
FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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Penderlea Homesteads, a Farm Security Administration project near Willard, N.C. in 1937; photo by Ben Shahn. (Prints and Photographs Division)

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

We folklorists have important *anti-quarian responsibilities!*

There, I have used that word "anti-quarian" with approval, and nothing has happened to me. How did the word manage to slip into such disfavor amongst scholars and activists alike in our generation of specialists in folk culture? It is rarely used nowadays except to allude to the giants of our field in the last century—with perhaps the suggestion that they were a bit dry, dusty, and obsessive—or to reproach one of our contemporaries with being too much like them. The term "anti-qui-ties," by the way, meaning the objects of an antiquarian's attention, has traveled even farther down the

road to oblivion. As I have just illustrated, one cannot now use the word without quotation marks. Yet I think there is a case to be made for keeping our antiquarian responsibilities clearly before us, untainted by condescension, and unencumbered by quotation marks.

The occasion for this outburst was harmless enough. For a week I have been writing annotations to a prospective documentary LP album to be published later this year by West Virginia University Press. It will feature the fiddling of Edden Hammons, the legendary fiddler of a past generation of Hammonses in east-central West Virginia. My colleague Carl Fleischhauer and I had spent time in the early 1970s documenting the Hammonses of Pocahontas County, West Virginia—Burl Hammons (the outstanding fiddler of this generation), Sherman Hammons, and Maggie Hammons Parker. Our LP-set *The Hammons Family* (Library of Congress AFS L65-L66, 1973) included their family photos, comments, and testimonies about their uncle Edden's artistry. All agreed that he was the consummate fiddler of the previous generation of Hammonses. But Edden died in the early 1950s, and though it was believed he had been extensively recorded by some professor years ago, recordings of him were not available to us during our work.

Important new information has a way of engulfing the hapless author who has just finished work on something. Thus I should not have been surprised at the news that Louis W. Chappell, who had been a professor at West Virginia University in the 1930s and 1940s and had reputedly recorded folk music throughout the state, turned up in the 1970s with his very large collection of field-recorded discs intact. After long negotiations the West Virginia University Library succeeded in bringing the collection home, and after further labor the collection was duplicated onto tape and meticulously cataloged. Included in it are 26 field-recorded discs of Edden Hammons's fiddling. It is spectacular fiddling.

Edden Hammons was born in the 1870s and lived in the Allegheny Mountains in east-central West

Virginia. Coming from a musical family within a musical community, he acquired his art early in life and soon became known as an outstanding fiddler. Though he had a reputation throughout the region, amplified by occasional appearances at fiddling contests and other festivals, he never made commercial recordings for the "hillbilly" record series of the 1920s and 1930s. Around the time of his appearance in August 1947 at an Arthurdale folk festival (in a West Virginia resettlement community Eleanor Roosevelt had patronized), Edden was recorded by Professor Chappell. He was in his seventies at the time. The resultant corpus of his playing totals 26 field-recorded discs and 51 different fiddle tunes—a few accompanied on guitar by his son James, but for the most part unaccompanied, pristine solo fiddling in the old West Virginia style.

There I sat, transfixed. I listened again and again to the tunes for which I was supplying annotations—astonished anew, as I labored to transcribe two tunes in detail, at the elegance of Edden Hammons's intricate playing style. He was a fiddler of the first order and, through his playing, expressed something very beautiful and important about the older Central Appalachian culture he represented. Now he is gone; fiddling in his style is but rarely encountered; and in a protracted seance in my office, through the medium of Edden's old recordings, I silently communed with this voice from the past, riveted by the power of its presence.

Then it occurred to me that I was an antiquarian. I was by turns amused and irritated at the thought, but once it had stolen into my mind there was no eluding it. I was not only studying the past, but was being swept up by the power and romance of its icons. Two conclusions finally emerged from this stream of thought: first, that my antiquarian impulse was perfectly *appropriate* for a folklorist; and second, that in certain areas of culture it was not only appropriate but an actual professional *responsibility*.

The propriety of folklorists' pursuing antiquarian interests should need no justification. Only in the present generation has it been an issue, and



Edden Hammons.

perhaps our generation's rebellion against the preoccupation of our predecessors with the pastness of tradition—our urge to de-emphasize our profession's longstanding interest in the time-depth of traditional culture and to emphasize the ethnographic present—is already subsiding into a more balanced attention to the time-factor as well as the group-factor in tradition.

Certainly the public thinks it appropriate for folklorists to be interested in old-timey things, as any folklorist knows who deals with the public at all. In fact, the very words "old-time" or "old-timey" (they seem, incidentally, to be mainly American locutions in their history and usage) offer a popular paradigm for the work of folklorists. Americans may speak of the old-time fiddlers of yesteryear, but they also (and, I believe, more characteristically) speak of an old-time fiddler today. In other words, the word "old-time" describes a phenomenon occurring in the present, but with powerful links to the past. It thus neatly encapsulates the time-depth and cultural continuity embodied in the word "tradition." By bridging past and present at a stroke, the popular term should reassure us folklorists who harbor an anxiety that when the public pigeonholes us in the past we will be separated from our simultaneous interest in the ethnographic present. This, I believe, is the very anxiety that has led us to shun the word "antiquarian."

Being interested in the past, then, is certainly appropriate for folklorists, however much their imagination is fired by experiences with culture in the present. I find myself wishing to push the argument a step further, however, by asserting flatly that we folklorists have a clear *responsibility* for things past. The argument takes this form: If we don't do it, who will? Let me give an illustration.

Suppose I were digging in my garden, and suddenly encountered a cache of artifacts that seemed to reflect American Indian culture of a bygone era. I could of course simply plunder the site for geegaws to display on my mantel. But I know very well that the responsible thing for a citizen to do in such a circumstance is to contact an archeologist for professional advice. Archeologists are the people, I would correctly assume, who know best how to extract, care for, evaluate, and interpret the meanings imparted by the cache of artifacts in my garden.

But what if the archeologist I contacted said coolly, "We used to be interested in that kind of stuff. But the best and the brightest in our field have

gone on to other concerns. Prehistoric Indian sites are not where it's at now." I might well reply (and here I imagine myself waxing indignant), "Well, if you don't take care of such things, who will!?" In fact, whatever new interests and new areas of expertise may accrue to archeology as a profession in 20th-century America, the professional responsibility for the artifacts in my garden remains. They have assumed—and the rest of society now charges them with—the high responsibility of that cultural custodianship.

Folklorists similarly have assumed—by being interested and by becoming known for being interested—a public responsibility for certain expressions of culture, past as well as present. Members of other professions may share my interest in West Virginia history, or in West Virginia grassroots culture today. But it does seem that I have a special responsibility, a cultural custodianship, for those old recordings of Edden Hammons. Not only should I know best, of the various professions who might be interested, how to preserve and interpret them, but I should care most that the preserving and interpreting gets done.

Further, though Edden Hammons's fiddling might seem solely an antiquarian concern to most of the world, I am confident that for West Virginians today the old recordings of his fiddling will ring a responsive cultural chord, just as they have done for me. Edden Hammons, long since dead, will become more powerful as a cultural force today, once the recordings are out. Thus it is that custodians of the past serve the present as well.

When all is said and done, there is nothing like a dose of antiquarian zeal to insure that I carry out effectively my custodial responsibility to Edden Hammons and his cultural heirs today.

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AUTOMATED ARCHIVING CONFERENCE



Wayland Hand (L), Joseph C. Hickerson, and Richard S. Thill (R).

"A way station—not a stopping point," is how Richard S. Thill characterized the "Washington Conference on Folklife and Automated Archives," held at the Library of Congress on April 26-28, 1984. The American Folklife Center served as the host of the meeting, funded by the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation. Thill, who chairs the American Folklife Society's Archiving Section and heads the folklore archive at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, organized the conference. He concluded his welcome with the remark, "If this conference works the way I hope it will, we will probably come away with more questions; I hope they are the right questions."

The meeting agenda opened with a panel that explored the history of several of the archival collections

around the country that continue to be maintained manually in whole or in large measure. Wayland D. Hand of the University of California at Los Angeles discussed in some detail the development of his Index of American Popular Beliefs and Superstitions. Begun in 1944, it now has some two million cross-referenced card entries. Hand began his presentation by noting that while automation represents the incursion of high technology into the world of the scholar, it is no more frightening than the advent of other mechanical inventions: the typewriter, cylinder recorder, disc recorder, and magnetic tape recorder. He did, however, admonish conference participants not to entrust things to a machine that they are better capable of undertaking, specifically the planning and design work that must

underlie any productive automation project.

From this basis in manual retrieval systems the conference moved on to consider different approaches to the automated classification of folklore materials. David M. Axler from the University of Pennsylvania discussed bibliographic resources that are available to guide archivists seeking to explore the new frontier. Paul S. Smith of the University of Sheffield in England described an automated project to develop a hierarchical classification of English drama texts based on statistical analysis. The project exemplifies his theory that the most effective approach to the classification of folklore materials is the "tree" approach—analyzing the materials themselves to discern their inherent interconnections and divisions. This

he contrasted with the "bucket" approach which is to predetermine certain categories and then throw in "everything that looks or smells as though it may fit."

Finally, several automation projects were discussed in detail. James T. Callow described the University of Detroit Folklore Archive that has 20,000 automated entries for spoken-word material collected by students in the University's folklore classes. The system is set up to edit, classify, retrieve, and display entire entries.

Daniel W. Patterson and Beverly B. Boggs outlined the development of an automated data-retrieval system for published LP-disc recordings carried out by the Folk Music Archive of the University of North Carolina. Their system was developed using the University's main frame computer and is MARC-compatible (referring to the automated cataloging format used by the Library of Congress). It catalogs and indexes recordings of Anglo-American ballads and religious music and has produced a master list of the recordings, along with catalogs by album title, item title, geographic location, performer, and subject. While theirs is a fairly discreet cataloging project—the master list has some 10,000 entries—Patterson and Boggs feel the system may be applicable to cataloging ventures for other disc recordings and is expandable.

Perhaps the largest automation project represented at the conference was the Rigler and Deutsch Record Index. As described by Elwood McKee, the index provides "sub-minimal" bibliographic access and control for approximately 615,000 pre-LP commercial disc recordings in the collections of the Library of Congress, the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of the New York Public Library, the Belfer Laboratory and Archive at Syracuse University, the Yale University Collection of Historical Sound Recordings, and the Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound. The discs indexed were photographed with high resolution film and the information contained thereon—label name, matrix number, issue number, composer or author, title, performer—was manually entered into the automated data base. The index currently consists



Carolyn H. Sung (L) from the Library's Research Services office, Mark Glazer of Pan American University, and Jerome Wenker (R) from Sperry Corporation.

of microfilm roles of some 2,270,000 label and disc photographs, microfilm roles of 329,000 computer microform pages of bibliographic entries, and a MARC-tagged machine record of the data.

The two-and-a-half-day meeting did indeed illicit questions of all kinds. Joseph C. Hickerson, Head of the Archive of Folk Culture, proposed as a discussion question, "Do you continue your entries into the automated system in the same forms used for the manual system, or start anew?" Build on proven systems, said most of those who responded to Hickerson's query. Jean Herrmann, who presented a paper on her work to refine and complete an automated data base using some 4,000 Child ballad tunes collected and analyzed by Bertrand Bronson from the University of California at Berkeley, asked rhetorically what the utility of such an automated data base is. She went on to explain that it can be used to characterize in part or in whole British and American melodic traditions—habitual melodic schemes, the preference for one melodic phrase over another, the identification of tune "families," and possibly the migrations of whole "tune populations."

Two overarching questions seemed to connect many of the papers and remarks during the conference: (1) How do archives communicate between themselves, not only about how to handle certain aspects of automation, but about the substance

of their collections? (2) How does one go about automating an archive? As to whether the right questions were asked, one can only say perhaps. But, as Frederick J. Stielow from the University of Maryland noted, the conference generated a feeling of communality for participants. It was a forum for discovering that there are others out there experiencing the same difficulties, and some who have a few of the answers.

As Richard Thill noted at the beginning of the meeting, the Washington conference on automated archives is a way station in the search for answers. A number of regional conferences are scheduled to take up where the Washington conference left off, starting with one at Pan American University in December 1984. For further information on the regional automated archiving meeting in December, contact Mark Glazer, Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas 78539; tel. (512) 381-3321 or 381-3319.

The Archive of Folk Culture issued the revised reference aid *Folklife and Ethnomusicology Archives and Related Collections in the United States and Canada* (LCFARA No. 2) coincident with the "Washington Conference on Folklife and Automated Archives." The finding aid and *The Use of Computers in Folklore and Folk Music: A Preliminary Bibliography* are available free of charge from the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

AMERICA'S HARP

Harmonica, mouth organ, French harp, harp—there are dozens of names in American English for this simple instrument, evidence of the local and regional level of its widespread appeal. The ubiquitous little music maker may seem homely compared with more cultivated species, but the hardy perennial has taken firm root in our musical landscape, and has been owned and played by more Americans than any other instrument. This wildflower has long been mistaken for a weed by the arts establishment; consequently, there has been little scholarly writing about it.

Like many familiar domestic blooms, the harmonica is an Old World transplant. The ancestral rootstock of the free-reed family, to which the mouth harp belongs, comes from Asia where, according to myth, the Chinese female sovereign Nyn-Kwa invented the *sheng* or mouth organ about 3000 B.C. Written descriptions of the instrument date from two thousand years later, and examples and representations of *sheng* have been found at grave sites in central China dating from the fifth century B.C.¹ Similar instruments are known throughout Asia; some scholars believe that free-reed instruments originated in Southeast Asia rather than China.²

European travelers apparently rediscovered the original Asian free-reed instruments several times before the principle finally caught on in the West. An instrument resembling the Thai *khen* was pictured and discussed by the French author Mersenne in 1636-1637, and ranks of free reeds were incorporated into bellows-blown European organs later in the century.

Although its invention has been credited to several people, the first patent for the familiar mouth harmonica was filed by Christian Friedrich Buschmann in Berlin in 1821. This was followed by an 1829 patent for a button-keyed instrument resembling today's melodica by the English inventor Charles Wheatstone.



From a dealer's catalog published in 1900 by C. Bruno & Son of New York.

He named a later version the "Aeola," and was not the first to link the free reed with the popular Romantic-era image of the aeolian harp, a relationship which survives today in the "harp" names for the harmonica in many languages. Within ten years of its invention the European mouth organ was being produced commercially in Austria, Switzerland, and the German kingdom of Saxony. By the 1830s the German harmonica industry was firmly established in the state of Württemberg, where the small town of Trossingen soon established itself as the harmonica capital of the world. So it remains to this day, though significant numbers of instruments are now made in Brazil, East Germany, India, Japan, and the People's Republic of China.

In reed instruments such as the saxophone or oboe, a flexible sliver of reed is vibrated against something. The reed of a saxophone vibrates against the side of the mouthpiece, while the oboe has a split reed, the two parts of which vibrate against each other. Once the reed is vibrating, the length of a resonating column of air is varied to produce different pitches. Free-reed instruments, like the harmonica and concertina, have reeds that vibrate without touching anything

else, when set in motion by moving air. As the vibrations of free reeds are unhindered, the resulting sounds are dense with overtones, producing a timbre alternately described as warm or irritating, according to the taste of the listener.

The harmonica has a separate reed for each note, permitting several to be played simultaneously as chords or double stops. Most modern harmonicas have two reeds in each cell—one played by blowing and the other by drawing—making mouth organs the only wind instruments played on the inhale. Reeds are generally made of brass or bronze, and an astute 19th-century observer described this technology as producing "musical sounds from metal springs."³

The compact and inexpensive harmonica came to North America as early as 1830 and was soon carried as far as Mexican Texas and the Canadian prairie. Even in the days of bad roads, before extensive railroads, mail-order catalogs, and rural free delivery, the mouth harp was a familiar fixture among the "sundries and novelties" carried by the crossroads "general mercantile" store. It seems to have replaced the jew's harp in the Indian trade by mid-century. Reed plates found at many late 19th-century

archeological sites indicate that harmonicas were played by a broad cross section of Americans from the South to the Aleutian Islands. As some models retailed for as little as five cents well into the present century, many children received mouth harps as birthday gifts or found them nestling in the toes of their Christmas stockings.

In the second half of the 19th century, German manufacturers began the mass production of harmonicas and, with an eye to the huge export market, applied English-language inscriptions to the reed covers, such as "Happy Children" or "Our Newsboys." They also named models after musical celebrities of the day such as Caruso and the U.S. Marine Band. Some German instruments carried the somewhat misleading inscription "French harp," a term for the instrument from the southern United States which, I believe, uses "French" as a generic synonym for "European." Towards the end of the century German harmonica factories were producing up to ten million instruments a year, and more than half were sold in the United States. The instrument was featured on the popular stage in the "dutch acts" of "German delineators," much in the way the banjo was used in the "Ethiopian" minstrel show. Popularity of the instrument peaked again between the world wars, when it was used for music education in public schools, on the vaudeville stage, and on early blues and "hillbilly" recordings. In the late 1940s electric "city" blues bands featured amplified harmonicas as lead instruments, and their records, though less popular in black communities since the mid-1960s, continue to be a strong influence on popular music both here and abroad.

With millions of mouth organs imported each year for over a century, it seems clear that the harmonica has been the most popular musical instrument in our nation's history. A 1967 estimate that over forty million living Americans knew how to play mouth harps seems equally valid today.⁴ Why, then, the dearth of literature on the harmonica? The harp's association with children may bring into play what Brian Sutton-Smith calls the "triviality barrier."⁵ We tend to

dismiss the small instrument as a childish toy instead of recognizing it as the basis of a musical experience shared by millions of Americans. It is easy to overlook the numbers involved, since most of the music produced has been private and non-professional, played in parlors, schoolyards, lumbercamps, and on porches across the continent for over 150 years. Small and cheap, the harmonica has been the instrument of choice not only for children, travelers, and working people, but also for buskers who have played their music on street corners, at tobacco auctions, and at factory gates for public donations. Mouth harps have always been played by people from all walks of life, but the social status of the most visible harp players has not encouraged the attention of students of "serious" music.

Fortunately, critical neglect has not prevented harmonica players from making good music, much of it unique to the United States. Harmonica tune books from the 1920s suggest that the instrument's repertory embraced familiar dance tunes, popular songs of the day, and sentimental favorites of the preceding half-century. We have few written descriptions of the actual repertory and playing styles of performers from 1830 to 1923, but the instrument is well represented in recordings of downhome blues and country music since then. Prominent among early recordings are entertaining solo pieces which, while not unique to the harmonica, were already closely associated with it. As Harold Courlander describes them:

Harmonica virtuosos are able to play the sounds of animals—goats, sheep, cows, dogs, cats, chickens, and birds— and of crying babies, electric pumps, and railroads. There are few experienced country Negro harmonica players who do not take pride in their railroad tunes, which reproduce the puff and surge of engines, the clacking of wheels over track joints, and the locomotive's whistle. . . . One popular exercise is the fox chase, in which the harmonica is called upon to imitate the pant-

ing and baying of the hounds, their yelps as they approach their quarry, and the fading of the sounds as the pack disappears into the distance. The fox chase motif has also been a favorite among white harmonica players.⁶

Train whistles and fox chases pervade the recorded harmonica repertory. I have located information on over one hundred commercial and field-recorded renditions to date, beginning with the first "hillbilly" recording session by Henry Whitter in 1923. They were no fad of the 1920s, however; W. C. Handy recalled similar performances from his Alabama childhood around 1880: "Sometimes we were fortunate enough to have a French harp on which we played the fox and hounds and imitated the railroad trains—harmonica masterpieces."⁷ The performances are remarkable portraits in sound which interpret the aural environment of rural America up to a century ago—the sounds of the steam locomotive and the nocturnal hunt in which the hunters "can tell every hound by his bark, and from the kind of bark just how the chase is developing."⁸ They are a kind of "radio drama" which preceded broadcasting by at least four decades. These pieces also make use of several instrumental techniques which mark some of America's most dramatic musical styles.

The standard ten-hole Richter pattern harmonica, such as the "Marine Band" model, arranges the diatonic scale (the familiar "do-re-mi," seven-note scale) in such a way that blowing out anywhere on the instrument produces the tonic chord, based on the first degree of the scale, and drawing in produces the dominant 7th chord, based on the fifth degree of the scale. In the railroad numbers, steam-whistle effects are played by drawing in. Since the train pieces usually rely on the chugging rhythms of alternating chords rather than a melody line, they can be as easily resolved to the draw chord as the blow chord, and most recordings and performances end on the draw. Playing the harmonica in the key of the drawing chord is the basic principle behind the "cross-harp"

Continued on overleaf

AMERICA'S HARP

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or "choked" style of blues harmonica. The origins of this style, one of the most strikingly creative devices of the Afro-American tradition, will never be known; but several country harp players have told me that they were able to figure out the "cross-harp" style for themselves after older musicians taught them elements of their train pieces.

Other virtuoso pieces make use of "note bending" or "choking" to make sounds and play pitches which are, in theory, impossible to play on the instrument. This technique, as yet unexplained by acoustic physicists, makes possible the distinctively fluid phrasing and wailing sound of the blues harmonica. It seems to occur because there are two reeds in each harmonica hole—one activated by exhaling and the other by inhaling—and the reed not being played somehow affects the pitch of the played reed. When the course of the airstream flowing into a hole is altered by opening the back of the throat more widely, drawing or blowing harder, or otherwise deflecting air with the mouth, the higher-pitched tone can be bent flat, almost to the value of the lower-pitched reed. This is probably due to some kind of phase-interference phenomenon which subtracts the difference in frequency between the vibrations of the two reeds. In the lower holes the draw reed produces a higher pitch than the blow reed, while in the upper holes the reverse occurs, so bending is achieved while drawing through the lower holes and blowing through the upper holes. The end holes of the instrument produce a greater variety of bent pitches because they make up a gapped scale. Since the blow and draw notes are wider apart in holes two, three, and ten, they can be bent through a greater span of intermediate pitches. Bending even enables the harmonica to talk in simple phrases like "uh huh" and "I want my mama."

Bending and other folk blues style techniques were employed by early solo performers such as Henry Whitter, DeFord Bailey, W. W. MacBeth, George "Bullet" Williams, William McCoy, El Watson, and Jaybird

Coleman, who recorded in the 1920s. Singing guitarists like Whitter and Henry Peterson ("the Kentucky Wonderbean") demonstrated "the art of self-accompaniment," by playing mouth harps held near their faces by wire racks. Many jugbands, "hillbilly" ensembles, and blues bands used the mouth harp as a lead instrument in the period before World War II; artists such as Buddy Moss, Sonny Terry, Hammie Nixon, Noah Lewis, Gwen Foster, the Crook Brothers, and Dr. Humphrey Bate have left a legacy of 78-rpm records which offer ample proof that the little harp can hold its own in a duo or band.

The airwaves became filled with the sound of French harps as weekend "barndance" shows began broadcasting in the 1920s. To paraphrase Henry Whitter, hardly a Saturday night went by without someone playing a fox chase over the radio.⁹ In their analysis of the 1928 logbook of Nashville's venerable Grand Ol' Opry, Richard Peterson and Paul DiMaggio found that, while fiddle-led string bands predominated,

harmonica players, Humphrey Bate and Herman Crook, fronted two of the most frequently appearing "string" bands. The importance of the harmonica is suggested by the fact that in addition to DeFord Bailey [the black "Harmonica Wizard" who usually opened the show], six solo or duo harmonica performers appeared during 1928,



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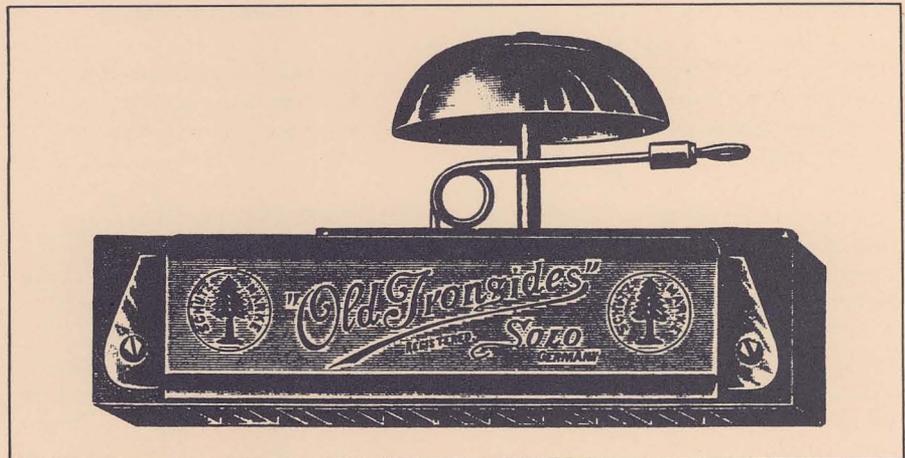
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A 1925 advertisement for Hohner harmonicas from Popular Mechanics Magazine.



An early 20th-century catalog illustration for Ludwig harmonikas from Germany. (Courtesy of Peter Kassan)

equalling the number of solo fiddle players appearing during that year.¹⁰

Charles Wolfe feels the abundance of country harmonica in the late 1920s was peculiar to Middle Tennessee;¹¹ as the early country music of other regions is not as well documented, however, it could also indicate a broader national pattern.

The "hillbilly" players tended to concentrate on the high end of the instrument, playing melodies and ornamental figures in the songs and fiddle tunes favored by these bands. They played almost entirely in the "straight-harp" style (rarely bending and then only on the higher notes), and seemed to favor birdcall-like trills played by alternating rapidly between two holes. A somewhat similar style is often heard on jugband recordings, though "cross-harp" appears on them as well. The early Crook Brothers band featured twin harmonica numbers, a technique later made popular by Wayne Raney and Lonnie Glosson.

Blues players of the 1920s used the "choked" style more heavily, and emphasized the lower and middle notes of the instrument. In some solo recordings the player sang a line, then used the mouth harp to play an improvised instrumental response. This practice continued in early duo and blues band recordings, though solo harp choruses and continuous counter-melodies are also heard. John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson made some influential recordings in Chicago in the late 1930s in which the harmonica was treated much as any other wind instrument in a small jazz or blues combo. Other harp players took the name "Sonny Boy" following his success; one was Aleck "Rice" Miller who, as "Sonny Boy Williamson," inspired many Delta bluesmen through his broadcasts from Helena, Arkansas on the King Biscuit Time radio show from 1941 to 1974. Nearby Memphis soon became a harmonica hotbed, although many of the best players moved on to Chicago, drawn by its more active club and recording scene.

After World War II blues players electrified their sound by cupping harmonicas and microphones in their hands and playing through small

guitar amplifiers. Not only does this make the sound louder, it dramatically alters attack, sustain, and timbre, de-emphasizing high overtones and adding an edge of electronic distortion which complements the electric guitar. The harp can solo like a saxophone or trumpet and play chords like a full horn section. Many recordings of small Chicago-style blues quartets sound much like big "jump" bands. Occasionally, players used the larger chromatic harmonica, but treated it as if it were a large diatonic instrument, playing in another variant position often called "second cross" or "third position." Of the hundreds of players who have recorded in this style over nearly forty years, the most influential has been Marion Walter ("Little Walter") Jacobs, for whom the word genius is not a bit too strong.

A listing of famous virtuosos such as Sonny Terry, Walter Horton, or Gwen Foster—Paganinis all—cannot help us know the kind of music played by the millions of typical performers. An examination of the information on commercial recordings reveals that, in addition to blues and country music, religious music and French-Canadian dance tunes have been played on the mouth organ. The Archive of Folk Culture field recordings at the Library of Congress offer a more representative sampling of American harmonica styles and repertory. While there are many recordings by well-known players like Woody Guthrie and Sonny Terry, there are about five hundred recordings by over one hundred performers from all parts of the country, most of whom were never recorded before or since. The collections include discs and tapes of soloists, one-man bands, harmonica duos and bands, harmonicas accompanying other instruments, and harmonicas accompanying string bands. There are examples of Irish, Scandinavian, old-time country, French-Canadian, Cajun, gospel, and blues music performed on the harmonica. Popular and novelty numbers, fox chases, train imitations, and stories with musical interludes are all represented.

It is difficult to generalize about the harmonica material in the Archive's holdings, collected by a variety of peo-

ple over fifty years under disparate circumstances, except to say that the differences in style between individuals is stronger than most regional characteristics. There is an intimate relationship between player and harp; the resulting music reflects experience, outlook, and even mood more than most instruments. While limited in range, the harmonica can speak with a very personal voice, a voice familiar as an old childhood friend's. Perhaps its versatile adaptability is the real key to the small instrument's large role in the musical life of America.

—Michael Licht

¹ Liang Ming Yueh, "Observations on Recent Archaeological Findings on Music in China, Neolithic to 2nd Century B.C.," in *International Musicological Society: Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977*, eds. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade (Basel, London: Barenreiter Kassel, The American Musicological Society, 1981), pp. 848-51; Terry Miller, "Free-Reed Instruments in Asia: A Preliminary Classification," in *Music East and West: Essays in Honor of Walter Kaufmann*, ed. Thomas Noblitt (New York: Pendragon Press, 1981), pp. 63-99.

² Sybil Marcuse, *A Survey of Musical Instruments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 731.

³ "On the Production of Musical Sounds from Metallic Springs," *Penny Magazine*, October 19, 1939. Reprinted courtesy of Steve Gradham in *Free Reed: The Concertina Newsletter*, Number 15 (September/October 1973), pp. 21-23.

⁴ Gordon Gaskill, "Never Underestimate the Power of a Pocket Piano," *Reader's Digest*, July 1967. Condensed from *Contemporary*, June 4, 1967.

⁵ Brian Sutton-Smith, "Psychology of Childlore: The Triviality Barrier," *Western Folklore*, Volume 29, Number 1 (1970), pp. 1-8.

⁶ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 216.

⁷ W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues, An Autobiography* (London: Sidgwick, 1957 [1941]), p. 15. Ed., Arna Bontemps.

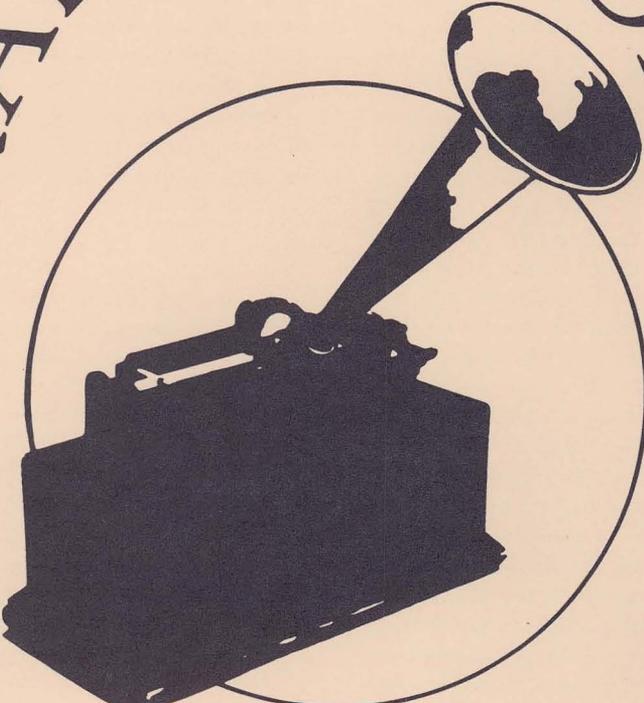
⁸ Alan Lomax, ed. *Afro-American Blues and Game Songs*, AFS L4 (Library of Congress: Washington, D.C., 1956).

⁹ Norm Cohen, "Henry Whitter: His Life and Music," *JEMF Quarterly*, Volume 11, Part 2, Number 38 (1975), pp. 57-66.

¹⁰ Richard A. Peterson and Paul DiMaggio, "The Early Opry: Its Hillbilly Image in Fact and Fancy," *Journal of Country Music*, Volume 4, Number 2 (Summer 1973), pp. 39-51.

¹¹ Charles K. Wolfe, *Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977), p. 60.

THE FEDERAL CYLINDER PROJECT



A GUIDE TO
FIELD CYLINDER COLLECTIONS
IN FEDERAL AGENCIES

The American Folklife Center is pleased to announce the availability of two volumes in the twenty-volume catalog series *The Federal Cylinder Project: A Guide to Field Cylinder Recordings in Federal Agencies* (Studies in American Folklife, No. 3). The first volume in the series, *Introduction and Inventory*, lists by collection the more than 10,000 field-recorded wax cylinders for which preservation tape copies exist at the Library of Congress. The recordings document a wide range of Native American cultural groups, along with songs and spoken-word materials from various parts of North America,

Hawaii, Polynesia, Jamaica, Denmark, Africa, and other areas of the world. Volume 8, *Early Anthologies*, describes 101 cylinder recordings by Benjamin Ives Gilman of musical performances at the "Javanese," "Samoaan," "Turkish," and "Vancouver Island Indian" exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The catalog also includes information on the "Demonstration Collection" of 120 wax cylinder recordings of music from many nations edited by Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and released shortly after World War I by the Berlin Phonogramm Archiv, which he directed.

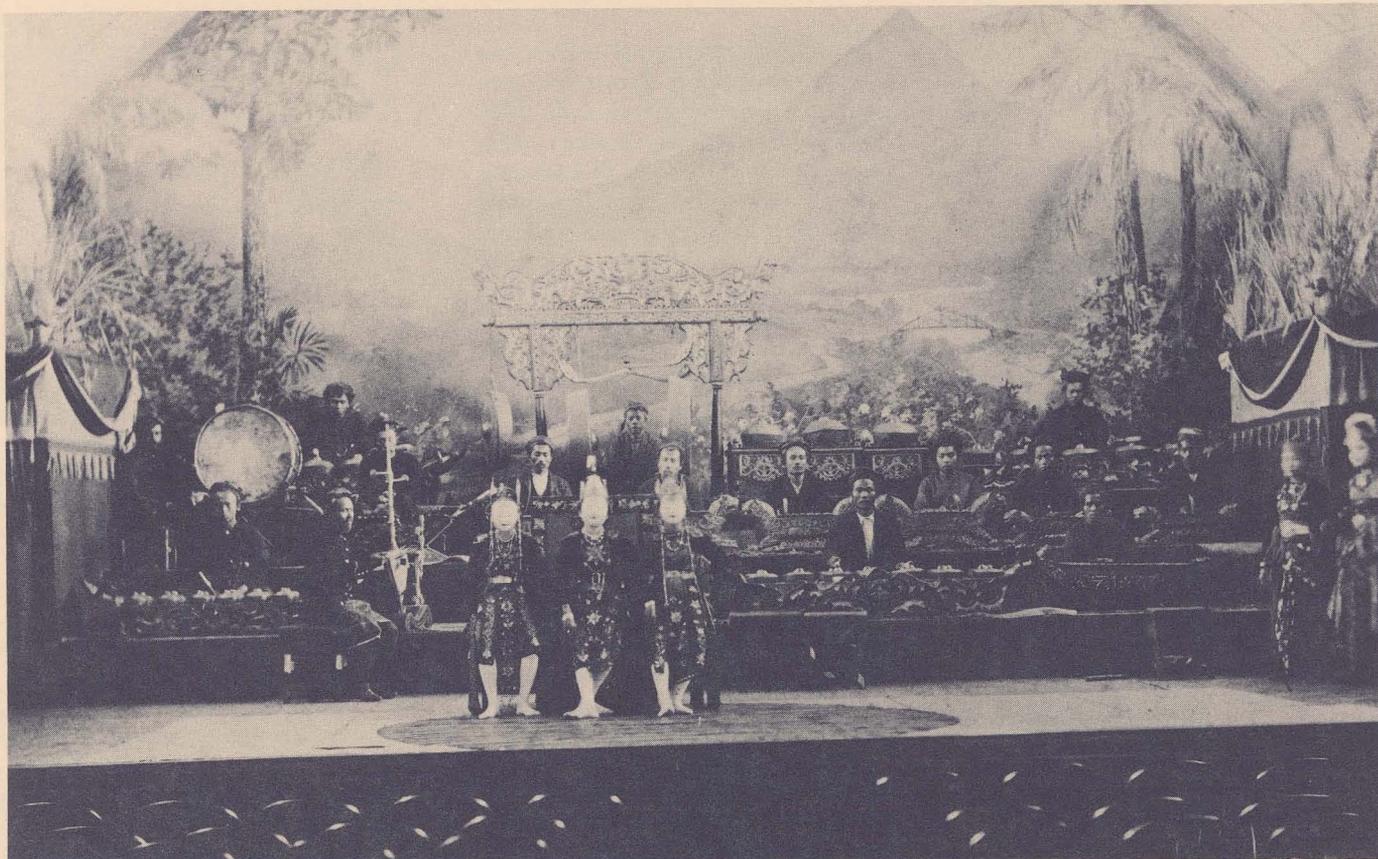
The introductory pages of *Introduction and Inventory* include a discussion of the role of the cylinder phonograph in early cultural documentation and a description of the work of the Federal Cylinder Project. Those sections are framed by a preface by Alan Jabbour, an afterword by the project's first director, Thomas Vennum, Jr., and a selected bibliography.

The inventory of cylinder collections follows. Organized by collector and cultural group, it lists the number of cylinders in each collection, the total actually duplicated, the sponsoring organization, and the various reference numbers used by the Library for the originals and tape copies. In addition, the inventory cites the contents of the collections, the recording date and location, and the immediate provenance of the cylinders themselves, whether transferred from the National Archives in 1948, received by exchange from the Mary C. Wheelwright Museum in 1972, or whatever.

Volume 1 concludes with three separate indexes to the inventory. The first index is by American Indian groups. That is followed by one for other cultural groups and regions, and finally by an index for collectors, institutions, and sponsors.

A foreword by Sue Carole De Vale introduces *Early Anthologies*. In it she describes the work of American psychologist Benjamin Ives Gilman and Austrian-born Erich Moritz von Hornbostel. Gilman is well known for his transcriptions and analysis of Jesse Walter Fewkes's pioneering recordings of Zuni and Hopi songs. His work on the Fewkes recordings was commissioned by Mary Hemenway, as was his project to record "exotic music" at the World's Columbian Exposition. The meticulousness with which Gilman carried out his assignment enabled him to record, among other events, an entire gamelan performance in the "Java Village," and to document the tuning of instruments.

A doctor of chemistry, Hornbostel went on to become Carl Stumpf's assistant in musicological and psychological research at the Psychological Institute in Berlin. In 1906 the institute became the Berlin Phonogramm Archiv, which Hornbostel directed until 1933. As De Vale notes:



Javanese musicians and dancers at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. (Prints and Photographs Division)

The initial issuance of Hornbostel's "Demonstration Collection," the first anthology of recordings of world music, was in itself a historical landmark. It contained some of the earliest and most representative recordings of "exotic" musics. Among them were wax cylinders which had been analyzed in the publications that laid the foundations for the discipline now called ethnomusicology.

The catalog that follows De Vale's introduction to Volume 8 is organized by cylinder. It includes the various numbering systems, the duration of the entire cylinder in minutes and seconds, a comment on the sound quality, a description of the item recorded, the name and identification of the performer, if known, and the date of the original recording. Each entry concludes with notes which relate the selection to other recordings, provide specific technical information, and so forth.

The Federal Cylinder Project: A Guide to Field Cylinder Collections in Federal Agencies. Volume 1—*Introduction and Inventory*, by Erika Brady, Maria LaVigna, Dorothy Sara Lee, and Thomas Vennum, Jr., 110 pp.; \$8.50 (Stock no. S/N030-000-00153-2). Volume 8—*Early Anthologies*, edited by Dorothy Sara Lee with a foreword by Sue Carole De Vale, 96 pp.; \$8.00 (Stock no. S/N030-000-00154-1). Both volumes may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Remittance, made out to the Superintendent of Documents, must accompany orders, and reference should be made to the stock number.



FOLK RECORD LIST

"American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1983: A Selected List" is now available. The annotated list of 31 records and tapes released in 1983 was chosen by panelists Norman Cohen from the John Edwards Memorial Foundation, William Ivey of the Country Music Foundation, Anthony Seeger from Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music, ethnic music specialist Richard K. Spottswood, Jeff Todd Titon from Tufts University, and Center staff. The list includes recordings of old-time country music, bluegrass, blues, gospel, cowboy, Cajun, Norteño, and other musical traditions found within the United States. The recordings exemplify "root" traditions and provide liner notes or accompanying booklets. Free copies of the list may be obtained from the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Folklife Center is pleased to announce that J. Barre Toelken, professor of English at the University of Oregon, and Bruce Jackson, Director of the Center for Studies in American Culture at the State University of New York at Buffalo, have been appointed to six-year terms on its Board of Trustees. The appointments were made by Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), President pro tempore of the Senate, and Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., (D-Mass.) Speaker of the House, respectively.

After completing his Ph. D. in medieval literature at the University of Oregon in 1964, Barre Toelken joined the English faculty there in 1966 to begin teaching regular courses in folklore, mythology, and Native American literature. He is now chairman of the institution's Folklore and Ethnic Studies Program.

From 1971 through 1976 Toelken was a member of the American Folklore Society's Executive Board. He has been editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*, *Oregon Folklore Bulletin*, *Northwest Folklore*, and regional editor of *Western Folklore*. His own writings have dealt with oral literature,

especially the traditional ballad, and Native American literature and religion, particularly Navaho. In 1979 Toelken directed the Center's Montana Folklife Survey, a three-month field project to document traditional folk culture throughout the state.

Bruce Jackson received an M.A. in literary criticism from Indiana University in 1962 and was a Junior Fellow at Harvard University from 1963 through 1967, studying folklore and sociology. He has been the Director of the Center for Studies in American Culture at the State University of New York at Buffalo since 1972 and has been teaching courses in folklore studies, documentary history and criticism, and law at the University since 1967. His writings have focused primarily on Afro-American culture, aspects of criminal justice, and the study of folklore. He is also a filmmaker and photographer.

Jackson, currently President of the American Folklore Society, is completing a six-year term on the Society's Executive Board. He was recently elected to be the next editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*. He is also co-director of an American Folklore Society group that is producing a booklet to define folklore studies and outline the nature of folklore research and teaching in America today.

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

On May 11, 1984 Donald C. Curran, Associate Librarian of Congress, signed into effect an interagency agreement between the Library of Congress and the National Park Service to facilitate the implementation of recommendations contained in *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States* (see *Folklife Center News*, Volume VI, Number 4, October-December 1983). The two-year agreement calls for the creation of a steering committee to be composed of Center director Alan Jabbour, or his designated representative, and the Associate Director for Cultural Resources of the National Park Service, or his designated representative. The committee, which will meet at least three times in 1984 and at least once a year thereafter, may invite representatives of other agencies and public or private organizations to the meetings as deemed appropriate. The development of an interagency agreement was a key administrative action recommended by former Secretary of the Interior James Watt in his letter to the President and Congress dated June 1, 1983 which accompanied his summary of the report.

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