

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress



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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Folklife Center News publishes articles on the programs and activities of the American Folklife Center, as well as other articles on traditional expressive culture. It is available free of charge from the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540-4610. *Folklife Center News* does not publish announcements from other institutions or reviews of books from publishers other than the Library of Congress. Readers who would like to comment on Center activities or newsletter articles may address their remarks to the editor.

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.

The Library of Congress Web site is available through the World Wide Web service (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/>). The Center's home page can be accessed from the Library's home page. Select "Using the Library," then select "Reading Rooms and Centers," and then select "American Folklife Center." The direct URL for the Center's home page is: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/>

The Folklife Information Service is now a cooperative announcement program of the American Folklore Society and the American Folklife Center. It is available only on the American Folklore Society's server: www.afnet.org. The service provides timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities, and news items of national interest.

EDITOR'S NOTES

In Praise of Middle Men and Women

This issue of *Folklife Center News* highlights the work of three great folksong collectors: Vance Randolph, Helen Hartness Flanders, and Herbert Halpert. As the several articles reveal, each was a talented, lively, at times quirky individual, *(Continued on page 23)*

Cover: Mrs. May Kennedy McCord, Springfield, Missouri, one of Vance Randolph's prime singers and a force in her own right in the Ozarks. Known as "The Queen of the Hillbillies," McCord wrote a newspaper column, "Hillbilly Heart Beats," had a radio program on KWTO and KWK, and was an official, at the same time as Randolph, of the National Folk Festival. American Folklife Center, Vance Randolph Collection. Photographer unknown

Vance Randolph: "Mr. Ozark"



Mrs. Alice Kirk, Busch, Arkansas, and Vance Randolph, October 1957. Vance Randolph Collection, American Folklife Center. Photographer unknown

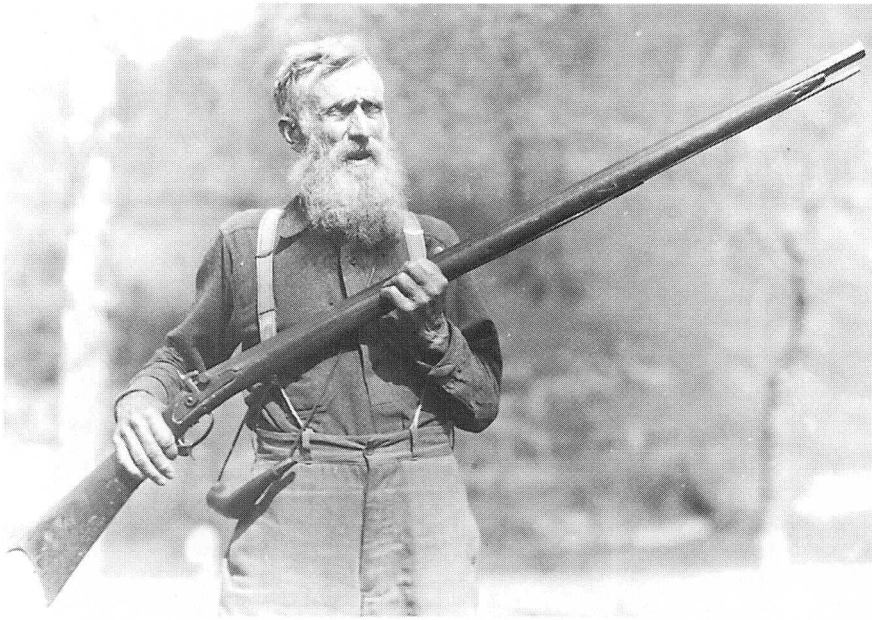
By Michael Taft

Vance Randolph (1892–1980) was among the most important regional folklorists in twentieth-century North America, but “folklorist” has never been a complete or comfortable label for the man. To some, he was better known as a rogue and trickster; to others, he was a collector, rather than a folklorist, who popularized the traditions that he collected; only those few academically trained folklorists who knew him well recognized him as a folklorist—even if he

never earned a degree in folklore or had an affiliation with a research institution. Randolph sometimes described himself as a hack writer and a consorter with lowlife, but in his later years, he was often called “Mr. Ozark.” In fact, Randolph was a man of many parts, but they all contributed to his value as the prime documenter of the traditions of Ozarks mountain folk.

As “Mr. Ozark,” Randolph was often mistaken for a rustic native, a self-taught hillbilly with a natural gift for good writing. In reality, he was a learned

and sophisticated man with a masters degree in psychology, and a long list of academic publications in psychology, language and dialectology, entomology (he had an expertise in beekeeping and certain species of butterfly), and natural science. As a professional writer and ghost writer, he wrote on an incredible range of topics, including philosophy, religion, firearms, and western outlaws. He was a biographer of Lafcadio Hearn, Timothy Dexter, and George Borrow. He published poetry, short stories, novels, and children’s sto-



Mr. John F. Foster, White Rock, Missouri. Photograph by Vance Randolph

ries. Among his more bizarre publications were *How to Get a Husband* (under the pseudonym of Betty Van Deventer), *The Autobiography of a Pimp* (Allison Hardy, pseud.), and *Confession of a Booze-Fighter* (Felix V. Rinehart, pseud.). He met or corresponded with Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, H. L. Mencken, Carl Sandburg, Theodore Dreiser, and Thomas Hart Benton, among other luminaries.

Mr. Ozark was not a native of the mountains. Born in Pittsburg, Kansas, he first went to the Ozarks with his parents, but moved there permanently in 1920. Over the next sixty years, Randolph immersed himself in Ozark culture, living in several small towns in Missouri and Arkansas, traveling throughout the region, and getting to know thousands of mountain people. His first major works of ethnography, *The Ozarks* (1931) and *Ozark Mountain Folks* (1932), are classic studies. Over the years, he wrote many more books and articles on Ozark folklore, including *Ozark Superstitions* (1947), several collections of narratives, a book on Ozark dialect, and his massive anthology, *Ozark Folksongs* (1946-50).

Always a superb fieldworker, in 1941 Randolph contracted

with the Music Division of the Library of Congress to collect folksongs. Archivist Alan Lomax supplied him with a disc recording machine, and over the next two years, Randolph sent back over eight hundred songs and fiddle tunes. But Randolph was more than a good collector of folklore. As his work demonstrates, he was a pioneer in contextual folklore; that is, he was careful to place Ozark songs, stories, and beliefs within their cultural and social contexts—a methodology that most academic folklorists would accept only years after Randolph showed the way. He was, as well, a fine comparative and bibliographer, annotating many of his books himself, or collaborating on their annotation with major comparative scholar-

ars (most notably Herbert Halpert). His comprehensive *Ozark Folklore: A Bibliography* appeared in 1972.

Vance Randolph was a self-taught folklorist, outsider to the discipline, and crusty non-conformist. It is not surprising that many folklore professionals dismissed his work or eyed him with suspicion. He was eighty-six years old before the American Folklore Society named him to its honor roll of Fellows. Yet the soundness of his methodology and his innovative approach to folklore are evident in the number of his works that were published either at the end of his life or posthumously. His *Ozark Superstitions* was reprinted in 1964 under the title *Ozark Magic and Folklore*; *Ozark Folksongs* was republished in 1980, with an abridged version appearing in 1982. Randolph's pioneering studies of obscene and sexual folklore had to await the maturing of the publishing industry: his *Pissing in the Snow and Other Ozark Folktales* appeared in 1976, while his *Unprintable Ozark Folksongs and Folklore* was published only in 1992.



Mr. Wes Noel, Elk Springs, Missouri. Photograph by Vance Randolph

The Vance Randolph Collection Available to Researchers



Mrs. Emma L. Dusenbury, Mena, Arkansas. American Folklife Center, Collection. Photograph by Vance Randolph

By Nora Yeh

The Vance Randolph Collection includes 261 folders of manuscripts, 255 phonographic discs and one 5-inch magnetic tape, and 213 graphic images. There are more than 870 audio selec-

tions on 198 recordings, on either aluminum or glass-based discs. The 24 boxes housing the collection occupy 12.5 linear feet of shelf space and comprise 18,216 items. Randolph made field recordings of folksongs, collected stories, and accumu-

lated an extensive number of newspaper clippings on a wide variety of subjects relating to the Ozarks, including local legends, history, language, and sporting activities. The collection was created between 1941 and 1942.

Although the American Folklife Center holds custody of this collection, portions are housed in other divisions of the Library. The Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division has the original discs and preservation-tape copies. The Prints and Photographs Division has 40 photographs (Lot 5580) of the 213 graphic images. Other related Randolph collections can be found in the Library's Manuscript and Music divisions.

The collection is organized by format into three series: manuscripts, sound recordings, and graphic images. It is further divided by sub-series, which are usually arranged in chronological or alphabetical order, or a logical combination of the two. Sometimes the materials are left in the sequence originally established by Vance Randolph.

Series I: MANUSCRIPT MATERIALS

Vance Randolph was a prolific writer. The collection contains manuscripts on a variety of subjects; a large amount of correspondence with and/or about famous and not-so-famous people. Genres represented include ballads, children's games, dialects, fiddle tunes, folksongs, games, jokes, jump-rope rhymes, railroad songs, shape-note singing, swearing, tall tales, and wit and humor. Musical instruments documented include banjo, dulcimer, guitar, and violin. Information on locations such as Eureka Springs (Arkansas), Hollywood (California), and Jacob's Cavern (Arkansas) are found in several folders.

Diverse Ozark subjects covered by the collection include agriculture, alcoholism, animals, belief, con artists, dialects, firearms, fishing, folk festivals, fox hunting, gambling, ghost-writing, healing waters, hermits, hog calling, lead miners, manners and customs, medicine shows, moonshiners, nick-

names, orators, outlaws, psychology, religion, spiritual healing, superstition, swindlers and swindling, tourism, water witches, weatherlore, and woodchucks. This manuscript series also includes correspondence with folklorists Benjamin Botkin, Sidney Robertson Cowell, Rayna Green, Herbert Halpert, Wayland Hand, Alan Lomax, and composer Henry Cowell. There is also documentation on personages such as the outlaw Belle Starr.

In addition to newspaper clippings, the printed materials include published articles and reprints, reviews of Randolph's publications, his review of other folklore publications, festival programs, bibliographies of his works, and telegrams.

SUBSERIES

Administrative Files
Subject Files
Correspondence Files
Reprints of Journal Articles and Reviews
Newspaper Clippings

Series II: SOUND RECORDINGS

The sound recordings, grouped into three subgroups, are annotated with names of performers, song titles, places, and other recording information. Examples include fiddle tunes played by Lon Jordan and by Bill Bilyeu; disc recordings entitled "Dear Mr. President"; and a taped interview with Florence Watts, "Some Talk about Belle Starr."

SUBSERIES

AFS 5236 to AFS 5425 (=LWO 3493, reels 14-26)
AFS 6397 to AFS 6464 (LWO 3493, reel 42)
AFS 6897 to AFS 6904 (LWO 3493, reels 56-57)

Folder 262 includes a sixty-minute audio-cassette record-

ing of an interview with Florence Watts.

Series III: GRAPHIC IMAGES

Vance Randolph used a high-quality, large format Hasselblad camera to document Ozark farm life, singers, musicians, and scenery. People depicted in the photos are sometimes identified with descriptions like "barefoot woman, in sunbonnet, carrying two pails," and "man at mining camp, seated in front of tent," and "Frank Payne, in hat, and family, 8 adults, 3 kids." Included is an image of the well-known ballad singer Emma L. Dusenbury.

Folders 263 to 278 contain photoprints annotated with names of the subjects, the places the photographs were taken, and descriptions of the images. Folder 279 contains photocopies of the originals, which are housed in the Prints and Photographs Division, Lot 5580.

Vance Randolph used much of the material he collected in his book *Ozark Folksongs* and in other publications. The Library of Congress has published selections from the Vance Randolph field recordings on the following releases: *Anglo-American Songs and Ballads* (L-12); *Anglo-American Songs and Ballads* (L-14); *Anglo-American Songs and Ballads* (L-20); *Songs of the Mormons and Songs of the West* (which includes Randolph himself singing "Starving to Death on a Government Claim") (L-30); *Railroad Songs and Ballads* (L-61); and *American Fiddle Tunes* (L-62).

A Vance Randolph Collection Finding Aid has been prepared and will soon be available through the American Folklife Center's Homepage (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/>) or the Library's EAD Homepage (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/lead>).

In Search of Woody Guthrie at the Library of Congress

By Mark Jackson

In March 1999, I found the time and money to travel to the Library of Congress for the first time. As a Ph.D. candidate at Louisiana State University, I wanted to explore the Library's holdings by and about the songwriter and political activist Woody Guthrie. I hoped to find material that would give me new information on Guthrie's personal history, and on the larger cultural, historical, and political contexts of his era, so that I could better contextualize the protest songs I was discussing in my dissertation, "Prophet Singer: The Voice and Vision of Woody Guthrie."

I started my search at the American Folklife Center (AFC), where folklife reference specialist Jennifer Cutting showed me the Woody Guthrie Corporate Subject Files, a mass of folders holding various newspaper clippings, programs, flyers, and other ephemera, all providing comment on his work, person, and legend. Here was an article discussing Guthrie's commemoration on a first-class postage stamp; there was the *Little Sandy Review* tribute issue in his honor.



Woody Guthrie, 1943. New York World-Telegram and Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division (LC-USZ62-113276). Photograph by Al Aumuller

Altogether, I found these files to be a wonderful miscellaneous source for the way Guthrie has been represented in the popular press.

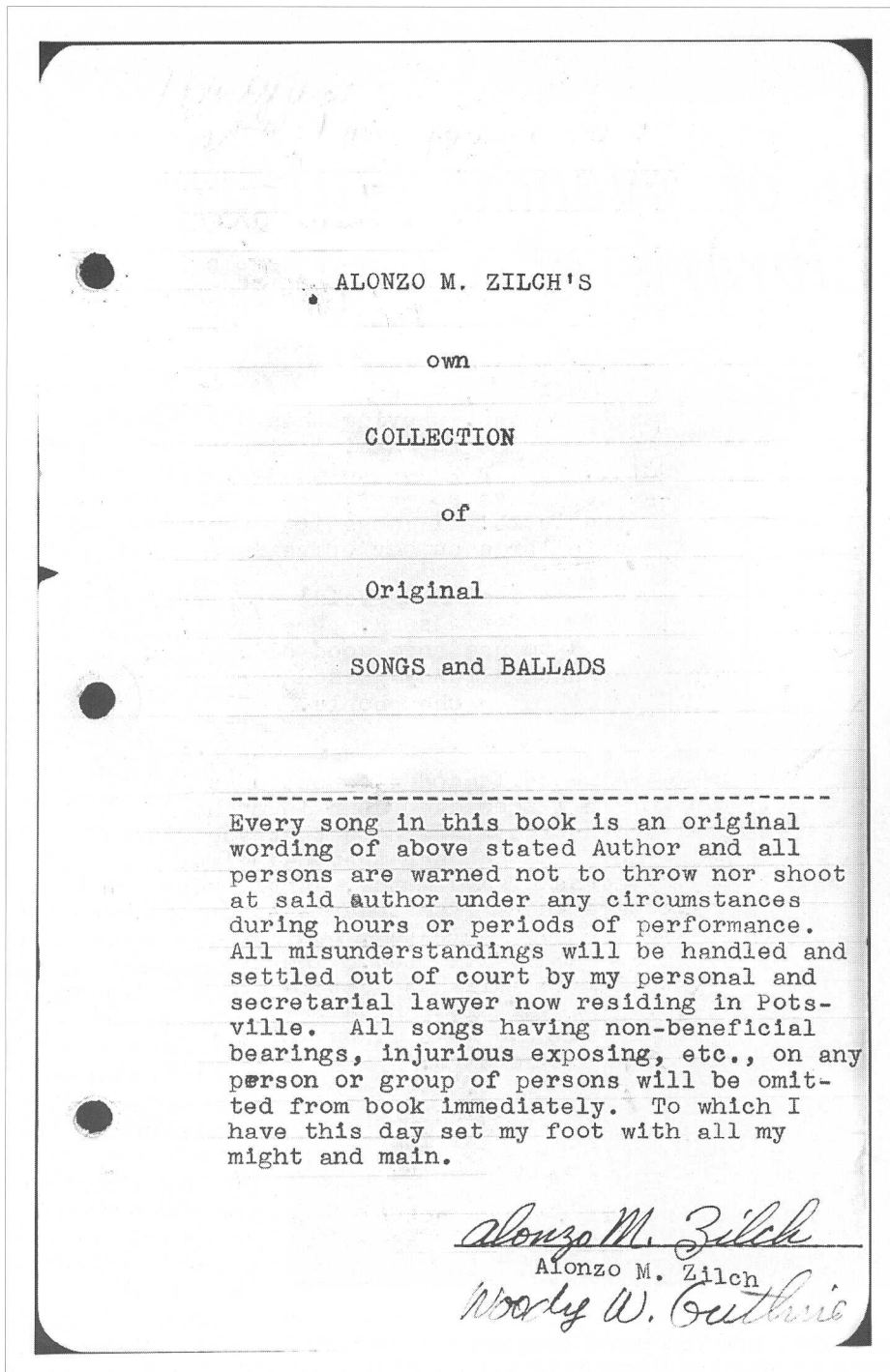
Next, I looked at the Center's Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection, which turned out to contain a treasure of undiluted Guthrie personality, especially in the letters he wrote to Alan Lomax. Although often informal

and joking, the letters also portray moments of reflection. For example, he discusses in detail how a songwriter can create a work that moves beyond entertainment and enters the realm of social commentary. Here I experienced an intimacy with my subject that I had not felt before in all my time studying Guthrie and his songs.

Along with the more personal material was one of his songbooks (circa 1940), containing early versions of such classics as "Do Re Mi." Other original songs, "Poor, Hard-Working Man Blues," for example, appear nowhere else and remain unmentioned in any discussion of Guthrie I have read.

After going through this material, over the course of my three-day visit, I returned to Baton

Rouge re-energized and more committed to my project than ever. But I knew that I had only covered a part of the whole that the Library of Congress had to offer. Fortunately, I was able to return to Washington in September 2001, thanks to the largesse of a Smithsonian Fellowship. Now time would be available to dig deeper and linger over what I found.



Title page from a song collection written by Woody Guthrie in the mid-1930s, and sent to Alan Lomax. American Folklife Center (LC-USZ62-67582)

One of my most surprising discoveries during these past months concerns the interview Guthrie did with Alan Lomax in March 1940. Since this recording has been commercially available since 1964, I thought there would be no need to listen to the original. However, I discovered

that some songs and conversation did not make it onto the commercial release. Listening to the original, I found that some of the omitted material consists of repeated songs. But Guthrie's version of "Jesse James" and other traditional tunes did not make the final cut, and even a few of Guthrie's original pieces,

such as "Mary Fagin," were not included.

Some of the dialogue was also omitted. For example, in a rather lengthy section, Guthrie discusses the racial situation in his hometown, Okemah, Oklahoma, even though no less an authority than music critic Dave Marsh writes, "there is little or no reference to the struggles of black people or other minorities" in the recordings Lomax oversaw. But those who go back to the original recording know the truth.

The Center's staff pointed me to another recording of Guthrie by Lomax; this one done on January 4, 1941. For the most part, the songs Guthrie performed were traditional, such as "Stagger Lee." But during this session, he also sang Blind Lemon Jefferson's plaintive "One Dime Blues," a tune he later used for several of his compositions, such as "New York Town."

Other recordings appeared as I continued my search. While looking through the Center's Subject Files, I came across a listing of the *American School of the Air* broadcasts. For a couple of years, Alan Lomax hosted and scripted this radio program, and he brought Guthrie on several times. Of the performances held by the Center, my favorite moment has to be the cast's enactment of Guthrie's "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You," including dust-storm sound effects.

Joe Hickerson, former head of the Archive of Folk Culture, also told me about some Almanac Singer recordings from January 1942. Here, the group—consisting of Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Sis Cunningham, and Lee Hays—runs through such original compositions as "Round and Round Hitler's Grave" and "Sinking of the Rueben James." Later, I discovered that the group performed many of the same pieces on a May 1942 episode of the



Mark Jackson in the Folklife Reading Room, viewing documents from the Woody Guthrie manuscript collection. Photo by James Hardin

radio show *News from Home*, which is held by the Recorded Sound Division (RSD) of the Library.

Guthrie also appeared solo on a number of radio programs during the 1940s, and many of these are also held by the RSD. He performs traditional and original songs on such shows as *Labor for Victory*, *Answering You*, *Jazz in America*, and *We the People*. But the strangest of these holdings has to be a Health Department program on the dangers of syphilis that Guthrie narrated sometime in the late 1940s.

Rachel Howard, a digital conversion specialist for the Library's National Digital Li-

brary Program, has discovered many of Guthrie's performances on radio programs held by the Library. It was she who pointed me in the direction of other written materials concerning Guthrie that are held in the Performing Arts Reading Room. There, I looked at microfilm copies of two songbooks and one manuscript. The manuscript is an early draft of *Bound for Glory*, which contains stories that did not make it into the final version of Guthrie's autobiographical novel. They are well worth the reading.

The files, manuscripts, recordings, and other items mentioned here are still just a portion of the Guthrie materials

held by the Library of Congress, although I have tried to hit the highlights. But even as my dissertation nears completion, my search for Woody Guthrie at the Library of Congress continues, full of promise that new discoveries and new surprises will appear to confound old assumptions and inspire me anew.

Mark Jackson is a Ph.D. candidate at Louisiana State University. He is a Smithsonian Fellow for 2001 and the recipient of an award from the Parsons Fund for Ethnography.

In Search of Bob Dylan's "With God on Our Side"

By Todd Harvey

A question met with a question: "Have you looked in the corporate subject file?"

Jennifer Cutting, a folklife specialist at the American Folklife Center's Reading Room, simultaneously asks the ques-

tion, answers the phone at the reference desk, and directs a patron to the researchers' cloak room. I had asked if Dominic Behan wrote the melody for his song "The Patriot Game," and, if he did not, where it came from.

The Folklife Reading Room holds some 450 linear feet of ver-

tical files—with thousands of manila folders containing articles, tape logs, correspondence, newspaper and journal clippings; all manner of information concerning folklife. I locate the appropriate file drawer, one dedicated to individuals and institutions, and begin to browse:

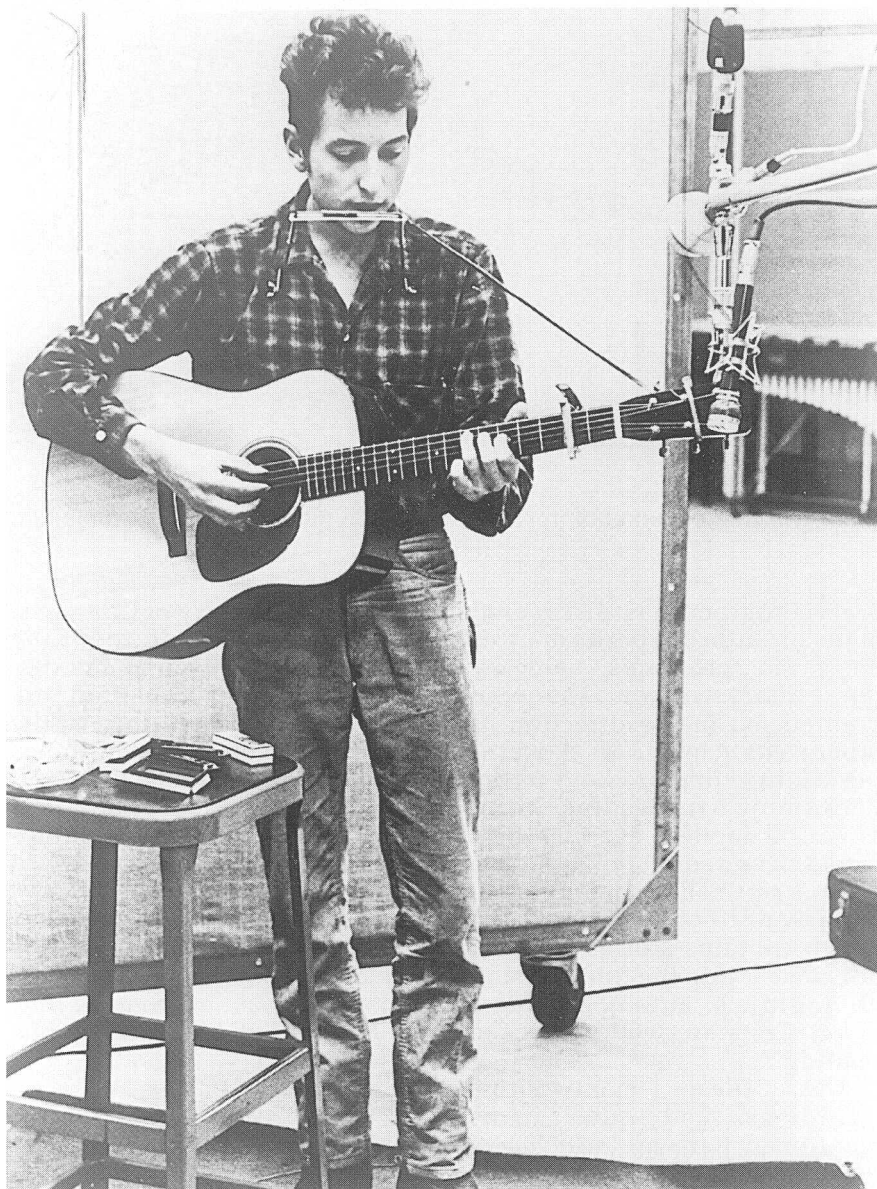
Begley Family
Behague, Gerard
Behan, Dominic

The Begleys were a family of musicians from Middle Fork, Kentucky, recorded by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax in October 1937. Kenneth Begley sang "The Moonshiner Song" (AFS 1453 B1), a song that found its way into the repertoires of many 1960s folk revivalists, including Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan.

Gerard Behague is a professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Texas at Austin. A former Society of Ethnomusicology president, he specializes in Latin American musics.

Dominic Behan is the subject of my search; I didn't realize that he was dead. The obituary from *Folk Roots* (October 1989:13) notes the basic information. Brother of the writer Brendan Behan, Dominic died in 1989 at age 60. He collected and composed songs, often political. "Absent from the folk club scene for many years now, he had become famed as a 'difficult' character in his later days as a performer. Perhaps his best-known song was 'The Patriot Game,' which he always claimed

Bob Dylan, about 1965. New York World-Telegram & Sun Photograph Collection, Prints and Photograph Division. (LC-USZ62-107999) Photographer unknown

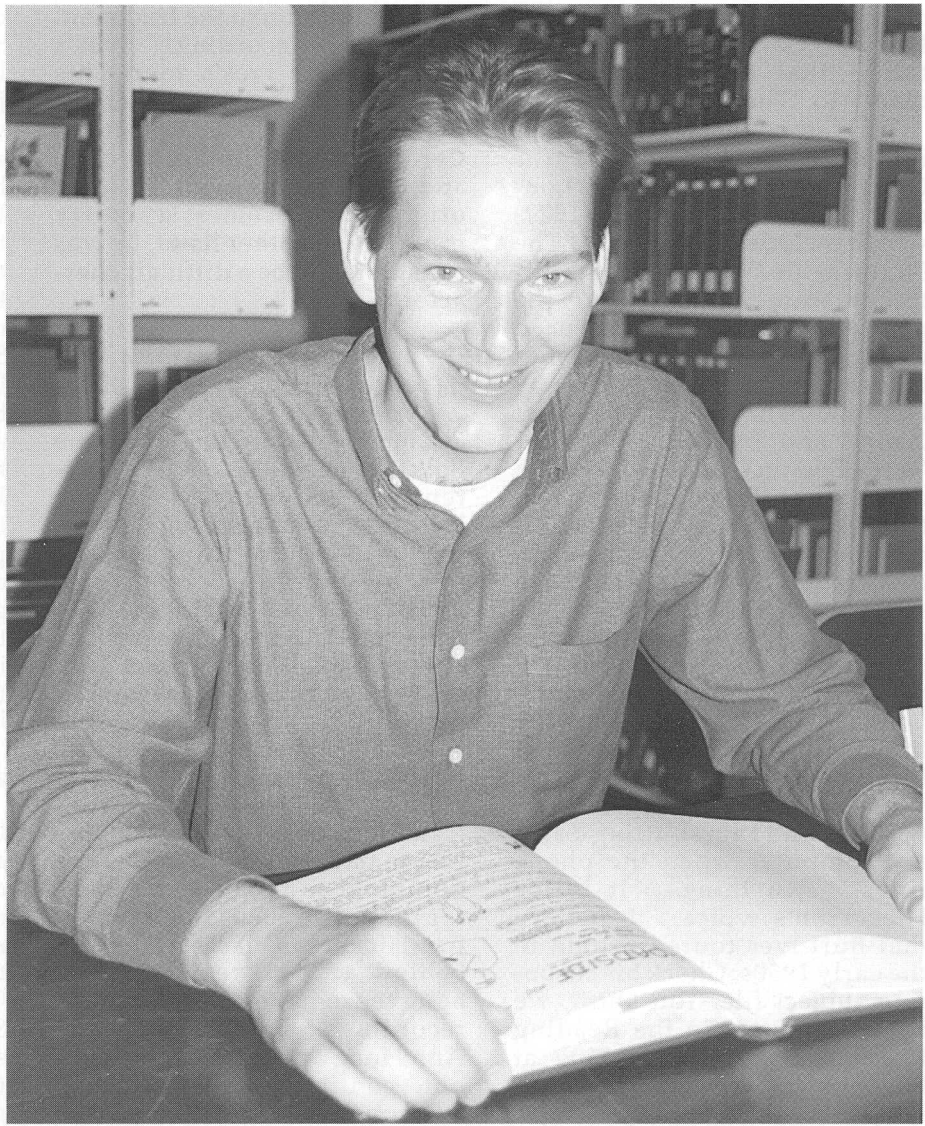


that Bob Dylan pirated for 'With God on Our Side.'"

The relationship between "The Patriot Game" and "With God on Our Side," hence between Behan and Dylan, is common knowledge. My goal in this search, part of a book project supported by a Smithsonian Institution postdoctoral fellowship, is to trace stylistic antecedents of Bob Dylan's early acoustic music. I have heard enough recordings of "The Patriot Game" to know that most performers adhere lyrically and melodically to Behan's original version. This faithfulness renders futile any attempt to pinpoint Dylan's precise source for his reworking of "The Patriot Game" into "With God on Our Side." Likely candidates, however, include The Clancy Brothers, Nigel Denver, or Behan himself.

Dominic Behan wrote "The Patriot Game" in 1957, recorded it that year for his LP *Songs of the Irish Republican Army* (Riverside RLP 12-820), and included it in his songbook *Ireland Sings* (1965). It also appeared in the summer 1960 *Sing Out!* "The Patriot Game" chronicles the ill-fated December 31, 1956, IRA attack against the Brookeborough Royal Ulster Constabulary barracks. Two young IRA soldiers, Sean South and Feargal O'Hanlon, were killed. They soon became martyrs to the Republican cause, representing the IRA's renewed struggle against British control of the Northern counties. Ballads were composed about both men, with Behan's "The Patriot Game" focusing on O'Hanlon. Behan wrote in the LP liner notes, "The words and music to this song are my own composition."

Dylan premiered "With God on Our Side" during his April 12, 1963, New York Town Hall concert, probably writing the song in the preceding weeks. It became a mainstay of his 1963-65 sets, and there are



Todd Harvey in the Folklife Reading Room, with a bound volume of *Sing Out!* magazines. Photo by James Hardin

recordings of about two dozen performances circulating or rumored. The song was printed in the June 1963 *Broadside* (#27) and the December/January 1963-64 *Sing Out!* In addition to his appropriation of Behan's melody, Dylan makes clear reference to the Irishman's text. His lyrics may be interpreted as an exploration of a single line from "The Patriot Game," one that questions unflinching loyalty to political causes. While Feargal O'Hanlon believed that he was a part of an important cause and that IRA violence was a justifiable response to longstanding British oppression, Dylan asks whether a just war can exist. While Behan's song martyrs

O'Hanlon, exhorting listeners to remember him, Dylan's character states, from the onset, that his name and age are meaningless. "With God on Our Side" ends, not with a clear answer for the listener, but with the singer himself feeling confused, in this case about the morality of conflict in the name of righteousness.

I pause for a moment in my file-folder browsing just as Joe Hickerson strides into the Reading Room. A retired former head of the Archive of Folk Culture, Hickerson has something to say to everyone—some kernel of information he has gathered on his nearly constant travels—and many new deposits for the verti-

cal files. I ask Joe about "The Patriot Game" melody. He thinks that it bears a resemblance to "The Nightingale."

Half an hour later, I am looking at a songbook titled *The Cruel Wars* (Karl Dallas, ed. London: Wolfe Publishing, 1972) which includes a version of "The Nightingale." The melody is different from Behan's, but the postscript reads: "Burl Ives used to sing a version [of this song] whose melody was taken by Dominic Behan for 'The Patriot Game' and by Bob Dylan for 'With God on Our Side.'" I walk over to the Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division and confirm that, indeed, Ives recorded the song in 1952 and issued the recording on his 1956 LP *In the Quiet of the Night* (Decca DL 8247). It is the same melody Behan used. According to the liner notes, the arrangement is Ives's own.

At home that night, it is nearly 10 P.M. and I am shutting down my computer when the phone rings. "Two things." It is Joe Hickerson's voice. "I believe that Burl Ives toured Britain in the early 1950s. Check his corporate subject file. You know, we have his guitar in the Reading Room. Also, I was looking at *Lawless (Folksingers and Folksongs in America)*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1960) and it seems that Jo Stafford recorded 'The Nightingale,' perhaps with her husband Paul Weston. Late 1940s. It very well may be another 'Nightingale' song, but it is worth a check."

The next afternoon I hurry back to the Recorded Sound Division and find the Jo Stafford 78 RPM album *American Folk Songs* (Capitol CC-75, 1948). She sings, in her version of "The Nightingale," the same melody that Burl Ives and Dominic Behan used. I return to the Folklife Reading Room, pull the Burl Ives corporate subject file, and find part of a press packet from Ives's well-received summer 1953 tour of Britain. I know now that the melody existed years before Behan wrote his song and I have three possible sources for

its transmission to the Irishman: Stafford's recording, Ives's recording, or Ives's tour. This doesn't necessarily discredit Behan's claim to composition. Certainly the words are his own, and, at a certain point, melodic originality becomes a blurry issue. On the other hand, he was considered to be a difficult character.

I am browsing again, a vice encouraged by the sheer volume of 1960s folk revival materials available at the Folklife Reading Room. Currently I am musing over the December 1967 *Sing Out!* printing of Mary Walling's "The Burghers of Newport," set to Dylan's "Only a Hobo." The song criticizes what Walling perceived as the Newport Folk Festival's growing commercialism. By 1967, it seems, the folk revival had begun to parody itself, becoming more mainstream. The 1963 Festival, contrastingly, marks Bob Dylan's rise to national fame, and some point to it as a high-water mark for the entire 1960s folk revival. Joe Hickerson eases out from behind a stack remarking, "I believe we have some Newport recordings." Folklife specialist Ann Hoog appears with a print-out, confirming that, indeed, someone had deposited partial recordings of the 1963-66 Newport Folk Festivals (AFC 1999/001). Dylanologists notoriously disagree about the dates and the set lists of Dylan's 1963 Newport appearances. Would I like to listen to these recordings?

It is 4:15 P.M. and I have time for only a quick listen. At the window, Reference Coordinator Judith Gray is watering the tangle of bamboo that threatens to overtake the listening station. She directs my attention to a large bound volume of Newport Folk Festival programs, 1963 among them. Dylan was scheduled to appear at the Friday, July 26, evening concert (Jim Marshall's famous photo of Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul, and Mary and others, hands clasped, swaying to "We Shall Over-

come" is from this concert); the Saturday, July 27, morning ballad workshop; and the Sunday, July 28, afternoon topical-song workshop. He also managed an appearance with Baez during her Sunday evening concert set. I locate the ballad workshop tape and listen. Dylan sings just two songs: "North Country Blues," probably the song's premier, and "With God on Our Side," as a duet with Joan Baez. Dylan introduces the latter song by noting its similarities to a song Jean Redpath had performed moments earlier, "The Patriot Game." The printed Newport Folk Festival program places the ballad workshop opposite the non-English language song workshop. I find this tape and listen as Jackie Washington sings "La Llorona." Near the end, in the background, I hear Dylan and Baez rip into "Oh my name it ain't nothin', my age it means less..."

Set list and date confirmed, I leave the Folklife Reading Room and walk homeward in the glory of a Washington spring afternoon. I try to finish the article in my head, composing so intently that I almost collide with Mr. Chubb's taxi while crossing "C" Street at the Madison Building's southeast corner. A block down the street I see Joe Hickerson glide out of the building's southwest doors, cross the street, and head down the Capitol South Metro escalator.

Todd Harvey is the author of "The Formative Dylan: Transmission and Stylistic Influences, 1961-1963" (Scarecrow Press, forthcoming). He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from Ohio State University, and has been a post-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution and an intern at the American Folklife Center.

Field Days in the Flanders Collection

By Nancy-Jean Ballard Seigel

Lunch time at Camp Letts. It was 1992 and this was my first time at a Folklore Society of Greater Washington Getaway Weekend. Eight of us were squeezed together at a wooden table. As I pushed cole slaw around on my plate, I was feeling awkward. The conversation drifted from songs to summer vacations and back to songs again. Frankly, I didn't know many of the songs these folks were singing. To participate in the conversation, I said, "Well, uh, my grandmoth-

er used to collect ballads." Seven strangers suddenly turned towards me. "What was her name?" one asked. When I said, "Helen Hartness Flanders," there was a circle of dropped jaws. To my surprise, they knew my granny. A man named Joe Hickerson sitting across from me smiled and said, "I think you should come to the Library of Congress. There are some things I would like to show you." Joe was then head of acquisitions at the American Folklife Center.

That day marked the turning point in my relationship with

Helen Hartness Flanders, and she is now the subject of a book I am writing. To learn about her life with ballads, I come to the American Folklife Center's reading room to listen to her field recordings. Each day I get a bit closer to my goal—to hear approximately forty-five hundred songs. Vicariously, I share in the delight my grandmother must have felt when she first heard them.

Helen Hartness Flanders (1890–1972) received her "life's calling" at a subcommittee meeting of the Governor's Commission on Country Life. In 1929 the Committee on Traditions and Ideals met to study certain aspects of Vermont life. My grandmother, already a published poet, accomplished pianist, and supporter of the arts in her town of Springfield, was asked to discover what songs were being sung that had been learned in the oral tradition. Dorothy Canfield Fisher, a friend and a fellow writer, scoffed at the idea. "Vermonters don't sing!" Yet, within minutes, Mrs. Fisher recalled a song that had been passed down through several generations in her family. That is how Helen Hartness Flanders collected her first folksong. Over the next thirty years, she would collect, record, and preserve thousands of folksongs and ballads from New England. She also gave lectures and wrote nine books and innumerable articles about ballads.

What began as a brief assignment turned into a lifetime passion. Early on, she understood that this venture was time-sensitive. The tradition of singing faced electric competition. Eventually, even the most remote homes would have radios blaring. Already, people considered



Helen Hartness Flanders, about 1945. Photo by Clara Sipprell, courtesy of Nancy-Jean Seigel



In the Folklife Reading Room, Nancy-Jean Seigel listens to “Boys Keep Away from the Girls,” as performed by Michael Barden in 1952 for Helen Hartness Flanders. Photo by James Hardin

music heard over the airwaves to be somehow superior to the traditional art of home sings. Would the old ballads be buried with the last generation of songsters? Helen Hartness Flanders threw herself into her project with both determination and vision, and today the Flanders Ballad Collection is the largest treasury of folk music in New England.

Small and fragile in appearance, Mrs. Flanders was keenly observant and interested in everyone she met. She was vivacious and sometimes wacky—not every Vermont woman huddled her family in a circle during the 1938 hurricane, assigned parts, and directed a reading of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*! Her husband, Ralph Flanders, said she had “a whim of iron.” Though neither she nor he had more than a high school education, they were an intelligent and intellectually curious couple. Both loved music. They recited poetry, shared books and ideas and corresponded with scholars in the United States and abroad. Though Helen Hartness Flanders came from a prominent

family and had such privileges as travel abroad and private music and language lessons, her poems reveal a capacity to understand local farm life or lumbering. Take, for example, the following lines from her privately printed book of poems *Country News Items* (Springfield, Vermont, 1965):

About a suicide, she wrote:

*Out in the field which grows no tree
They found her body dead.
Cold and dead. Her face was old
With all that she had not said.*

About a farmer:

*From his first self, hard years can
isolate
A man, whose barn is his last estimate.*

She described a woman who lived

*back on the hill farm—one meadow
from the sky.*

And imagine her visiting a man’s home to find this scene:

*He settles in the kitchen chair
The table cleared, the shuttered
stove
Set for the night, the purring cat
Is blinking in the alcove*

Or characterizing a farmer, forced to sell his farm so that a power company could install a line across his land:

*Justin had never quite known
How his farm had daily grown
Into him and held its part
In the quickening of his heart.*

Born in 1890, my grandmother was a Vermonter who rejoiced in the beauty she saw around each bend in the road. If a day’s travel didn’t yield ballads, the ride through hilly countryside was enough. She cared deeply about people and took them for who they were. Over time, her collecting activities led to warm friendships. The day she recorded Mr. Sparks at the Weston Old Home Day, they ended up sit-



Helen Harness Flanders (left) talks about old songs with Mrs. Olive May of Stowe, Vermont. Photo from the 1950s by Bob Bourden (News Bureau, Mt. Mansfield Co. Inc.), courtesy of Nancy-Jean Seigel

ting under a maple tree while he told her about his days as a sailor and showed her how to tie knots. She and Mr. Flanders visited the Burditts at their former lumber camp, but they also were present at the couple's golden wedding anniversary. On some occasions she would return to a home with her recording machine so that family members could hear the voice of a relation who had passed away. Notes and small gifts passed back and forth between collector and singers. The ratty-looking bear-skin rug beside my grandmother's bed was a gift from Hanford Hayes from Maine. He had trapped the bear himself.

In an interview, Helen Harness Flanders said she was allergic to ballads—that is, whenever she was near them she caught them. Yet the rarest of ballad catches—such as “King John and the Bishop,” which had not been previously recorded with its tune on either side of the Atlantic—did not happen by

chance. Success came with determination, thorough research, and creative footwork. Shortly after her ballad search began, about 1930, Helen Harness Flanders made a trip to the Library of Congress and consulted with Robert W. Gordon, head of the Archive of American Folk Song. He advised her that it was essential to record what she collected. After this trip she stayed in close contact with every succeeding head of the Folk Archive to report on and to promote Vermont folksongs.

Mrs. Flanders knew that the person who sings ballads looks the same as the person who doesn't. Everyone she met was a potential songster or a possible connection to someone who knew old songs. Phillips Barry, a professor from Harvard, was a mentor. In the voluminous correspondence between the two, one can trace Barry's advice and follow how Mrs. Flanders used it in the field: Never ask for a title, rather ask if the singer

knows a song about such-and-such; always record everything, fragments count as variants; use the techniques of a detective—if the singer knows a certain song and her relatives came from the northeast of Ireland, chances are she might know other ballads previously found in that region.

The Helen Harness Flanders Ballad Collection was not, however, a one-person effort. My grandmother had help. It is important to give full credit to those who assisted her: George Brown, Elizabeth Flanders Ballard (my mother), Phillips Barry, and, most important, Marguerite Olney. For

nearly twenty years, starting in the late thirties, Marguerite Olney did much of the fieldwork and managed the collection (which by 1941 had been given to Middlebury College). My grandmother led a full life and attended to responsibilities in many areas. When my grandfather became U.S. senator from Vermont, her part in the collecting went on hold; she was “marooned in Washington while the Senate was in session.” She was not physically strong and suffered frequent periods of ill health. In the final years before her death in 1972, she suffered a series of strokes. Frances Byrne Flanders, a secretary and family companion who eventually married my grandfather's brother, contributed tirelessly to make those final years productive ones.

The field recordings illustrate traditions of an earlier time: New Englanders sang unaccompanied and focused on the story. One cannot help but be involved

The Flanders Ballad Collection

The Library of Congress has a complete copy of all the field recordings, as well as the Index to the Field Recordings, for the Flanders Ballad Collection. In the late 1970s, the Library learned that the Flanders field recordings at Middlebury College were at risk of deteriorating and offered to help. A partnership was created between the two institutions whereby all the recordings were shipped to the Library for copying onto reel-to-reel tape. The Library also made a duplicate copy of the recordings for the American Folklife Center. In addition to these recordings, the AFC has a limited number of files on Helen Hartness Flanders, mostly concerning her correspondence with people at the Library and some copies of newspaper articles by or about her. Middlebury College has everything that was ever collected—the field recordings, plus the entire collection of books, manuscripts, broadsides, correspondence, lecture notes, photographs, newspaper articles. Helen Hartness Flanders donated this material to Middlebury at various times during her life, beginning in 1941. The Web site is: <http://www.middlebury.edu/~lib/FBC/index.html>. —Nancy-Jean Seigel

with the song about three hundred souls searching for a man lost, then finding him three days later frozen to death in the snow. Or smile at yet another version (one of twenty-eight) of "Springfield Mountain." In this one, the snake gets more than the usual press. The collected songs on a tape might range from antique Child ballads to songs like "Jones' Paring Bee," which with its lilting tune tells us about another Vermont tradition—ending a day's work with fiddle music and dance. There are gospel songs sung by the daughter of a former slave, and a song about a sailor dressed up as a prince to outwit the father who won't give up his daughter, sung by Elmer George (from North Montpelier, Vermont), a former lumberman. I hear "The Robin's Song" and nearly fall off my chair laughing. The robin is singing a temperance song! Then, on to the song about the exploits of Jim Fisk, an American Robin Hood.

The Flanders Ballad Collection was a participatory venture. My grandmother wrote weekly columns on folk music in several of the New England newspapers. Typically, she began an article by mentioning a song, then described the singer who had given it to her and the place where he or she had learned it. The text of the song would be printed out, followed by an invitation to the readers to share other versions of that or another

song, or to alert her to the existence of other people she might contact who liked the old songs. These columns were popular and letters poured in. She printed the names of those who sent in contributions.

A couple of years ago, I learned that in 1934 my grandmother recorded a Polish woman, Mrs. Stankiewicz, in Springfield, Vermont, singing "Two Sisters." Curiously, the woman had sung in Polish ("Dwei Siostry"). Since I had planned to spend the Millennium in Warsaw, I packed a copy of the field recording and carried it back to where it came from. My Polish friends took me to the University of Warsaw. There I shared the Flanders ballad with two English-speaking ethnomusicologists, professors Anna Czekanowska and Piotr Dahlig. They, in turn, played Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian field tapes of the same ballad. While we did not find the same tune Mrs. Stankiewicz had sung, this ballad saga began to take on a life of its own. I presented the Polish professors with four versions of "Two Sisters," which American friends had generously taped for me (Judy Cook, Mary Lamarca, Lisa Null, and Joan Sprung). They promised to play tapes in their ballad classes. I returned to the United States and thought that was the end of it. Now, a year later, I have visited the next generation of that very Polish family in Belows Falls, Vermont. The granddaughter is as eager to know

more about her grandmother as I am to find out about mine.

Finally, these songs connect me with the people central to my family history, such as the ballad singer Margaret MacArthur. Margaret moved to Vermont in 1948, became immersed in New England traditions, and has made Vermont songs a large part of her repertoire. She and my grandmother were friends. Margaret MacArthur is a torchbearer for the Flanders Ballad Collection. Her workshops, performances, and recordings are presented in a manner to honor her mentor and the New England singers and traditions they represent.

Many songs have a verse saying "and here my story is ended." The ballad story, however, keeps going, and does not end with the decision to write a book. What I have shared here is what can happen to anyone who is interested in "catching ballads." As the pieces of my grandmother's story come together, I find myself on an uncharted journey through field recordings, with field trips leading off in directions I didn't know existed, and meetings with people whose names I don't yet know.

Nancy-Jean Seigel is researching the life and collecting activities of her grandmother, Helen Hartness Flanders, at Middlebury College and the Library of Congress, and writing a book on the subject. Ms. Seigel would welcome additional information from readers on Flanders and her collecting activities.

Researching Appalachia and the WPA at the Library of Congress

By Alison C. Mitchell

The editorial board of the Liveoak Editions Program, at the Center for American Places, approached me about a year ago to undertake research for a pro-

posed book whose working title is "A Celebration of America: The Creative Harvest of the WPA." The mission of Liveoak Editions is to "produce illustrated books in praise of the American land." As the "Celebration"

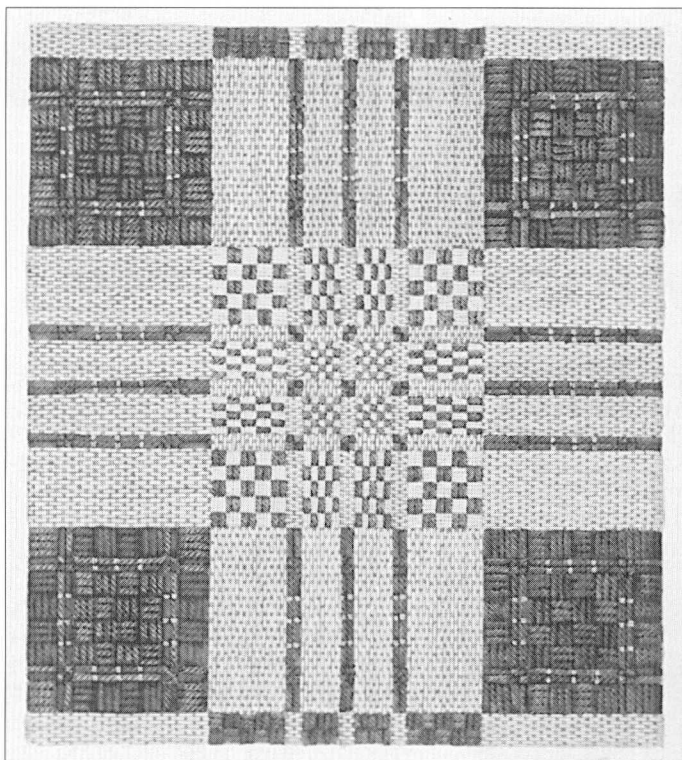
book project concept states, "perhaps at no time in U.S. history has there been such an outpouring of creative effort to celebrate the American 'place' as in the 1930s, under the WPA and associated cultural programs of the New Deal."

I accepted the offer and we decided that I should focus initially on the region of Appalachia (Kentucky, North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia) as one of the "Celebration" chapters. My assignment has been to obtain a "core sample" of the WPA activities that took place there, including artwork, photographs, writing, recorded interviews, and other materials to determine what might be available and how to find it. The Library of Congress was a logical and fertile place in which to begin my research, and the American Folklife Center (AFC) graciously accepted me as an intern with the proviso that I produce a finding aid on the subject so that other researchers might benefit from my research.

How to approach such a daunting assignment! I began by boning up on what historians, other scholars, former WPA workers, and bureaucrats have written about the WPA era during and since the 1930s. One of my early primers was "Spending to Save," written in 1936 by Harry L. Hopkins, who had been appointed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to administer the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. That agency in turn created the short-lived Civil Works Administration, in 1933, and then the Works Progress Administration in 1935. In order to understand the scope of WPA Federal Project Number One,



Alison C. Mitchell in the Folklife Reading Room with a copy of *The Index of American Design*. Photo by James Hardin



Coverlet. Floyd, Virginia, about 1819. Index of American Design

the program that designated money for federal art, theater, music, and writing projects (and later, the historical records survey), I turned to "Federal Relief Administration and the Arts" by William F. McDonald. This study of the WPA arts programs was commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1942, but not published until 1969. It has become a faithful companion. Scholarly work by Charles L. Perdue Jr. and Nancy Martin-Perdue (e.g., "Talk about Trouble" and "Weevils in the Wheat"), in compiling and editing materials from the WPA Virginia Writers Project, has been invaluable for my research.

The bibliography that I have compiled is a testament to the continued fascination with the WPA era. For example, I discovered that over two hundred books have been written about the FSA/OWI photographs. An excellent bibliography compiled by Library of Congress staff member Marguerite D. Bloxom, entitled *Pickaxe and Pencil: References for the Study of the WPA*, was published in 1982. But a great number of

additional works has been produced in the past twenty years. The American Guide Series, the primary focus for writers employed by the Federal Writers Project, remains one of the best chronicles of individual state history, customs, and institutions as they existed in the 1930s. The suggested tours, with accompanying maps, included in

each of these state guides would provide valuable field experiences for students of local history.

The volume of materials about the WPA era continues to grow, and I realized early on that as much as I yearned to settle in for several years' reading (and listening to tapes), I needed to get on to the central task of identifying just where in the Library of Congress the materials on the Appalachia region are housed.

The AFC's Archive of Folk Culture, for example, has sound recordings made by Charles Seeger and Sidney Robertson for the Resettlement Administration; tapes of ex-slave narratives recorded by Roscoe Lewis of the Hampton Institute for the Federal Writers Project; and 419 12-inch discs of songs and instrumentals recorded by

Chair. Kentucky, 1850. Index of American Design

Herbert Halpert in 1939 throughout the southern states (a joint undertaking of the Federal Music, Theater, and Writers Projects, and the Library of Congress).

The Manuscript Division has 300,000 items pertaining to the Federal Writers Project, and materials on the Historic American Buildings Survey. In 1998, the division acquired records comprising the Research Library of the United States Work Projects Administration. The state file subseries is arranged alphabetically by state, and thereunder by author and title of the report.

The Music Division has materials on the Federal Music Project and the Federal Theater Project.

The Prints and Photographs Division has over 164,000 black-and-white negatives, 1,610 color transparencies, and 107,000 black-and-white captioned photographs from the Resettlement Administration/Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information (FSA/OWI) programs. It also has 907 Federal Art Project posters and 220 fine art prints produced by the Graphic Art Division of the FAP.



Probably the most pleasant discovery I made is that many of the Library of Congress WPA-era materials are now on the World Wide Web. John Y. Cole, director of the Center for the Book, has produced an online exhibit, entitled *Amassing American Stuff: The Library of Congress and the Federal Arts Projects of the 1930s*, that is part of the National Digital Library Program. This presentation summarizes the role the Library has played in preserving these WPA-program materials for the American public and highlights images from the Library's collections. The Web has changed the way initial research is conducted on any topic. It doesn't replace the age-old slog-ging through government documents, containers, files, and record groups that is a prerequisite for solid primary source data collection, but it certainly helps identify which archives are most likely to yield those gold mines every researcher dreams about.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of my research into the New Deal Art programs has been in attempting to discover the provenance of public artwork produced by various governmental agencies. For assistance in solving this puzzle, the Fine Arts Program staff of the General Service Administration (GSA) was extremely helpful. I was amazed to learn that, as the successor to the Federal Works Agency, GSA is the repository for art created since 1939 under the WPA. In 1999, GSA published a comprehensive directory, *WPA Artwork in Non-Federal Repositories*, Edition II. This inventory lists over 11,000 WPA paintings, graphics, and sculpture on long-term loan to museums and universities all over the country. I also learned of the GSA Web site that lists WPA

art in public buildings: <http://www.gsa.gov/pbs/centers/arts>

However, my greatest treat was the rediscovery of the Index of American Design, a project of the WPA Federal Art Program. "Its aim was to compile and eventually publish a visual survey of objects of decorative, folk and popular arts made in America from the time of settlement until about 1900. Each object was recorded in an accu-



Frax spinning wheel. Kentucky, 1810. Index of American Design

rate watercolor drawing accompanied by a sheet of written information giving the object's date, source, location and ownership." ("Foreword," *The Consolidated Catalog to the Index of American Design*, edited by Sandra Shaffer Tinkham. Chadwyck-Healey, 1980) The idea behind this project was to encourage artists, designers, and manufacturers to appreciate and use regional American design in their work. The repository for this extraordinary collection, over 15,000 drawings of textiles,

costumes, furniture, woodcarvings, ceramics, silver, toys, and musical instruments, is the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American Art. Fortunately, the Archive of Folk Culture has a microfiche edition of it with an accompanying catalog. When I was viewing it in the reading room, my colleagues would invariably express amazement at the beauty as well as accuracy of these watercolor renderings.

Research on the WPA is complicated by the fact that the program ended abruptly with the beginning of World War II. Many of the programs had very little time to close up shop. Many materials were sent to Washington and now reside in Record Group 69 at the National Archives and Records Administration, which I found to be a rich resource. However, many materials were also kept in the state in which they were created. In the case of Virginia, for example, the University of Virginia, Alderson Library, is the repository of a 6,500-item WPA Folklore Collection (Record Number 645). It is essential to research historical societies and universities in each state to capture the total picture of what the WPA accomplished there.

As Harry Hopkins described it in 1936, the WPA set out to assist a "democratization of culture" through the Federal One Project. The research that I have done so far confirms that besides providing employment to thousands of destitute professionals, Federal One made an enormous impact on communities throughout this country.

Alison C. Mitchell is a freelance researcher who lives in Washington, D.C.

Herbert Halpert: Folklorist-Fieldworker (August 23, 1911, to December 29, 2000)



Herbert Halpert poses by the old ambulance he outfitted as a “sound wagon” with an acetate disc recorder borrowed from the Archive of American Folk-Song, Sattillo, Mississippi, 1939. Photo courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History

By Michael Taft

The death of Herbert Halpert holds a special significance for the American Folklife Center. He was among the last of a generation of folklorist-fieldworkers, contracted by the Library of Congress in the 1930s and 1940s, whose contributions constitute a great treasure of American folklore. As a teenager in New York, Halpert was influenced by Library of Congress folksong archivist Robert W. Gordon, who wrote articles on American folksong in the *New York Times Magazine*. Eventually, like so many other folklorists, Halpert

became a performer—singing folksongs at student gatherings at New York University. As an undergraduate, he was influenced by folklorist Mary Elizabeth Barnacle (who introduced him to Alan Lomax). Barnacle suggested that Halpert explore the traditions of the New Jersey Pinelands region—a study that would eventually lead to his doctoral dissertation at Indiana University.

But a few years before his studies at Indiana, Halpert gained valuable fieldwork experience as a contractee with the federal government and the Music Division of the Library of

Congress. During the Great Depression, he found work with the WPA (Works Progress Administration), where he developed an interest in children’s folklore. In 1939, he was hired to contact singers and musicians already discovered by Federal Writers’ Project workers, and to record them on disc. He traveled throughout the Southern States, amassing over four hundred discs of songs and music—one of the largest collections of its kind at the Library of Congress. Both before and after this field trip, as an advisor on folksongs for the National Service Bureau of the Federal The-

ater Project of the WPA, Halpert recorded close to fifty discs of songs, street cries, children's rhymes, and interviews in New York City. These discs are also at the Archive of Folk Culture.

Halpert went on to become a distinguished folklorist. He was a president of the American Folklore Society (1955–56), and was elected a Fellow of both the American Folklore Society and the American Anthropological Association. His crowning achievement was the establishment of the Folklore Department and Archives at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Yet, all of his work in folklore had its roots in his early years with the WPA and the Library of Congress. His pioneering work in urban folklore, children's traditions, folk speech, as well as his distinction as one of the early functionalists, who melded folklore fieldwork with an anthropological approach, all stemmed from his 1930s work. As an example, he was not content simply to collect New York street cries from itinerant fish-seller Clyde "Kingfish" Smith; he interviewed him on how his performances changed, depending upon the ethnic make-up of his customers, and how his cries functioned within the context of street-selling.

One of Halpert's strengths as a folklorist was his capacity for bibliographic research. He also developed a new approach to comparative scholarship that explored the interrelationship of texts and performers. Again, one need look no further than his early WPA work in New York to see the roots of his folkloristic methods. Note his report on songs he collected from Dee Burque in New York City on January 30, 1939:

Miss Dee Burque . . . learned several songs from a friend, Bernard Steffen . . . Mr. Steffen got them from Margaret Valiant, who learned them from Mr. Charles Seeger, who got them from Bascom Lamar Lunsford. Published versions of several of the songs will be found in 30 and 1

Folksongs (From the Southern Mountains) by Lunsford and Stringfield. [Herbert Halpert, "New York City Recordings," AFS 3625–3672, New York City Collection, 1937–1939, AFC, p. 6]

This short note is an early study in folksong revival, showing how songs traveled from singer-collector Lunsford in North Carolina through academic ethnomusicologist Seeger, to friends of friends. Similarly, through his record reviews in *American Music Lover* (1936–38), Halpert was one of the first folklorists to recognize the role of commercial recordings in the folksong-transmission process.

Halpert's scholarly output spanned sixty years, from those early record reviews to his monumental *Folktales of Newfoundland* (co-authored with J. D. A. Widdowson, New York: Garland, 1996). He has left a legacy that will continue to enrich and inspire the research of scholars.

Michael Taft is well qualified to write about his former professor Herbert Halpert, having completed his Ph.D. in folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1977. Halpert wrote the introductions to two of Taft's works: Index to Hoosier Folklore Bulletin (1942–1945) and Hoosier Folklore (1946–1950) (co-authored with I. Sheldon Posen and Richard S. Tallman, 1973) and A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1904–1972 (1975). Taft reviewed Halpert's last book, Folktales of Newfoundland, in Ethnologies 22 (2000). Michael Taft joined the staff of the American Folklife Center as a folklife specialist in February 2001. He is coordinating the Center's "Save Our Sounds" at-risk sound recordings preservation project.

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Conference Honors Benjamin A. Botkin

By Craig D'Ooge

The American Folklife Center will present two days of folklife programming, November 15–16, in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of folklorist Benjamin A. Botkin, who served as head of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress from 1942 to 1945. All events will be held in the Library's Coolidge Auditorium in the Thomas Jefferson Building, and are free and open to the public. The program is presented in co-sponsorship with the Center for the Book and the Music Division of the Library of Congress (George and Ira Gershwin were Botkin cousins), and the New York Folklife Society, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Council for the Traditional Arts, and CityLore.

There will be live performances featuring Washington, D.C., musicians, and panel discussions on Botkin's career as author, scholar, folklife editor for the Federal Writers' Project, and chairman of the Joint Committee on Folk Arts for the Works Progress Administration.

Speakers and performers will include folk music legend Pete Seeger; musicians Peggy and Mike Seeger; musician and writer Stephen Wade; the internationally known Irish band "Cherish the Ladies"; folklorist and TV personality Roger Welsch; music scholar and performer Joseph C. Hickerson; radio personality and musician Oscar Brand; historian Jerrold Hirsch; Joe Wilson, director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts; Marjorie Hunt, coproducer of the Academy Award-winning documentary *The Stone Carvers*; The United House of Prayer Brass Band; fiddler and folklorist Alan Jabbour; Dale Johnson of the New York Folklife Society; Steve Zeitlin, director of New York's CityLore; WPFW-FM radio hosts Nap Turner and Henry Tate; Miyuki Williams discussing the life and career of Washington radio host Jerry "The 'Bama" Washington; John Cole, director of the Library's Center for the Book; Peggy Bulger, director of the Library's American Folklife Center, and others.

Benjamin A. Botkin (1901–1975) was a pioneering folklorist who focused attention on newly emerging aspects of folklife in

modern life. At a time when other scholars viewed modernity as something that contaminates and destroys tradition, Botkin moved away from the concept of folklife as a collection of relics on the brink of extinction and embraced the idea that people are always creating folklife around their collective experiences. His best known book is *A Treasury of American Folklife* (1944).

In many ways, the creation of the American Folklife Center is a legacy of Ben Botkin's scholarship. He was one of the first scholars to assert that people create culture out of shared experience, regardless of where or how they live, and he insisted that democracy is built by valuing many different cultural voices. Today folklorists widely accept the idea that folklife is creative expression used to communicate and strengthen social values, traditions, and goals; and Botkin's folklife research within government and community settings is accepted as ground-breaking. This two-day celebration pays tribute to Ben Botkin's pivotal role as the "father of public folklife" as it exists and thrives today.

Fellowships and Awards from the American Folklife Center

The American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress has made three awards from its Parsons Fund for Ethnography and one award from its Blanton Owen Fund for Fieldwork. In addition, the AFC has named two Library of Congress Junior Fellows for the summer of 2001. The Owen Fund is awarded for the first time.

Barrett Golding has been awarded \$1,000 from the Parsons Fund to support the creation of two public radio pro-

grams, one for National Public Radio and one for Florida stations. The programs will interweave the archival music and stories from the AFC's collection "Florida Folklife from the WPA," along with an interview with Stetson Kennedy, head of the WPA Florida project. Barrett Golding is a veteran documentarian and radio producer who lives in Montana.

Mark Jackson has been awarded \$400 from the Parsons Fund to support the creation and

publication of a CD based on the music and spoken words of John Handcox, a sharecropper and member of the Arkansas-based Southern Tenant Farmers Union in the 1930s. Handcox was recorded at the Library of Congress in 1937. Mark Jackson is a Ph.D. candidate at Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge.

Nancy-Jean Seigel has been awarded \$400 from the Parsons Fund to support her work researching, organizing, and

adding to the files of the Helen Hartness Flanders Ballad Collection in the Archive of Folk Culture. Ms. Seigel is working on a book on Helen Hartness Flanders, who is her grandmother.

Professor Yolanda Hood, University of North Carolina, Asheville, has been awarded \$1,000 from the Blanton Owen Fund to support her project "Only a Child Chews Her Fufu: Constructing, Maintaining, and Negotiating Identities in U.S. Diasporic Nigerian Communi-

ties." This is the first award from the Blanton Owen Fund for Fieldwork. Dr. Hood will use the money to support her field trips to Atlanta, Georgia, to interview members of the Nigerian community located there.

The Library of Congress Junior Fellows Program was established a number of years ago to help the Library inventory, describe, and make available unexplored materials; give selected fellows an opportunity to work with the Library's unique collections; and intro-

duce fellows to the career opportunities at the Library of Congress. Junior Fellows candidates must be enrolled in or just completing academic programs at the undergraduate or graduate level.

The two Junior Fellows selected this year to work at the AFC are T. Chris Aplin, a master's candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of Oklahoma, and John Vallier, a Ph.D. candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angeles.



Nora Yeh, coordinator of processing for the American Folklife Center, works with materials from the Local Legacies Project Collection. Photo by James Hardin

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with a strong sense of mission. The issue also includes articles by four researchers who have been working in the Folklife Reading Room on book projects, one nearly complete, one well along, and two just started. Such are the folk who mine the

resources in the Archive of Folk Culture, turning it's lode of ethnographic materials to their various interests and purposes.

But consider for a moment the men and women who facilitate the purposes of both collector and researcher by performing everyday library tasks, ensuring that documentary materials

will be accessible for use by scholars. Processing technicians, archivists, and librarians are the great middle men and women of the profession, anonymous and essential.

Processing is one of the unsung tasks of library and archival management. Yet, along with cataloging, it makes the difference between a warehouse and a library. The work includes the arranging, numbering, housing, and describing of library materials. Without it, all the wonderful books, sound recordings, photographs, maps, and other resources we expect to find in our great libraries and archives would be virtually inaccessible.

Thus, the occasion for an article on Vance Randolph is the completion of a finding aid (see the collection description provided by AFC coordinator of processing Nora Yeh). It's cause for celebration when a large collection is carefully arranged and housed and properly stored in a collection area.

A footnote to this appreciation is that two of our contributing authors are themselves helping with the processing work: Nancy-Jean Seigel will be helping to arrange and describe the ballad collection of her grandmother, Helen Hartness Flanders; and Todd Harvey has accepted a position to help process the Center's newly acquired collection from The National Storytelling Center.



Taking part in a two-day, Library-wide, "arrears-reduction" effort, American Folklife Center staff Catherine Kerst, David Taylor, and Michael Taft arrange, house, and label multi-format materials from the Local Legacies Project Collection. Photo by James Hardin

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