

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress
20th Anniversary Issue



The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by the U.S. Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

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TELEPHONE AND ONLINE INFORMATION RESOURCES

American Folklife Center publications (including *Folklife Center News*), a calendar of events, collection guides, general information, and connections to a selection of other Internet services related to folklife are available on the Internet.

LC Web is available through your local World Wide Web service. The Center's home page can be accessed from the Library's World Wide Web service. The direct URL for the Center's home page is: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/>

Folklife, an information service providing timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, is available from the Center's home page. For telephone service, call the Folklife Reading Room: 202 707-5510.

EDITOR'S NOTES

20th Anniversary Issue

The first issue of Folklife Center News, volume 1, number 1, appeared January 1978, twenty years ago. No editor is listed on the masthead, but Alan Jabbour and Paula Johnson worked together to assemble it and several other subsequent ones. Brett Topping became managing editor with volume III, number 2, April 1980; and

continued on page 15

Cover: Members of the Musgrove family, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, October 1935. Library of Congress field recordings from the 1930s are featured in a new compact disc from Rounder Records. Photograph by Ben Shahn, Farm Security Administration Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

“Beautiful Music All Around”: A Treasury of Library of Congress Field Recordings



The Shipp Family, Byhalia, Mississippi, 1939. Christine and Katherine Shipp (right) perform “Sea Lion Woman” on Stephen Wade’s *Treasury of Library of Congress Field Recordings*. The song was recorded by Herbert Halpert in 1939. Photo by Abbott Ferriss

By James Hardin

In the 1930s, an African American musicologist from Fisk University named John W. Work III began documenting the street musicians of Nashville, Tennessee. Work came naturally to the study of music, since both his father and grandfather had directed choirs, but the Fisk professor sought to

document what he called “the beautiful music all around you.”

Musician Stephen Wade kept this quotation in mind as he selected and annotated thirty of his favorite performances from the Library of Congress LP series *Folk Music of the United States* for a new compact disc from Rounder Records, *A Treasury of Library of Congress Field Recordings* (Rounder

1500). Wade’s selection is based on a lifetime’s devotion to the thousands of performances documented on the series, and a collaborative friendship.

Stephen Wade moved to Washington, D.C., in 1981 to appear in his one-man show “Banjo Dancing.” Scheduled for a three-week engagement, that show and the subsequent “On the Way Home”

ran more than ten years at Arena Stage and became one of the longest-running stage performances in the United States.

Washington residency gave Wade ready access to the Library of Congress. Already familiar with the Library's series of published recordings from his days growing up in Chicago (and having visited the institution a number of times), Wade was now able to use the American Folklife Center's Archive of Folk Culture on a regular basis. The Archive was established at the Library in 1928 to document and preserve the rich heritage of American folksong, and since that time has itself documented or received from others thousands of ethnographic field recordings of music and the spoken word.

Sometime in 1994, during one of his nearly daily conversations with Folk Archive Reference Librarian Gerald E. Parsons, Wade discussed with Parsons the idea of producing a single album of folk music that represented a few of the wonderful songs and tunes from the legendary series of published recordings.

The operative word was *artful*, for the two agreed that there were

great folk performances, notable in their own right and worthy of critical attention and acclaim. Stephen Wade says that the final choices were based on a personal judgement that these were simply wonderful performances that people would like to hear. Gerry Parsons thought the album might be the one recording of folk music anyone might want to own if he owned only one.

Parsons offered intellectual context and insight and edited the liner notes; Wade became a tireless investigator into the background of the recordings, searching archival file folders, making phone calls, tracking down informants. Parsons died in July 1995, and I took on his editorial role to help Wade complete the work on the liner notes.

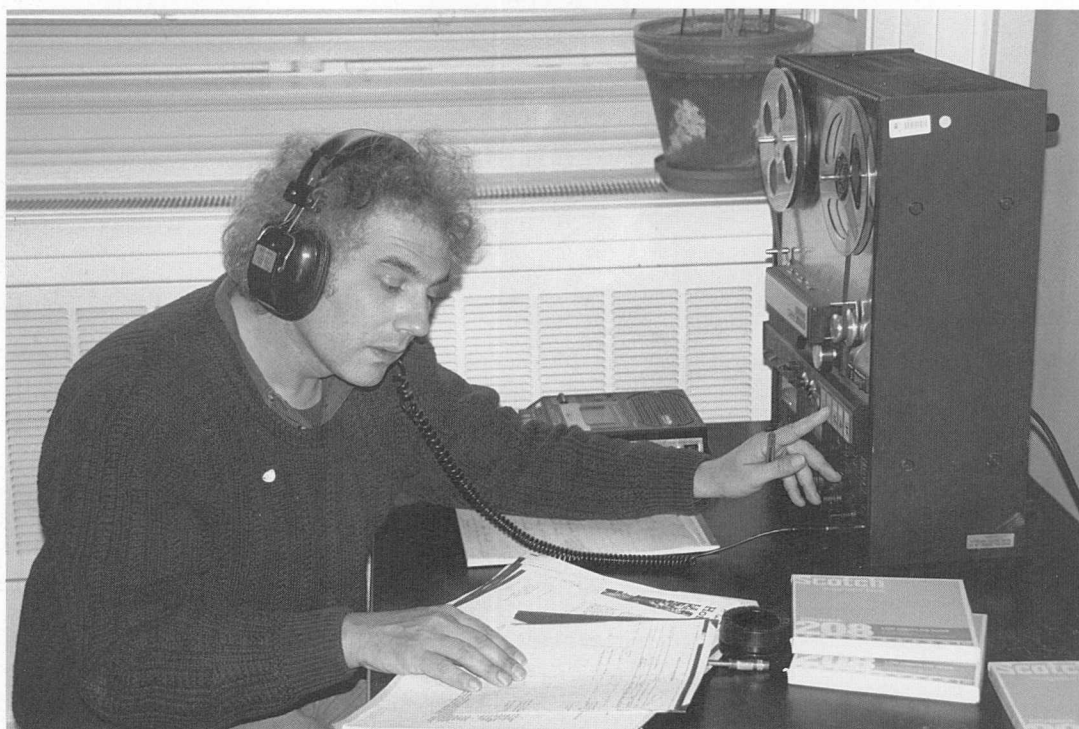
On a series of journeys, Wade retraced the routes taken by John and Alan Lomax, Herbert Halpert, and other folklorists who made the original disc field recordings from 1933 to 1946, identifying locations, talking to the descendants of performers, and in several cases interviewing the performers themselves. *A Treasury of Library of Congress Field Recordings* appeared in October, the collaborative effort of

a musician and a librarian with a common vision.

Here on a single compact disk are W. H. Stepp's rendition of the fiddle tune "Bonaparte's Retreat," the tune Aaron Copeland used for the hoedown section of Agnes DeMille's 1942 ballet *Rodeo* (which was used in turn on national television for a commercial advertising "Beef, it's what's for dinner"); a stirring arrangement of "Rock Island Line" by prisoners at Cummins State Farm in Arkansas; the plaintive lament "Another Man Done Gone"; and a virtuoso performance of the triumphant gospel tune "Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down."

Here are children's game songs and the songs of miners and cowboys; a Sacred Harp singing convention; a tune from the Civil War performed by the distinguished jurist Learned Hand; a Kiowa flute player; and the Nashville Washboard Band, recorded by the Fisk professor John W. Work III.

The name "folk music" is attached to many different forms and productions these days. Even folklorists may not agree as to what is and is not folk music. But,



Stephen Wade in the American Folklife Center's Folklife Reading Room, 1994. Photo by James Hardin



Ella Hoffpauir Boudreaux, New Iberia, Louisiana, February 1997. Stephen Wade interviewed Mrs. Boudreaux about her recording session with John and Alan Lomax in June 1934, during which she sang "Sept ans sur mer." Photo by Stephen Wade

in making a definition, most would invoke the idea of context and a connection with the daily life and particular traditions of the performer. With Wade's beautifully lucid and informative liner notes, we can imagine the context for each of these personal renditions of ongoing tradition.

Stephen Wade's treasury project has outgrown the original idea for a compact disc. National Public Radio launched a series of Wade's commentaries about the Library of Congress field recordings. A number of programs have

already been broadcast on "All Things Considered," including ones on "Bonaparte's Retreat," "Rock Island Line," "Pretty Polly," and the "Nashville Washboard Band." Several have been rebroadcast on "Weekly Edition," an editors' selection of the best programs from the week before. Ever restless, still roving in devotion to his life's work, Wade is writing a book for the University of Illinois Press series *Music in American Life*—thirty case studies of the performances included on his *Treasury* CD, with many illustrations.

Nat Hentoff, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, November 20, 1997, calls the *Treasury of Library of Congress Field Recordings* "the most diversely dramatic and illuminating collection of the American folk music heritage." Amidst the jarring cacophony of a noisy world, it is good to be reminded that beautiful music with an intimate connection to everyday life is all around us.

The *Treasury* is available at record stores nationwide, or call Rounder Records: 800 443-4727.

Thaddeus C. Willingham Jr. sang and played the banjo for Herbert Halpert in Gulfport, Mississippi, June 11, 1939. Photo by Abbott Ferriss



Outsinging the Gas Tank: Sidney Robertson and the California Folk Music Project



Sidney Robertson copying California Folk Music Project recordings for the Library of Congress in the WPA project office, Berkeley, California, early 1939. [photographer unknown]

By Catherine Hiebert Kerst

From 1938 to 1940, while in her thirties, Sidney Robertson,¹ ethnographer and collector of traditional American music, single-handedly organized and directed a Northern California Work Projects Administration project designed to survey musical traditions in the northern part of the state. Sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley, and co-sponsored by the Archive of American Folk-Song at the Library

of Congress, this undertaking was one of the earliest ethnographic field projects to document English- and foreign-language traditional music in one region of the United States.

Sidney William Hawkins was born in San Francisco in 1903. Her family was quite well off and lived comfortably. As a child, Sidney was precocious, articulate, and inquisitive. She was given piano, violin, dancing, and elocution les-

sons from an early age and spent her summers in Europe. Sidney graduated from Stanford University in 1924 with a degree in Romance languages and philology. Later that year, she married Kenneth Robertson and traveled with him to Paris where he took classes with Jung while she studied the piano with Alfred Cortot.

When they returned to California in 1926, Robertson found a job teaching music at the Peninsula School for Creative Education in Menlo Park. The progressive, ex-

perimental nature of the school allowed her to introduce Spanish and cowboy tunes and the modal Irish and English songs she loved to the children she taught. Sidney and her husband gradually grew apart and were divorced in 1934.

In 1935 Sidney Robertson decided that she was leading too "self-indulgent" a life in California and wrote to the Henry Street Settlement in New York City to ask if there were anything she could do for them. They responded that there was an immediate opening for someone to organize social music in the community. Robertson moved to New York and began working with elderly Jewish immigrants from Central Europe.

In reminiscing about the development of her interest in folk music at this time in her life, she recalled:

I had for some time been worrying the question of folk song, like a dog with a bone, and particularly I was curious about American folk song: What was American about it? I knew only the Lomax Cowboy Songs and a few tunes from my parents, but I had been so struck by the wild enthusiasm and persistence engendered among the youngsters at the Peninsula School

by "Home on the Range" that I was convinced there was some special affinity between the character of this song and the youngsters who went after it so hard.²

While in Washington visiting friends in 1936, Robertson went to the Archive of American Folk-Song (now the Archive of Folk Culture) at the Library of Congress to ask this very question. She also visited the office of Charles Seeger, who was then in charge of the Music Unit of the Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administration. One thing led to another, and shortly thereafter Robertson became Seeger's assistant. At first she accompanied John A. Lomax and Frank C. Brown to Alabama and North Carolina to get a taste of how they conducted folk music fieldwork. It wasn't long before she began to travel on her own on extensive recording trips throughout the South, into the Ozarks, and later the Midwest (mostly Wisconsin and Minnesota)—all for the Resettlement Administration.³ Women generally didn't travel alone during the thirties, and especially not in the South.

Once the Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administra-

tion was liquidated late in 1937, Robertson began to search for WPA connections that would allow her to continue collecting on her own. In 1938, she traveled to her native California to organize a state-based project that she hoped would become a prototype for the collection of folk music across the country.

In a paper describing her plans for the collection of folk music in America, distributed to possible sponsors at the time, Robertson wrote:

Until recently Americans have been humble before Russian and British folk music and quite sincerely unconscious of their own. To a people brought up on songs like the Volga Boat Song, it has been a great surprise to discover that America has her own boat songs and bandit songs, her Civil War songs and her love songs, stemming like the American race from many nationalities but after generations here stamped, in varying degrees, with the American mark.⁴

Robertson was especially eager to record the kinds of folk music being performed in California that had not previously received much attention. For example, she



"Some of the WPA personnel at work on the California Folk Music Project, Berkeley, California, 1938. Sidney Robertson is sitting just beyond the first window on the left, against the partition." [This is Robertson's own caption for this photo, which she took.]

wanted to explore ethnic as well as English-language musical traditions. In this, as well as in her determination to produce a thorough ethnographic documentation of the folk music she wished to record, she was far ahead of her time.

The WPA Northern California Folk Music Project (1938-40) was the result of her efforts. It was sponsored by the Music Department of the University of California, Berkeley, and cosponsored by the Library of Congress, the New Music Society, and the Society of California Pioneers. The project became one of the earliest attempts at conducting a large-scale ethnographic survey of American folk music in a defined region. Its scope was broad and went well beyond the thirty-five hours of instantaneous sound recordings she made on 12-inch acetate discs. One third of the recordings represented English-language material, and the other two thirds the music of numerous ethnic groups, primarily European, including Armenians, Basques, Croatians, English, Finns, Hungarians, Icelanders, Italians, Norwegians, Russian Molokans, and Scots (from both Cape Breton Island, Canada, and the Hebrides Islands, Scotland). There was also Portuguese music from the Azores, Spanish music from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Asturias region of Spain, not to mention recordings of Spanish-speaking settlers whose forefathers had come to California beginning in the 1600s. In addition, 168 photographs of the musicians and their instruments were made, and field documentation of numerous kinds and textures was gathered.

The Library of Congress Folk Archive supplied Robertson with blank acetate discs, with the provision that the original copies of the sound recordings, once made, be returned to the Library. Through the sponsorship of the University of California-Berkeley Music Department, Robertson's project received support for space and equipment on campus. And, because she conceived her collecting project as belonging to the fields of anthropology, sociology, literature, and music, Robertson made contacts with interested fac-



Mrs. Cruz Losada, Oakland, California, from San Juan Island, Puerto Rico. A recent immigrant in 1939, she performed unaccompanied Spanish songs for Sidney Robertson.

ulty members in a variety of university departments who agreed to serve on its advisory panel.

Once the official sponsors were lined up, Robertson was able to apply for WPA funds to hire personnel. The trick within the WPA was to devise a project that could keep twenty staff persons busy—both to provide socially useful work to those on the relief rolls and to justify the hiring of a supervisor. With Robertson's ingenuity, a whole range of activities associated with the collection of folk music was proposed that con-

vinced the Northern California WPA office that her project might succeed.

Robertson had an uncanny knack for unearthing WPA staff who could actually assist her in her project. One of her most valuable fieldworkers was a Mr. Devere, who had had a dairy route in Contra Costa County and who led her to numerous fine contacts in that area. On the WPA staff were also Alice Lemos Avila, a performer from the Azores who had hosted radio music shows for the Portuguese community in Oak-



Myrtle B. Wilkinson playing tenor banjo, Turlock, California. Mrs. Wilkinson was the accompanist for Mrs. Ben Scott, fiddle, on Anglo-American tunes. [photographer unknown]

land; several Spanish speakers familiar with music being recorded on the project; and an Armenian ethnomusicologist.

The California Folk Music Project opened officially on October 28, 1938, at 2108 Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley. Robertson sought out all the performers and researched and recorded all of the music herself. She also supervised the WPA personnel hired to catalog and index the collection and to make photographs and scale drawings of some of the instruments. WPA workers produced

catalogs of the sound recordings and a printed checklist of English-language California songs. They compiled bibliographies of many kinds and made photostats of California mission music and old California songsters from several library collections. The WPA staff also transcribed the texts of many English-, Spanish-, and Portuguese-language songs and noted variants in the literature.

After seventeen months, plans for extending and expanding the California Folk Music Project had to be given up when the expected

WPA funding was not renewed in time for the project to go forward. Robertson had hoped that the continuation of the project would allow for recording and documenting the performance of non-Western music in Northern California, including performances by Asians, South and Central Americans, and Middle Easterners.

An ethnographic collection is never solely a grouping of sound recordings or cultural items—it also reflects the personality, expectations, sense of humor, and point of departure of its collector. In this, the California collection is no different—and because of Robertson's fine documentary methods and lively prose, we have an excellent record not only of what she was looking for but also what she gathered as a result. Robertson was a perceptive ethnographer, eager to reflect upon what she recorded and to muse about what meaning the music she collected had for her performers.

Robertson has written about the field situation and how she conceived her role as collector on this project. As she put it:

I never asked the singers to sing for me or for the government except as a preservation project. And I was never demanding of them. If they didn't want to sing, we skipped it for the present, and almost without exception, they revived the subject later themselves. I was careful, just as a matter of good manners, not to say "I want."⁵

Robertson honored any restrictions her performers placed on duplicating their recordings. In fact, she became protective of all the recordings, even long after they had been made. Robertson's ethical standards served her well. The respect she gave her performers earned their trust and appreciation and resulted in their cooperation with her efforts.

Robertson was also interested in documenting folk musical performance in its normal context—not merely in recording individual songs as separate items, as had been done by many early collec-

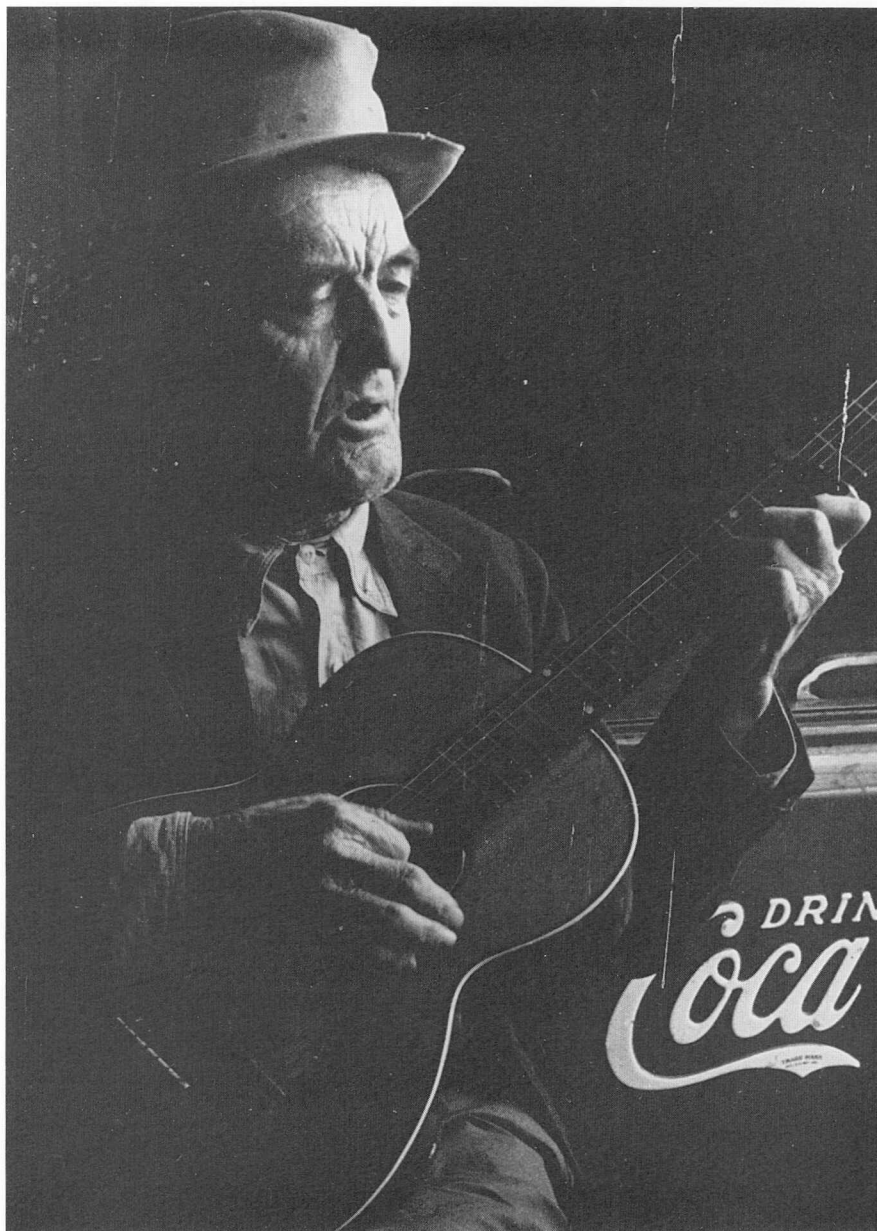
tors. Some of her folk music collecting ideas and methods for documenting the cultural background of the music being performed were no doubt forged through discussions with Charles Seeger—though it seems that Robertson actually applied many of the ideas that Seeger merely wrote or spoke about. Robertson's fieldwork and correspondence consistently reflect her keen interest in capturing a wide range of details about the environment in

which the music was performed and the functions it served in community life.

Robertson had excellent rapport with many of the persons she recorded in California. In less than two years, she gained entry into the lives and performance styles of many musicians. There were thirty-one English-language and seventy-five foreign-language performers recorded by Robertson during the project. In an unpublished paper entitled "Folk Music

in California," prepared prior to the WPA project, Robertson wrote:

*How does one find songs? They are everywhere at hand. A man changing a tire on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley last month sang an old ballad as he worked, and was startled by an urgent request to repeat it so it could be written down. A receipt for a bill paid to a Railway Express delivery man was signed with a Basque name; this led to a whole nest of songs . . . And one man in Shasta County offered to "outsing the gas tank" if he might ride along to Fresno.*⁶



Son of a 49er and former singer of minstrel songs for medicine show performances, Ben Pitts, from Pine Grove, Eldorado County, also played guitar. Pitts recorded old American dance and medicine show tunes with Leonard W. Jones on harmonica. Photo by Sidney Robertson

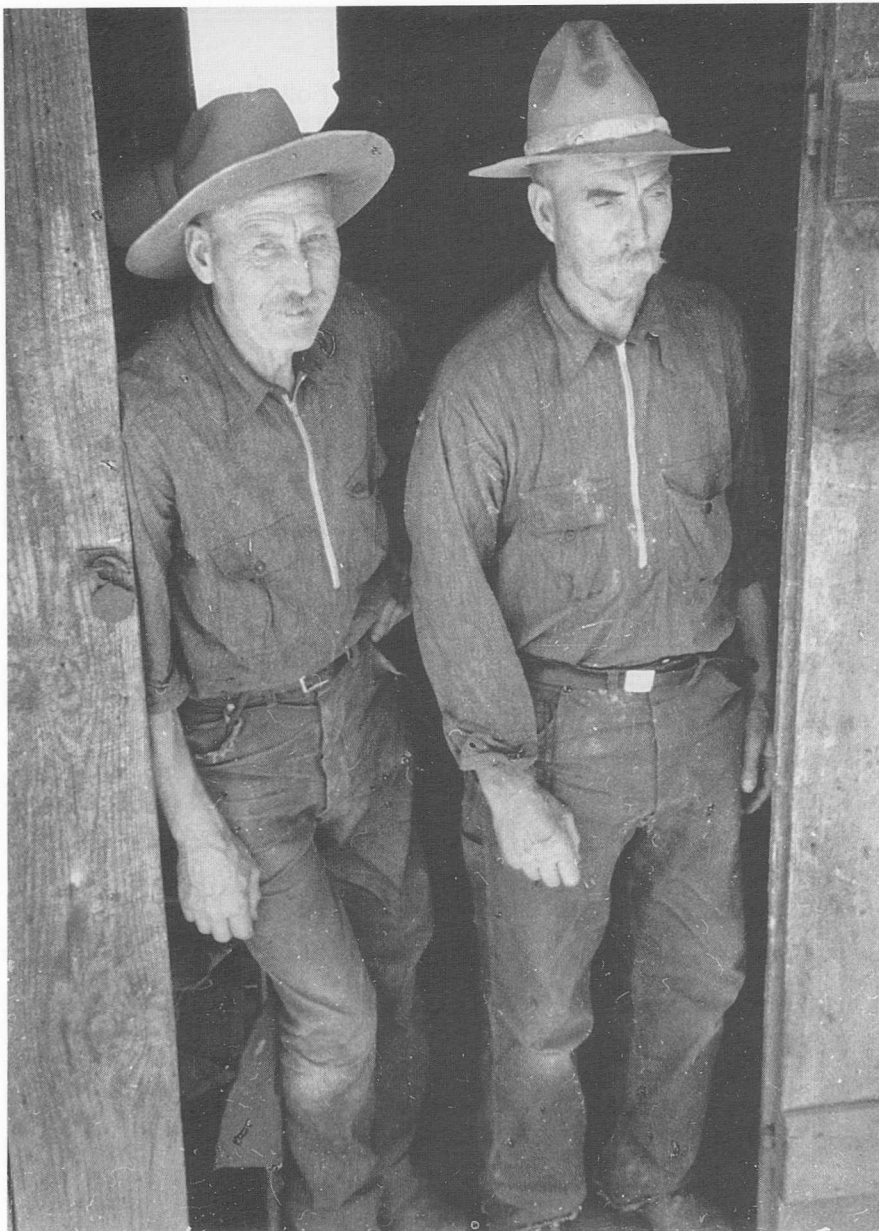
The recordings Robertson made are wide-ranging in character and offer a truly ethnographic perspective of northern California folk music. Robertson was eager to record ethnic music and her California collection is remarkable in this respect. In fact, before the field recordings she made in the Midwest and then in California, there are few examples of ethnographically documented ethnic music made in the United States that include much beyond African American and Native American music.

Robertson's California recordings are also varied in style and origin, not adhering to strict folk music-collecting conventions of the time regarding whether a song was considered authentically "traditional" or not. As she put it in an article she wrote in 1940 about the WPA project,

*"California" folk music was defined in the widest possible sense as any music—song or dance tune—which is orally transmitted and current in California in 1938.*⁷

She did not restrict what her performers wanted to record, and because of that policy we are able to hear both popular and traditional melodies performed at the time, a cross-section of home-grown music-making traditions.

Among the English-language songs, one finds, for example, tunes from the California Gold Rush era, Barbary Coast songs, ragtime melodies, Cornish sailors' shanties, and popular songs from



John and Pen McCready, Groveland, Tuolumne County. John and Pen are two of three brothers, born in Kansas, who came to California to make a living mining. They made music and sang together for much of their lives, performing Anglo-American music, including many tunes from the Gold Rush era. Robertson adds: "They lived also in northeast Arkansas and Colorado, which they left to come to California to escape the snow! (It is 3'-6' deep in Tuolumne County in the winter.)" [photographer unknown]

the turn of the century. There is also music of recent migrants from the Midwest, such as the Ford brothers from northern Wisconsin, who came to work in the CCC camps at the Shasta Dam.

Included in the collection of foreign-language recordings are examples of Hungarian salon music "composed" in the early part of the century. There are also re-

cent Icelandic songs about emigrating to Vancouver, collected side by side with Old Norse *rimur* said to stem from the twelfth century in Iceland. The collection includes traditional Gaelic love songs, Hungarian Christmas carols, Armenian dance melodies on a variety of instruments, Spanish-Californian mission music, Dalmatian oral epic, and melismatic Rus-

sian Molokan hymns from a San Francisco congregation. Robertson sought to record what people were singing at the time—not just the songs they remembered from the past.

In the California project, she also took advantage of a variety of contexts that allow us to hear where and how the music she recorded was being performed. For example, Robertson recorded popular tunes played by a band at a Mexican wedding, songs sung at a Hungarian New Year's Eve Party, and Gold Rush songs performed in noisy Tuolumne County bars. She frequently asked performers to introduce themselves and to say a few words about the songs. Fieldnotes written on the dust jackets while instantaneous recordings were being made are evocative and illuminating. When George Vinton Graham forgot his words while singing, Robertson jotted down that "Mr. Graham's gravity was disturbed by the antics of the photographer."

Robertson also made detailed notes regarding the quality of the recordings, such as "All the McCready recordings have a hum, due to fan in Arizona Bar—the fan brought the temperature down to 90 degrees at 6 p.m." While recording Sam Blackburn singing "She's More to Be Pitied Than Censured," Robertson noted that the record was made "in the milk house—occasional noises are due to milk running over cooling pipes."

The Northern California WPA Folk Music Collection provides a valuable set of recordings representing a range of traditional and popular music collected during a specific era. This collection, taken as a whole, also tells much about ethnographic fieldwork at its best during the late 1930s—and the style and character of a particular collector: the questions Robertson posed about the music—where, when, and why it was performed; her annotation of contextual details accompanying the field recordings; her insistence on taking an ethical stance on behalf of her performers; and her documentation of the making of folk music not only through recordings, photographs, and drawings, but also

and most importantly, through her own ethnographic and personal impressions.

The California Folk Music Project, available online as "California Gold," gives us a glimpse of an energetic and capable folk music collector who, through the Work Projects Administration, had the opportunity to carry out an ambitious folk music collecting project. Robertson's successes in the California Folk Music Project fit well with the New Deal dynamism and creativity that generated similar cooperative efforts meant to document and validate the lives of exemplary, yet so often unsung Americans.

Notes

1. I will refer to Sidney Robertson Cowell as Sidney Robertson because that was her name when she was most active as a folksong collector—and before she became, in 1941, as she frequently preferred to call herself, Mrs. Henry Cowell. Mrs. Cowell died in 1995 in Shady, New York.

2. Unpublished mss., Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

3. These collections are also housed in the Archive of Folk Culture.

4. Unpublished mss., Archive of Folk Culture

5. Unpublished mss., Archive of Folk Culture

"California Gold: Northern California Folk Music from the '30s," a multi-format ethnographic field collection from the American Folklife Center's Archive of Folk Culture, has just been made available online through the National Digital Library Program of the Library of Congress (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem//afcchtml/cowhome.html>). This elaborate online collection, drawn from the Sidney Robertson Cowell California Folk Music Project, includes sound recordings, still photographs, drawings, and manuscripts documenting the musical traditions of a variety of European ethnic and English- and Spanish-speaking communities in California. It comprises 35 hours of folk music recorded in 12 languages representing 185 musicians.

6. Unpublished notes for mss. entitled "Folk Music in California," prepared for potential sponsors of the California Folk Music Project, p. 5.

7. Sidney Robertson Cowell, "The Recording of Folk Music in California," *California Folklore Quarterly* 1, number 1 (1942), p. 11.

AWARD OPPORTUNITY

Parsons Fund for Ethnography at the Library of Congress

The Fund Committee for the Gerald E. and Corinne L. Parsons Fund for Ethnography at the Library of Congress invites applications for an award of up to one thousand dollars to be made from the fund in 1998. The committee is composed of the professional staff of the American Folklife Center.

The purpose of the fund is to make the collections of primary ethnographic materials housed anywhere at the Library of Congress available to the needs and uses of those in the private sector. Awards may be made either to individuals or to organizations in support of specific projects.

Projects may lead to publication

in media of all types, both commercial and non-commercial; underwrite new works of art, music, or fiction; involve academic research; contribute to the theoretical development of archival science; explore practical possibilities for processing ethnographic collections in the Archive of Folk Culture or elsewhere in the Library of Congress; develop new means of providing reference service; support student work; experiment with conservation techniques; and support ethnographic field research leading to new Library acquisitions.

Applicants should submit a two-to-three page narrative describing their proposed project and its poten-

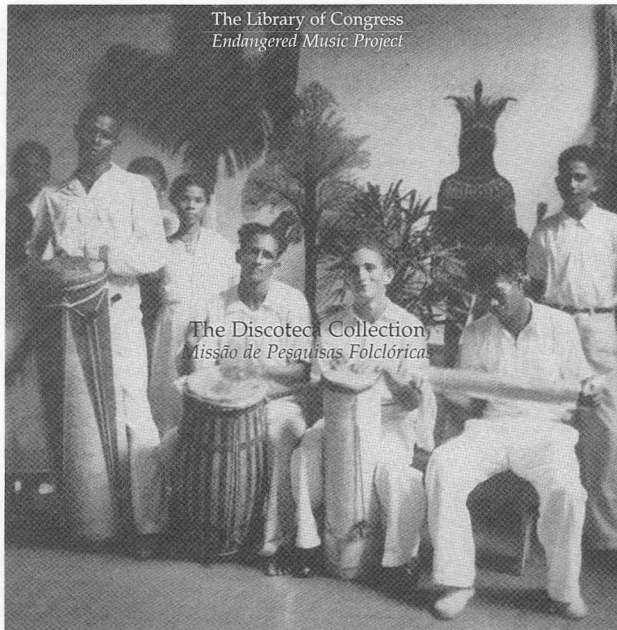
tial products and audiences, and should provide a budget and timeframe. Applications should include a resume or statement of previous experience and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of three references who are qualified to speak about the applicant's professional work. Send applications to the Parsons Fund Committee, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 20540-4610, by March 1, 1998. An award will be announced by the end of March. For questions, call or write the chair of the Parsons Fund Committee at the American Folklife Center—phone: (202) 707-5510; FAX (202) 707-2076.

New Endangered Music Project Releases Feature Music from Brazil

The American Folklife Center, in cooperation with Rykodisc and 360° Productions, is pleased to announce the release of two new albums in the Endangered Music Project series: *The Discoteca Collection: Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas* (Rykodisc RCD 10403) and *L.H. Corrêa de Azevedo: Music of Ceará and Minas Gerais* (Rykodisc RCD 10404).

These historical collections of field recordings were made in the late 1930s and early 1940s and are now part of the Folklife Center's Archive of Folk Culture. The albums were coproduced by Alan Jabbour, director of the Center, and Mickey Hart, the renowned percussionist whose series of albums is making available to new audiences the musical cultures of many regions of the world. All material has been expertly transferred from the original source discs by Michael Donaldson of the Library's Recording Laboratory and mastered for release by Mickey Hart.

The Discoteca Collection is 1938-vintage field recordings culled from the library of the Discoteca Pública Municipal (Municipal Public Recordings Collection), now known as the Discoteca Oneyda Alvarenga, in São Paulo, Brazil. The Discoteca dispatched a team to six states in northern and northeastern Brazil to document regional folklore, ritual music, and dance. The research expedition gathered recordings, musical instruments, costumes, and ritual objects. The music they collected, much of which accompanied ritual, social, and dramatic dance, is primarily vocal, accompanied by various types of drums, bells, rattles, shakers, and other assorted Brazilian percussion and strings.



Babaçuê musicians, Belém do Pará, 1938. From the *Discoteca Collection* booklet.

The Library obtained its set of the recordings in an early exchange project with the Discoteca.

The material on *Music of Ceará and Minas Gerais* was recorded in the early 1940s by Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, a professor of music and composer from Rio de Janeiro. Azevedo's involvement in the study of folk culture began in 1937 and led to his being appointed to a chair in National Folklore at Rio's National Institute of Music. In 1941 he visited Washington, D.C., as a guest of the Pan-American Union and returned to Brazil with recording equipment lent to him by the Library of Congress. He then began to undertake arduous expeditions through Brazil documenting a great variety of his country's folk music. The northern and central Brazilian songs in this collection are performed on shaker, wooden box, claps, strings, bell, friction drum, guitar, and other instruments. The music Azevedo recorded documents the root traditions of Brazil-

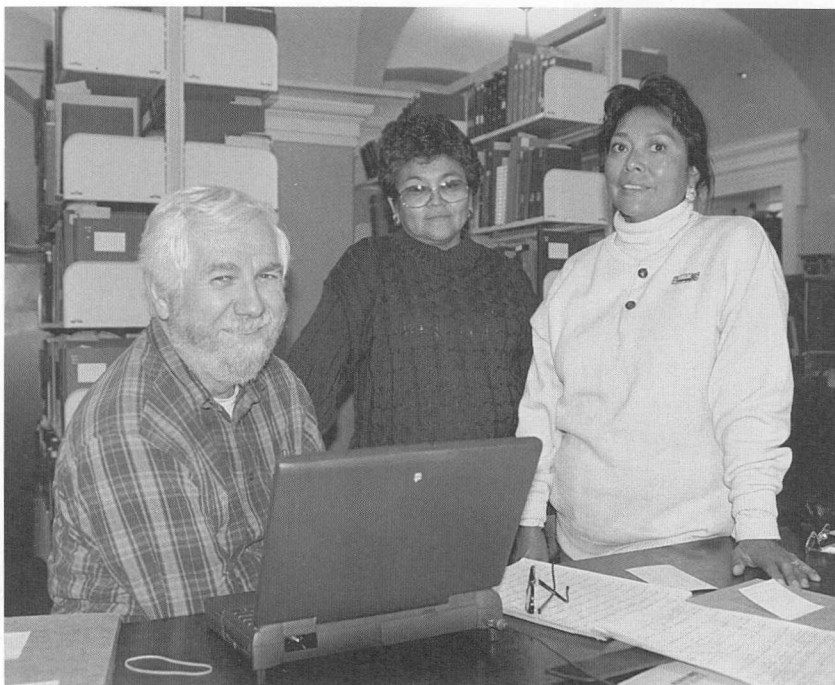
ian music that would later attract worldwide attention.

Many people helped make these compact-disc productions possible. Kenneth Bilby and Max Derrickson began the process by scouting among the Archive's collections for candidates for release, then by undertaking much of the preliminary auditioning and background research on the two collections finally chosen. Ethnomusicologist Morton Marks wrote the general essays and musicological analysis that appear in the booklets accompanying each CD and assisted the project during various stages of its development. José Eduardo Azevedo, who is affiliated with the

Discoteca Oneyda Alvarenga in São Paulo, provided very helpful annotations and corrections of the textual material in the *Discoteca Collection* booklet, and Miriam Edith Bolsoni, director of the Cultural Center of São Paulo, and Cristina M. Marinho, chief archivist of the Discoteca, provided useful coordination. Staff at the Rio de Janeiro field office of the Library of Congress—especially Pamela Howard-Reguindin and Carmen Muricy—served as expert translators and facilitators of communications between Washington and Brazil during the many stages of the project's development, and Ieda Siqueira Wiarda of the Library's Hispanic Division also assisted in matters of translation.

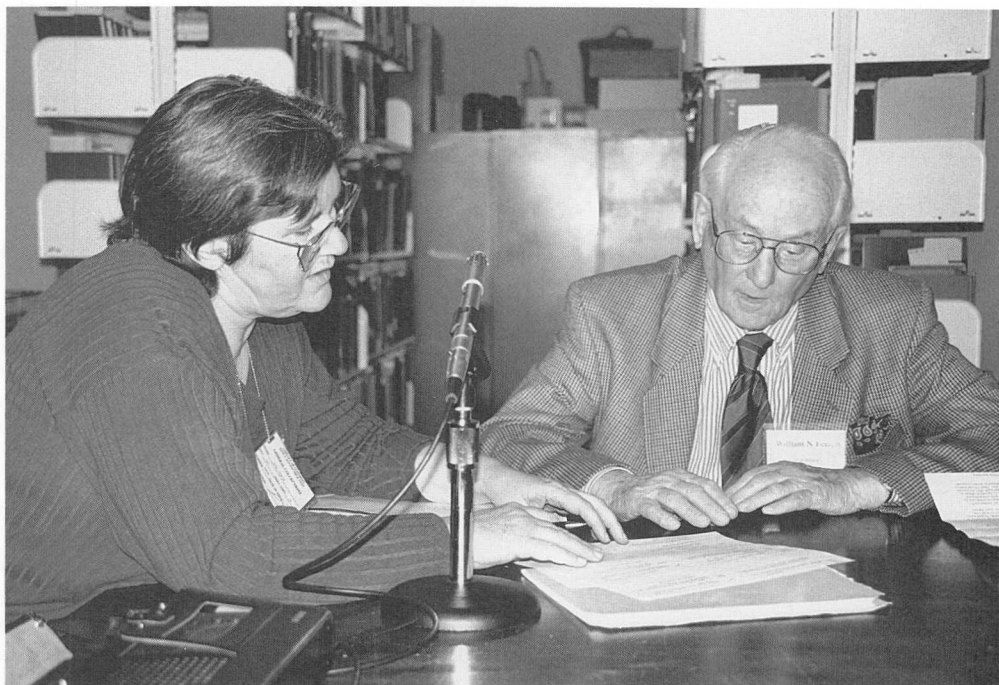
Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas and *Music of Ceará and Minas Gerais* are available in the world music sections of fine retail outlets nationwide or from Rykodisc mail order: 1-888-2-EARFUL (1-888-232-7385).

In the Folklife Reading Room



Dr. Hilaire Valiquette, Keres linguist and consultant; Ms. Rebecca Lucario, Acoma Language Retention Project director; and Ms. Donna Boynton, Acoma Language Retention Project consultant, (left to right) research language material from the Center's Acoma collections, November 12, 1997. The project is based in Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico. Photo by David Taylor

Folklife Reference Specialist Judith Gray interviewing anthropologist William Fenton in the Folklife Reading Room, November 19, 1997. Fenton is known particularly as a student of Iroquois culture and made recordings for the Library of Congress in 1941 and 1945. Acknowledging that he never fully comprehended the idiosyncracies of the recording apparatus the Library sent out with him, Fenton credits the quality of the Seneca, Onondaga, Oneida, and Cayuga recordings made at Allegany Reservation in New York and Six Nations Reserve in Canada to the ingenuity of Iroquois individuals who worked with him. Some of these recordings were compiled



for the Library's *Folk Music of the United States* series of LPs: *Songs of the Iroquois Longhouse* (AFS L6), published in 1942; and *Seneca Songs from Coldspring Longhouse* (AFS L17), published in 1948. Photo by James Hardin

In the Recording Laboratory

By Alan Jabbour

The American Folklife Center has recently acquired six test pressings drawn from a recording session with legendary blues singer Robert Johnson (ca. 1911-38). "Test pressing" is the term for a special disc pressed by a record company to audition a performance, often as a prelude to selecting the disc for release. These test pressings came to the Library from the Alan Lomax Archives. One disc (American Record Co. test pressing DAL 400-1, recorded in Dallas, Texas, June 20, 1937) contains a take of Robert Johnson's "Traveling Riverside Blues"—a performance heretofore not known to exist, despite long and intense interest in Johnson by collectors and musicians as a pivotally important Mississippi Delta bluesman of the 1930s.

The disc containing the newly discovered take of "Traveling Riverside Blues" has been included in the Library's exhibition "American Treasures from the Library of Congress." Before displaying it, the Library made a meticulous



Michael Donaldson, Senior Audio Production Specialist, in the Recording Laboratory of the Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. Photo by James Hardin

copy for preservation purposes. When old disc recordings from the Archive of Folk Culture are transferred onto tape for release on new compact discs or by the public media, the Library relies on expert sound engineers such as Michael Donaldson of the Library's Recording Laboratory, pictured here transferring the Johnson test pressing onto tape. The Recording

Laboratory has a distinguished history of special expertise in the preservation of unique sound recordings—often in unusual or obsolete formats. In recent years Mike Donaldson's skills have been a key ingredient in sharing with the public the wealth of documentary sound recordings in the Archive of Folk Culture.

EDITOR'S NOTES from page 2

I became editor with volume 10, number 1 (winter 1988), when Brett left to become director of publications for the new National Museum of Women in the Arts. The mailing list has grown from about four thousand in 1980 to more than twelve thousand today, both in this country and abroad.

A Treasury of Field Recordings

Appropriate for the anniversary, whether that of the newsletter or of the Center (in 1996), is a new compact disc produced by Rounder Records, selected by Stephen Wade from the legendary series of published Library of Congress field recordings. For those unfamiliar with the work of John

A. and Alan Lomax and other pioneering folklorists, this CD provides a splendid introduction; for those who know their work, it offers convenient access to the company of old friends; for teachers of folk music and folklore, the *Treasury* should become an essential tool.



Mrs. Cruz Losada, Oakland, California, 1939. Mrs. Losada performed Spanish songs for Sidney Robertson Cowell, who collected traditional American music for the Works Projects Administration from 1938 to 1940. A portrait of Mrs. Cowell and her career begins on page 6.

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