







The lyrics for Folsy's Jesus Christ Is the Best however are contained in Johnson's two recordings of the Jesus Christ Recorded in Texas, Record (Columbia 14931) and Columbia, 14931-B<sup>1</sup> and it is a pity that Johnson's cassette did not get into him as the text is so interesting also.

Jesus went on mee head,  
Jesus went on mee head,  
Come all the way from heaven down here,  
To go on mee head.

When Christ came down, he opened the books of the seven seals,  
And that's the way he came to me,  
Jesus went on mee head,  
Jesus went on mee head,  
Come all the way from heaven down here,  
To go on mee head.

He promised the good Jesus (Jesus) for five thousand years,  
He'll stay on mee head,  
Jesus went on mee head,  
Jesus went on mee head,  
Come all the way from heaven down here,  
To go on mee head.

Three intertextualities cannot are quoted from early disc that Harris performed. The first comes from a very old song which many people have from the poor German version (Disc En Dixie by Paul, Columbia 14915, Disc 14915)

God made a nigger,  
Made him in the night,  
Made him in a hurry,  
Drops to point him white,

A later version which reflects the atmosphere of racial discrimination common in most Southern states in those days. The second is a variation of a theme most familiar from the use by Jelly Roll Morton in the jazz classic (I thought I HEARD John, John, John, John, which is known to have a folk origin. It is interesting to see the usage by a Texas singer.

Heavy foot, white'n' foot,  
Take it easy,  
Thought I heard his (Jesus say)  
White foot, black foot,  
Take it easy!

The third fragment to trace what the Germans describe as 'a corrupt set of lyrics, Jesus' is generic name for selection and 'repetitive' party songs) and it resembles a verse in Leadbelly's White Head, Black, White song

Jesus take him to the white side,  
Jesus take him to the white side,

Several verses of White, Black, described by the Germans as a 'historic folk song' were collected from Folsy himself. In the his family song was usually called a 'white' and Black, the change of the Brown Brothers, who appear in numerous Texas disc it was however widely known throughout the South without, of course, the entire operation.

White had got over in the yard that's never been checked,  
White had got over that never been checked (John)<sup>1</sup>  
White had, white had,  
White had, white had,  
White had, white had, white had,

If you want to be a man, a man in field,  
Let your balls hang down like a penny ball,

White had to a man like this,  
If he can't get a woman, he'll take his life,

White had got a beautiful belly and a house see hole,  
White had

Paragraph No. 14773 at Knoxville have the alias 'Frank Brown', presumably as a tribute to his reference. Frank Brown's true name was Augustus (or August) Haggerty<sup>2</sup> and he was born in Missouri, Union on 25 October 1881. He was apparently first imprisoned sometime in the 1880s as the prison records show he was discharged on 18 June 1894 but his freedom was short-lived as he was back in the state penitentiary when the Germans visited it in 1936. He was finally discharged on 21 February 1938.

Haggerty made many other vocal recordings for the Republic of Folsy Inc, two of which are included in this album. Three have guitar accompaniment, which certainly is not like and probably on all three, is by fellow prisoner Jack Johnson. In addition the Germans took down from Terry Moore some verses related to the ancient heavily talked Old, Black, White.

Oh, my wife, oh, my wife won't you please listen to me,  
Oh' baby when you're in that bed up at my gate post, when my wife need to be?

You think back, you think back, your mind and cannot see,  
That's neither' but a mile over my mother's seat to see,

You ride many miles and I'll ride many too,  
You never ride a mile over with a saddle on 'ole!

The notes and hints to two of Haggerty's recordings have been published in Old, Black, White, Volume 14-770 which he sings accompanied (AFN 138 & 14), and a work-song Chattanooga, Chag 14, 1940, two other groups of prisoners (AFN 138 & 14). The introduction to the latter (repeatedly begins, 'This Chattanooga was "Frank Brown" and he's dead now (1940). His body was a thick wedge of strength that could be a cushion round his shoulder (ie. the shimmering use of the rhyming word all the other the last line) but, he had the voice of a lion that for both with songs and spirituals.' Frank Brown's words certainly live up to this description. In (I HEARD John, John, John, John his version is 'John like a Christian, was like a model 7-7-7-7'. The text was:

Jesus' plenty only water, keep my name down,  
Jesus' plenty only water, keep my name down,  
Say you know when I get started, it's hell all over town,

Haggerty also recorded an unaccompanied version of this song. White, Black, White, Disc 14912 (AFN 132 & 14).

1. Columbia 14914-B is titled White, Black, White, Recorded in Texas, but this is the same song as an 14914-B.

2. The Germans have retained their mis-spelling of this name.

3. Dr Haggerty, the prison records contain both versions of both names.

1. Fred 'The Old Woman' & Jim 'The Man' contains such strange scenes from the prison mass tradition as:

That they tell the Louisiana to a cockatrice' house,<sup>21</sup>  
Might be a cockatrice but I'm going free long.

The last verse again celebrates the man who taught Texas prison songs. "Thanks" Bob Howell.

**Police Agency**, apparently recounts the events that led to Frank Harris's imprisonment in April 1933. It seems odd that after a startling attack like this came up in June of that year and if the lyrics had known that it may be that the prison records are in error. In the last verses to songs "Thank Heaven from Louisiana" which along with his recorded Louisiana Blues (AFM 121 1-1) and the single "Howdaddy" have't references, suggest that he may also have lived in that area.

**Little Texas**, agrees in a variety of related Texas country blues. Haggerty's version is of particular interest in that it predates the first commercial recording of this song by Joe Pullum (made in 1935, Standard S-1482). Although Pullum's lyrics are different from Haggerty's text, when taken from the same source, Little Texas was apparently the source of a misreading shown in Victoria Spivey's words "all the more could get together."<sup>22</sup>

Jack Johnson, also known as "Black Jack" was, according to prison records, born on 15 December 1877 and came from Macon, Texas, after long he had been in Huntsville when the Louisiana recorded him in 1926 but the records show that he was discharged on 24 February 1934. His prison photos on *The Black Jack* (see starting two more attractive with that of Gene Campbell and Carl Davis. This name refers to the prison situation:

If I ever get back, baby, women and drink this here,  
Lord, I'll get back, baby, and drink this here,  
Say, I won't be getting, baby, of this crime no more.

The single recording made to a certain job sent by the name of "Little Brother" is the only one here that has been traced (partially) back through the chain of ownership and it should be noted that one *Archie's* (possibly<sup>23</sup>) shows the title of this song as *Oh, And Some Goodbye*. The R. C. Line, Archie himself is in the "Archie and R. C. Line" which Little Brother sings about in his last lines. What is of considerable interest, for during the latter part of the 1930s, a record called the *Archie and R. C. Line* was issued but never completed.<sup>24</sup> Presumably a year about this original record titled *Archie's*, perhaps on a work song, and has been preserved as noted by the inclusion to Little Brother's blues.<sup>25</sup> Two other references are mentioned in the poem, the name *Joe* (years later) and the *Black Island* (never noted). The second verse is yet another about "Whitey Bob Howell", who Little Brother says "wants a thousand men" (it is perhaps noted on Howell's environment status as delivered to him then 1933, 1934) and in the Texas prison system.<sup>26</sup> In some cases the line "Lord, ain't you tired of making for the big fat man" is a reference to the prison guard and similar sentiments are expressed in the Texas recording *Little Texas* (see the *Big Fat Man* by Mary Jo and Eugene (Huntington) (Standard) "I been proper the Police, Lord, My Captain said" in 1934 but appears in recordings by two other Texans, Texas Alexander (Standard Blues, Standard S2024) and Wright Johnson (Single Special, volume 100).

A problem surrounds the identity of Little Brother. The Texas Department of Correction has supplied a "correct biography" for one Wesley Smith who had this nickname. The Little Brother name in the Standard version has *Big Red Eyes* (Fred 11-1-1) was issued at Huntsville in 1931, but (because) was discharged from there on 4 April 1933. The record might have been made the previous year but the Louisiana was released elsewhere in Huntsville in 1930 and as did not recording there that year.<sup>27</sup> It is not made in Huntsville, and this date does seem to be in doubt, then it must have been in 1928. Nevertheless, Smith's biography may still be applicable and to therefore given. He was born in Wichita, Texas (the biggest town between Houston and Corpus Christi) on 11 March 1894. His mother's name is given as Florence (and his father's as Wiley) but perhaps these have been reversed. His wife's name was Melissa and he had two brothers and two sisters all but one of whom lived in Wichita. His last job is given as chauffeur to one Ed Pines. He had a previous conviction for the theft of a tractor, for which he was fined in 1921, and he received the state penitentiary on 28 August 1924 for a term of two to eight years for an uncompleted crime.

How James Robertson, another 1928 at Huntsville, acquired the nickname "Tricky Sam" we do not know and the only biographical information we have is that he was born in the city of the same name, Texas on 13 January 1899. One of the items of his discharge, on 1 October 1923, his wife Janie Robertson was named as well (though it need be that Janie). What is evident however is that Tricky Sam was one of the finest songwriters at Huntsville in 1924. He recorded two distinct versions of *Tricky Sam*<sup>28</sup> and a long *Little Texas*, additionally the final notes about the performed *Franklin and Albert* and a country blues *From Texas, Oh, Lord*<sup>29</sup> for the Louisiana.

**Tricky Sam's Blues in a Little Texas** is the subject of a limited edition booklet written and published by Richard A. Golden (London, 1967). This traces the history of songs about Tricky Sam from a fragment collected by John Thomas, a record 1928 in the Sydney County area of Texas,<sup>30</sup> up to an uncompleted recording made by Mance Lipscomb in 1961.<sup>31</sup> Tricky Sam is only the second

21. Both the Louisiana blues *Franklin and Albert* and the *Franklin and Albert* Prison Blues, Mississippi have been widely described as cockatrice' houses.

22. Tony Howell, "Folklore Blues", *Long Magazine*, No. 120, January, 1951, p. 44, states, "Tommy-doo-brother and granddaddy 'Oh, Big Red' (Louisiana blues) recorded two versions of *Little Texas* in 1929 (Standard 100), and Standard 1930 and two other Texas prison recordings in the 1930s. Another *Whitey Bob Howell* (AFM 120) and Robert Stone (Atlantic 141 15, Atlantic 141 16), which the name is also noted by Lighter's biography for the *Archie* (Atlantic 1004) but this song makes no reference to *Little Texas*.

23. *Franklin and Albert* recorded in *The English Language in The Archives of American Folk Song* by July, 1949, Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, Sheet Division, 1948.

24. A history of this version is given in *The Many Strips Of Country: The Memphis Road*, a chapter in, Charles Nelson Childs, *Common City and The Highway*, Madison, The Stone Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1965, pp. 193-194.

25. Lenny Carr however refers to the "Archie and R. C. Line" as a working record in his *Arkansas Woman Blues* (Prestige 1049).

26. John S. Loman, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

27. Loman and Loman, *op. cit.* pp. 105-107 has a version of *Tricky Sam*, attributed to Tricky Sam but there are a number of differences between this, Smith's recordings, and a list attributed to him and one of his friends to the Louisiana? *Red* notes.

28. The Louisiana note that he has the *From Texas, Oh, Lord* in the name as for *From Texas, Oh, Lord* printed in John A. Loman and Alan Loman, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, New York, Oxford, 1948, pp. 194-195.

29. *The Ballad of Mr. Tricky Sam*, written by John Thomas in, J. Frank Dobson, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

30. *The Unrecorded Folk Songs of Texas*, Eugene Carl 50. Other recordings of the song include those by James Temple (Standard 1111), Alan Loman (Standard S-7984), Dr. Ed Miller (Folk 100) and C. D. Brown (Decca 401) 21-1959.

is now known to have recorded John Chappin, the first being William Jones (who also recorded Bill for the Locomotive of Lafayette, Louisiana in July 1910 (AFS 74 B 2)). Sam changed the word choice 'You can't make it down like Mark's' Chasin' to 'You making it down, baby, like Mark's' Chasin' a small but significant alteration, for 'Mark's' Chasin' to lead and gate. Let me have to copy his good work on'.

Bill Spang (Lowe, 1 0<sup>2</sup>) is one of the best known Mark Texas folk ballads but relatively few versions have been recorded and few of these are commercial ones. Leadbelly recorded it three times for the Archive of Folk Song (AFS 14 A, B, AFS 17 B 1, AFS 107 B) and once for Capitol in 1946 (Capitol (LP) 6 3095). Wallace Guthrie and Sylvester Jones recorded it earlier for the Archive in 1934 (see RG6 207) and Fiddler 'Fiddler' Buckhouse recorded it in 1940 (AFS 1999, p. 1, at Lubin, Texas). John A. Lomas believed the version he obtained from Buckhouse was other than that obtained from Leadbelly.<sup>10</sup> An early printed reference to the song is The American Songster by Carl Sandburg (New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927, pp. 22-23). Here it is titled Bill B but the song is definitely the familiar ballad about Bill Martin and Bill Spang. An interesting article which highlights the complex (fusions of oral) transmission in the story of how the song reached Sandburg, apparently to suggest it from the son of a lawyer in Rockport, New York state, who had learned it from a friend from New Orleans, Louisiana, while the two were riding on top of a box car heading for Chattanooga (at all places!) with the American Relief Expedition. The friend had been taught the song by a lady in New Orleans who had himself learned it a few days earlier in Memphis from a Mark, newly arrived there from Galveston, Texas. No wonder names and places got changed around. This Bill's story is also instructive in that it places the origin of the song in Texas and indeed Leadbelly was clearly convinced that Bill Martin had sung down like Spang in the streets of Dallas not long before he arrived in that city. The fourth verse of Tricky Sam's recording, beginning 'Bring out your rubber-tired horses and your rubber-tired hank' is a (leading one which crops up in a number of different ballads, notably Franklin And Albert<sup>11</sup> and Bill. Tricky Sam also uses this verse in the last of Franklin And Albert which the Lomaxes took down from him. There is further evidence to that he similarly uses the verse about people pulling over in St. Louis in both songs and that usually Franklin and Bill Martin took over a Cole 11, (usually the field note text of Tricky Sam's Bill Spang seems back the 'rubber-tired horses, rubber-tired hank' and 'St. Louis' verses. It is in fact an extension from the recorded version that one wonders if Tricky Sam sang Bill Spang, for the Lomaxes on more than one occasion and that the last they noted down in a companion.

The extent in this collection is on three ballads. Except that the selection would have been more representative if it had included more songs and the like, this set (and its companion album RG6 218) offers the most interesting example of pre-war black Texas music you're to be made available on long playing records. There is much here that is new to hear, enjoy and research and anyone like Paul Huron, Frank Jones (Gipsey) and Tricky Sam must in future be accorded a place amongst the elite of recorded pre-war black folk music performers.

Bob Green (c) 1975

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11. Lowe, op. cit.
  12. Buckhouse was taught Bill Spang when 'a boy in Knoxville' to 'Cokeville' a Dallas Mark.
  13. The writer either points out that Bill B and Bill Spang are phonetically similar and that the change in names may well be a result of the oral transmission process.
  14. In his notes in Archives (LP) 1995, Many Ligonish, Texas (Hattercopper And Songster) (Barclay, 1995, p. 5) Mark McDonald refers to his attempt to locate details of the actual crime and it would be interesting to know if he ever received a reply to his letter to the (Dallas County) Clerk.
  15. Examples include Franklin quoted by W. H. Thomson, op. cit., pp. 22-11, version A of Franklin and Albert (collected from Texas sources in 1908) in Lowe and Lomas, American Ballads and Folk Songs, op. cit., pp. 101-102, and Archives of Folk Song recordings by John French (see Volume 1 in this series, RG6 217) and Hanker V. Gage (see Volume 4 in this series, RG6 202).

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Recordings supervised by John Avery Lomas and Alan Lomas for the Archive of (American) Folk Song, the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Biographical details are on the album sleeve.

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