THE OLD-TIME HERALD
A MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO OLD-TIME MUSIC
Volume 12, Number 10
April - May 2011

ADDIE GRAHAM: BEEN A LONG TIME TRAVELING
1926 FIDDLE CONTEST MYSTERY

JUNE 2-4 · 2011
THE BILL MONROE MEMORIAL BLUEGRASS PARK
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THE 2011 JOHN HARTFORD MEMORIAL FESTIVAL

THE INFAMOUS STRINGDUSTERS
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Unsolicited comments from recent purchasers:

- ".....This book will take its place as one of the monumental documentations and explications of old time music. The precise language is beautifully chosen and descriptive and the scope is simply in a class of its own." - Shel Sandler, Brandywine Friends of Old Time Music
- "Worth every penny even if you can’t read music." - Larry Warren
- "You have done for American tunes what Child did for English and Scottish ballads. Amazing." - Will Fielding, Fielding Banjos
- "...This will become a classic reference work for anyone interested in American fiddle tunes." - Joel Marcus
- "The quality of the production is an appropriate tribute to tunes that pass the test of time while providing succeeding generations with a means to the inspiration, joy, and comradeship that the music has provided us." - Steve Kessler, Appalachian Friends of Old Time Music
- "My God, it is so beautiful!!!! What a wonderful labor of love and now made for the ages!" - Phillip Gura, co-author, America’s Instrument, The Banjo in the Nineteenth Century
- "Not only are the arrangements beautiful and easy to follow, the notes, depth of information and overall presentation are way beyond our expectations for what we knew would be a definitive collection. Your wisdom, skill and love of the music are evident in every page." - Malcolm Smith, Ph.D.
- "Wow, zip, bang! Woo woo!" - Harry Liestrand, fiddler, Sweets Mill String Band
- "If anyone who likes Old-Time music but doesn’t play an instrument thinks that it will not be appropriate for them, all I can say is that they are mistaken. There is so much in there that is so good and so informative that anyone can learn a lot from it - all of it valuable... and it’s all there - a truly historical account of fiddle tunes, musicians, and their recordings!" - Jack Bond, Old Time Music aficionado
- ".....I took it to band practice last night and had to fight off my fiddle player to get it back!" - Gene Bowlen
- "This is one of the most important accomplishments of the OTM revival and I congratulate you on what you all have done. If I may say so, Highwoods was a very big deal but the publication of this book is even bigger and you all have honored the music and the musicians in a profound labor of love." - David Allen
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The Old-Time Music Group, Inc., celebrates the love of old-time music, old-time music—grassroots, or home grown music and dance—shares origins, influences and musical characteristics with roots musics throughout America. Our magazine, the Old-Time Herald, casts a wide net, highlighting the Southeastern tradition while opening its pages to kindred and comparable traditions and new directions. It provides enlightening articles and in-depth reviews, opportunities for musical learning and sharing; and a forum for addressing the issues and questions that bear upon the field.

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Letters

To our friends in Japan

ここ数週間のうちに、度重なる災害に襲われた日本を世界中の人々は深い悲しみの心で見守っています。アメリカや海外のオールドタイム・ミュージックのコミュニティはオールドタイムとブルーグラスへの思いでつながっている日本のミュージシャンとファンをとても心配しています。一日でも早く復興し、明るい未来が来ることを祈っています。

The Old-Time Herald

News from the OTH

The Old-Time Herald has undergone some staff transitions since the beginning of 2011. Ruth Eckles has been the OTH’s business and advertising director since 2008, and many of you have been in touch with her over this time. This year she has moved on to a position at another nonprofit organization here in Durham. We enjoyed working with Ruth, and are grateful for the time and excellent work she devoted to the Old-Time Herald.

Stepping into the role of OTH business director is old-time fiddler Peter Hencig. Peter has been a North Carolinian for nearly a decade, having previously lived and played music for many years in the Charlottesville, Virginia, area, and before that, in his native Westport, Connecticut. Anytime you have a question about OTH subscriptions, back issues or merchandise, old-time music, or old-time professional wrestling, you can contact Peter at oth@oldtimeherald.org, or (919) 286-2041. For now, questions about advertising should be directed to editor@oldtimeherald.org.

Finally, we were distressed recently to learn that some Canadian subscribers received defective copies of the February/March Old-Time Herald, in which a stretch of pages were either omitted or repeated. We believe that only a handful of such copies went out. If you received a defective copy, please contact us so that we can replace it right away with a good copy; and please accept our apologies.

Correction

In the review of the Liedstrand Family’s CD In Harmony, appearing in the February/March issue, we supplied an incorrect web address. The correct address for ordering the album is www.mtwow.com.

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Old Time Fiddler’s
& Bluegrass Festival


Fiddler’s Grove Campground,
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info@fiddlersgrove.com
Here & There

Congratulations

Congratulations to the Carolina Chocolate Drops, 2011 Grammy Award Winners in the Best Traditional Folk Album Category, for their Nonesuch release Genuine Negro Jig.

Events

The square dance event Dare to Be Square is coming to Riner, Virginia, April 29 - May 1. For callers, dancers, and musicians of all levels, the event will feature workshops, square dances, and jamming. Callers include Michael Ismerio, Phil Jamison, Will Mentu. Visit www.DareToBeSquare.org for more information and to register.

Galax, Virginia, will host the inaugural Houston Fest this year, on May 6 and 7. Organized by his friends and family, the festival is a celebration of the life of 18-year-old banjo player Houston Caldwell, who passed away recently. Numerous bluegrass and old-time bands will perform at the two-day festival, to be held at Felts Park in Galax, Virginia. Events for children and teenagers who are budding musicians will encourage their learning about traditional music. Proceeds from the festival will provide funds to the Galax Volunteer Fire Department, and grants to nonprofits and local youth aspiring to carry on the musical traditions of the region. For tickets and information, call (276) 236-9908 or visit www.houstonfestgalax.com.

Ken and Trisha Brooks are opening a new music store, Strum Hollow Music, in Spring Hill, Florida. Catering especially to old-time and folk musicians, the store will have its grand opening on May 14, with music by the Strum Hollow String Band, an open mic, and food. Call (352) 610-4341 or visit www.strumhollow.com for more information.

The thirteenth annual Bluff Country Gathering in Lanesboro, Minnesota, will take place May 19 - 22, with workshops, concert, and barn dance with Bruce Greene, Ron Kane and Meghan Merker, Tim Foss, Rayna Gellert, Tracy Schwarz & Ginny Hawker, Paul Tyler, and Mac Benford. For more info visit www.boveheil.com.

On May 30, Dwight Lamb Day will be celebrated at the Onawa Community Center in Onawa, Iowa. A concert from 2 to 4 PM, will feature Dwight Lamb, as well as
Danish accordionist Mette Jensen and fiddler Kristian Bugg playing Danish tunes from Lamb's grandfather, Chris Jerup. The event also marks the release of the trio's CD *Live in Denmark 2010*. The concert is free, and will be followed by a party. Contact Bill Peterson at missourivalleymusic@sicomco.net for more information.

The 16th Annual Charlie Poole Music Festival returns to Eden, North Carolina's Governor Morehead Park, on June 10 and 11. It will feature concerts, competitions, and the presentation of a lifetime achievement award to musician and Charlie Poole biographer and relative Kinney Korner. For more information, contact festival director Louise Price at (336) 623-1043, or visit www.charlie-poole.com. The annual Bluff Mountain Music Festival will take place on June 11 in Hot Springs, North Carolina. The event features traditional mountain music and dance, and is held on the grounds of the Hot Springs Resort and Spa, will run from 10 AM to 8 PM. Proceeds will benefit the Madison County Arts Council. Call (828) 649-1301 or visit www.madisncountyarts.com to find out more.

The 17th Annual Old-Time Music Ozark Heritage Festival will take place June 17 and 18 in downtown West Plains, Missouri. Featured will be traditional Ozark musicians, dancers, storytellers, craftspeople, and cooks. The event runs from 9 AM to 10 PM both days. For a full schedule of events, visit www.oldtime-music.org or call (888) 256-8835.

The 39th Annual Indiana Fiddlers Convention (Battle Ground) will take place June 24-26 at the Tippecanoe Battlefield in Battle Ground, Indiana. There will be concerts and workshops for all ages, with camping available. Call (765) 742-1419 or visit www.dcwi.com/fiddlers to find out more.

Asheville, North Carolina's Folk Heritage Committee has announced its Shindig on the Green and Mountain Dance and Folk Festival dates for 2011. The events are held at Pack Square Park's McGuire Green, on the Balsam Mountain Lumsford State, in downtown Asheville. Dates are July 2, 9, 16, and 23; August 13, 20, and 27; and September 3. The 84th Annual Mountain Dance and Folk Festival will take place August 4,

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**THE GEORGIA STRING BAND FESTIVAL**

**Honoring the Georgia Yellow Hammers, Andrew & Jim Baxter & All Of Our Great Georgia Pickers & Fiddlers of The 90's & 30's**

**CALHOUN, GA, 1/2 Between Atlanta & Chattanooga on I-75**

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**Friday, May 13th**

Opening Concert At Harris Arts Center Theater, Downtown Calhoun With

**The Georgia Crackers & The New Binkley Brothers**

8PM - $15 - 706-629-2599

**Presented By**

The Harris Arts Center, 212 S. Wall St., Calhoun, and Generously Sponsored By Omnova, Chris Taylor Construction, Proctor Chiropractic, Bridges Discount Home Store and Old Hat Records

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**Saturday, May 14th**

After a 70 year break, the return of

**The Gordon County Fiddler's Convention**

Noon 'Till Dark-Thirty
At The Cherokee Capital Fairgrounds,
Hwy 53 at Liberty Rd. Calhoun

**Competitions In Fiddle, Banjo & String Bands**

**Generous Cash Prizes!**

Featuring Performances By The Freight Hoppers,
The Pea Ridge Ramblers, The New Binkley Brothers,
The Groundshaws, Cheyenne Medders, The Jackrabbits & Many More!
Vendors, Luthiers, M.C. Parking, Food, Camping Available

$10 Admission. Children under 12- Free

Please visit The Georgia String Band Festival Page on Facebook or call 706-629-2599 for more Information
5, and 6, at the Diana Wortham Theatre at Pack Place in downtown Asheville. The events all feature performances by traditional mountain musicians and dancers from Western North Carolina and beyond. Visit www.folkheritage.org for details.

In concert and on tour

Joe Herrmann and David McLaughlin will give a bluegrass and old-time concert on April 15 at 8 PM at the Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 420 Willa Road, Newark, Delaware. The concert is sponsored by the Brandywine Friends of Old-Time Music. Tickets will be sold at the door only, $17 for members of the general public, $14 for seniors, $12 for members of BFOTM, and anyone under the age of 17 free. Visit www.brandywinefriends.org or call (302) 321-6666 for more information.

Bob Bovee and Gail Heil’s spring performance schedule includes appearances at Rock House in Reeds Spring, Missouri, on April 15; Springfield, Missouri, contra dance on April 16; Spring Grove Cinema in Spring Grove, Minnesota, on April 28; Harmony for Mayo concert in Rochester, Minnesota, on May 9; Harkin Store Historical Site in New Ulm, Minnesota, on May 29.

Matt Brown will appear at Birmingham Unitarian Church in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, opening for Jo Serrapere and the Williie Dunns, April 16; with Matt Brown’s Dream playing for the Easter Square Dance with caller Marlin Whitaker, at Concourse Hall in Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 24; Black Rose Acoustic Society Concert in Black Forest, Colorado, June 10; and teaching at the Colorado Suzuki Institute in Avon, Colorado, June 13 – 25.

The Carolina Chocolate Drops’ upcoming tour dates include appearances at Radford University, in Radford, Virginia, on April 13; the Porter Center for Performing Arts in Brevard, North Carolina, on April 14; Daleville Town Center in Daleville, Virginia, on April 30; the Lyric in Oxford, Mississippi, on May 7; the Bama Theatre in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on May 8; and for ROMP: Yellow Creek Park in Owensboro, Kentucky, on June 25.

Foghorn Stringband will be performing with Jesse Léger, Joel Savoy, and the Cajun Country Revival at the Alaska Folk Festival in Juneau, Alaska, April 14 – 17 (also with the Caleb Klauder Country Band); Café des Amis in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, April 27; Festival International in Lafayette, Louisiana, April 29; and New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in New Orleans, May 1. Foghorn will then tour Ireland and the United Kingdom in May, appearing at Fiddle Fair in Baltimore, County Cork, Ireland, May 5 – 8; St. John’s Theatre in Listowel, County Kerry, Ireland, May 9; Kilworth Arts Centre in Kilworth, Ireland, May 10; in Galway May 11 (TBA); Linnenhall in Castlebar, County Mayo, Ireland, May 12; Glens Centre in Maryville, County Leitrim, Ireland, May 13; Seamus Ennis Cultural Center, Fingal, County Dublin, May 14; in Dublin May 15 (TBA); the Prince Albert in Stroud, Gloucestershire, England, May 17; the Old Queen’s Head in London May 19; the Masons Arms in London May 19; and the Prince Albert in Brighton, England, May 22.

The Freight Hoppers will be performing at the Tuckasegee Tavern in Bryson City, North Carolina, on April 23 (with the Dan River Drifters); Merlefest in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, April 29 – May 1; John Hartford Memorial Celebration in Bean Blossom, Indiana, on June 2 and 3; Second Friday Summer Concert Series in Covington, Georgia, on June 10; Grass Valley Bluegrass Festival in Grass Valley, California, on June 18 and 19; and Old Songs Festival of Traditional Music and Dance in Altamont, New York, on June 24 and 25.

Bruce Molsky will give performances and/or workshops at the Opera House at Boothbay Harbor in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, on April 15; the Katherine Cornell Theater in Tisbury, Massachusetts, on April 16; the National Folk Festival in Canandaigua, New York, on May 26; and teaching at the New Century School of Traditional Music in Croton-on-the-Hudson, New York, on June 18.

Fiddle workshops will be given in the Blue Grass Volunteer State Park in Tennessee, May 13 – 15; and for the Tennessee Folklife Festival in Nashville, Tennessee, May 14 – 15.

Jake Krack will give a fiddle workshop and house concert on May 14 at the home of Bibi Freer in Tryon, North Carolina. Preregistration is important, as the workshops are limited to 10 participants per session. The beginner workshop, $50, takes place from 9 AM to 12 PM; the intermediate/advanced workshop, $60, from 1 to 4 PM; and the concert, $15, at 7 PM. Email bfreer@windstream.net for details.
**SPECIAL 20th ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM**

**Blue Ridge Old Time Music Week**

June 5 - 11, 2011

A relaxed approach to learning and an atmosphere of friendship and encouragement make this an unforgettable week. Interaction between students, instructors, and staff has become a hallmark of the week as musicians of all abilities develop new skills and share in the celebration of old-time music.

*Find more information and register at www.mhc.edu/oldtimemusic*

**INSTRUCTORS & CLASSES**

Banjo: Carole Anne Rose, Hilary Dirlam, Travis Stuart, Hilarie Burhans

Fiddle: Robby Robertson, Helen White, Beverly Smith, Curly Miller

Guitar: Adam Tanner, Billy Cornette, Wayne Henderson

Dulcimer: Margaret Wright and Lloyd Wright

Mandolin: Bill Paine

Rhythm and Repertoire: Greg Canote and Jere Canote

Traditional Country Singing: Alice Gerrard

Mini-courses in Harmony Singing, Bass, Ukulele and more!

*PROGRAM DIRECTOR: Hilary Dirlam*

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**BLUEGRASS in the Blue Ridge Mountains Week**

June 19 - 25, 2011

This affordable week of personal instruction, jamming, and playing with nationally known bluegrass instructors is certain to delight you, improve your skills, and help you play with more confidence! Whether beginner or expert, this is a great opportunity for players of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to learn more about the music they love!

*Find more information and register at www.mhc.edu/bluegrass*

**INSTRUCTORS & CLASSES**

Banjo: Bobby Anderson, George Buckner, Dave Talbot

Fiddle: Natalya Weinstein, Bryan McDowell

Guitar: Diane Bouska, Steve Kilby, Jack Lawrence

Mandolin: Wayne Erbsen, Roland White

Bluegrass Vocals: Stacy Claude

*PROGRAM DIRECTOR: Jerry Sutton*

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**Bluegrass Week Daily Schedule**

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>8:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-11:45 am</td>
<td>Morning Class</td>
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<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:00-4:00 pm</td>
<td>Master Classes</td>
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<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Faculty Concerts</td>
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<tr>
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**MARS HILL COLLEGE**

For more information contact: Conferences and Events
P. O. Box 6785
Mars Hill, NC 28754
(828) 689-1167
Email: conferences@mhc.edu
Old-Time Herald author Cary Fagan has announced the publication of his children’s book, Banjo of Destiny. It tells the story of a boy growing up in a mansion and attending patroncratic private schools, whose greatest aspiration is to play clawhammer banjo. The book is available on Amazon.com.

The Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College in Ferrum, Virginia, is holding over the exhibition The Virginia Dulcimer: 200 Years of Bowing, Strumming, and Pick- ing, into the spring and perhaps the summer. The exhibit features more than 50 dulcimers dating from the 1700s to the present, and tells the story of the evolution of the instrument that the instrument has undergone in Virginia. Visit www.blueridgeinstitute.org for information.

Harry Bolick and Joel Wennerstrom have recorded a tune, “Chubby Drag- on,” composed by Bolick in honor of the late Ray Alden. They have made the tune available in mp3 form as a free download at www.harrybolick.com/ray.

Final notes

Jesse Presley “J. P.” Fraley passed away on February 17, at his home in Denton, Kentucky. He was 87 years old. One of the most prominent East Kentucky fiddlers of his generation, J. P. Fraley was the son of fiddler Richard Fraley, and grew up in the town of Hitchens, which he described as “the jumping off place for the bluegrass country.” The elder Fraley strongly encouraged young J. P. to take up the fiddle, even letting him get out of doing farm work with the family when he said that he wanted to go play a tune. Reminiscing to Guthrie Meade and Mark Wilson in 1974, Fraley said, “I’d always try to eurchine some way out of hoeing that corn, I tell you.”

The Fraley family sometimes traveled to Ashland, where Richard Fraley would leave J. P. in the company of Ed Haley, then fiddling on the streets of the town. J. P. would sometimes stay with Haley for hours at a time, moving with him from one street corner to another, and observing and absorbing the now-legendary fiddler’s techniques.

When Fraley grew up, he served in the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Air Force. He also worked at farming, in a brickyard, and as a world-traveling company representative in the mining machinery industry. Having set aside his music in favor of his career for some years, in the 1950s Fraley entered a fiddle contest on a whim and, though he felt he was entirely out of practice, won first place. From then on, heargs, and his wife Annadene Prater Fraley (1925-1996), a singer and guitarist from Star Branch, Kentucky, who had been a radio performer as a girl, would perform together and with friends regularly. They made recordings as well, including the classic Rounder albums Mayville and Wild Rose of the Mountain. They became frequent performers and attendees at old-time music festivals, and J. P. would win the senior fiddle championship at the Appalachian String Band Festival at Catskill, West Virginia, and, after three Fiddler of the Festival titles, was designated a Master Fiddler at Fiddler’s Grove in Union Grove, North Carolina. He also received the Appalachian Treasure Honor from Morehead State University.

Forty years ago this summer, Annadene Fraley brought together a group of musical family and friends for a small festival-like gathering. It would become an annual event, and grow into J. P. Fraley’s Mountain Music Gathering, held Labor Day weekend at Carter Caves State Park between Grayson and Olive Hill, Kentucky. The festival will go on in 2011, now held in memory of J. P. and Annadene.

Missouri born fiddler Earl Kenneth Murphy passed away peacefully at his home in Athens, Georgia, on March 12, at the age of 93. Earl was honored for his artsy by the Old-Time Herald at MerleFest in 2010. He bounces back quickly from a heart attack last October, resumed his routine of playing daily in his kitchen, and continued to host weekly old-time and bluegrass sessions. Earl will be dearly missed by his family and many friends.

Charlie Hartness

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Charlie Hartness

Note: An extended remembrance of Earl Murphy will appear in an upcoming issue of the Old-Time Herald.

Musician Clyde Davis died on March 15, at the age of 75, in Greensboro, North Carolina. A native of Piedmont North Carolina, Davis was a Korean War Veteran, having served as a Specialist Third Class in the Army's 123rd Signal Battalion. Coming home to North Carolina after the war, he would work in a variety of professions throughout his life, and develop his considerable talents for the restoration and repair of antique automobiles and campers, hit-and-miss engines, and musical instruments. Davis served the northern Piedmont's musical community for many years, first working as a manager, instrument repairman, and piano tuner, with C. B. Ellis Music Company in Burlington, and later, as proprietor of his own Clyde Davis Music Repair. Also an accomplished musician, Davis, with his wife Pammy, played with Melanye Fiddler Joe Thompson. They were featured on guitar and bass, respectively, on Thompson's 1999 album Family Tradition. The Davises were also members of the old-time band Old Blue, with Rich Hartness, Tolly Tollefson, and Greg Ossten.

Clogger Oscar Everett Roberson died at the age of 97 on March 23, at his home in Robersonville, North Carolina. He grew up in the small eastern North Carolina town founded by his grandfather. After training at the Virginia Military Institute and studying in business college, Roberson served as a Staff Sergeant and B17 Maintenance Crew Chief in the 379th Bombardment group of the Army Air Force. He saw service in both Europe and North Africa. After the War, he had a long career running his family’s general and farm supply store, A. O. Roberson and Company, in Robersonville.

Oscar’s son Greg became a member of the Green Grass Cloggers and learned to clog. When he retired, at the age of 50, Oscar too took up clogging, which turned into a favorite pursuit throughout his 47-year retirement. He became a well-known dancer at music festivals and dance events throughout the Southeast, known for his skill, enthusiasm, and hat that read, “Whatever.” Phil Jamison profiled Roberson in the Spring, 1990 edition of the Old-Time Herald. Oscar Roberson was also an active member of Robersonville’s First Baptist Church, the Shriners, Masons, and Scottish Rite. He was buried in Robersonville Cemetery with military honors.

8 THE OLD-TIME HERALD WWW.OLDTIMEHERALD.ORG APRIL-MAY 2011
CELEBRATION OF THE NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION

THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN MUSIC
OPENING MAY 2011, BLUE RIDGE MUSIC CENTER, GALAX, VA

THE CROOKED ROAD, HEARTWOOD & BLUE RIDGE TRADITIONAL ARTS
ARE PROUD TO PRESENT

ROOTS OF AMERICAN MUSIC
(how hillbillies helped invent it)

MAILSTAGE EVENTS

GRAND OPENING WEEKEND - ALL EVENTS ARE FREE
FRI. May 27 - OFFICIAL OPENING AND DEDICATION of the new, permanent exhibition, THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN MUSIC 7 - 9 PM
Ribbon-cutting, music and tours of the exhibition which tells, for the first time, the compelling story of the development and national significance of Blue Ridge traditional music.
SAT. May 28 - DAN MULEY & THE SOUTHERN GRASS | The Stuamans 7PM
SUN. May 29 - THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN MUSIC ROAD SHOW: featuring Irish, African & Blue Ridge musicians! 7PM

SAT. June 4 - Blues in the Blue Ridge: Nat Reese, Phil Wiggins & Emily Spencer 7PM - 9:30
SAT. June 11 - From the Blue Ridge to the Lone Star: Quebe Sisters | Kelley & The Cowboys 7PM - 9:30
FRI. June 17 - Doc Watson & David Holt | Wayne Henderson & Friends 7PM - FREE
SAT. June 25 - Ronnie Reno & The Tradition | Raw Calendar's Broads Sho' Boggeters 7PM - 9:30
SAT. July 2 - Blue Ridge Dance Traditional: Roan Mountain Hilltoppers | Whetstone Mountain Band 7PM - FREE
SAT. July 9 - Heather Berry | Jeanette Williams 7PM - 9:30
SAT. July 16 - Historic Church Music of Virginia: Old Regular Baptist, Moravian Gospels, Shapeness & more 7PM - 9:30

SAT. July 23 - Slate Mountain Ramblers | Lester McCumbers Stringband 7PM - 9:30
SAT. July 30 - New North Carolina Ramblers | Costa, Campbell & Lloyd 7PM - 9:30
SUN. Aug. 7 - Michael Cleveland & Flamekeepers | Lonz Driver 7PM - 9:30
SAT. Aug. 20 - Bluegrass Gospel Concert: Junior Sisk & Ramblers Choice | Rich In Tradition | Sunrise 7PM - FREE
SAT. Aug. 27 - Jesse Mereynolds | Gerald Anderson Band 7PM - 9:30
SAT. Sept. 3 - Blue Ridge Music in the 21st Century: The Snyder Family | McPeak & Mountain Thunders, & Loose Strings 7PM - FREE
SAT. Sept. 10 - Toast String Stretchers | Zephyr Lightning Balls 7PM - 9:30

*FREE PROGRAMS ARE MADE POSSIBLE WITH YOUR SUPPORT THROUGH THE BLUE RIDGE MUSEUM FOUNDATION - YOUR STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION*

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TOURING THE CROOKED ROAD
MAY 10 - 29, 2011

ROOFS OF AMERICAN MUSIC SALUTES OUR REGION’S CREATION OF THE FIRST TRULY AMERICAN SOUND: HEAR WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE EUROPEAN VIOLIN MET THE AFRICAN BANJO IN AN UNFORGETTABLE PERFORMANCE BY SOME OF THE FINEST IRISH, AFRICAN AND BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN MUSICIANS PLAYING TODAY. JIG DANCING, OLD BALLADS, UILLEAN PIPING, THE SHUJT'S TWANG; IT IS ALL HERE.

TUES. May 10 - Pulaski, VA | Pulaski Theatre
WED. May 11 - Galax, VA | Rox Theatre
THUR. May 12 - Scott County, VA | Natural Tunnel State Park Amphitheater
FRI. May 13 - Bristol, VA | The Paramount Theatre
SAT. May 14 - Clintwood, VA | The Jettle Baker Center
SUN. May 15 - Stuart, VA | The Star Theatre
TUES. May 17 - Roanoke, VA | Downtown Roanoke Public Library
WED. May 18 - Richlands, VA | SWVA Community College, The King Center
THUR. May 19 - Marion, VA | The Lincoln Theatre
FRI. May 20 - Big Stone Gap, VA | The Goodfellow Center, Mountain Empire Community College
SAT. May 21 - Floyd, VA | Floyd Country Stars
SUN. May 22 - Rocky Mount, VA | Rocky Mount High School Auditorium
SUN. May 29 - Galax, VA | Blue Ridge Music Center

Information: RootsOfAmericanMusic@gmail.com
Our family had music in them; it was borned in and you can’t get it out. That’s one thing you can’t get rid of is singing.

Addie’s Life And Times

Addie Graham sang all her life. She was surrounded by music from birth: from neighbors, friends, travelers; from timber cutters, railroad workers, stage entertainers; most of all from her family. She grew up in a culture where music was as natural as talk; she had it all through her and was only too happy to pass it on.

She never revealed her age, but she was born before 1900 near Gilmore, Wolfe County, Kentucky, and grew up on the headwaters of the Red River, an area which includes parts of Magoffin, Morgan, Wolfe, and Breathitt Counties. It is a rough, beautiful country, and even today it seems peaceful and isolated. When Addie was born, the area had not changed all that much since the days of the earliest white settlers. There were few roads, few stores, few jobs; mostly people lived on farms and what they had was mostly what they grew or made.

This was as true of music as of anything else. We who have lived all our lives with TV, radio, movies and the Internet have little idea of the richness and variety of the homemade music of people who had little other entertainment. In Addie’s community there were banjo players and fiddlers, ballad singers, hymn singers; the African Americans who came to the area to build the railroads brought guitars and the blues. Addie learned from them all.

Certainly, the strongest influence on her music was her mother. She was the youngest of five children of Thomas T. and Gillian Prater. Tom was a farmer and logger; he and his wife lived all their lives in the Morgan-Magoffin-Breathitt area. Addie did not remember much about her father’s family except that they had lived there for a long time. Gillian Williams was the daughter of James Harvey Williams and his wife, a Rudd from Virginia. James Harvey’s grandfather was Elder Daniel Williams, a Revolutionary War veteran who was one of the first settlers in Morgan County.

Like most of the people in the area, Addie’s family traced their roots to the British Isles, and their music reflects their travels. It was the folk music of England and Scotland, unmistakably shaped by the Southern mountains and the people they met there. Addie’s mother sang many of the “classic” British ballads, including “The Three Little Babes” (Child 79) and “Greenwood Sidey-O” (Child 20). Besides ballads, her parents sang many folk hymns of the Old Baptist church and several religious songs which they regarded as personal family possessions. “The Indian Tribes of Tennessee,” a nearly unique piece, Addie believed to have come down from her pioneering ancestor Daniel Williams. A religious nursery song, “To See Poor Indian in the Woods,” was passed down in her mother’s family for at least three generations. A quasi-religious song—we could describe it as an Abolitionist hymn—must have been a possession of the family since pre-Civil War times, when slavery was a heated question in the Kentucky highlands. The song, “We’re Stole and Sold from Africa,” is a moving plea for freedom.

As Addie grew up she learned music from many people. Her sister Nan, twelve years her senior, married John Henry Coffey of Magoffin County. He was fifteen or twenty years older than Addie and a principal source for many, especially native American, ballads and songs, such as “Poor Omie”; “The Lonesome Scenes of Winter”; “The Wexford Girl”; “Darling Corey”; and “Drunkard’s Dream.” One of her most striking memories is of Grant Reed, a black banjo player:

The only colored man there was around there; everybody liked him. He’d go along the road picking the banjo and I’d stand and listen at him. I’d get out behind the
house and here Grant come—and nobody on earth could pick it like Grant Reed—and I’d try to dance it. Daddy wouldn’t let us dance none; he’d have killed us if he caught us dancing. He didn’t believe in it.

Another source of songs was R. B. Dunn, a family friend who was noted around the Red River area of Wolfe County for his fine singing. He taught her various “frolic” pieces like “Putt Around the Kitchen Till the Cook Comes In,” and may have been her source for “The Dummy.” Himself white, Dunn sang many songs of black origin.

Grant Reed and R.B. Dunn were not the only source for a somewhat surprising store of black material in Addie’s repertoire. Between the years 1899 and 1910 the Ohio and Kentucky Railroad (O&K) was being built from Jackson, Breathitt County, into the timber and coal fields toward Cannel City and the Licking River in Morgan County. The building of the O&K was perhaps the most exciting event of the era for the people who lived along its route. The young men of the region worked on the railroad alongside black crews imported from the South, some perhaps as prison gangs. These crews brought work songs and lonesome railroad blues to the region, and the residents were quick to make such songs their own. Some of Addie’s kin (cousins named Lykins) worked on the train, one of them as a fireman. The train passed right by the house. Not only were the black people delighted when her cousins would “just roll big chunks of cannel coal off that train” for the family’s use, but Addie was also eager to garner in the train songs she heard “those mountain boys running around singing.” Three of these are included on her recording, “Darling Don’t You Know That’s Wrong,” “Wouldn’t Mind Working from Sun to Sun,” and the “O&K Train Song.”

Not only did the O&K introduce new folkways into the region, it also gave previously isolated people a ready means of travel, consolidating a sense of community beyond the usual boundaries of county lines and river valleys. It was only for a brief time; the O&K made its last run in 1933, and Addie and her family long mourned its passing. During its existence it created a sense of excitement, romance, and unity within the region—at the same time hauling away its vast resources of large timber and cannel coal.

The building of the O&K opened the Breathitt-Wolfe-Morgan area to large-scale logging, and Tom Prater and his family moved to Frozen Creek in Breathitt when
A. R. GRAHAM  
BETTER KNOWN AS  

“Cheap John”

Brethren:

Ye will find from the 3rd chapter of Cheap John, the Revelator, and the Book of Amos, in substance as follows:

“Come unto me all ye who hunger and thirst for low prices in food and raiment and I will give unto ye Bargains

In Ladies’ and Gents’, Boys’, Misses and Childrens’ Clothing, Hats, Caps Shoes, Notions, Fruits, Fowls and Furniture and all kinds of Groceries and all kinds of things that ye consume.

I defy competition—I absolutely save money for those who will come to me—I am

CHEAP JOHN,  
THE REVELATOR AND THE POOR MAN’S FRIEND.

Advertisement for Amos Graham’s store, Jackson Times, 1916.

Addie was a young woman. Until it was cut down, the Appalachian hardwood forest was the largest in the history of the world, and for many mountain people like Tom Prater the logging industry was their entry into the “modern” world of industrial jobs and wages.

You don’t know the wealth that went out of that country. It’d kill you to know of it. When the big companies came in they bought all the timber in that country, all through it... He was a timber man, my father; he could fell a tree as big as you could build a house with and never split it. All that walnut timber, millions of dollars worth, went out of there. The wealth that was in that country, they never got nothing much for it; it went too cheap.

It was in Wolfe County that Addie met and soon married Amos Graham, a tall, flamboyant, and colorful man who became something of a legend among those who knew him. Born in Wolfe County in 1868, he went west where he became (by his own account) a self-taught lawyer, doctor, and gambler; returning to the Kentucky mountains, he became (among other things) a timber man and a merchant. He and Addie moved to Jackson, which at that time was the booming center, not only of the area’s political life but of the thriving coal and timber business and the ensuing commercial activities. Amos opened a general store under the name “Cheap John the Revelator, the Poor Man’s Friend, Independent as a Hog on Ice.” He was quite successful.

The family soon purchased the historic J. B. Marcum home. Marcum had been a prominent lawyer in Jackson and a principal in the last of a number of family feuds (Hargis-Cockerell) which had given the county the epithet “Bloody Breathitt” in newspaper stories across the nation.
Addie was well acquainted with family members and allies from both sides and often heard stories of the feud, which climaxed with Marcum’s assassination in 1905. To the end of her life she was hesitant about relating too many of these stories, for she never forgot the short tempers and long memories involved. But she did sing the ballad written about the murder, “J. B. Marcum.” Around 1918 or ’19 she heard blind fiddler and singer J. W. “Blind Bill” Day sing it at the county courthouse, probably during one of the court day celebrations that used to be common in East Kentucky when court was in session.

Day is one of those seminally important people in the course of mountain folk music whose influence on other folk musicians is still evident. He was born in Rowan County in 1860 and lived in Ashland, Boyd County, for many years, becoming the “Jilson Setters” of Jean Thomas’ books and her American Folk Song Festival. In spite of his blindness, Day was evidently a tireless ballad composer and inveterate roving musician throughout the region. He seems to have sung and fiddled, and sold printed broadsheets of his own and other ballads, in a great many towns of eastern Kentucky. Addie and her children well remembered his visits to Jackson.

The days in Jackson were a sort of Golden Age to Addie. She threw her considerable energies into running the store and raising a family. The store did well; she, Amos, and their three children were popular; her parents, brother, and sisters were all close by. It was not to last. The timber boom collapsed and the Depression followed soon after, and Jackson’s prosperity was no more. People left—as Addie said, “some went east, some went west”—and the Grichams did too. Eventually they left the mountains for good, heading for the bluegrass. Locating in Cynthiana, Harrison County, they re-established the store and settled in. Amos died in 1962; Addie and her daughter Opal continued in business until 1973. For the remainder of her life she enjoyed a well-deserved rest—but did not retire from singing. She appeared at a number of folk festivals in Kentucky and gained recognition as a fine traditional singer, a reputation enhanced when Appalshop brought out the LP Been a Long Time Traveling in 1978. She passed away in Cynthiana on April 1, 1978.

Addie’s life spanned a period of extraordinary change in her native Kentucky; yet neither her music nor her values seem outdated, and she has a great deal to teach us. Looking back on her life, she reflected:

People had a better time back then than they do now. As long as we have our family... If I could call my days back, I could live them over.

She often said, drawing on her Bible as source, “that that has been, shall be again.” She was happy to share with people who would help her music and her history continue to live and grow.
Ballads and Songs

Addie's many songs and ballads contained her personal history and an imaginative history of her time and place. And exciting times they were in turn-of-the-century eastern Kentucky. Her songs capture moments when the echoing whistle of a narrow-gauge locomotive finally shattered the isolation of a mountain community, while mountain feudsmen still rode to elections surrounded by small armies of retainers armed with "Breathitt County pistols," and fortunes were won and lost daily through the exploitation of timber and coal.

Pre-industrial Appalachia is often portrayed as an isolated area outside the mainstream of national life, the last frontier of American "progress." Indeed, in Addie's youth basic life patterns flowed on much as they had for most of a century. Quiet gatherings in mountain homes still provided entertainment in the form of old ballads or solace in the form of Old Baptist hymns. Addie's childhood home, Johnson Fork, is still a stronghold of Primitive Baptists. Yet a great deal of American history appears in her repertoire. Her music reflects the early arrival of white settlers in Kentucky, relations with Native Americans, the Irish famine, slavery and abolitionism, and the Civil War.

The events of her lifetime also appear. Addie's brother-in-law John Henry Coffey went off to fight in the Spanish-American War, sending letters about the larger world and a ballad about the sinking of the battleship "Maine." America entered the First World War, and Breathitt filled its quota of soldiers even before a draft was imposed. One of Addie's favorite songs was a humorous account of the "Long and a Country Jake" who went off to bag himself a Kaiser. A Kentucky governor was assassinated in 1900—Addie both sang and recited a ballad, "The Death of William Geobel." A prominent Breathitt County lawyer was murdered in a feud in 1905; Addie sang "The Death of J. B. Marcum."

Her music also reflects an aspect of Appalachian history that receives more attention today than it once did, the presence of African Americans and their contributions to the region's music and culture. During the time Addie was growing up, Appalachia was being "discovered" by cultural, religious, and political leaders who saw there an idealized community of "pure Anglo-Saxon" culture, in contrast to the "melting pot" of
America in an age of mass immigration. Indeed, Addie's children were taught this vision in the missionary-run schools they attended in Jackson. The reality was otherwise. There had always been African Americans in eastern Kentucky, and many more came to the region as it industrialized. The crews who built the O&K Railroad were among large numbers of African Americans who came to the mountains to build railroads and work in the coal mines. And while parts of Addie's repertoire are deeply rooted in the British Isles, other parts show the deep influence of African Americans.

She frequently mentioned the black banjoist Grant Reed, who made quite an impression on her as she grew up, and she was clearly open to the music brought by the railroad crews. Her repertoire, in which Child ballads and Old Baptist hymns sit side by side with blues and black-derived fiddle pieces, testifies to a music and culture that was far more complex than its stereotypes.

Some of this complexity appears rather unexpectedly in Addie's piano playing. Most of her music was sung unaccompanied, but she grew up surrounded by instrumental music and dancing. Despite her Old Baptist parents' disapproval she absorbed much of this. When her husband bought her a piano, she worked out a number of pieces with a definite banjo flavor to them. Playing mostly on the black keys (a pentatonic scale), she played melody notes in octaves with her left hand while adding offbeat accent notes with her right. The effect neatly replicates a thumb-lead two-finger style common in Kentucky. My guess is that, could we somehow hear Grant Reed's playing, we would hear it echoed in Addie's piano.

Addie seems to have rounded off her repertoire around 1920. When she moved to Cynthiana she became, outwardly at least, a "city" person on the outskirts of Appalachian follies. She took no notice of later developments in country music, and her songs show no evidence of the hillbilly record boom of the '20s and '30s.

But Addie was never averse to picking up any song that came within earshot if it struck her fancy. Although raised in a strictly religious home, she still felt free to accumulate songs that her parents did not approve of. As a little girl she would slip off to dance to the banjo tunes of Grant Reed, and sang verses to "Hook and Line" which may have come from him. She was fond of interpersing her songs and stories with rhymes like "Say old man, can you play the fiddle? Give me a drink of moonshine, I can play a little." She learned murder ballads like "Pretty Polly," "Omit Wise" and "The Wexford Girl" from her much older brother-in-law, though her mother often said such songs were "fast" or "bawdy." And it's a sure bet that Addie would not have sung some of the railroad crew material in front of her mother. But for all that, Addie accepted fully and deeply the religious beliefs of her parents' old-time Baptist faith.

Her music reflects the major facets of folk life, and the events which influenced the life of eastern Kentucky, during a time of social ferment. Restless times produced in the mountains an outpouring of folklore, some expressive of the new ways, some looking backward to what seemed a time of greater stability and cultural simplicity. Addie was quite literally attuned to this outpouring, as the great variety of her repertoire attests. She not only held her own past before her in her songs, but offered (and through her recording still offers) her listeners a vibrant history of an exciting era in East Kentucky's and all Appalachia's past. In this respect we may appreciate her songs for being, as Emily Dickinson once described her poetry, her "letter to the world."
Religious Songs

There’s times I get so upset I feel like I have to sing me a good song ...

We don’t often think of religious music as folk music, but in Addie’s case it certainly is; some of the longest and deepest of her roots are those that go back into the religious traditions of the early settlers. Her hymns are of an earlier generation and from a different society than modern gospel music. They are instead part and parcel of the religion and folkways of the days when the Kentucky mountains were the western frontier.

Addie traced most of her religious music back through her mother. Gillian Prater’s family first arrived in Kentucky in 1775 in the person of Elder Daniel Williams, a Baptist preacher from North Carolina who settled in Montgomery County after the Revolution, then moved east into the headwaters of the Licking River in what is now Morgan County. J. H. Spencer’s History of Kentucky Baptists (1886) says that

For many years he preached to the settlers as they came into the country. At length he succeeded in gathering a number of small churches which united with North District Association. In 1814, these distant churches ... obtained letters of dismissal, and formed themselves into Burning Spring Association. Mr. Williams lived to a good old age, and is still remembered with reverence and affection by the aged Christians of Morgan County.

The Burning Spring Association became the main body of Baptists (and in those days that was nearly everybody in the area) in Morgan, Magoffin, and Wolfe Counties.

As time passed, differences began to appear between the mountains and the bluegrass, differences of culture, economy, and politics that deepened into a significant degree of differentiation of the mountains from 1830 until perhaps 1900. It was during this period that mountain Baptists drew apart from their brethren in the flatlands. Mountainers did not have much experience with the camp meetings, the large ecstatic revival gatherings that were held widely across the South from 1800 into the 1840s. They stayed instead with the Calvinist beliefs that eighteenth-century Baptists had brought across from the British Isles to the frontier—belief in predestination and salvation by grace. They evolved a loose democratic church structure that was perfectly suited to isolated farming communities. When mountain Baptists lost the battle against the institution of missionaries that was widely debated around 1830, many—including the Burning Spring Association—simply went their own way, alone except for a few similar-minded groups in East Kentucky and other parts of the mountains. They still do, meeting today under the name of Primitive, Regular, Old Regular or Hardshell Baptists. (There are differences among these churches, but for Addie
these terms were interchangeable. They share a common heritage and will be referred to here as Old Baptists.)

The cornerstone of Addie’s belief was salvation by grace: “By grace through faith are ye saved, and not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph. 2:8,9) In this view, grace is the gift of God, and He gives it if, when, and how He pleases; without it we are lost. This would be a grim and fatalistic belief if it were not balanced by a belief that God is merciful, that all sins will someday be forgiven and that loved ones (such as her husband Amos, who died at 96 a lifelong skeptic about all churches) were or will be saved. Receiving grace is equivalent to being born again. “I believe in my heart He’ll come to us in due time and due season; if He don’t, it looks like we’re all lost.” Addie did not say flattery whether she was in grace, but said, “I don’t like to do a sin. And when you get so you don’t like to sin then it’s a-working on you.” Conscience, then, is both a sign of God’s interest and a guide through the world. “When you go to having that feeling, that’s God a-working with you, that’s not you. I believe in doing the least we can of sin, that’s all I can do.”

Addie grew up with these beliefs, embodied in her parents and her community. “If ever there was a Christian man on this earth, it was him,” she says of her father Tom Prater. “Everybody thought he was called to preach, and he never would preach it. But he was always out telling the Bible; he knew it from end to end.” Once a month people gathered at the churchhouse for a full day of singing and preaching, preachers riding in from many miles away to be part of the gathering.

Like most Old Baptist churches, Addie’s was held together more by community consensus than by formal organization. “Money was never allowed to be narrified in that church. What the preacher did was free; grace is free.” The church doubled as a schoolhouse. On meeting day it would fill with Rudds, Arnolds, Spencers, Arnettts, Patricks, Praters, and other families from the area—a tight-knit group whose church was the cement that held their community together. Ron Short wrote of a similar church:

Each person must carefully search his heart and mind and there must be full harmony for the services to begin. Any dissent must be voiced with the full recognition that the unity of the church is broken, the most grievous state that can exist; but to stifle a question one feels should be asked is just as harmful.

“You talk about Christians—they had to walk the chalk if they stayed in that church. If they was caught doing one wrong thing on the outside they turned him out of that church. If he changed his ways he could come back. But if he was drinking about and caving about—they didn’t keep the wolf among the sheep.” This resulted in a real collectivity of feeling among the members, a reinforcement of the cooperation needed for life in a hard country. To quote Ron Short again:

Stressing the need to establish unity and cooperation among its own members, and to act as a working example of harmony, its influence extended into the broader community … Even today there is a cooperative spirit among people in the communities of Appalachia that has its roots deep in the historical development of the region and, I believe, in the development of the church.

Music was one of the strong ties in the church. There were no solos, no performances; everyone sang. Hymns were lined out one line at a time from books printed with words only (few people could read music; evidently the shape-note singing teachers did not much visit East Kentucky, though Gillian Prater could read by the shapes). The tunes are folk melodies, sung in unison, kept alive by oral tradition. No musical instruments were allowed, and indeed it would be impossible to accompany Old Baptist singing without changing it drastically. Though they opposed “unseemly” conduct like shouting and dancing, their music was (and is) intensely emotional. “You’d hear their voices before you ever got to church. They wanted the whole congregation to sing.” Different people led their favorite songs until it was time to part, when they would sing one of the numerous farewell hymns and leave until the next meeting. But the songs were not confined to meeting days, and Addie heard her family and neighbors singing the old hymns constantly, as she herself did all her life.

The old religious songs seemed like a fact of nature to Addie, who sang as naturally as she drew breath. But when we ask where they came from and we run into something of a puzzle, for no other group of people anywhere sings in a style quite like the Old Baptists of the Southern mountains. (A possible exception: a few congregations on the Isle of Lewis, who sing in Scots Gaelic.) Addie learned her hymns from family and neighbors, and thought they came from England; this is true for some tunes and some words, but
the total style seems native to the Appalachians. Josiah Combs, an early folk-music collector and East Kentucky native, wrote that “as far as I know there is no record of any such strange music in the British Isles.” Addie sang from several old songbooks, but these are not much help; they have words only, and usually no indication of authorship. Some words are standard Protestant hymnody (“Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”) while others were seemingly written in the mountains. The melodies are generally of folk origin, sometimes widespread in the South, sometimes unique to the Old Baptists.

What seems to have happened is that when the Baptist church emerged in Britain its members were common people with a rich tradition of folk song. It was natural for them to take standard hymn texts and put them to old tunes, and thus incorporate them into tradition in a way more formal churches, with our many hymnals and church choirs, have little experience of. And this tradition, together with a number of tunes, was carried across the Atlantic and found a home, first in old New England, then on the Southern frontier. Thus, pioneer evangelists could sing the words of Wesley, Watts, or Lowell Mason to old folk tunes, or new ones of their own making. I believe the origins of Addie’s religious music are squarely within this tradition.

Thus it seems that Old Baptist music is older than that of the shape-note songbooks, the most important source we have today of early American religious folk music. The camp meetings, those wild revivals which electrified the frontier for thirty years after 1800, gave birth to hundreds of songs. Camp meeting singers took older songs and “sang them to pieces,” in the words of George Pullen Jackson, making them simpler and faster, adding repetitive verses and choruses—all with the aim of enabling large groups to sing. This, in turn, gave rise to the shape-note singing movement which flourished in the South through the 1870s (and still exists today; in fact it has undergone a notable revival). Shape-note songbook compilers traveled across the South collecting religious folk songs, harmonizing them and publishing them, then leading singing schools to teach people how to sing harmony from printed music. There is a good deal of similarity between shape-note music and Addie’s—many tunes, texts, and the fact that the music is intended for group singing rather than performance. But there are many differences too: Old Baptists sing in unison, they sing many tunes and texts not found elsewhere; and where shape-note singers (and others) tend to streamline music, Old Baptists tend to slow it down, make it more elaborate and deeper.

On an emotional level these folk hymns have a power to comfort and strengthen which cannot perhaps be understood outside of personal contact. This is all the odder in that texts like “I’m Glad That I Was Born to Die” are seemingly so dismal, and that the tunes are so often in minor or modal keys, in sharp contrast to the flowery optimism of modern gospel music. Yet the makers of these tunes lived in a world where little came easy. Their lives were made up of constant struggle, in which family and friends were all the allies they had. Heaven was nothing more or less than home, a place of reunion and rest, and they found an echo of it in the solidary of the meeting house. Their music does not gloss over the pain of living but comes squarely to grips with it: the grief of sickness and death, of losing a loved one or leaving the fellowship of the meeting, can be borne in the secure faith that pain and separation are only temporary. Addie’s life testified that such faith is grace indeed.
Addie’s Musical Legacy

Throughout most of her life, Addie’s music went unheard outside the immediate family. As her grandson, I can say that we heard quite a lot of it, as she sang all the time. My earliest music memories are of sitting in her lap as she rocked and sang the old songs. She was our bedrock, hard-working and fun-loving, wise and strong and full of unconditional love for her family. We loved her dearly; but we never paid much attention to the music, it was just always there.

That her music ever got beyond the family is due indirectly to the folk song revival of the 1960s. In high school I bought a banjo and joined a trio. As we worked our way through the “hooferanny” repertoire I started to notice that some of the songs were ones I’d heard Addie singing all my life—but her versions were deeper and more challenging, I started really listening to her for the first time, drawing connections. Around me, others were making similar discoveries. The New Lost City Ramblers brought string music to life; the Friends of Old Time Music brought master artists from the rural South to the city stage. Both Mike Seeger and John Cohen encouraged me to think of Addie’s music as a treasure. A Jean Ritchie concert opened my mind and heart to the power of Addie’s music and of its Appalachian community.

I started recording her, a process that continued until her death. When Appalshop began June Appal Recordings in 1974, Appalachian artists like Addie had an outlet for their work. With encouragement from Jack Wright, John McCutcheon, and Dudley Wilson I was able to record her on some pretty good equipment, and her LP Been A Long Time Traveling appeared in 1978.

At the same time people all over the mountains were rediscovering and presenting the extraordinary talents of musicians of Addie’s generation. Addie sang at the Cumberland Gap Jubilee in 1973 and Loyal Jones invited her to Berea’s Celebration of Traditional Music on two occasions. She sang at several other
regional festivals including the Mountain Heritage Festival near Ashland, Kentucky. I generally went with her on these trips. She wasn’t a bit shy about singing on stage, as long as I stood beside her; she’d take my arm and sing her heart out. She thought she might someday appear on the Renfro Valley Barn Dance, though in contrast to the stage “hillbillies” of such venues, she always dressed formally to sing in public.

Following her death her music made its way through the traditional music community via the June Appal recording. Among the artists who have recorded her songs are Mike Seeger, John McCutcheon, Alice Gerrard, Ginny Hawker, Brett Ratliff, the Crooked Jades, and likely more. Today her music resonates in a world she could hardly have imagined. But I imagine that, were she somehow here today, she’d take it all in stride, and that her hymns and ballads would bring strength and comfort just as they always did.

Rich Kirby, Addie Graham’s grandson, works for WMMS radio at Appalshop in Whitesburg, Kentucky. Been a Long Time Traveling is now available on CD, with additional material at www.appalshop.org.

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I'm a bit ashamed to admit it, but I've got an Ebay problem: I'm addicted to the online auction website. This dependence began eight years ago when I was away from home with large amounts of downtime between projects. Although I've gone cold-turkey when my money has run out, I always seem to return to the site when my finances improve. A day without Ebay, at least for me, is an incomplete day.

I help to control my auction spending by limiting my searches to a few objects and subjects. Usually, I buy photographs and ephemera that inform my musical research and writing. That doesn't mean that, occasionally, an item doesn't cross my screen that falls outside of my interests.

Such was the scrapbook that ultimately came my way in March of 2008. Based on the item description and a photo of the cover, I put in the low bid that won me the book. When the package arrived, I was amazed and delighted to find a fairly comprehensive documentation from the 1930s of the comings and goings of the Elgin (Illinois) Hawaiian Guitar Band.

When the last reunion of the Elgin Hawaiian Band was held in October of 2000, about 15 former band mates attended. By that time, the Watch Works, the town of Elgin's main employer, had long since gone bankrupt, and the watchtower that served as a town symbol had been torn down. With the passing of the majority of the members from the Hawaiian ensemble, the memory of Elgin's musical ambassadors has faded away. Even highlighting the band in an exhibit at the Elgin Historical Museum did little to revive interest in their accomplishments of some 80 years ago.

It was kismet that I was the one to whom the scrapbook came, for it launched me on a quest to find out all I could about the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band. Before it was over, I was to make several journeys to the Chicago area in an attempt to locate artifacts and memories of this cultural phenomenon from days gone by.
The Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Club, c. 1935. Pat Patton stands at center with baton, Leonard Peterson stands with a tenor guitar in the back row, second from the right, and Sam Groh sits to Peterson's left. Alfred Handrock is the tubiste bassist, mandolinist William Bedwell sits second from the right in the second row, and Eleanor Mosimam and Nancy Piegsch are on lutes second and third from the left in the back. Sitting in the first row right of center is probably Nancy's sister Margarette, with Lydia Troye next to Nancy.

Patton's Dream

Elgin, Illinois, sits on the St. Charles River, about 40 miles to the north and west of downtown Chicago. Today, it's an easy drive to reach Wrigley Field but, in the days before World War II, a trip into the wintry city seemed like a major journey. During the 1930s, the heyday for Hawaiian Guitar Bard, Elgin was a self-contained community sitting on a railway line and based around the Elgin National Watch Company. Outside of the city limits lay farmland and small rural communities that dominated the flat landscape typical of the upper Midwest.

The Watch Company needed skilled workers and so attracted employees from a pool of European immigrants of mostly Germans and German-Swiss descent, but that also included Norwegians, Swedes, Hungarians, and to a lesser extent Irish, French, and Czechs. These workers were drawn from the farming areas of surrounding states such as Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska, and came from as far away as Kansas, Tennessee, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. This ethnic mix was also reflected in the musicians who participated in the Hawaiian guitar ensemble. Mostly, band members were first- to third-generation American-born citizens.

Considering the ethnic groups making the Elgin area their new home, it might seem strange that a musical ensemble based there would focus on the music of the then-Territory of Hawaii, or that the instrument of the Islands would captivate the employees of the Watch Company and their families. These newly established citizens of the United States were looking for a common bond, a common cultural meeting place. And they found it in something foreign to them all, an interest in a seemingly mythical fairy tale locale and the music being produced therein.

Mainland interest in Hawaiian music dates to the first decades of the twentieth century. A Broadway show called Bird of Paradise introduced Hawaiian music to many Americans in 1912 and the Panama
Pacific Exhibition in San Francisco featuring Hawaiian performers followed in 1913. Touring musical groups along with the rise of cruise lines linking the Hawaiian Islands with the West Coast of the mainland helped to further help to spark an interest in “all things Aloha,” which included clothing and hula dancing along with Hawaiian (and faux Hawaiian) music. Besides the ukulele and its relative the tiple, steel guitar playing experienced an explosion of popularity. Fretting the guitar with a steel bar while holding it in one’s lap was established in Hawaii by 1900, and is correctly called steel guitar rather than Hawaiian guitar, which is the name for another Hawaiian style called slack key.

Musical instrument manufacturers followed suit and introduced lines of Hawaiian instruments to the American public. Joining island makers in the production of ukuleles and lap guitars were musical giants such as Martin, Gibson, Lyon and Healy, Stromberg-Voisinet, Harmony, and Regal. For example, Martin made 14,000 ukes at the height of the instrument’s popularity in 1926.

By the 1930s, when the first group that called itself the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band was formed, ironically, changing musical tastes and the Depression had taken a huge bite out of musical instrument sales. And, while it seemed an unlikely time to find students and to form an ensemble, the single-mindedness of one individual joined with the programs of a national musical organization to make this happen in Elgin. That man was a Canadian-born immigrant employed by the Watch Works, A. E. Patton.

Ancel E. “Pat” Patton was born August 27, 1902, in Oxford, Nova Scotia, of English descent, the son of a laborer. The Pattons were a family of violinists, leading young Ancel to study the mandolin with “Professor” W. D. Boyce. In 1919, Pat Patton joined the Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists and Guitarists, an organization founded in Boston in 1902 “to unite and advance the professional and trade interests of the banjo, mandolin and guitar; to promote, promote and promote their music, literature and manufacture; to set a standard of excellence in their art and to establish a higher average of competency; and to give annual concerts to demonstrate and exploit the merits of the banjo, mandolin and guitar.” By 1927, A. E. Patton had relocated to Elgin, married, and found employment at Elgin Watch.

The following year, Patton opened a teaching studio in one of the rooms of the Masonic Temple located on East Grand Avenue. As he later advertised, he specialized in teaching the tenor banjo, Hawaiian guitar, Plectrum guitar, mandolin, mandola, mando-cello, ukulele, tiple, and simplified harmony. The history of the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band dates to 1928, the year that Patton assembled a group of his students to help them with ensemble playing and performing.

The original guitar and mandolin ensembles were a mixture of teenaged players and those in their early twenties, although not all of them were Ancel’s students. (Over time, you had to be a student of Patton’s in order to qualify for the group.) Patton’s five-member Mandolin Quintet of 1930 was entirely made up of his fellow adult watch workers in their thirties and forties, none of whom later participated in the full-blow Hawaiian Band of the mid- to late 1930s. On the other hand, the 15-member Hawaiian Guitar Club more accurately reflected the makeup of Pat’s classes. Of the original guitar group, nine members stuck with Patton for one to three years and two more lasted a year or so after that. Only four of the original ensemble would carry on through the 1930s. However, three of these—Glenn Hartman, Alfred Handrock, and Eleanor Mosiman, all in their late teens to early twenties when joining
the band—would work with Ancel Patton in building the Hawaiian Guitar Club into a prize-winning organization and a good-will ambassador for the town of Elgin. Hartman and Handrock eventually took on the jobs of assistant directors under Patton, and Mosiman became the band’s publicity director and historian.

By 1930, this first group of seven grew to 18, at least four of whom were mandolinists. Photographs from 1932 show separate male and female groups of Hawaiian (lap slide), Spanish (regular), and tenor (four-string) guitar, ukulele, and mandolin for a total of almost 30 members. 50 members are named in 1935 programs. The heyday of the Band was the years of 1937-1941, when membership stayed around 90 musicians.

**Stringed Band Music is Coming Back**

In 1933, Pat Patton was feeling confident enough to enter his student group in the national competition held yearly by the Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists and Guitarists (known as BMG). This might have been prompted by the location of BMG’s thirty-second convention, to be held that year in nearby Chicago at the LaSalle Hotel.

In preparation for the contest, the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band held a spring fundraising concert to cover travel costs and, at the end of June, departed for the four-day convention. The band, 32 members strong, vied with 16 other ensembles in their size class, performing two pieces, “High School Gang” by William J. Smith, and “Hawaiian Hotel March,” arranged by Smith. The Elgin band captured second place, a big win considering their inexperience. One month later, the Hawaiian Guitar Band again represented Elgin by performing on Elgin Day at the Century of Progress World’s Fair in Chicago.

This 1933 group included a number of musicians who would help to form the core of the later ensembles. These included Lloyd Blank, born on a farm in Burlington, Illinois, in 1912, who played guitar; Bessie Schneider on tenor guitar and mandolin; auto mechanic and multi-instrumentalist Leon Schmidt (born 1908) from the original 1930 group; mandolinist and group business manager Sam A. Groh; William Lull (guitarist, born 1920) and his sister Eunice (Hawaiian guitarist), who were recruited right off of the family farm in Dundee; tenor guitarist, banjoist, and mandocellist Leonard Peterson; sisters Marguerite (born 1914), on Hawaiian guitar, and Nancy (born 1909) Piegorsch on tiple and piano; and Tennessee native William Bedwell (born circa 1897) on mandolin. The last four worked with Pat Patton at Elgin Watch.

While at the Chicago BMG convention, the Elgin musicians were privy to an address by James H. Johnstone, the secretary-treasurer for the Guild, that reflected the agenda of the organization. Johnstone told those assembled that, “Stringed band music is coming back. Banjo, mandolin and guitar and their kindred instruments are not to be considered as schoolboy tinkle-tinkle instruments. They’re capable of playing some of the greatest compositions ever written for regular orchestras.”

**Growth Years**

The words of the secretary-treasurer at the BMG guild were prescient for Patton’s group. As word of their accomplishments spread throughout Elgin and the surrounding environs, students flocked to Pat Patton, taking his classes and joining his ensemble.

The Elgin Hawaiian Band stayed close to home during 1934 and 1935. Perhaps funds were too limited to afford the travel and hotel costs associated with the BMG competitions. Local concerts were held to apprise the public of the band’s progress and growth, and also functioned as fundraisers to offset future costs. In 1934, spring concerts were held at Elgin and Huntley High Schools. In 1935, joint recitals were presented with the Ambassador Male Quartet at the Masonic Temple in the spring and fall. With admission set at 25 cents, it must have taken a large attendance to reach their goal of $1,000, needed to cover the costs of attending the 1936 summer convention in Minneapolis.

An unidentified local newspaper described one of the band’s appearances in April of 1935, showing that the Hawaiian ensemble took advantage of their individual members’ talents in presenting more of a variety show than usually found in a string ensemble:

> Marjorie Lucas, one of the special solo dancers, arrayed in glittering silver tulle and rose costume, captivated the audience. . . . Eleanor Rakow, strikingly clad in white and black satin, proved her prowess in the field of acrobatics, while Rose Annette Pedersen in a ballet costume of white satin, fur trimmed, with saucy turban to match, won the

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Elgin Guitar Band, c. 1940, wearing the last version of their uniforms. The directors of the ensemble stand on stage in the back: l – r, Alfred Handrock, Glenn Hartman, unknown, and Ancel Patton.
hearts of the audience in her special dance number. The comedy element was supplied by Glenn Hartman and Leonard Peterson, attired as a woman and man dancer, respectively, who brought down the house with their boisterous and other dances of a burlesque nature, presented in comical attire. William Thomas was also well received as vocal soloist with many of the ensemble selections. Leon Crain entertained with a yodeling number and Ted Schaeffer with a song, "Moonlight on the Colorado," in which he accompanied himself on the guitar...

"Aloha," theme song of the club...opened and closed the program, [and] was made particularly effective by the colored lights trained upon the stage.

After additional events in the winter of 1936 at the YWCA, in the spring at the Masonic Temple, and weekly outdoor fundraisers at Highland Park on State Street during the first three weeks of June, the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band departed for Minneapolis.

All the hard work paid off. After three days of competition, the 41-member Elgin Band returned home victorious, having beaten 27 bands to win the class C division for ensembles of 35 to 50 players. They celebrated with a victory din-
ner and a concert on July 1st upon their return at the South State Street Park.

The Minneapolis Win helped to fuel Patton's efforts toward continued attendance of the BMG meetings. Luckily, the 1937 competition was to be held in nearby Detroit. After a summer break, Ancel Patton and his managers began working to expand the Guitar Band in order to compete in an additional division for bands of over 50 musicians. 43 new students joined as part of his membership drive.

One gets the impression from the comments of band members that not all of the expanded ensemble boasted advanced musical skills. Connie Metzger Lull and Eloise Joy Anderson recall Ancel Patton tuning each band member's instrument before performances, intimating that the skill was beyond the abilities of most of band members. I'm sure that when the full Hawaiian Guitar ensemble was playing, the core of long-term students carried the most complicated parts. The larger size also helped to cover up a multitude of musical sins; a kind of musical "strength in numbers" was the rule of the day.

The 36th Annual Convention was held July 6-9 at the Hotel Statler. Eighty-five Elgin musicians traveled in two chartered buses to Detroit. Events were typical of the BMG conventions of the late 1930s. There was a street parade in which the Elgin band got to show off their new navy blue and white uniforms, dances in the hotel ballroom, sightseeing trips (in this case, to Windsor, Canada, and the Ford Greenfield Village), and exhibits by musical instrument manufacturers such as Gibson (which supplied the majority of band members with their instruments), Bacon and Day, Regal, Harmony, Stella, Vega, and local retailers Grinnell Brothers, J. L. Hudson, and Bronson. A large public concert dubbed the Great Lakes Musical Festival filled the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple with performances by the top string players of America including Peter Vorunas (mandolin), Charles Rotherme (guitar), Frank Bradbury (five-string banjo), and Eddie Ludt (tenor banjo).

Results of the competitions were announced in a massed band event held at the Cass Technical High School auditorium, where one large ensemble made up of 500 musicians from 29 bands performed. Against 35 other bands, the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band again captured top honors. They won first prize for bands of 34 to 49 members, first prize for bands of more than 50 members, and second prize...
in the popularity contest held during the Thursday-night celebration. And in individual competitions, 11-year-old Joseph Martini took second prize in the solo Hawaiian guitar division.

Band member Maguerite Piegorsch wrote down some of her impressions of the convention in a letter to bandmate Lydia Troyke, who was unable to attend the event:

Well here we are in Detroit today. Gee but I wish you could be with us. I should have answered your letter long ago but it just made me sick that you couldn't go. We left Mon., morning at 6:30 am and arrived at about 4:40 in the afternoon. I had a sore throat when we started out and didn't have sense enough not to sing + holler on the way over and do you know when I woke up Tues. morning I couldn't say a word. I had lost my voice. It's a little better today but I still am aurally deaf.

Oh and I must tell you. I sure wished I were you at the time. I played an electric in the contest. Pat's I think. Anyway he brought it out. Well anyway the Minneapolis bunch played first. I no more than played five bars of Hilo March our warm-up number when I broke a string.

And kiddo I got so nervous I thought I'd faint right up there on stage. Well at the start of Susanne Echoes I took Glenn's guitar and the frets are different on that and when we had to play that squeaky part, you know 21-19-17 I couldn't find 21. Did I ever frizzle it. Oh I'm telling you I wished you were dead.

Rosalie [Gilles] + my sister Nancy [Piegorsch], said I should say "Hello" to you. Rosalie is knitting a purse right now. Mrs. [Walter] Heckman [one of the chaperones, probably band member Norman Heckman's mother] is staying in our room. Tonight we're going over to Windsor, Canada.

O.K. now I'll go on. Well anyway the Cass D band went off pretty good. Don't know if we won yet but I'm praying all the time. Pat called me down to his room this morning + said I should just forget about the other but I can't help thinking about it. I'm telling you it was awful.

I've got you a souvenir copy of Susanne Echoes, a Detroit pennant and Agnes get a set of Gibson strings for you. Oh yes and we're some soap from the hotel and maybe I'll even snatch you a towel. We're on the 13th floor. Have a grand room. Running water, a radio, got a nice view, it's a lot better than last year. Even get a newspaper every morning.

Well I guess I'll close now. I hope your [sic] feeling better by now Lydia. We all miss you and wish you could be with us. Hope you can read this pen scratching and that it doesn't make you feel [sic] bad that you couldn't come along. Cause look what happened to me. Wish I had stayed home myself now.

Hope to see you soon. Your sidekick, Margie.

Repertoire

So, what might you hear when attending a concert by the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band and its related ensembles? Obviously, the structure of the concerts changed depending on the context for their performances. And, the larger groups of students of the mid- to late 1930s dictated a greater variety of features and groupings.

To get an idea of a "typical" Elgin Band concert, let's examine program books from the group's annual spring concert. The first official spring fundraiser was held in the auditorium of the Elgin High School April 3 and 4 of 1934, the last at the Masonic Temple in April of 1941. Although the length of the concert expanded and contracted to fit the overall number of Patton's students, the format basically stayed the same.

The Elgin Hawaiian Band's concerts always started and ended with "theme songs," compositions used over multiple years that became identified with the full band. These included "High School Gang" as an opener, and "Don't Sing Aloha When I Go" (copyright 1926 by Walter Smith, Ben Black, and Neil Morel) and "Good Bye Hawaii" (written circa 1934 by Leon-Towers-Robins and mandolin virtuoso Dave Apollon) as closers. According to surviving concert programs, this format was abandoned in the late 1930s, giving way to a variety of starting and ending pieces. There were also sea changes in repertoire during the last years of the band's existence, perhaps reflecting changing musical tastes, the introduction of electric instruments, and a shift in the student population, or a combination of all three. After a sampling of compositions featuring the full ensemble, individual members and small groupings were highlighted. These performances could be anything from sub-groupings by instrument to solo selections by those band members accomplished as instrumentalists, singers, dancers, comedians, and the like. The program books often refer to these selections as "novelty num-

The 1938 Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Club goes electric, with one of amplifiers up front.
bers.” During 1938-1940, the mandolin section would play a few compositions on their own before these novelties occurred. Then, the whole band would return for approximately four to five pieces before the concert’s final theme. This would include a mass community “sing” (kind of a “follow the bouncing ball”) that included popular songs of the day and well-known selections such as “The Sidewalks of New York” and “The Man on the Flying Trapeze.”

Although the band’s repertoire varied from year to year, there were pieces that carried through large parts of their history. Besides the “theme songs,” these included a fair number of Hawaiian (or pseudo-Hawaiian) tunes, including “Hilo March,” composed in 1881 by Joseph Kapaa‘ele Ka‘ea, “Song of the Islands” by Charles E. King, circa 1917, “Sailing Along to Hawaii” from 1928 by Merton H. Bories, “Drowsy Waters Waltz” by Jack Alau, circa 1916, and tunes popular for Hawaiian guitar, including “Indiana March.” Other parts of the Hawaiian ensemble’s core repertoire were standards that became state songs (“Missouri Waltz” and “Beautiful Ohio”), along with patriotic pieces (John Phillip Sousa’s “Washington Post March,” and “Officer of the Day”) and Broadway hits (“Wabash Blues” from Ziegfeld’s Follies of 1921).
Europe May Be Concentrating On Cannon, Tanks and Warplanes, But Americans Prefer the Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar

The yearly pattern of rehearsals and events that had been in effect would be continued for the remainder of the band's history. Fall and spring fundraising concerts would lead up to the annual competition/conference of the Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinsists and Guitarists. The BMG met during June, 1938 in St. Joseph, Missouri; in Providence, Rhode Island, during July of 1939; the end of June/early July, 1940 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and at Niagara Falls, New York, in 1941.

In order to deal with the influx of students and the need to train players quickly to keep up the size of the ensemble, Ancel Patton opened an official Fretted Instrument School of Music. He advertised:

Graded Classes Forming on Hawaiian Guitar, Spanish Guitar and Mandolin. Beginners or Advanced. A Major, High Bass, E7th and A7th tuning used on Hawaiian instruments. Instruments, case and lesson music furnished. You pay for lessons only. Instruments are not cheap, they are built to Mr. Patton's own specifications and are not for sale. Pupils from these classes will be eligible for membership in this club. Assistant teachers will be on the floor during all classes, assuring individual attention. No contracts to sign!

In 1938, the Hawaiian Guitar Band entered as a marching band in the local Memorial Day parade, played the overture for a local production of “The Million Dollar Butler,” and performed in concert for the DeKalb County Pumper Grange. They took two private railway cars to St. Joseph for the Guild convention, and again won the national championships out of 38 groups for fewer then 15 players, mid-size band, and band with more than 50 members. Additionally, the Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band got $50 for “best band” in the parade (although band members recall that their satin uniforms caused some of the members heat stroke from marching in the heat), and Marguerite Pegorsch won fourth and Miss Gladys Schmidt eighth as Hawaiian guitar soloists. The Elgin band was featured in Paramount newreel coverage of the Convention, which was shown locally in Elgin two weeks after festival. Upon their return to Elgin, the band reassembled for the Chicagoland Music Festival in August, where they led the parade at Soldier Field.

Electric instruments made first their appearance during the 1939 season, when they were added to the BMG competition in Providence. The Hawaiian Guitar Band won the full-band title for the fourth consecutive year, the first ensemble to achieve this goal. The group also captured first place in the small band of 40-piece units category, won the mandolin band contest, and took third and fourth in the new electric instrument division. After the BMG convention, the group traveled to the Elgin Watch exhibit

(top) The Elgin Mandolin Orchestra of 1939. Note the full range of mandolin family instruments, including mandola, mandocello, and mandobass played by Alfred Handrock. (bottom) The full Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band, 1939. Identifiable members include Ruth Kluender at the front far left on steel guitar, Dorr Leuthold, fifth from the front in second row from left, and Glenn Hartman, standing in back on the left. Alfred Handrock plays string bass, Miriam Schroeder, in front of fourth row from the left, is on electric steel guitar, Arthur Stadel, sitting on the lip of the stage third from right, holds a mandolin, Arnold Schroeder sits behind Arthur to his left, with Adolph Stadel, John Brabin, and Pat Patton finishing the row. Son Groh sits on the stage at the far right. Don Leuthold is the fourth one in on the third row, to the right of center, and Bob “Red” Burns sits first in the extreme right row. Side guitar soloist Joseph Martini sits next to last in the first row to the right of center.
at the New York World’s Fair, and also went sightseeing in Washington, DC. This trip cost a whopping $6,500. Another affirmation of their popularity, photographs of group members were featured by the Gibson Company in their Mastertone system music course.

Patterson wrote proudly about the Hawaiian Band for one of their concert programs:

"The Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band is composed mainly of youngsters from our own homes, who meet once a week for the enjoyment of their common interest—music. Every young musician must at some time face his first audience and tonight many in this band are having that experience. Nevertheless, we know that to those interested in wholesome and beneficial recreation for their children, and young people in general, the result will be both satisfactory and inspiring.

"The fact that their organization is maintained by their own efforts—without any outside support or sponsorship—is proof of their enthusiasm and interest in it. This includes the purchase of their own uniforms, chairs, music stands, music and paying monthly dues and rental for their rehearsal hall.

They have successfully competed in four national contests and will enter their fifth in Cincinnati this July.

For Cincinnati, the Elgin Hawaiian Band sported new uniforms of navy blue, white, and gold. Only 76 from the total membership of 114 were able to make the 1940 trip. Either the exact results of the competition are not available, or the way bands were rated changed, but it appears that, although they had an enjoyable stay, the Elgin Band did not repeat any of their previous wins.

It Was Like a Big Family

As time went on and the ensemble (and the number of Patton’s students) grew, the average age of the band members got younger and younger. Instead of musicians of high school age, students began playing as young as 11, 12, and 13 years of age.

Band member Marjorie Lucas remembers the “family feeling” of the guitar group and Dorothy Zoll describes the ensemble as “a big family.” This familial feeling was possibly helped by the real blood relationships between a number of the ensemble’s members. I documented 22 sets of siblings, four groups of cousins.
three parent/child combinations, one son-in-law relationship and five married couples (either concurrent with the group's existence or who married later). Lloyd Blank had the gumption to bring his new bride Margaret along on the Guitar Band’s trip to the 1937 BMG convention as a substitute for their honeymoon. One wonders if Patton gave family discounts for lessons.

However, all families need to send their children out into the world and, after many members had graduated high school and moved on to jobs, marriage, and raising their own families, America's entry into World War II caused the group's final demise. A number of band members entered the service, Patton’s wartime job took up all of his free time, and gasoline rationing made travel difficult if not impossible.

On the occasion of Patton’s death forty years later, group publicist and member Eleanor Mosiman Carey recalled Aancel Patton in a letter to the local newspaper, “Many of us hoped that Pat would come back to Elgin to revive the guitar club, but life just isn't that way, so I now close my job as reporter for Elgin’s own Hawaiian Guitar Club. Thanks, Pat, for the 10 happiest years of my life.”

Afterword:
The Mosiman Scrapbook Returns Home

The scrapbook I purchased on eBay that provided the impetus for my research and this article had been lovingly assembled by Elgin Hawaiian Guitar Band publicist Eleanor M. Mosiman. Mosiman was a second-generation American of German-Swiss descent born April 15, 1913. Her father Otto worked at the Elgin National Watch Company and her mother Hazel (née Bodenschutz) was a homemaker caring for Eleanor and Eleanor's older sister Jean.

Eleanor was a student of Aancel Patton’s by at least 1930 and her name appears in all the band’s rosters from that time until the ensemble’s demise at the beginning of 1942. Although she started on Hawaiian guitar, Mosiman quickly moved to ukulele and then to its relative the tiple. Eleanor Mosiman was an integral part of the Hawaiian Band’s core, not only as a publicist and band member, but also par-
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Eleanor Mosiman followed her father into the watch works, and was employed there by at least 1936. Soon after the dissolution of the group, she married Harvey J. Karry. As noted above, Mosiman always regarded her years with Patton’s band as “happiest years of my life.” Ten years after Pat Patton’s death, Eleanor Mosiman passed away at the age of 80.

I can only assume that, on the occasion either of Mosiman’s death or the passing of her husband, their belongings were placed in a yard sale and the scrapbook was bought by an area dealer in antiques. The summer after I purchased the book on Ebay, I first visited the Elgin Area Historical Museum and found that one of Eleanor’s band uniforms, probably sold at the same time as the scrapbook, had been donated to the Museum. I concluded that this was a sign from Eleanor Mosiman, and on my next trip to Elgin several months later, donated her scrapbook to the Historical Society. I figured that Eleanor’s scrapbook and uniform deserved to be reunited. So now the scrapbook, having traveled to North Carolina to draw me into the story, is back at home in Elgin.

Bob Carlin is researcher, writer, musician, and record producer who specializes in acoustic traditional music. His instruction manual (co-written with Dan Levinson) on banjoist Kyle Creed for Mel Bay is just out, with their follow-up on the playing of Wade Ward close behind.

This article is primarily based on the Eleanor Mosiman scrapbook, now held by the Elgin Area Historical Society. Other sources used include area newspapers the Herald and Courier News (with thanks to Dave Gathman); Elgin: Days Gone By, by E. C. Alft, elginhistory.com; the collections of the Elgin Area Historical Society including the Lydia Troyke scrapbook; the Warren Aukes scrapbook; interviews conducted by the author with Connie Metzger Lull, Elaise Joy Anderson, Warren Aukes, Rhene Cassell, Marjorie Lucas Shailes, and Arnold Schroeder; Ancestry.com and Newspapersarchive.com; and the Gail Borden Public Library.
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1926 FIDDLING CONTEST MYSTERY

The Old-Time Herald recently acquired this news service photograph in an Ebay auction, and we’ve been both entertained and vexed as we have tried to identify these fiddlers. OTH readers, can you help?

In the large group photo, two are easily recognized: Charlie Bowman (8) is named in the accompanying caption, and we feel sure that’s Uncle Am Stuart in the front row, just to the right of the cup (14). Though friends have weighed in with suggestions, and we’ve had flashes of passing inspiration, we’re not certain of anyone else’s identity.

The news service caption attached to the photograph, stamped February 13, 1926, reads:

OLD TIME FIDDLING CONTEST FOR THE MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP IS BEING PLAYED OVER THE RADIO IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL WHERE A CUP WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE CHAMPION

View shows the fiddlers of Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, headed by Charlie Bowman, the Champion fiddler of East Tennessee, and a member of the Hill-Billies, as they will appear at one of the Hotels in the National Capital where the fiddler’s contest for the Middle Atlantic championship will be held.

© Henry Miller News Picture Service, Inc.

Even greatly magnified, it’s hard to read the inscription on the cup, but it indicates that the contest was sponsored by the Washington Times. So far we have yet to find any news articles about the event.

We would love to have help from readers to solve the mystery. If you recognize, or even think you might just kind-of-sort-of recognize, any of these folks, please get in touch. Email editor@oldtimeherald.org, call (919) 286-2041, or write to PO Box 61679, Durham, NC, 27715. Thank you!
2010 CDs are Now Available

Please check our website for additional details about the CDs in our new series of rare and unique recordings (see below). We are also continuing to offer our prior releases of CDs and DVDs, many of which are now on sale at reduced prices.

Reverend Gary Davis

1952 Wire Recordings from the collection of John Cohen

John Cohen recorded Gary Davis in Davis’s home in 1952 using a wire recorder. These recordings from John’s collection pre-date the Smithsonian Folkways release of his 1953 tape recordings (“If I Had My Way”) and do not duplicate any of the material there. A rare visit with a blues master, relaxed and in his prime.

Jont Blevins – Grayson County, VA Banjo Player

This disc represents one of the masters of the old clawhammer banjo styles of Virginia and North Carolina. Jont Blevins was respected by his peers for being one of the finest banjo players around. On this volume, taken from tapes made by some of the many who came to visit and learn from him, he plays many of the great local tunes of his area. He also plays in some rare tunings that aren’t often heard today.

Gaither Carlton 1972

This is the very first full-length recording devoted entirely to Gaither Carlton (of Deep Gap, NC), a revered and highly influential figure in the world of old-time music. A superb banjo and fiddle player, Carlton toured extensively with his son-in-law, Doc Watson, during the folk music revival of the 1960s and early ’70s. Tom Carter’s field recordings, made a few months before Carlton’s death in June 1972, capture Gaither Carlton in top form, validating his legendary stature among old-time musicians.

Harold Hausenflack – Vol. 1: The Fiddling Collection

Home, Radio and Heritage Records Recordings

This first volume of Harold Hausenflack’s music focuses on his powerful fiddle playing, gleaned from personal, radio and heritage records. Harold pays homage to some of his fiddling influences (John Carson, Joe Birchfield, Tommy Jarrell, Norman Edmonds, French Carpenter) with stylistic accuracy and great feeling. Harold also plays a number of tunes that are largely unique to his repertoire.

Vernon Riddle – Old-Time Texas Style Fiddle

As a young man in the Air Force stationed in Amarillo, TX in the 1950s, Vernon Riddle spent a great deal of time with legendary fiddler Eck Robertson. He learned a great number of tunes from Eck as well as from other iconic Texas fiddlers, including Benny Thomasson, Jack Mears, and the Solomons. This collection presents Vernon’s fiddling from his Texas years up through his time in Spartanburg, SC in the early 1990s.

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THE OLD-TIME HERALD. WWW.OLDTIMEHERALD.ORG APRIL-MAY 2011 41
Disc 1: Hill Billie Blues / The Old Maid’s Last Hope / All I've Got’s Gone / The Fox Chase / Papa’s Billie Goat / The Little Old Log Cabin In the Lane / She Was Always Chewing Gum / Jonah and the Whale / I’m Going Away To Leave You / Love Somebody / Soldier’s Joy / Make Them Cabbage Down / Rooster Crow Medley / Just From Tennessee / From Jerusalem To Jericho / I Tickled Nancy / Arkansas Traveler / The Girl I Left Behind Me / Muskrat Medley / Down in Arkansas / Down By the Old Mill Stream / I Don’t Reckon It’ll Happen Again / Save My Mother's Picture from the Sea / He Won the Heart of Sarah Jane / Just Tell Them That You Saw Me

Disc 2: I Ain’t Got Long to Stay / Ain’t it a Shame to Keep Your Money Out in the Rain / Shout Mourner, You Shall Be Free / I Don’t Care if I Never Wake Up / In the Good Old Summer Time / Something’s Always Sure to Tickle Me / In the Good Old Days of Long Ago / My Girl’s a High Born Lady / The Old Carolina State / Where the Sweet Magnolias Bloom / Never Make Love No More / Them Two Gals of Mine / Tossing the Baby So High / Uncle Ned / Braying Mule / Take Me Home Poor Julia / Lullaby Song / Poor Old Dad / Oh Bear Me Away on Your Snowy Wings / Mockingbird Song Medley / In the Sweet Bye and Bye / In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree / Got No Silver Nor Gold Blues / Heartaching Blues / Rock Rite Pauli Girl / Backwater Blues

Disc 3: Jesus Lover of My Soul / Fad the Razor / Put Me in My Little Bed / New in Town / We Need a Change in Business All Around / Mister Johnson / Huss Little Baby Don’t You Cry / Oh Lovin’ Babe / Come On Buddie, Don’t You Want to Go / Go On Nora Lee / Was You There When They Took My Lord Away / Thank God for Everything / When the Train Comes Along / Tennessee Tornado / Don’t Get Weary

As one of the most enduringly popular early hillbilly artists, Uncle Dave Macon has always been a hit in the world of reissues. In the early 1920s, he was one of the first pre-WWII country performers to have an entire LP devoted to a reissue of his first album, which eventually sold out. The deluxe package is, as most readers of OTH surely know, Keep My Stillet Good and Gresney, issued by the German company Bear Family in 2004. That set features not only all of Uncle Dave’s commercial recordings, but also the home recordings he did for folklorist and composer Charles Faulkner Bryan, and a DVD of the short film The Grand Ole Opry, which contains the only known film footage of the Man Himself in action. The music is accompanied by a hardcover book containing an Uncle Dave biography by Charles Wolfe, transcriptions of all the song lyrics, many photos, and a complete discography. It also carries a hefty price tag.

If the Bear Family production is the luxury car of Uncle Dave reissues, the set at hand, on the London-based JSP label, is the basic, no-frills compact; not fancy, but serviceable. JSP has chosen to issue the Uncle Dave recordings in two sets of four CDs each; it is only the second volume that is under consideration here. (I have
not seen the first, so comments about it are based only on catalog information.)
Each of the two volumes contains 100 songs, though in Volume Two, only 81 are by Uncle Dave; the remaining 19 are by his frequent musical companions, Sam and Kirk McGee (whom last name is unaccountably, but consistently, spelled "McGee" in the documentation). Each CD has brief notes, written by Pat Harrison, a name that is unfamiliar to me. Recording dates, locations, and personnel are given for the recordings, but there is no information on master numbers or original releases. Neither the home recordings nor the film are included.

The material is not split chronologically across the two volumes as one might expect. Rather, the (unnamed) producers have instead included songs from the full range of Uncle Dave's career on each set. It would be uncharitable, though arguably accurate, to say that most of the "good stuff"—i.e., those songs that are most familiar to Uncle Dave fans and that are most often performed by people today—is on Volume One: "Sail Away Ladies," "Way Down the Old Plank Road," "Rock About My Saro Jane," "Hold That Wood Pile Down," "Rabbit in the Pea Patch," et al. In fact, most of the sides on which Uncle Dave was accompanied by the Fruit Jar Drinkers, and which are regarded by many as some of the finest string band recordings of that or any other era, are on the first volume.

Nevertheless, there is much good music to be heard here; this is Uncle Dave Macon we are dealing with, after all. Of particular note are the banjo/fiddle duets he does with Fiddlin' Sid Harkreader, his earliest musical partner. On "Love Somebody" and "Soldier's Joy," both recorded July 10, 1924, during Uncle Dave's first trip to New York, the Dixie Dewdrop shows that he was unmatched in the art of accompanying fiddle tunes. No jokes, recitations, or carrying-on; just some complex and imaginative instrumental interplay between two skilled musicians.

Uncle Dave's repertoire was nothing if not eclectic, and a collection such as this (taking the JSP two-volume set as a whole) which presents his work in its entirety, brings that fact home with abundant clarity. His string band pieces may be what come to mind first, but those constitute just one aspect of a huge body of material that includes sentimental songs, gospel numbers, songs from both black and white folk tradition, pieces from the world of blackface minstrelsy, and even...
a few originals. A sizable portion of the songs he recorded can be traced to printed sources of one sort or another: sheet music, gospel songbooks, and collections of minor poetry. And make no mistake about it, Uncle Dave was very much a man of his time and place. He recorded many so-called "coon songs" from the popular tradition of the late nineteenth century, and the N-word runs freely throughout the material on this set. Modern listeners must be prepared to deal with these pieces as historical artifacts, and understand that Uncle Dave was attuned to the cultural sensibilities of his culture, not ours.

The inclusion of the sides by Sam and Kirk McGee is a welcome and appropriate bonus. There are five numbers attributed to Sam as a solo artist, and 14 to the brothers, though in reality two of the latter ("As Willie and Mary Strolled by the Seashore" and "The Ship Without a Sail") are also Sam solos. Most importantly, Sam’s classic guitar instrumentals, "Back Dancer’s Choice," "Franklin Blues," and "Knoxville Blues," are here. They still impress and inspire 85 years after they were recorded.

Indeed, it is generally impressive and remarkable the way that the music of Uncle Dave and his cohorts has held up over the years. People still play and record many of his songs, he continues to inspire a host of imitators, and the annual festival named after him and held on his home turf of Middle Tennessee is one of the major events on the old-time music calendar. He had the musical ability and force of personality to stand head and shoulders above his peers during his lifetime, and he continues to cast a long shadow today.

NOTE: At the bottom of the Amazon.com listing for Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy is their customary indication: “What Do Customers Ultimately Buy After Viewing This Item?” An astonishing 73% go on to purchase Volume One of the JSP set, and 54% pick up Volume Two. Since the two JSP volumes together cost about 20% as much as the Bear Family box, this is understandable. However, if companies like Bear Family that lavish time, attention, and money on producing high-quality publications do not get sufficient support from the audience for these productions, there is little incentive for them to continue to issue them. The world of old-time music has been greatly enhanced by these deluxe packages; let us hope that they continue to appear.

Paul E. Wells
J. E. Mainer: Classic Sides 1937-1941

J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers: Carry Your Cross With a Smile / Swing the Door of Your Heart Open Wide / Answer to Greenback Dollar / There’s a Green Hill Far Away / Miss Me When I’m Gone / Floating Down the Stream of Time / Don’t Go Out / Don’t Get Trouble in Your Mind / Kiss Me Cindy / Your Best Friend is Always Near / Lamp Lighting Time in Heaven / When the Light’s Gone Out in Your Soul / I Once Loved a Young Man / Somebody Cares / I’m Living in the Right Life Now / Just Over in the Glory Land / I’m in the Gloryland Way / If I Lose, Let Me Lose / Great Reaping Day / Oh Why Did I Ever Get Married / Back to Johnson City / Wade Mainer and his Little Smilin’ Rangers: Ramshackle Shack / Memory Lane / Wild Bill Jones / I Want to be Loved

Wade Mainer and his Little Smilin’ Rangers: What Are You Going to Do Brother? / Companions Draw Nigh / Mountain Sweetheart / Don’t Forget Me Little Darling / Wade Mainer and the Sons of the Mountaineers: Lonely Tombs / Pale Moonlight / All My Friends / Don’t Get Too Deep in Love / Don’t Leave Me Alone / I Won’t Be Worried / Where Romance Calls / Another Alabama Camp Meetin’ / Mitchell Blues / Further Along / Dear Loving Mother and Dad / Can’t Tell About These Women / That Kind / If I Had Listened to Mother / She is Spreading Her Wings for a Journey / The Same Old You to Me / Life’s Ev’nin’ Sun / Mother Still Prays for You Jack / You’re Awfully Mean to Me / Home in the Sky / A Little Love

Wade Mainer and the Sons of the Mountaineers: North Carolina Moon / More Good Women Gone Wrong / Sparkling Blue Eyes / We Will Miss Him / I Left My Home in the Mountains / I Met Her at a Ball One Night / You May Forsake Me / Look On
and Cry / One Little Kiss / Mama Don’t Make Me Go to Bed / Crying Holy / Heaven Bells are Ringing / Sparkling Blue Eyes No. 2 / The Poor Drunkard’s Dream / Were You There? / The Gospel Cannonball / The Great and Final Judgment / What a Wonderful Savior is He / Why No: Make Heaven Your Home / Mansion in the Sky / Not a Word of That Be Said / Drifting Through an Unfriendly World / Shake My Mother’s Hand for Me / Anywhere is Home / I Can Tell You the Time

CD D 1937-1941


Here we have the anticipated second part of a two-set collection, from the British ISP label, of music from J. E. and/or his brother Wade Mainer. As with the earlier boxed set, J. E. Mainer: 1935-1939: The Early Recordings (ISP77118), this collection serves up a generous 100 sides of music on four discs. J. E. Mainer’s heartbreak breakdown fiddling and Wade’s bright two-finger banjo came to dominate a sound that some see as an intermediate stage, a sonic “missing link” between old-time and bluegrass music. When you hear the Mainers’ music on these recordings, I think you’ll agree that even if bluegrass music had never happened, that the music of the Mainer brothers, with its good-humored energy and unassuming freshness, is worthy in its own right. Their music not only needs little introduction to long-time old-time music fans, it needs little justification in terms of its place in some musical evolutionary timeline.

For many of us, it was the infectious string band music of Wade and J. E. that lured us down the primrose path of old-time music. Their old recordings were plentiful, many remaining in print for decades. Further, some of the most charming Mainer selections received treatment by influential touring old-time bands of the 1960s through 1980s, such as the New Lost City Ramblers. Moreover, the Mainer output was simply so enormous that their old 78 rpm records were easy to find. Even non-collectors could usually stumble on a stack of Mainer records in the junk or thrift stores of the 1960s-’80s.

The Mainer bands’ music was appealing to those just getting into playing old-time music. With the exception perhaps of cuts with the wonderfully squiggly fiddling of Steve Ledford, the arrangements were usually pretty straightforward rhythmically, and if you got a clean copy, the sound quality on these 1930s records was quite clear. It was easy to hear the interplay of all the instruments and voices. Many of the earmarks of the bluegrass sound were audible in the Mainers’ music from the mid- to late 30s—Including the prominence of vocals and vocal harmony; the short instrumental breaks between the verses of songs. Nevertheless, J. E.’s rough-and-ready fiddling, Wade’s melodic two-finger banjo picking, and their unadorned, heartfelt singing gave them an appealingly archaic sound.

J. E. (Joseph Emmett) Mainer (1898-1971) and his younger brother Wade Eckhart Mainer (born 1907 and still living) were born and raised near Weaverville in Buncombe County, North Carolina, an extraordinarily rich musical environment. Their father, W. J. Mainer, was a singer and old-time fiddler, and several relatives and neighbors around Weaverville played fiddle or banjo, or sang. By the early 1920s the brothers were playing music with family and neighbors. J. E. played fiddle, and both played banjo. Like many youngsters in cash-strapped mountain families, the brothers left home to find work in the cotton mills of the Piedmont. In the mill towns, they found themselves surrounded by other country and mountain people of similar musical background. The movement of people familiar with traditional mountain music to Piedmont cotton mills, and the emergence of radio stations transmitted from nearby urban centers such as such as Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro, and Atlanta, set the stage for the Mainers’ form of music. Radio was just becoming hugely popular and talent scouts for patent medicine nostrums like Crazy Water Crystals and Peruna would patrol square dances and musical entertainments in the vicinity of the mills, seeking
hillbilly musicians to sell for their products on radio stations. In 1934, the Texabased Crazy Water Crystals bought time on WBT in Charlotte and sponsored a stable of bands that included the Monroe Brothers and the Jenkins String Band with banjo player Snuffy Jenkins, and, by the early 1930s, the newly formed J. E. Mainer’s Crazy Mountaineers. That first early Mountaineers band was made up of the Mainer brothers and two singing guitarists, “Daddy” John Love and Zeke Morris, solidifying the core sound and mix of material for all of the related bands that followed. This set begins with the bands of 1934, by which point Love had moved on and Zeke had switched to mandolin. When his guitar-playing and singing brother Wiley joined the band, the Mountaineers then had the classic brother singing duet with guitar and mandolin backup.

The primary way that these bands made money in the early radio days was through selling song sheets and recordings at personal appearances. Like many other bands, the Mainer’s strategy was to remain in a region until their market was saturated, and then move on to a different station in a fresh area. Though there may have been some discord between J. E. and Wade over the older brother’s drinking, they always remained friends and their splitting into two groups of bands, some led by J. E. and others by Wade, made good financial sense. So through the ’30s and early ’40s J. E. and Wade tended to have several simultaneously running clusters of bands with various personnel. It was a successful play. In the depths of the Depression years, while other bands floundered, the Mainers and affiliated bands always had the flexibility to put out a wide range of popular string band sounds, from smooth brothers duets to rowdy barn dance breakdowns. They even had a talented children’s duet with their nephews “Buck” and “Buddy,” Banks with the Wade Mainer and his Little Smiling Rangers grouping.

Another striking aspect of their music is the familiarity of the material. Though there was a jaunty signature Mainer sound, the songs and tunes were tried-and-true old favorites. Always pragmatic and with an ear toward what would be salable, they boldly raided the catalogues of earlier recording groups as well as their contemporaries. Favorite targets for material and then fashion it to their own style included Charlie Poole (“IF I Lose”), Grayson and Whitter (“Don’t Go Out My Darling,” “What-Cha Gonna Do With the Baby-O?”), the Leake County Revelers (“Mitchell Blues” is an adaptation of “Carroll County Blues”), Roy Acuff (“Come Back Sweetheart” is a thinly veiled version of Acuff’s “Please Come Back Little Pal”), Oscar Ford (J. E.’s “Kiss Me Cindie,” with fiddle sound effects), and the Carter Family (“Miss Me When I’m Gone”).

In many cases, the transformations are an improvement. The Mainer versions of “Don’t Get Trouble in Your Mind” and “Kiss Me Cindie,” with J. E.’s vigorous fiddling and crazy sound effects, just about jump out of the tracks, becoming definitive versions in their own right. The same can be said about “What-Cha Gonna Do With the Baby-O,” which I cannot hear now without wanting to hear a man with a deep voice cry out in a deadpan “baby” voice, “Waaaaah! Waaaaah!” It’s hard to give too much praise to the creativity and skill of Fiddlin’ Steve Ledford, also from the mountains west of Asheville. “Bachelor Blues,” “I Won’t Be Worried,” “Mitchell Blues,” and “Only a Broken Heart” (“Little Maggie”) are showcases for some of the finest bluesy fiddling ever captured on commercial country recordings. And the other part of the overall Mainer band sound that was new and exciting was the
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style and bright audibility of Wade Main-er’s banjo. Both Manners learned to play in a version of the local two-finger style from their brother-in-law Lew Banks. Wade’s innovation was to use a mix of two approaches to two-finger style—a standard thumb lead to back up songs and an index lead on the higher strings when he wanted to emphasize the melody. He also used the G tuning and a capo more frequently than double-C or the drop-C tuning that Charlie Poole and earlier players favored. He was not the first to use fingerpicks, but his love of the newer bright-toned resonator banjos was a choice of equipment that certainly helped with projection. Another important Carolina musician who appeared on a half-dozen J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers recordings, including “Don’t Go Out,” “Kiss Me Cindy,” and “Don’t Get Trouble in Your Mind,” was Dewitt “Snuffy” Jenkins. He had a jumpy three-finger style of his own invention, though it certainly came from the same well from which Earl Scruggs and others would later draw in developing the smooth continuous rolls that are the hallmark of bluegrass banjo.

This is a beautifully conceived and complete collection, and I have enjoyed it so much that I already ordered the earlier package that I had somehow missed. Thanks to very clean copies supplied by Chris King, the sound is bright and transparent, and the arranging and sequencing of the material is thoughtfully done. My only quibble is that the personnel, tunes, and band names are in separate places, making it necessary to switch back and forth between the insert and that back of each disk in order to find out who is playing on which cut. There are also a handful of small factual errors in the notes, but these will probably only distract people intimately familiar with the names of counties and little towns of North Carolina and South Carolina. I recommend this collection wholeheartedly. The exuberant performances and interesting variety of string band sounds are guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

As a postscript, I also recommend a couple of books as companions to this recording. There’s a charming chapter on the Mainer bands in Tony Russell’s 2007 Country Music Originals, and 2010 saw the publication of an informative and beautifully illustrated biography of Wade Mainer by Dick Spottswood, Banjo on the Mountai: Wade Mainer’s First Hundred Years.

GAIL GILLESPIE
Sausage Grinder
Delicious Moments

Moosh Piddle CD 13001

Chris Berry: vocals, guitar, kazoo; David Bragg: fiddle, mandolin, guitar; Josh “Boy Baby” Orkin: kazoo; kazoo, whistle; Matt Orkin: mandolin; Bobby Reed: vocals, banjo, harmonica; Margie Royall: vocals, washboard, banjo-ukulele

My Four Reasons / Fourth Street Mess Around / Tie Your Dog, Sally Gal / Good Grindin’ / Black Bottom Strut / Why Do I Have to Bend Over? / Black Eye Blues / Peacock Rag / Black Mattie / If You’re a Viper / Deep Ellum Blues / Weary Lone-some Blues / I'm Gonna Bake My Biscuits / Carbolic Rag / Tapping That Thing

Sausage Grinder is a Los Angeles-based jug band. I'd never heard of them before, and this is their first album. I hope it's not their last, because their infectious fun pulled me right out of the funk of a bad winter cold. So far, the medication hasn't produced any side effects, other than euphoria.

The first thing I noticed on opening the album is that the band has a fondness for bizarre visuals. The cover shows a dead sausage, done in by whiskey, a banjo and a syringe (a reference to toxic vaccine?), being devoured by vultures. The back cover is a photo of one of the band members, accompanied by a monkey-god statue that looks like a relic from the original King Kong movie set, biting into a Black Patti 78. (I hope no records were harmed during production.) Inside, the main photo is of three of the six band members performing with one Senor Stretchy Skin, who's wearing clothespins and battery clamps. Finally, the formal band portrait shows the same head on all six bodies. As I'd expect from such sensibilities, there are no explanations about what it all means.

But the visuals take a back seat to the music. The first cut, “My Four Reasons,” introduces the band's approach: mania, abetted by a slide whistle and raucous laughter, and a penetrating bass vocal (by Bobby Reed) that sounds very much like Louis Armstrong after he scored some really good reever. “Fourth Street Mess Around” features the same bass voice, but on the chorus this time. The whistle has somehow morphed to produce a sound like a musical saw.

I'd put a $10 bill in the hat for this band, because they realize that you need great voices in order to sound good on a street corner. Not all revival jug bands have noticed that. In addition to Bobby, Chris Berry provides a nice, somewhat higher, voice for some of the songs, and Margie Royall does a great job as the bad girl, channeling Ma Rainey, Memphis Minnie, and Little Brother Montgomery on such masterpieces as “Good Grindin’” and “I'm Gonna Bake My Biscuits.” All the members sing on the chorus of a song like “Deep Ellum Blues.” Mostly they're all singing the tune, with no attempt at three- or six-part harmony. I'd leave an extra $5 tip in the hat for that.

They're no slouches on the instrumentals, either. Variety is the key here. “Tie Your Dog, Sally Gal” is a nice old-time fiddle and banjo breakdown with a very funny ending. “Black Bottom Strut” features mandolin, while “Peacock Rag” features bluesy fiddling and a tenor banjo or banjo-uke. The explanatory note will get a laugh from string musicians.
"Weary Lonesome Blues" is a reflective two-guitar country ragtime piece. "Caribonic Rag" makes the most of a banjo/mandolin combination.

I suspect from the sound that this is a home recording, which, in this context, is an advantage. But, given the prominence of the jug in some of the source recordings, I find it odd that I can't hear jug playing on any of these pieces, even though jug is listed as one of the instruments.

LYLE LORGEN

To order: www.sausagegrindermusic.com

Red Hen Crossing

Jane Rothfield: fiddle, banjo, vocals; Allan Carr: bass, guitar, vocals; Linda Schrade: guitar, vocals; David Rhyne: banjo, vocals

Both Sides of the Road / Old Greasy Coat / Red Hen / Tell Me True / The Moon is Over the Mountain / November Wind / Copper Run / Annabelle Lee / Too Late for the Bacon / Sittin' Alone in the Moonlight / Jailbreak / Love is Teasing / The Two Ravens

Can you call a CD an old-time CD if there is only one traditional song on the whole CD? Yes, absolutely, but only if the people who made it are steeped so well in their traditions that the music they create sounds traditional, even though we know the composers and the copyright dates. Traditions—there are at least two major traditions represented on this CD: Appalachian music and Scottish-based Celtic music, as well as some ventures toward bluegrass.

At Clifftop's Neo-Traditional Band Contest, judging criteria say: "Highest scores going to bands that creatively and skillfully combine fundamental elements of traditional old-time music (e.g., repertoire, style/spirit, instrumentation) with alternative techniques and various musical styles in their presentation." I can't think of a better way to describe the music of Red Hen. One of the songs on this CD, in fact, won "Best Original Tune" at Clifftop a few years ago.

The members of Red Hen have achieved a wonderful synthesis of their talents. All four are excellent singers and instrumentalists, and they listen to each other when they play. This is a singing band, with a repertoire ranging from full-length ballads down to brief lyrics that Allan made up to go with Jane's tunes. The harmonies are well put-together. Every band member sings lead at least once; David leads Bill Monroe's "Sittin' Alone in the Moonlight" and the band somehow achieves an old-time sound. Linda has an achingly pure lead voice on several songs, including "Tell Me True," which she learned from Laurie Lewis.

Allan Carr is the primary Celtic influence in Red Hen, although Jane osmosis a lot of Celtic culture during her years touring with Allan, first as a duo and then as a trio with Martin Hadden. People play guitar differently in Scotland; it's a much more melodic style, and this is one of the ways in which Red Hen distinguishes itself from other bands. Carr also has a gift for writing lyrics for other people's tunes, as he has done here. A highlight of the CD is "The Two Ravens"—Rick Lee made up the tune. This tune inspired Allan to rewrite a Child ballad into an American setting. Linda and David execute this in an elegant arrangement. The full-band arrangement of "Annabelle Lee," showcasing Allan's visceral singing, has been stuck in my head for days now.

Six of the 13 cuts are original tunes by Red Hen member and fiddler Jane Rothfield. Of these, only one is a straight instrumental; the others have had lyrics written to go with the tunes. Harold Maurer (of Clifftop's "Bates Motel") wrote the lyrics for "Too Late for the Bacon," while the other lyrics were written by Allan. Other instrumentalists are by Chris Coole and Garry Harrison. I suspect that Old-Time Herald readers will be able to pick out which tunes are by Jane, and which are by other composers, but describing the difference will be more difficult. (Try it!)

Red Hen's CD showcases one of the paths that old-time music can take and still be considered old-time music. There's a lot of new tunes and music out there for other bands to learn, enjoy, and cover. I hope readers will start playing some of the original tunes and songs.

PETE PETERSON

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There Breathes a Hope: The Legacy of John Work II and His Fisk Jubilee Quartet, 1909-1916

There Breathes a Hope

Archeophone Arch 5050

Fisk Jubilee Quartet-1909 (on Camden and Victor): John Wesley Work II, first tenor; Rev. James Andrew Myers, second tenor; Alfred Garfield King, first bass; Noah Walker Ryder, second bass; Rev. Myers: reader

Fisk Jubilee Quartet-1911: Work, Myers, Ryder; Leon P. O'Hara, baritone

Fisk Jubilee Quartet-1911 (Edison cylinders): John W. Work, II, first tenor; Roland W. Hayes, second tenor; Leon P. O'Hara, first bass; Charles Wesley, second bass

Fisk University Male Quartet-1915-1916 (Columbia and Silvercone): John W. Work, II, first tenor; James A. Myers, second tenor; J. Everett Harris, baritone; Lemuel L. Foster, bass

Disc One: "I guess you've heard of Professor John Work"/"Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray/Old Black Joe/Roll Jordan Roll/Swing Low, Sweet Chariot/There is a Balm in Gilead/When Malindy Sings/Golden Slippers/Little David Play On Your Harp/Shout All Over God's Heaven/The Great Campmeeting/"He had one of the sweetest tenor voices."

Disc Two: My Soul is a Witness/Roll Jordan Roll/The Band of Gideon/The Great Campmeeting/Peter on the Sea-The Ole Ark/Bar Jo Song/"Jubilee Hall up there is called 'frozen music."

Shout All Over God's Heaven/There is a Light Shining for Me/Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray/Steal Away to Jesus/River of Jordan/Little David Play on Your Harp/"See we sang spiritually—interpreted them as the slaves did."/The Old Tunes/O Mary, Don't You Weep, Don't You Mourn/In the Great Getting Up Mawnin'/Brethren Rise!/Good News, the Cheriöt's Coming/The Great Campmeeting/Swing Low, Sweet Chariot/"These students are far removed from what we were..."/I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray/Shout All Over God's Heaven-Little David

The title of this new historical CD set from Archeophone comes from the words of W. E. B. Du Bois in The Souls of Black Folk (1903).

Though all the sorrow of the sorrow Songs there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith 'in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, we shall judge men by their souls and not by their skins. Is such a hope justified? Do the Sorrow Songs ring true?

The Archeophone label, with its motto "songs you thought were lost forever," is dedicated to the art of digital remastering of music preserved on turn-of-the-century acoustic recordings—cylinders and gramophone disks recorded without the interference of microphones or electricity. Based in Champaign, Illinois, Archeophone is the brainchild of Richard Martin and Meagen Hennessey and, bless them, they have spearheaded a number of superlative-quality/commercially marginal projects such as this one. Archeophone CDs are packaged with well-written scholarly notes, and lavishly illustrated with rare photos and period record advertisements and labels. This release, There Breathes a Hope, joins a distinguished catalogue that includes the Grammy-winning project Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1891-1922, and a double-Grammy-nominated CD set Actionable Offenses: Indecent Phonograph Recordings from the 1890s, and a set that's now on my list of must-haves, Real Ragtime: Disc Recordings from Its Heyday.

Despite the relatively arcane subject matter of its catalog, Archeophone's past compilations have received the approval of scholars and music lovers alike, and this splendidly packaged two-CD set should be no exception. The set offers 39 cuts by Fisk University's Jubilee Quartet, plus poetry readings, and an illuminating 1983 interview with Fisk Jubilee alum Rev. Jerome L. Wright. With prologues by Martin, Hennessey, and Tim Brooks, and an in-depth essay by music historian Doug Seroff, the nearly 100-page booklet is a serious portrait of the first serious portrait of a nearly forgotten style of spiritual singing. Initially held in low regard by African Americans for its bitter reminder of slavery, the tradition of spiritual singing proved to be the salvation of one of the first institutions of higher learning for blacks. By the 1920s the ethereal spiritual singing style heard here was beginning to shift to the more rhythmically defined and emotive gospel quartet form, a style more reflective of the actual singing style used in Southern black religious song. Because the producers have chosen to present the Fisk music chronologically, and in the form of a musical program, it is possible to get a feeling for the solemn beauty of the spiritual style, but also to get a sense of how the seeds of the fervent twentieth-century gospel movement were already taking root.

Though the glorious songs of the Fisk singers speak for themselves, some contextual background is in order to appreciate the magnitude of the accomplishments of the 1909-1916 Fisk Jubilee Quartet and its charismatic leader, John Wesley Work, II. Founded in 1865, Nashville's Fisk University was formed by the American Missionary Association to provide for the higher education of former slaves. Despite assistance from former abolitionist groups and the Freedmen's Bureau, the new school was struggling financially. Its faculty worked for minimal pay, there were few supplies, and the students went to class and lived in abandoned Union Army barracks. By 1871 the situation had become so dire that if the school were to survive at all, it needed funding and needed it quickly. In 1871, the school's treasurer and music instructor, George L. White, organized a series of student concerts in Nashville in an attempt to foster goodwill and raise the necessary funding. Though the group's original repertoire was the standard choir material popular in the day, these arias, temperance anthems, and parlor songs got a lukewarm response. However, when the Fisk singers delivered spirituals or "sorrow songs" with far greater emotional intensity, audiences were enthralled. The director then wisely decided to feature spirituals in their concerts, and they all chose to name their choir the Jubilee Singers after the "year of jubilee" or emancipation.

The Fisk Jubilee Singers thus began to serve as musical ambassadors and fundraisers for the University, bringing African American spirituals to the attention of predominately white audiences all over the Northern and Eastern United

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States, and abroad as well. On a tour of Great Britain, they eventually sang for Queen Victoria. The Fisk Jubilee Singers also brought home the financial wherewithal to sustain the University and to build the first permanent structure for black higher education in the South. As former singer Jerome Wright put it in his interview with Doug Seroff, “Fisk was built off of singing.” Jubilee Hall up there is called ‘frozen music’—because the Jubilee Singers went away and came back with $175,000 to build that building.” Not only did the group save Fisk University, they were really the first to forge a connection between the singing of spirituals and black education.

We can only try to imagine how the earliest Fisk Jubilee Singers sounded—they made much of their music before the development of sound recording technology. This landmark project gives a pretty good impression of their music though, because it presents the Fisk Jubilee Quartet in the early twentieth century, while the group was still rooted in the spiritual style and just beginning to branch out toward the more dynamic gospel sound that flowered in by the 1920s. Actually, since both styles sprang from movements in the development of African American harmony singing, the difference is less a matter of a complete transformation than one of a gradual shift towards greater vocal intensity and subtle changes in the way the singers communicated with their audience. The early Jubilee Singers delivered spirituals in a carefully controlled manner, aiming for a perfect evenness of all the parts so that the whole group blended seamlessly like the sound of a pipe organ. Gospel style singers performed in a style that increased in volume and energy, with the intention of exciting their audiences into a religious fervor.

The man who shepherded the transition from spiritual serenity to gospel excitement at Fisk was John Wesley Work, II. Work, who would toil passionately for over 30 years to champion jubilee singing, was born in Nashville in 1871. His father, John Wesley Work, had been sent by the slave-owning Work family of Nashville to New Orleans to learn to read and write, speak French, and sing opera. After the Civil War John Work, Sr. (often called John Work I), organized the first choir in Nashville’s First Baptist Church and several members of this choir were members of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers. John Work II began his studies at Fisk in 1891 and was active in many campus activities, including the choral group on campus. At the time, educated blacks were embarrassed by the spiritual style of singing, viewing it as an undignified vestige of slavery, even tantamount to the racist caricature of a minstrel show. In an 1898 letter to the Fisk Herald, Work pointed out that audiences seldom weep at minstrel shows. For him, the power of the black style of spiritual singing to bring audiences to tears marked it as a high art, its sublimity “even rivaling The Messiah,” with its theme of God and Heaven.” After studying Latin at Harvard and receiving an MA at Fisk, Work took a job and eventually a teaching position there. He revived the Jubilee Singers, and with his charismatic personality persuaded them to adopt the more emotive and energetic sound that resembled the style of singing he heard at black country churches in Tennessee. Work’s influence eventually spread to other black institutions of higher learning as his students went on to teach others at sister schools throughout the South.

Along with promoting respect for the spiritual song form, Work’s other passion was the arrangement of traditional African American religious songs that he collected into four-part harmony for quartet groups. Both John Work and his brother Frederick were enthusiastic collectors and arrangers
of traditional spirituals, and brought many now classic songs into the repertoire of the Jubilee Singers and other groups springing up at other colleges. Together the brothers published a collection that set out spirituals in musical notation to "secure them for publication and permanency," called *New Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University*. While collecting songs, John and Frederick were astonished by the vocal agility and creativity of rural African American singers in Tennessee. In a 1902 article in the *Fisk Herald*, Work described the singing of musically untutored young people they heard at a local church. "There were some quavers and deflections from the main theme... but the changes were fascinating and shot a thrill through his soul never before experienced. From here would come a turn of the voice, there a 'curley cue,' as we called it, yonder a spontaneous, nameless outpouring of extra melody—which combined make a most pleasing effect."

So what does this music sound like to readers of this magazine, whose ears are accustomed to the sound quality of remastered early recordings? If you have developed the habit of mentally filtering out the pops and crackles of old recordings to get at the actual music, and you do not expect modern bass-heavy audiophile sound, you will not be disappointed. On the other hand, if you are expecting a high-energy gospel sound, the spiritual style may seem a little staid and emotionally distant, but when you come to it with understanding of its context, there is a serene beauty to the precisely modulated harmonies.

Fans of old-time string band music may prefer the more familiar upbeat songs to the slower spirituals, because that is the sound that found its way onto the commercial "country" recordings of the 20s and, through many routes, made its way into the repertoires of modern old-time string bands. For example, the Fisk version of "The Old Ark" will be familiar to many of us because a train of transfer from the Jubilee groups inspired by the Fisk singers wended its way to Georgia guitarist and singer John Dilleshaw (aka Seven Foot Dilly), and from Dilleshaw to Craig Johnson and the Double Decker String Band in their "The Old Ark's a-Moving." The "pleasing effect" of this music is to be found now, as it was hundred years ago, in the recordings of the groups in which the tenor leaps to the fore as a lead voice. John Work's first tenor is especially magnificent on the old spirituals from the 1909 sessions, such as "Roll Jordan Roll," "I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray," and "Bright Mansions Above." Though Work's classical technique of rolling of his "r's" is a little jarring, his voice brims with real feeling, and can raise the hair on the back of your neck as sure as Roscoe Holcomb's singing.

Among the finest recordings made by the variously configured Fisk quartets are the nine four-minute Edison cylinders recorded with the 1911 lineup of singers. Unlike musicians of the 78 rpm era, confined to a stricter time limit, singers who recorded on the old cylinders had enough time really to warm to their subject, and these old four-minute-plus recordings create the feeling of a concert performance. (Incidentally, Ken Flaherty, the set's co-producer, discovered seven of these Edison recordings at a flea market. The jewel in the crown of the 1911 Quartet is the absolutely spellbinding tenor singing of Roland Hayes, who was one of the legendary tenors of the twentieth century. And speaking of tenors, with the exception of "Old Black Joe" (a Stephen Foster song rather than a spiritual), which spotlights two bass singers, Alfred Garfield King and Noah Walker Ryder, the tenor singer(s) ruled supreme in the

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arrangements of the Fisk Quartet. The tenors, for there were sometimes two, generally carried and traded the melody back and forth, their dramatically soaring solos working as the “call” in “call and response” arrangements.” Probably the most “black” performance here is “Po’ Mo’ner Got a Home at Last.” Though the precise enunciation of the early spirituals occasionally creeps in (“last” comes out as “laaahst”), this song has more of the spontaneous feel of singers who are improvising their harmonies.

There Breathes a Hope gives us a rare opportunity to enter a musical time capsule, and though the world you enter can feel a little strange, it feels as wondrous as if a tintype or carte de visite suddenly came to life. One thing’s for sure: in resurrecting this musical fragment of time, the digital age has certainly allowed us to experience some odd moments. When I was listening to this recording on my iPod shuffle on the elliptical trainer: at the gym, I had the image of how incomprehensible this scene would seem to these singers from another place, time, race, and gender. Despite its presentation through various layers and technological trappings, this music from another world still has the same power to move emotions today as it did a century ago.

Another funny thing is that on iTunes, the genre automatically assigned to this collection is “blues”; without even delving into the “race records” vs. “hillbilly” segregation that emerged a decade later, it’s still a pretty odd slot in which to slip the Jubilee Singers. The fact is, it really doesn’t matter what box you put this music in—the soaring music of the Fisk Jubilee Singers is as evocative today as it was a hundred years ago, and admirers of powerful old-time singing will certainly treasure this splendid collection.

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Books

Dick Spottwood
Banjo on the Mountain:
Wade Mainer’s First Hundred Years

Banjo on the Mountain is a chronicle of the lives of Wade Mainer, traditional banjo player from western North Carolina, and his wife Julia, a singer and guitarist. Along the way, this book is the story of the evolution of traditional Southern mountain music from its isolated rural roots into the world of commercial mass media and marketing. Dick Spottwood wrote the book at Wade Mainer’s request. He has done an almost superhuman amount of research and documentation of the lives of these two important figures in the history of traditional country music.

Wade Mainer was born in Weaverville, North Carolina, in 1907. He spent his childhood on his family’s subsistence farm. His father had a “real stout voice,” and Wade later performed and recorded many of his father’s songs. Leaving the mountains in his teens to work in cotton mills, and acquiring a banjo, he teamed up with his brother J. E., who played fiddle. Although the two brothers ultimately went their separate ways, J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers set off Wade’s career as a banjo player during the ’30s and into the ’40s, including live performances, radio gigs, and recording.
In various bands under various names, Wade Mainer was one of the pioneers who brought mountain fiddle and banjo music to a wide audience throughout much of the Southern United States and beyond. He performed for the Roosevelts in the White House, recorded for the Library of Congress, and participated in a BBC broadcast from New York City, an event that included Lily May Ledford, Woody Guthrie, Sorny Terry, and Burl Ives, among others.

After World War I, various circumstances—including the emergence of bluegrass—caused Wade's musical career to wind down. Wade and Julia moved to Flint, Michigan, where he worked for General Motors until his retirement in 1972. He and Julia underwent a spiritual conversion. They abandoned secular music, performing only occasionally at local informal gatherings. After his retirement, however, he began to perform again, this time with Julia. Audiences still valued the old music, and the Mainers enjoyed success here and abroad. Wade received the National Heritage Award in 1987. When fire destroyed their home in 1997, they moved into their RV and lived there until their house could be rebuilt. These days, we are told, they stick closer to home, but still play for folks on occasion. In 2008, Wade and Julia played for a crowd of 400 family and friends. Wade celebrates his 104th birthday this month, July 11, and they are still enjoying life in the bosom of family and friends in Flint.

The story of Wade Mainer's life is enriched throughout by Dick Spottwood's seamless melding of impeccable scholarship and lively presentation. The book contains numerous direct quotes from Wade Mainer's fascinating recollections of his early life and his time as a musician. His comments are trenchant, entertaining, and full of fascinating information. A biography of his wife Julia is included. She was an upper-and-coming racio personality in her own right ("Hillbilly Lily") when they met, performing on the radio in Winston-Salem, and they married in 1937 after a long-distance courtship. This year will mark their seventy-fourth wedding anniversary.

Photos, posters, letters, and various promotional materials are beautifully reproduced. One gem included is a two-page letter from Woody Guthrie.

For those interested in Wade Mainer's banjo style, his own description of how he evolved as a picker, and the thinking that went into it, is included. A detailed essay by banjo scholar Stephen Wade contains more details and puts Wade's two-finger style in a historical context. Tablature for one of Wade's banjo tunes is included.

The book's complete discography makes for fascinating reading. As much as possible all the musicians for each session are listed, so it reads like a who's-who of traditional music in the 1930s and '40s. Radio stations that he played for are also listed—the last being a short engagement around 1950 with two young up-and-coming musicians, Jim and Jesse McReynolds.

Banjo on the Mountain, besides documenting the amazing lives of Wade and Julia Mainer, provides a fascinating overview of traditional country music during the 1930s and '40s. I recommend it highly. Kudos to Dick Spottwood, and to the University Press of Mississippi, the publisher of this fine book.

HILARY DIRLAM

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DVDs

The Legacy of Roscoe Holcomb

Roscoe Holcomb (1911-1981) is no stranger to traditional music lovers the world over—adored and revered for his spare, authentic, powerful singing and playing. The legendary singer and banjo and guitar player from Daisy, in the coal mining area of eastern Kentucky, epitomized the "high lonesome" sound and gave voice to the hills and hollers in which he lived, and to the working people among whom he lived. This DVD, as one reviewer put it, is the Roscoe Holcomb "motherlode"—filled with his music, scenes from his life and the culture around him, Roscoe talking about his life, pleasures and regrets, and the worries and conflicts within him—a glimpse into the soul and life of one of the finest traditional musicians who ever trod the earth. No one's old-time music library is complete without the music of this ex-coal miner, sawmill worker, construction worker—a man who couldn't get his breath because of coal dust, who broke his back while sawmilling, who, with his wife Ethel, lived a hard, rough life way back in a holler on the side of a hill, and who played some of the most intense and haunting music I've ever heard.

John Cohen first met Roscoe in 1959 and subsequently filmed, photographed, and recorded him. Until the early 1960s Roscoe remained a home musician, playing for friends and neighbors mainly. With the advocacy and encouragement of John and others, Roscoe began to enjoy renown outside his home community, traveling to festivals and performing throughout the US. In 1966 Roscoe was part of a European tour with Cousin Emmy, the Stanley Brothers, the Landreneau Cajun Band, and the New Lost City Ramblers.

This DVD features John Cohen's new film on Roscoe, Roscoe Holcomb from Daisy, Kentucky, put together with unused footage from John's earlier films, footage from other TV shows and films, footage shot by the late George Pickow and others, and John's 1962 film masterpiece, The High Lonesome Sound.

There is wonderful footage here: a community square dance in Arby, Kentucky, with Marion Sumner on fiddle; Coal Days in Hazard, Kentucky, with Bill Monroe (with Ray Coons on banjo, Frank Buchanan on guitar, and Benny Williams on fiddle); Roscoe with Pete Seeger on the Rainbow Quest series; and the unforgettable scenes in the Old Regular Baptist church and the Holiness Church of God, of the river baptism, and of coal miners going in and out of the mines.

The DVD includes some bonus tracks in color: one of Mary Jane Halcomb, Roscoe's cousin, talking about and showing her quilts; Roscoe talking about his health and workman's comp; a 1962 square dance in Hazard, with caller Corbett Grigsby; a 1959 recording of Roscoe singing "Stingy Woman Blues" over footage of the mines and coal miners; Roscoe working in his garden; a final recording (with no picture) of Roscoe talking to the "Wild Pig Story"; and some footage (with no sound) of Roscoe playing with a toddler, Susie. It is a playful side of Roscoe; he seems happy and leaves us with a final beautiful smile.

And he left us with a wonderful body of work. His is the hard edge of country music: singing and playing that comes from a deep, deep place, not pretty, but beautiful, mighty, and true—as Dylan so aptly put it, "an untamed sense of control." Roscoe was an artist for the ages.

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“Not only are the arrangements beautiful and easy to follow, the notes, depth of information and overall presentation are way beyond our expectations for what we knew would be a definitive collection. Your wisdom, skill and love of the music are evident in every page.” Malcolm Smith, Ph.D.

“Wow, zip, bang! Woo woo!” Harry Liestrand, fiddler, Sweets Mill String Band

“If anyone who likes Old-Time music but doesn’t play an instrument thinks that it will not be appropriate for them, all I can say is that they are mistaken. There is so much in there that is so good and so informative that anyone can learn a lot from it - all of it valuable - and it’s all there - a truly historical account of fiddle tunes, musicians, and their recordings!” Jack Bond, Old Time Music aficionado

“....I took it to band practice last night and had to fight off my fiddle player to get it back!” Gene Bowlen

“This is one of the most important accomplishments of the OTM revival and I congratulate you on what you all have done. If I may say so, Highwoods was a very big deal but the publication of this book is even bigger and you all have honored the music and the musicians in a profound labor of love.” David Allen
Addie Graham: Been a Long Time Traveling

1926 Fiddle Contest Mystery