Ain't it hard, oh lord, ain't it hard.*

*Save me no chicken, save me no wing;  
Think he's a working when he ain't doing a thing.  
Say it's hard, oh lord, ain't it hard.*

*Railroad Bill standing on a hill.  
Think he's working when he's standing still.  
Hard, it's hard, ain't it hard.*

*Railroad Bill, he was all bad.  
Stole everything that the farmer ever had.  
Says ain't it hard, ain't it hard, ain't it hard.*

*Save me no chicken, save me no wing.  
Think he's a working when he ain't doing a thing.  
Say it's hard, oh lord, ain't it hard.*

*Lordy me, lordy my.  
Lordy me, what have he done.  
Say it's hard, ain't it hard, ain't it hard.*

*Railroad Bill standing on a hill.  
Think he's a working when he's standing still.  
Says it's hard, ain't it hard, ain't it hard.*

*Railroad Bill, he was all bad.  
Stole everything that the farmer ever had.  
Ain't it hard, oh lord, ain't it hard.*

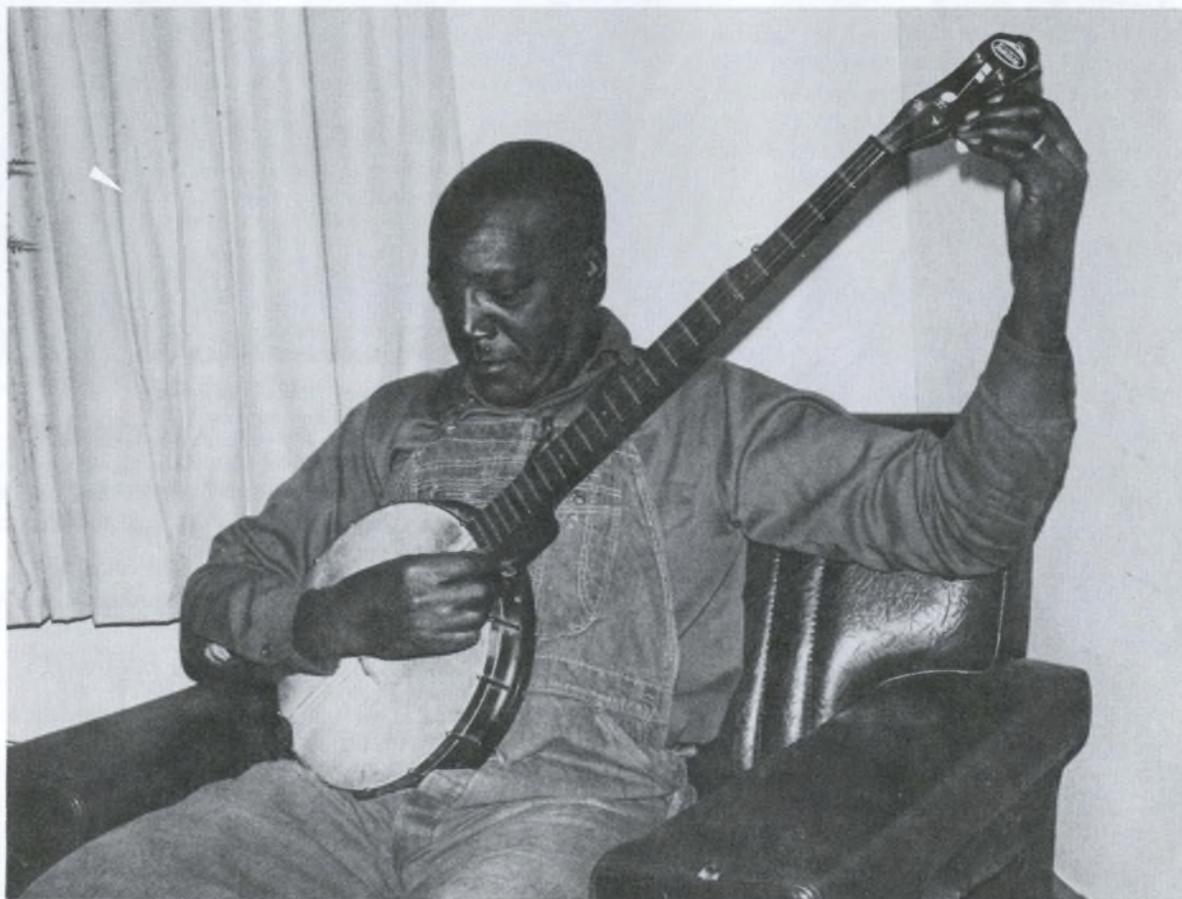
*Rubber tired buggy, rubber tired hack.  
Take [him] to the graveyard and don't bring him  
back.  
Say ain't it hard, ain't it hard, ain't it hard.*

*Selected Discography: Etta Baker—"Railroad Bill"—  
(Traditional 1007)*

Will Bennett—"Railroad Bill"  
—Vocalion 1464—(Origin Jazz  
Library 18)  
Frank Hovington — "Railroad  
Bill" — (Library of Congress  
L.B.C. 10)

**2. HOP ALONG LOU—John Lawson Tyree, banjo. Recorded in Sontag [Franklin County], Virginia, on January 13, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 1:05.**

"Hop Along Lou" is a piece Mr. Tyree played for the square dances that used to be held in the basement of his home. Until ten years ago, older blacks in the Sontag section of Franklin County held square dances in the homes of different people throughout the winter. This tradition has since died out, but John Lawson had a square dance as late as 1972. In addition to square dance instrumentals, Mr. Tyree also plays lyric songs like "Cuckoo Bird" and an animated version of the "Fox Chase." John Lawson Tyree (b. 1914) has always lived in eastern Franklin County and picked up banjo playing from his father, John Walker Tyree, and his uncle, Samuel Tyree. "Hop Along Lou" was learned from his uncle and, although it bears a title similar to a song recorded by Tom Ashley and others, it's not the same piece.



JOHN LAWSON TYREE

**3. THE CUCKOO BIRD—John Calloway, vocal and banjo. Recorded in Martinsville [Henry County], Virginia, on November 21, 1976, by Kip Lornell. 1:35.**

There are very few native American ballads dealing with sporting events and "Ten Broeck and Mollie" (Laws H 27) is the only one which enjoys any widespread popularity. The song is based on a horse race which took place on July 4, 1878, in Kentucky (see D.K. Wilgus, "Ten Broeck and Mollie: a Race and a Ballad," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 2 (1956), 77, for a full account). "Ten Broeck and Mollie" was probably most popular in Kentucky and remained a fairly localized ballad until the 1930s when it appeared on a phonograph record by John Byrd, a black twelve-string guitarist from Louisville, Kentucky, in 1930. The ballad was probably most widely disseminated, however, via a late 1930s recording by the popular country duo, Charlie and Bill Monroe. John Calloway was born in 1906 in Franklin County but has lived in Henry County for nearly 60 years. He learned the clawhammer banjo style from local blacks and employs it on this song which he learned from an uncle, Harry Calloway. A shy man, Mr. Calloway was hesitant to record at all and this is the only complete song he played for me.



JOHN CALLOWAY

Photo by Kip Lornell

*Cuckoo, fine bird, warbles as he flies.  
Never hear him holler Cuckoo till the fourth day of  
July.*

*I'm going up on the mountain, up to a steeple so  
high.*

*So I can see old Timbrooks when he passes on by.*

*Old Mollie, she's a trotter, old Timbrooks, that  
horse can run.*

*I can see him a-coming, like powder from a gun.*

*Now the racetrack was so dusty and the wind was so  
high.*

*That I couldn't see old Timbrooks when he passes  
her on by.*

*Old mistress, she betted silver, old marster, he  
betted gold.*

*But old Timbrooks being a runner, he went in four  
by four.*

*Selected Discography:* Tom Ashley—"Cuckoo Bird"—  
(Folkways FA 2359)

John Byrd—"Old Timbrooks  
Blues"—Paramount 12997—  
(Origin Jazz Library 8)

Monroe Brothers—"Molly and  
Tenbrooks"—Columbia 20612  
(Harmony 7338)

**4. POOR FARMERS—Lemuel Jones, vocal. Re-  
corded at the State Farm, Richmond [Henrico  
County], Virginia, on May 31, 1936, by John and  
Alan Lomax. 1:05.**

Relatively few American folk songs of protest concerning the plight of the farmer have emerged over the years. Several important studies concerning protest songs and folk-song types have appeared (see Green, *Only a Miner*, Urbana, 1972, and Greenway, *American Folksongs of Protest*, Philadelphia, 1953), but no lengthy works deal with agrarian songs. Fiddlin' John Carson, a fiddle player from Georgia, recorded a number of songs for Okeh and Bluebird during the 1920s and 1930s that were sympathetic to the economic plight of the farmer—"The Farmer is the Man that Feeds Them All" and "The Honest Farmer."

Recordings of protest songs by blacks prior to the civil rights movement are relatively scarce. The main body of such songs is found in the recordings done by the Lomaxes for the Library of Congress during the mid-1930s through the early 1940s. Their collecting yielded prison work songs, blues, dance pieces, fife and drum band music, children's game songs, Child ballads, and protest songs, among others. This recording by Lemuel Jones was part of this project. Nothing is known of Jones except that he is presumed to have been an inmate of the prison system at the time of the recording. One other effort to document protest songs similar to "Poor Farmers" was undertaken by Lawrence Gellert, who recorded numerous protest songs in Georgia and North and South Carolina between 1933 and 1937. Eighteen examples of Gellert's recordings are found on Rounder L.P. #4004 *Negro Songs of Protest*.

*Work all the week and don't make enough.  
Pay my board and buy my snuff.  
It's hard, it's hard on we poor farmers, it's  
hard.*

*Every night when I get home,  
Peas in the pot and the old jaw bone.  
It's hard, it's hard on we poor farmers, it's hard.*

*Whoa gee.*

*Work all the week and don't make enough.  
Pay my board and buy my snuff.  
It's hard, it's hard, it's hard on we poor farmers, it's  
hard.*

*Git up here, Jim.*

*Work all the week to sun to sun.  
Fifteen cents when payday come.  
It's hard, it's hard, it's hard on we poor farmers, it's  
hard.*

*Every night when I get home,  
Peas in the pot and old jaw bone.  
It's hard, it's hard, it's hard on we poor farmers, it's  
hard.*

*Every morning when I wake up,  
Got to feed my horse and all hay cut.  
It's hard, it's hard, it's hard on we poor farmers, it's  
hard.*

*Selected Discography:* Mercy Dee—"Walked Down So  
Many Turnrows"—(Arhoolie  
1007)

Mance Lipscomb—"Mr. Tom  
Moore's Farm"—(Blues  
Classics 16)

Bob Miller—"Farm Relief  
Blues"—Brunswick 4529

**5. TENNESSEE DOG—Jimmie Strothers, vocal  
and banjo. Recorded at the State Farm in  
Richmond [Henrico County], Virginia, on May 31,  
1936, by John Lomax and Harold Spivacke. 1:40.**

Minstrel shows were popular in America until around the turn of the century. Several books concerning minstrel shows have been published and for a detailed account of these shows consult either Robert Toll, *Blackening Up: The Minstrel Show in 19th Century America*, (New York, 1974) or Carl Whittke, *Tambo and Bones*, (Durham, 1930). With the decline of the minstrel show, vaudeville took over the city stages and travelling medicine shows took to the rural areas. Both these entertainment media incorporated minstrel show sketches and music and the travelling medicine show proved a rich source of songs for southern folk musicians. With the advent of wholesale commercial phonograph recordings in the early 1900s, the oral documentation of this material began. Minstrel shows, probably via medicine shows, were the inspiration for songs like "Carve Dat Possum" by Uncle Dave Macon and the Fruit Jar Drinkers, "I Got Mine" by Frank Stokes, and the cante-fable "Dr. Ginger Blue" by Arthur Tanner and His Blue Ridge Corn Shuckers. Jimmie Strothers was an inmate when he recorded for Lomax and Spivacke, and another performance "I Used To Work On The Tractor" is heard on side one of this record.

*Anybody here want to buy a little dog?  
Come right here I'll sell you.  
Ain't no catfish, ain't no hog  
And I'm right here to tell you.  
That dog, that Tennessee dog,  
Oh his head is long, his ears is flat,  
He never stops eating till he balls that jack.  
That dog, talking about that dog,  
He's the meanest dog that come from Tennessee.*

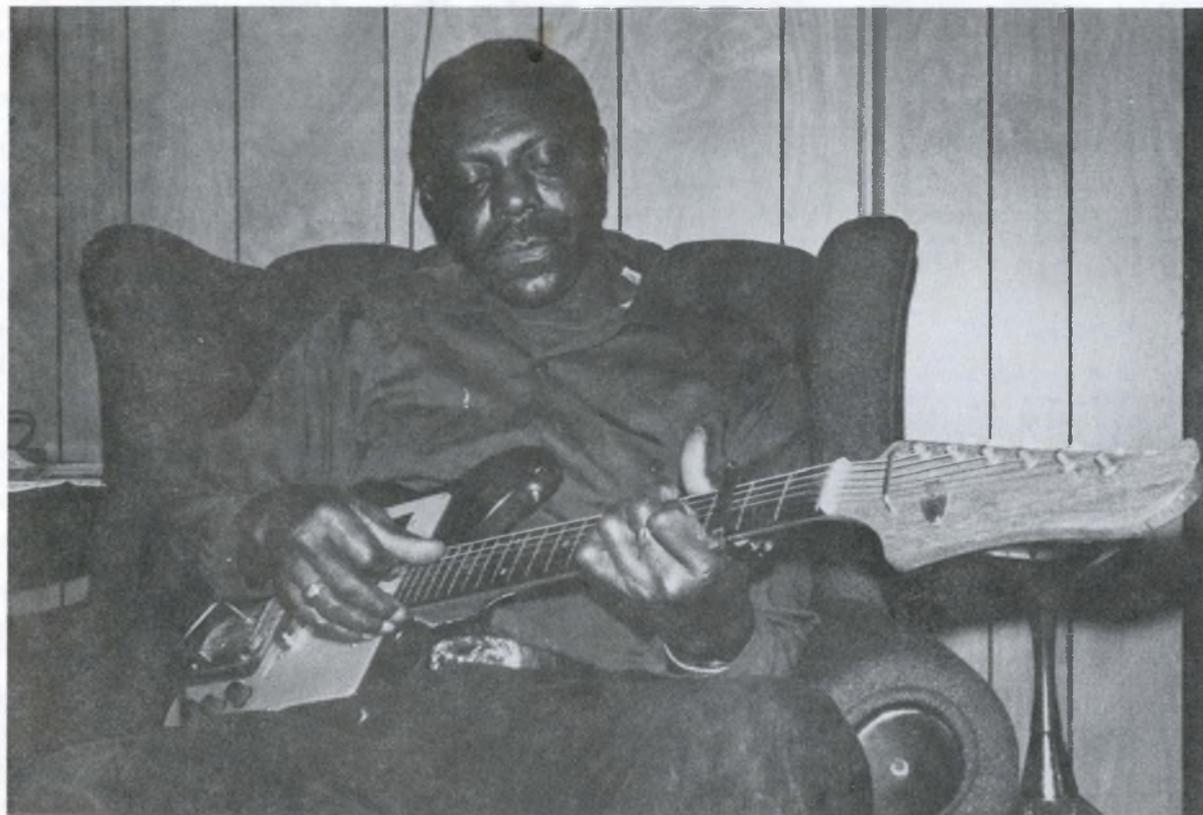
*Now he can eat more meat than any butcher dog,  
Eats beefsteaks, pork chop, and liver.  
He catch more rats than any other cat,  
On this side of Mississippi River.  
That dog, that dog, that talking about that dog.  
(What about him?)  
Oh his head is long, his ears is flat,  
He never stops eating till he ball that jack.  
That dog (Lay down there pup). That mean little dog  
(I tell you to lay down.)  
He's the meanest dog that come from Tennessee.*

*Now does anybody here want to buy a little dog?  
I'm right here to sell you.  
Ain't no catfish, ain't no hog  
And I'm right here to tell you.  
That dog, talking about that dog,  
Oh his head is long, his ears is flat,  
He never stops eating till he balls that jack.  
That dog (Lay down there I tell you), mean old dog,  
He's the meanest dog that come from Tennessee.*

*I say come to me Tab.  
 He balls right up and shivers.  
 He catch more rats than any cat,  
 On this side of the Mississippi River.  
 That dog, that dog, that dog,  
 That mean little dog.  
 Oh yeah, his head is long, ears is flat,  
 He never stops eating till he balls that jack.  
 That dog, talking about that dog.  
 He's the meanest dog that comes from Tennessee,  
 I mean.*

**6. POOR BLACK ANNIE—Clayton Horsley, guitar. Recorded in Lynchburg [Campbell County], Virginia, on April 14, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 1:55.**

Mr. Horsley is primarily a blues musician who plays many songs learned by way of phonograph records by Blind Boy Fuller, Big Bill, Lightnin' Hopkins, Big Maceo, and others. His earliest influences, however, were the guitarists and banjo players he heard while growing up in rural Amherst County in the 1940s. "John Henry" and "Poor Black Annie" were two songs he heard banjo players perform and they impressed him so much that he adapted their style to guitar. Clayton tunes his guitar to an open chord and finger-picks in imitation of the banjo players. John Jackson sometimes uses this technique and I've also encountered it in Orange County, North Carolina, where several black musicians adapted banjo tunes to guitar utilizing an open-chord tuning known locally as "K.C." I also recorded another version of "Poor Black Annie" by Dink Roberts, a black banjo player from Alamance County, North Carolina. Mr. Horsley recalls there



CLAYTON HORSLEY

were words to "Poor Black Annie" but remembers only the instrumental part. The "Black Annie" song family might well be of local black origin. I have not encountered it anywhere else. Another reference to a "black Annie" occurs in Bowles and Cook's "Wish To The Lord I'd Never Been Born." Clayton Horsley was born in 1929 and raised in Campbell County about twenty miles northwest of Lynchburg. He moved to Lynchburg as a teenager and has lived and worked there for the past seventeen years. He has been musically inactive for the past ten years or so but played regularly for house parties until the mid-1960s, when job pressures forced him to quit.

**7. EVE—Clarence Waddy, vocal and accordion. Recorded in Wicomico Church [Northumberland County], Virginia, on April 6, 1977, by Roddy Moore and Kip Lornell. 3:15.**

Secular black accordion playing is difficult to locate these days outside of the Cajun country. From interviews with older blacks, however, it would appear that up until some thirty years ago there were a great number of accordion players around. Evidently the generation born around the 1870s was the last to play accordion in substantial numbers. According to Mr. Waddy and his friends, there are a few younger blacks playing accordion in Northumberland but they only play at church.

"Eve," is a dance tune which was quite popular at local black dances during the teens and the 1920s and Mr. Waddy (b. 1892) learned it and



Photo by Kip Lornell

CLARENCE WADDY

other pieces from older black accordion players. I'm not certain of its origins, but I know that during the 1920s a dance with a similar name, "Adam and Eve," was popular among whites living in southern Grayson County, Virginia, and Surry and Allegheny Counties in North Carolina. The references to Eve are obviously biblical in origin.

*Eve bit the apple, see.*

*Eve, Eve, Eve, Eve bit the apple.*

*Eve, lord baby, lord baby.*

*Eve, Eve, Eve, Eve, Eve.*

*Eve bit the apple.*

*Eve bit it but once.*

*Sweetheart in this world.*

*So sorry that I ever left my. . . .*

*Caused me to weep,*

*And she caused me to moan,*

*Lord she caused me to leave my home.*

*Eve, Eve, Eve, Eve, Eve bit the apple.*

*Lord, lord, lord, lord, lord.*

*Eve bit the apple.*

*Bit it but once.*

*Sweetheart in this world.*

*So sorry that I ever left her. . . .*

*Eve, she caused me to weep,*

*And she caused me to moan.*

*Lord she caused me to leave my mother's home.*

Spoken: *Of course, I'm tired. It's hard on me, hard on me. I declare that's hard on me. That's old "Eve." That's the old time "Eve." That's a party piece.*

Photo by Kip Lornell

**8. OLD BLUE—Irvin Cook, vocal and banjo. Recorded in Martinsville [Henry County], Virginia, on October 10, 1976, by Kip Lornell. 1:24.**

Minstrel shows were an important source of entertainment for many Americans one hundred or so years ago. They provided whites a distorted glimpse of what plantation life was like to southern "darkies." Beginning in the 1840s, the minstrel shows began touring the country with an entertaining and varied program which included music, dramatic sketches, and dances. Some of this material, such as the song "Old Blue," passed gradually into folk tradition and has been collected well into this century. This very fragmented version of "Old Blue" is played to the tune generally associated with "Georgia Buck" and was learned by Irvin from his father, who also played banjo.

*Old Blue was a good old dog.  
Treed a possum in a hollow log.  
Caught the possum and put him in the sack.  
Hung on to him till I got back.  
Old Blue.*

*Old Blue died in a dirty grave.  
Dug his grave with a silver spade.  
Let him down with a silver and chain.  
Old Blue.*

*Selected Discography:* Frank Hovington—"Old Blue"  
—(Library of Congress L.B.C.  
10)  
Jim Jackson — "Old Blue" —  
Vocalion 1146 — (Folkways  
FA 2952)  
Flemming and Townsend —  
"Old Coon Dog Blues"—Decca  
5419

**9. MEDLEY OF COUNTRY DANCE TUNES—John Jackson, vocal and guitar. Recorded in Fairfax [Fairfax County], Virginia, on September 16, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 4:10.**

Several other selections on this record deal with music that is used primarily for square dancing ("Cripple Creek" by Uncle Homer Walker and "Hop Along Lou" by John Lawson Tyree). In addition to group dancing, which included both round and square dancing patterns, there is also a solo dance tradition. In the southeastern white mountain culture, "clogging" is an example. Solo dancing is also wide-spread among southern blacks and is usually referred to as "buck dancing" by most musicians I've spoken with. John Jackson (b. 1928) has always lived in northern Virginia and plays blues and "hillbilly" songs as well as the dance tunes presented here. Mr. Jackson is probably the best known performer on this record. He has recorded three albums for Arhoolie records and has toured extensively in this country and abroad.

*This is an old song that we used to dance to coming up, when we were about growing up. They call it "Flat Foot Choice."*

*In years gone we used to dance a lot, they call square dance. Like 8 people, maybe, 12 people, sometimes as high as 16 people, we dancing in a set. They call it the "Flat Foot Choice." It's a good old*

*dance tune. This is one they used to do that buck dance to. They call it "Buck Dancers' Choice."*

*Call that the "Buck Dancers Choice." This is*



JOHN JACKSON

Photo by Charles L. Perdue, Jr.

another we used to call "Heel and Toe."

Call that one "Heel and Toe." And this is another one we used to dance to. They call "Sally in the garden sifting sand, Sally come riding in Jew Land." An old ghost song. They claim all these people were dancing and this ghost came in—with no head on and scared everybody away from the dance. Don't know whether—this was before my time but I used to hear the older heads talk about it. (Aside to his wife) Do you want to do a little Charleston to this?

And this is another one that they used to waltz to when I grew up.

**Selected Discography:** John Jackson—"Flatfoot and Buck Dance"—(Arhoolie 1025)  
Sam McGhee—"Buck Dancers Choice" Vocalion 5094—(Yazoo 1024)  
William Moore—"Old Country Rock" Paramount 12764 — (Origin Jazz Library 2)

**10. COTTON-EYED JOE—"Big Sweet" Lewis Hairston, vocal and banjo. Recorded in Martinsville [Henry County], Virginia, on September 28, 1977, by Kip Lornell. 1:23.**

This ante-bellum banjo piece is known throughout the South. The lyrics sung by "Big Sweet" are minimal and his emphasis is on the instrumental work. Like "Tennessee Dog" and "Old Blue," "Cotton-Eyed Joe" is most likely a product of the minstrel show stage and more complete printed versions tend to bear this out (see Scarborough, p. 69).

*Where you coming, where you been, where you going Cotton-Eyed Joe?  
Cotton-Eyed Joe, where you been?  
You been here 'while ago.  
Cotton-Eyed Joe, where you coming, where you been Cotton-Eyed Joe?*

*Now it was down in the country where I found Cotton-Eyed Joe.  
Cotton-Eyed Joe, I see you been here. . .  
Where you been, where you going, where you been Cotton-Eyed Joe?*

**Selected Discography:** Camp Creek Boys—"Cotton-Eyed Joe"—(County 409)  
Carter Brothers and Son — "Cotton-Eyed Joe"—Vocalion 5349—(New World Records 236 and County 519)  
The Mountain Ramblers — "Cotton-Eyed Joe"—(Atlantic 1347)



UNIDENTIFIED BANJO PLAYER.



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