

# 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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#### TELEPHONE AND ONLINE INFORMATION RESOURCES

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

**Folkline**, 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 through the above Internet server. For telephone service, call the Folklife Reading Room: 202 707-5510.

#### EDITOR'S NOTES

The Library of Congress was established by an act of Congress in 1800 when President John Adams signed a bill providing for the transfer of the seat of government from Philadelphia to the new capital city of Washington. The legislation described a reference library, for Congress only, containing "such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress—and for putting up a suitable apartment for containing them therein."

Established with \$5,000 appropriated by the legislation, it was housed in the new Capitol until August 1914, when invading British troops set fire to the Capitol Building, burning and pillaging the contents of the small library.

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Cover: Ray Cottrell (left) and Randy Sprouse looking for hellgrammites at the mouth of Hazy Creek on Coal River, Raleigh County, West Virginia, spring 1997. Photo by Terry Eiler

## Indians and Scholars Join Forces to Document the Dance Music of Oklahoma's Yuchi Tribe



Yuchi Feather Dance, performed during the 1996 Green Corn Ceremonial at the Duck Creek Ceremonial Ground near Hectorville, Oklahoma. Newman Littlebear (left) and Chief Simon Harry (right) are the singers. They accompany themselves with coconut hand rattles. The four "feather men" who lead the dance can be seen behind the singers. They carry poles decorated with crane feathers given to the Yuchi for this purpose in ancient times. Four "poleboys" stand to the left, serving as ceremonial policemen who protect the purity of the square ground. All photos by Jason Baird Jackson

By Jason Baird Jackson

*Jason Baird Jackson's work at the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in documenting Yuchi dance music was supported by a 1998 award from the Parsons Fund for Ethnography in the Library of Congress. This article is one in a series of occasional notes and reports on scholarly work supported by the Parsons Fund.*

Singers from the Yuchi (Euclidean) Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma have joined with anthropologist Jason Baird Jackson and ethnomusicolo-

gist Victoria Lindsay Levine to document the tribe's distinctive social dance music. The recordings this project is producing will be a valuable resource for tribal members seeking to learn these songs, and in addition will become part of the priceless collection of American Indian music and spoken word in the Archive of Folk Culture.

The Yuchi are a Native American people who today reside just outside Tulsa. Ancestors of the Yuchi once lived throughout the region that is today the Southeast-

ern United States, the tribe having been forced west to "Indian Territory" with other Eastern tribes during the 1830s. Dance songs are an important part of Yuchi culture, playing a central role in the continuing practice of traditional Yuchi religious ritual and serving as the focus for the inter-tribal social dances that link the Yuchi to other Woodland peoples in Oklahoma. With the loss of Yuchi doctoring knowledge, the musical practices associated with traditional medicine are moribund, as are Yuchi-language lullabies, game

music, and hunting songs. Dance songs and Native language Christian hymns are the remaining Yuchi musical forms. Ensuring their continued vitality is an important concern of the modern Yuchi community.

Yuchi elders have been active for over a decade documenting their unique language, culture, and history. Working jointly with outside researchers, the tribe has already completed projects recording tribal oral history and genealogy. Most recently the tribe organized an exhibition with Gilcrease Museum titled *Children of the Sun: Euchee Indian Culture and Tradition*. This project brought much needed public recognition to the history and present circumstances of the little-known Yuchi people.

Increased awareness of Yuchi culture serves two goals. For younger tribal members, these projects have helped to pass on the traditions most valued by community elders. For the non-Yuchi community, the projects help to clarify the unusual political situation of the Yuchi. While they speak their own distinct language and possess a unique history and culture, the Yuchi do not have a separate political existence in terms of modern federal Indian affairs. Since the time of their removal from the Southeast in the 1830s, the Yuchi have been politically absorbed into the Muskogee (Creek) Nation. Lacking political sovereignty, the identity of the Yuchi people is closely linked, both for themselves and for those who know them, to the distinctive customs and traditions they possess as a community. Social and ceremonial dance music is one particularly important expression of Yuchi peoplehood.

**T**he music of the Yuchi and their neighbors is unlike other genres of American Indian music more familiar to many non-Indians. Much Woodland dance music is sung in a call-and-response style. The large drum central to the music of Plains Indian groups and to those who have taken up the modern inter-tribal powwow is absent from Yuchi music. The primary accompaniment for Woodland music in



Yuchi women perform the Ribbon Dance during the 1998 Green Corn Ceremonial at the Polecat Ceremonial Ground near Kellyville, Oklahoma. Their head dancer, Mary Watashe, leads the dancers. The women wear tortoise shell leg rattles. A pair of singers is seated beneath the chief's arbor to the west of the town square, where they provide music for the dance.

Oklahoma is the sound of the leg rattles (made of tortoise shells or tin cans) worn by women during dancing. Women provide musical rhythm, while men provide the vocal music for the song. In general, this division of activity by gender is central to ceremonies and traditional life among the Yuchi and their neighbors. Songs are sung by a dance leader, who is often positioned at the front of a line of dancers. The men and women alternate in line behind him, with the other men singing "answers" to his songs and the women "shaking shells." Additional instruments are used in some songs. A song leader sometimes uses a hand rattle made from a dried coconut shell. In some songs, the song leader or an assistant will play a small "water drum"—a hand-held pot or crock partially filled with water and cov-

ered with a tight hide or rubber head. The soft, resonant sound of a water drum is very different from the booming sound of a powwow drum. While words in the Yuchi language are sometimes incorporated into Yuchi ceremonial and dance songs, most of the vocal text consists of vocables or sung syllables that carry the melody of the song.

Most important among Yuchi dance music is a group of songs used to accompany the feather dances held each summer during the annual Green Corn Ceremonial. These songs are believed to have been provided to the Yuchi people in ancient times by the white crane. Mr. Newman Littlebear, the leading ceremonial orator and singer among the Yuchi today, has provided the following origin story for these songs. His telling is based on an earlier tell-

ing he received from a former feather-dance singer. The story is presented here with line breaks keyed to the spoken rhythm of traditional Yuchi oratory.

So,  
He said this was  
about our songs that:

“We didn’t . . .  
We didn’t have songs  
at that time, and well the Yuchi  
people was wanting  
wanting songs for their ceremonies.”

And  
He said:

“At that . . . , in that . . . , in those times,  
our,  
our people was able to  
communicate with  
birds and  
animals.”

“And they went  
they went about,  
seeking the

songs, that  
they could use in their ceremony.”

“They had went to different  
animals and had them to  
sing in their ways;  
and  
the birds.”

“And there was none that they  
had that was pleasing to ‘em.”

“So they continued on,  
and,  
and they came to the white crane.”

“And they asked the crane to sing.”

“And he agreed to.”

“So he sung for the Eucheas and

And  
they told the crane that:

“These are the songs that we want  
to use,  
we want to use in our  
our ceremonies.”

“And the crane answered and  
agreed  
to let ‘em use his songs.”

And also the crane informed ‘em that

“If you use my songs,”

he said

“I want you to also use my feathers.”

And also  
It’s been said that  
the white  
white feathers represent  
peace  
peace to people

And  
like  
being dedicated and  
purenness.

That’s what they say the white  
feather represents.  
And to this day that  
we continue to use those songs. So,  
according to that story, they don’t



Chief Simon Harry leads a performance of the Yuchi Old Folks Dance during the Green Corn Ceremonial of the Duck Creek Ceremonial Ground. The dance is a memorial to Yuchi ancestors. The leader keeps time with a coconut rattle, while the women shake tortoise or milk-can leg rattles.



During a dance demonstration at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Yuchi and Creek women rest between performances. The leg rattles they wear, made of tortoise shells (called "turtles") or condensed milk or tomato-sauce cans (called "cans") can be seen beneath their long cotton dance skirts. Tulsa oilman Thomas Gilcrease founded Gilcrease Museum. Mr. Gilcrease, who was himself of Creek Indian heritage, is pictured in the portrait hanging behind these women.

belong to us  
they belong to the  
the crane,  
We're just  
on loan,  
for those songs  
and the feathers also.

So, but we still, we still continue on,  
to this day.  
And that sounds like, you know, a  
good story.

While our current collaboration with Yuchi singers focuses on recording and analyzing songs, stories like this one make clear that understanding the significance of songs in Yuchi life requires understanding the larger cultural context in which songs are used and made meaningful. This understanding is central to Yuchi community efforts to pass on traditional knowledge. In addition to the informal teaching that has always taken place in Yuchi community and family life, new formal

gatherings play an increasingly important role teaching songs, dances, and other parts of the tradition. In these gatherings, songs are taught, but singers and ceremonial leaders also share the stories and beliefs that make them significant. We are fortunate to have been included in these gatherings.

**T**he first product of our work with Yuchi singers is a set of recordings on compact disc. One set of these recordings is being deposited in the Archive of Folk Culture while another is being given to the Euchee Tribe of Indians for use by young singers apprenticing themselves to the leading singers of today, with whom we have worked and made the recordings. The discs provide master recordings from which high-quality cassettes can be made, to be used by learners in their work of mastering the Yuchi song repertoire. During the

summer of 1999, Professor Levine and I will continue our work with Yuchi singers, recording additional songs and participating in dance events. Our longer-term project is a study of Yuchi dance music in the broader context of the many Woodland Indian communities with whom the Yuchi have shared dance gatherings since time immemorial. We are grateful for the support the Yuchi people have shown this project.

*Jason Baird Jackson is curator of anthropology at Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His work on Yuchi music builds on work he has conducted in collaboration with Yuchi ceremonial leaders since 1993. This work is reported on in Jason Baird Jackson, "Yuchi Ritual: Meaning and Tradition in Contemporary Ceremonial Ground Life." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1998.*

## Seining for Hellgrammites on Coal River



By Mary Hufford

Hellgrammites (like the one pictured right), also known as “grampus,” are the fierce and succulent larva of the dobson fly. They first hatch in late spring and hide under rocks from would-be predators, such as red-eye, bass, wall-eye, and other game fish native to Coal River. The term *grampus* elsewhere refers to the whip-scorpion and the hellbender, fitting companions for a larva whose pincers draw blood.

Fishermen in the region, like Ray Cottrell (left) and Randy Sprouse (right), capture hellgrammites to use as bait. They snag the feisty creatures by means of “hellgrammite seines”—nets suspended vertically in the water, with ends that can be pulled together to enclose the catch. The seine pictured here is strung between two broom handles (sometimes hickory sticks or even window screens are used). Cottrell

turns over rocks, and the current washes the hellgrammites downstream into Sprouse’s waiting seine.

Randy Sprouse served in 1997 as a field coordinator for the American Folklife Center’s Coal River Folklife Project and now directs the Coal River Mountain Watch, a grassroots heritage con-

servation group. Recognizing the river’s centrality to a local way of life and the need for safeguarding its tributaries against mountaintop removal strip-mining, the American Rivers Council recently named Coal River one of the ten most endangered rivers in America.

Photos by Terry Eiler



## Local Legacies Projects Start Up Nation-wide



Ken Light photographs four generations of an Italian American extended family in Pueblo, Colorado, while several family members hold cherished photographs of relatives. From the American Folklife Center's Italian-Americans in the West Project. Photo by David Taylor

By James Hardin

Robert Winslow Gordon, who became the first head of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress in 1928, invited all Americans to send him their folksongs. He had a dream of a great national archive, and called the collecting effort "a national project with many workers."

Since Gordon's day, the Library's Folk Archive has grown to include over 1.5 million items, with a wide range of folklife materials, from this country and

around the world. This happy fulfillment of Gordon's dream has been made possible through the efforts of hundreds of fieldworkers—persons such as Jesse Walter Fewkes, who made the first wax-cylinder field recordings, of Passamaquoddy Indians in Maine in 1890; Zora Neale Hurston, who made recordings of African American folk expression in Florida in the 1930s; John and Alan Lomax, who made recordings of folk music throughout the South; Henrietta Yurchenco and Vida Chenoweth, whose international

work has brought in ethnographic materials from around the world; and folklorists on the staff of the American Folklife Center, who have directed and coordinated field documentation projects in many regions of the country.

**N**ow the Librarian of Congress has invited all Americans to join in the effort of building the national folk archive. The Library of Congress and the American Folklife Center are sponsoring a project called "Local Legacies," as



part of a program to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Library of Congress, which will be two-hundred years old on April 24, 2000 (see *Folklife Center News*, fall 1998, p.12).

"We invite all Americans, working through their members of Congress, to participate in this project to document their local culture and deposit portions of that documentation in the national library," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "The materials in the Local Legacies archives will serve as a snapshot of American traditions at the end of the century, and they will be avail-

able to future generations."

"Members of Congress represent the very people whose culture we want to preserve in the congressional library," said Director of Congressional Relations Geraldine Otremba. "This is why we have asked the members and their staffs to help identify traditions and customs unique to the state or district they represent."

The Library's Bicentennial is a celebration of all libraries and the role they play in communities throughout the nation, and the Library of Congress hopes to gain the participation of communities

large and small in this grassroots effort to document and preserve a panoply of "local legacies." The congressional offices will oversee the many Local Legacies projects, and a selection of materials from these projects will be sent to the Library of Congress. In addition, the Bicentennial Program hopes local libraries, archives, and historical societies will want to house all the documentation created by the projects, so that it can be made available to interested patrons and local residents.

According to Peter Bartis, folklorist at the American Folklife Center and coordinator of the Local Legacies Project, "persons doing the documentation need not be professional folklorists. We will guide participants toward the kinds of projects and materials we want. The key words for us are *public participation*."

**S**o far, more than two hundred projects have been proposed to members of Congress by citizens from all areas of the country, including at least one project in each of the fifty states. Some Local Legacies projects are already under way:

In Hawaii, for example, the journey of a voyaging canoe of Polynesian design will be documented during its passage to New Zealand and back. The trip will retrace migration routes in the South Pacific, and thus challenge the notion that the ancient Polynesians drifted between the islands by accident.

In South Carolina, documentation will focus on the renowned Hallelujah Singers gospel group.

In the District of Columbia, the "Hope in Our City" project will document and celebrate the African American traditions of the people living in the city's historic Anacostia section.

Citizens living in the upper peninsula of Michigan will document dog-sled races.

As a collaborative effort in the Pacific Northwest, involving both Oregon and Washington, folklorists and others recorded a "Fisher Poets Gathering" in Astoria, Oregon, in February. All those involved in the maritime culture of the area were invited to participate in this second annual gathering,



Local Legacies team members pack project kits for distribution around the country. From left, standing, Evie McCleaf, Peter Seligman, Denise Gotay, Aya Asano, and Robert Sokol; and, kneeling, Peter Bartis. Photo by James Hardin

which was modeled after the famous Cowboy Poets Gathering held in Elko, Nevada.

The Bethesda Home for Boys, located in Savannah, Georgia, is the oldest extant orphanage in the United States. It celebrates its 260th birthday in 2000, and documentation will focus on its place in Savannah's history.

Persons, organizations, and institutions wishing to become involved in a Local Legacies project should contact the Library's Bicentennial Program Office at (202) 707-2000; toll free: (800) 707-7145; e-mail: [bicentennial@loc.gov](mailto:bicentennial@loc.gov); fax: (202) 707-7440. Bicentennial Program Office staff will offer suggestions for projects appropriate for documentation and explain how to contact members of Congress, either to suggest a project or to take part in one already under way. They will also send a Local Legacies information kit, which includes guidelines and a time line for documentation, a brochure on publicizing local projects, sample press releases, and permissions and other forms. Project documentation is due to the Library of Congress by December 1999. In May 2000, members of Congress and all participants will be invited to a



Pedro Sanatan and members of El Grupo de Baeles Folkloricos de Worcester, a drama group from Worcester, Massachusetts, waiting to perform at Lowell's annual Puerto Rican festival, 1987. From the Center's Lowell [Massachusetts] Folklife Project. Photo by Tom Rankin

special event at the Library to celebrate their contributions.

Local Legacies is but one of the Bicentennial projects that the Library of Congress is sponsoring as

part of its birthday celebration. Information about others is available online for those who have Internet access at [www.loc.gov/bicentennial](http://www.loc.gov/bicentennial).



Evening dance at the volunteer fireman's barbecue, Paradise Valley, Nevada. Such community events are emblematic of folklife in the United States. From the American Folklife Center's Paradise Valley Folklife Project. Photo by Carl Fleishhauer

## Center Board of Trustees Welcomes "New Day"

By James Hardin

A spirit of optimism and anticipation pervaded the March 12 meeting of the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center, with old members happy to have the support and expertise of new members and all eager to work on future plans and directions for the Center. Board chair William L. Kinney welcomed a "new day" for the Center, which has been given permanent authorization and a new, expanded board by the U.S. Congress. Kinney hopes to make the American Folklife Center truly the center for folklife in this country. "Let us make this clear," he said, "as we develop our mission statement and goals."

Alan Jabbour, director of the Center, said that he was thrilled by the new construction of the board. "Times are shifting in Washington," he said. "Our difficulties of the past few years coincided with a budget deficit. That time has gone. People are once again looking to Washington for ideas."

The board has grown to include four new members appointed by the Librarian of Congress (Jane Beck, director, Vermont Folklife Center; Norma Cantú, acting director, Center for Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara; Tom Rankin, director, Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University; John Roberts, chair, Department of African-American and African Studies, Ohio State University); and two new ex officio members, the presidents of the American Folklore Society and the Society for Ethnomusicology (currently Jo Radner, American University, and Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Harvard University, respectively). In addition, the president has named four representatives from federal agencies to the board: Kevin Gover, assistant secretary for Indian affairs, Depart-

ment of the Interior; William Kennard, chairman, Federal Communications Commission; Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, deputy assistant to the president and advisor to the first lady on the Millennium, the White House; and Mario Moreno, assistant secretary for intergovernmental and interagency affairs, Department of Education.

Other board members who returned for the March meeting were Wilsonia Cherry (representing William Ferris, chairman, NEH), James Hoy, William L. Kinney Jr., Richard Kurin (representing I. Michael Heyman, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution), Dan Sheehy (representing Bill Ivey, chairman, NEA), Winston Tabb (representing James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress), and Charles Trimble. Members unable to attend the meeting included Judith McCulloh, David Robinson, and Kay Shelemay.

The first day of the two-day meeting consisted of an orienta-

tion to the Center and the Library, with presentations from staff and a tour of Library buildings. Geraldine Otremba, director of the Library's Congressional Relations Office, told the board that permanent authorization might be attributed in part to the significance of the collections in the Archive of Folk Culture, and that the board should help to guide the growth of the collection, as well as help with fundraising and the development of long-range plans. Winston Tabb, associate librarian for Library Services, said that the board's job is to determine what the Center can do to "help folklife in America," and that his job at the Library is to help make that happen. The Center's budget for fiscal year 1999 is \$990,800, with about 90 percent of that amount allocated for staff salaries and benefits. In making requests for appropriated funds in the future, Tabb told the board, they should note that Congress often responds



Winston Tabb, Associate Librarian for Library Services, tells the Center's board of trustees that they should consider what the Center can do to "help folklife in America," while board member Charles Trimble looks on. Photo by James Hardin



William Kennard, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, says he is concerned with the problem of how to “marry” culture and technology. Photo by David Taylor

more favorably to proposals for “big things that make a difference” than to incremental increases for things that seem like “more of the same.”

**T**hree of the four new presidential appointees attended the March meeting, and offered ideas and suggestions for collaborative projects:

William Kennard said that, in the fifteen months he has been chairman of the FCC, he has done a lot of thinking about what he can accomplish in this industrial and information age. One of his challenges is to see that information goes to everyone, and that it is used to “advance culture.” The FCC will put \$2 billion into a program to provide Internet access to schools and libraries. “There ought to be a public place of access for people who do not have computer access in their homes,” he said, noting that some people still do not have their own telephones. The Internet affects the way people understand culture. Kennard is concerned with the problem of how to “marry” culture and technology and thinks there might be some interesting synergies between the FCC and the American Folklife Center.

Mario Moreno spoke about the exciting opportunities for connecting folklife and kids, as exemplified by the Center’s Montana Heritage Project. Engage children in folklife projects, he said; involve them in the life of their own com-



Mario Moreno, Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, Department of Education, would like to see children engage in after-school folklife projects, to involve them in the life of their own communities. Photo by James Hardin

munities. After-school programs might be tailored to fit the mission of the Center and provide young people with enriching, productive experiences. The Center might also think about forming partnerships to carry out its mission. For example, the Department of Education has established the “Partnership for Family Involvement in Education,” in order to engage a whole range of persons and institutions in the work of raising and educating children.

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell (representing the White House Millennium Council) said that the board meeting was a “homecoming” for her; and she was especially happy to see the talented people assembled around the table. She credited Alan Jabbour with helping her to establish a folklife program in Vermont twenty years ago, and noted that she hired board member Jane Beck to fill the created post of director.

The Millennium Council, with the slogan “honor the past; imagine the future,” has a number of projects underway: (1) Millennium evenings at the White House, lectures to recognize American creativity; (2) Save America’s Treasures, with \$30 million in fiscal 1999 for monuments, documents,

and sites that represent cultural and intellectual heritage, including \$3 million to preserve the "Star-Spangled Banner"; Scenic and Heritage Trails, sponsored by the Department of Transportation, NEA, and others; Millennium Communities, which will be so-designated if they work to save their history and heritage and engage citizens to imagine their future; and a great celebration on the Mall, such as to make Washington, D.C., the place to be to celebrate the Millennium.

McCulloch-Lovell made two additional comments that pertained particularly to the American Folklife Center: Government policy, she said, may either enhance or destroy cultural heritage. Agencies daily make policies without thinking about their effects on indigenous cultures. And (echoing a remark made earlier by Winston Tabb), "big ideas attract big money." The Center ought to identify its unique role, and that might attract new money.

**T**hese presentations caught the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that was a theme of the meeting, a shared hope that the Center might work closely with other federal agencies, specialists in the field of folklore, cultural communities, and private corporations to ac-

complish its goals. Speaking as president of the American Folklore Society, Jo Radner called upon the board to "re-invent" itself and said "there is no precedent for this kind of board" at the Center.

It's also a "new day" for the American Folklore Society, said Radner. The AFS board is working on a strategic plan that includes bringing many people into the planning process, building a structure of support, and understanding and acting on diversity and education. The AFS board is rethinking its role and wants to make itself more responsive to members and active outside the society. She looks forward to "extraordinary collaborations" with the American Folklife Center.

The new expanded Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center brings to its discussions of folklife programming wide experience from public, private, and academic life, as well as geographic, racial, and cultural diversity. The next several meetings will be devoted to defining the role and responsibility of the board and creating a long-range plan for the Center.



At a luncheon following the board meeting, Geraldine Otremba, Director of the Library's Congressional Relations Office, and William Kinney, Chair of the Center's board, share a moment of mutual appreciation and congratulations for the work they did together to achieve permanent authorization for the Center. Photo by David Taylor



Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Deputy Assistant to the President and Advisor to the First Lady on the Millennium, reminds the board that government policy may either enhance or destroy cultural heritage. Photo by David Taylor

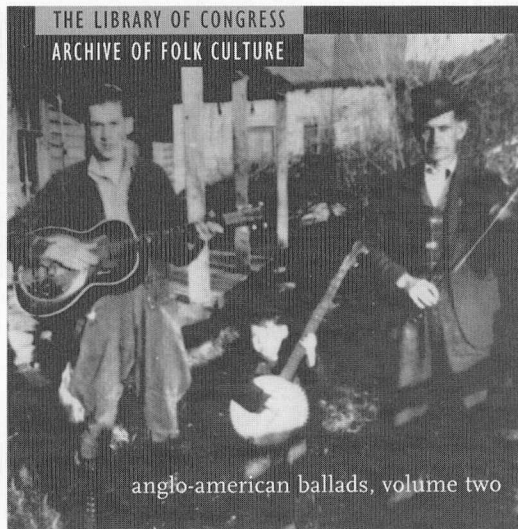
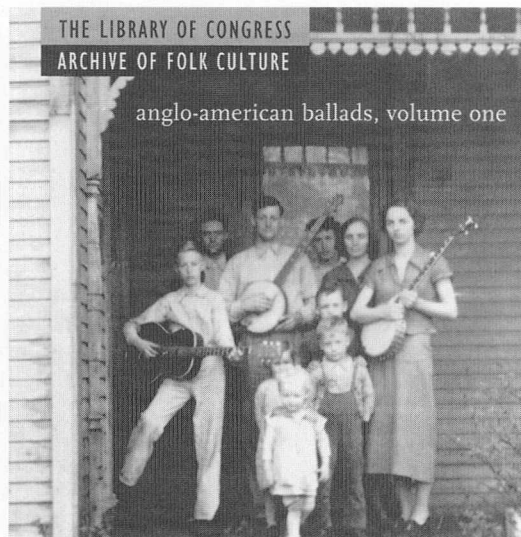


Jo Radner, President of the American Folklore Society, calls upon the board to "reinvent itself," while past president John Roberts considers the idea. Photo by James Hardin

## Three New CDs Join List of Rounder Records Reissues

Rounder Records has released three new compact discs in its series of reissues of the Library of Congress series Folk Music of the United States, originally released in the 1940s:

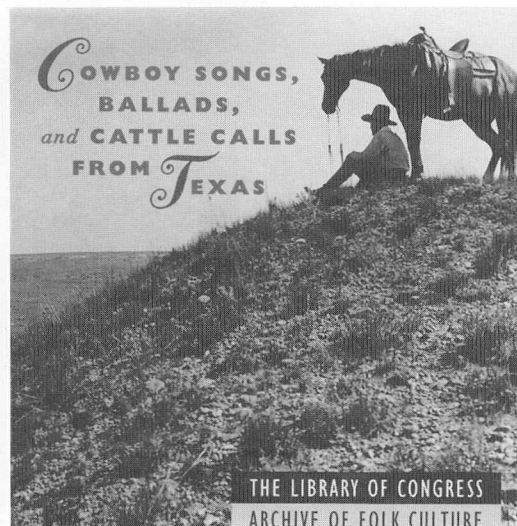
*Anglo-American Ballads, Volume One*, edited by Alan Lomax, was originally released in 1942 as AFS L1, the first in the Library's series Folk Music of the United States. It includes such recorded treasures as Woody Guthrie's "The Gypsy Davy," Pete Steele's "Pretty Polly," and versions of "The House Carpenter" and "Barbara Allen."



*Anglo-American Ballads, Volume Two*, edited by Benjamin Botkin, was originally released in 1943 as AFS L7. Successor to Alan Lomax's Volume One, this album includes "The Golden Willow Tree," "The Two Sisters," and "Lord Thomas and the Fair Ellender."

*Cowboy Songs, Ballads, and Cattle Calls from Texas*, edited by Duncan Emrich, was originally released in 1952 as AFS L28. All but two of the selections on this disc were recorded on portable equipment by John A. Lomax, the great collector of cowboy songs. It includes "Good-bye, Old Paint," "The Texas Rangers," and "The Streets of Laredo."

Rounder Records is located at One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140. Telephone (617) 354-0700, or on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.rounder.com>



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## The Federal Writers' Project and the Ex-Slave Narratives: A Report from Virginia

We received the following letter regarding "Slave Narratives at the Library of Congress," by Ann Hoog, *Folklife Center News* 21, no. 1 (winter 1999). Charles L. Perdue, editor of *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), offers clarifying information, particularly about interviews with former slaves that were conducted in Virginia:

I have been following the recent activity viz-a-viz the ex-slave interviews conducted by the WPA's Federal Writers' Project [FWP] and read your commentary in the latest *Folklife Center News* with interest. I must, however, point out a few areas that need a bit of editorial fine-tuning. . . .

The FWP did not continue [Lawrence D.] Reddick's project [collecting slaves narratives in six states of the Ohio River Valley]. Several states interviewed ex-slaves on their own, and you are right to point out Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina in this regard. It was some Florida interviews

that caught John Lomax's eye and he began the larger ex-slave interviewing project on April 1, 1937. But, unbeknownst to Lomax, Virginia had begun interviewing ex-slaves in November 1936. And, by the time Lomax announced the ex-slave interviewing project from the Washington office, Virginia had already completed sixty interviews. Virginia sent in only fifty pages—15 interviews—to the Washington office. The bulk of its material was scattered among several archives in Virginia.

Since Botkin's *Lay My burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery* included only excerpts, you would have to say that publication of the slave narratives began in 1940 with the publication of *The Negro in Virginia* which included numerous excerpts of slave narratives.

I am always appreciative when people include a cite of *Weevils in the Wheat* [there is now a paperback edition from the University Press of Virginia, 1992]. . . . *Weevils* is not "based on ex-slave narratives," it presents ex-slave narratives. As indicated above, the

bulk of the Virginia material was not at the L.C.

About twenty-five years ago I listened to the sound recordings you have that were made by Roscoe Lewis and I cited them in *Weevils*.

I included one ex-slave interview which I transcribed from the recordings—Henrietta Perry, pp. 224-226, in *Weevils*. . . . If I had had in the 1970s the digital remastering technology that is now available I would have included transcriptions of all of Lewis's recordings.

The above information is covered in the introduction to *Weevils in the Wheat*. Although several states had some black interviewers, Virginia is the only state that had an all-black unit conducting ex-slave interviews. This should be of critical importance to those who are concerned about the potential bias of white conducted interviews.

Charles L. Perdue  
University of Virginia

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### EDITOR'S NOTES from page 2

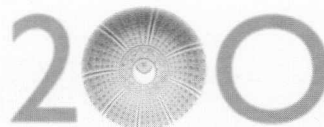
But within a month, retired president Thomas Jefferson offered his personal library as a replacement. Jefferson had spent fifty years accumulating books, "putting by everything which related to America, and indeed whatever was rare and valuable in every science." His library was considered to be one of the finest in the United States. In offering his collection to Congress, Jefferson anticipated controversy over the nature of his collection, which included books in foreign languages and volumes of philosophy, science, literature, and other topics not normally viewed as part of a legislative library. He wrote, "I do not know that it contains any branch of science which Congress would wish

to exclude from the collection; there is, in fact, no subject to which a member of Congress may not have occasion to refer."

—from a Library of Congress informational brochure

Such were the beginnings of the Library of Congress, which has become the national library and is no longer just "for Congress only." And Jefferson's argument for an all-inclusive approach to book-collecting helped to produce the great institution that is about to celebrate its two hundredth anniversary.

sary. Jefferson's dictum about "everything which related to America" certainly provides an underlying and historical rationale for the creation of the Archive of American Folk Song in 1928 and the American Folklife Center in 1976. And the congressional and popular response to the Library's Local Legacies project, a Bicentennial initiative that invites all Americans to document their own traditions for sending to the Library of Congress, reaffirms the importance of folklife in telling the national story.



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Yuchi women of the Duck Creek Community perform the Ribbon Dance during the Green Corn Ceremonial in 1997. The dance takes its name from the long flowing hair ribbons the women and girls wear for the performance. The Ribbon Dance is performed solely by women, and recognizes their important contributions to Yuchi community and family life. For more on Yuchee dance traditions, see page 3. Photo by Jason Baird Jackson

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