
AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER
THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Summer 1988

Volume X, Number 3

folklife center news

LOWELL FIELDWORK COMPLETED

By Doug DeNatale

On May 31 the fieldwork phase of the Lowell Folklife Project was completed. Lowell, Massachusetts, boasts of having over fifty ethnic groups represented among its citizens, and the city's cultural diversity posed an exciting challenge for the project workers. The field team—Michael Bell, Barbara Fertig, John Lueders-Booth, Mario Montañó, Martha Norkunas, Tom Rankin, David Taylor, and Eleanor Wachs—documented a range of community events and expressive activities, predominantly among the Irish, Franco-Americans, Greeks, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans, and Cambodians who comprise the city's largest ethnic groups. The Center will publish an illustrated study based on the Lowell Folklife Project in about a year.

A full analysis awaits that publication, but some preliminary observations about the city's contemporary cultural landscape have emerged from the project's research. The city's population was in a gradual decline

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Sophia Pargas crocheting at her workstation in the computer sub-assembly area, Wang Laboratories, Pawtucket Boulevard, February 12, 1988. The traditional activity carried on in the high-tech setting symbolizes the juxtapositions of cultural groups, old and new ways, that are part of daily life in Lowell. (LFP-TR-B392-3) Photo by Tom Rankin



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LOWELL PROJECT

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from the 1930s, but within the past twenty years the influx of three major populations—the Portuguese, the Hispanics, and the Southeast Asians—has brought a variety of new cultural resources and pressures to Lowell. While these populations respond differently to their new social environment, political and educational issues are equally critical for each. During the year of the project, housing problems, political representation, and bilingual education were issues of public debate.

There is a strong tendency among Lowell's older populations to perceive the newer groups as unified ethnic groups. Yet among the Portuguese there are significant cultural differences between those of Continental, Madeiran, or Azorean origin. Lowell's Hispanic population accommodates a fundamental national and cultural distinction between Puerto Ricans and Colombians. The Southeast Asians likewise derive from the separate nations of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. At the same time, these populations have necessarily drawn together as communities in their relationship with the city. Their internal politics are shaped by their own dynamic of cultural difference and also by their reception by the outside community.

The ethnic stereotyping that masks cultural diversity is necessarily limiting, even where the stereotypes are positive, as they are for the Portuguese and Southeast Asians. Both of these communities are positively stereotyped as hardworking and quiet. In the Portuguese community, the younger members from the secondary wave of immigration in the 1960s have been angered by the tendency to neglect their needs in the recent bilingual education controversy, and have begun to build a political network among the various groups in their community. The work ethic summarily attached to the Southeast Asian community can trivialize the major cultural differences stemming from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions and the deep scars left by the holocaust among the refugee population.

The stereotype that burdens Lowell's Hispanic population, buttressed by the confusion between street life and a well-publicized drug traffic, tends to negate the perception of cultural traditions entirely. Early skepticism over the Folklife Project's efforts to document Hispanic culture were countered by the richness and variety of the traditions uncovered. Within the Hispanic population, a strong religious community, both Catholic and Protestant, fights the stereotype and attempts to deal with the serious social issues. The Colombians and Puerto Ricans of the Catholic community have consciously fused a number of cultural religious traditions to further their common social and spiritual goals.

From a longer historical perspective, the challenges and opportunities faced by Lowell's newer immigrant groups may prove no greater than those faced by its earlier immigrant communities. Yet this assertion is no rationale for failing to connect public policies with cultural considerations. Lowell's agencies charged with integrating the city's cultural resources and public programs, in particular the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, the Lowell National Historic Park, and the Lowell Heritage State Park, have been mindful from their inception of the problems inherent in establishing respectful interaction between Lowell's people and visitors. The original impetus for establishing these agencies came from a grassroots movement in Lowell during the 1960s to develop itself as an "educative city" where cultural contrasts could act as community resources rather than limiting stereotypes.

Toward the dream of an educative city where cultural knowledge would have a liberating effect in social relations, it is essential that the agencies involved engage in a process of developing new models for cultural presentation and self-evaluation. Lowell's agencies have been noteworthy for developing innovative alliances of public and private resources and also for recognizing and weighing the necessary social effect of the programs they have fostered. But there is always a danger of lapsing into forms of



The wedding of Cambodians Sopheap Kuth and Pen Hing at the home of Pen Hing's mother, Mrs. Chounn Chen, September 26, 1987. Ethnic stereotypes applied to Southeast Asians often mask the richness of the cultural and religious traditions the new immigrants bring to and carry on in Lowell. (LFP-JB-B254-13) Photo by John Lueders-Booth

presentation that at their worst reinforce stereotypes and deny historical change. Folklorists can play an important role in guarding against this tendency by insisting on attention to ongoing cultural interaction.

The Lowell Folklife Project has itself become an active part of this process through its documentation of cultural resources and its argument against

reducing the city's social relations under an overly simplistic model of ethnicity. The project collection contains approximately 200 hours of sound recording, 10,000 black and white negatives, 3,500 color transparencies, and 2,500 pages of manuscript material. Original negatives and transparencies will be housed at the American Folklife Center; contact sheets,

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

James Hardin, *Editor*
Don Shomette, *Design Consultant*

Folklife Center News is a quarterly report on the programs and activities of the American Folklife Center, available free of charge from the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, Washington, D.C. 20540.

Folklife Center News was temporarily suspended in 1986 with volume IX, numbers 2 and 3 (there was no volume IX, number 4). Publication resumed with volume X, number 1.

duplicate fieldnotes and logs, and a large selection of duplicate slides will be available at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center in Lowell. The field data, including fieldnotes and catalogs of interview tapes and photographs, have been indexed according to subject, place name, and personal name using an innovative computer program devised for the project.

The American Folklife Center is currently working with the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission to create a regional folklife center. The development of the center and the forthcoming publication provide assurance that the work of the Lowell Folklife Project will not end with the completion of field research. □

Doug DeNatale is Project Coordinator for the Lowell Folklife Project.

FOLKLIFE

For timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, a taped announcement is available around the clock, except during the hours of 9 A.M. until noon (eastern time) each Monday, when it is updated. Folklife is a joint project of the American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society. Dial:

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FOLKLIFE AND MEMORY IN RUSSIA: AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES H. BILLINGTON

Conducted and edited

by James Hardin

*James H. Billington became Librarian of Congress in 1987, after serving since 1973 as director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution. A specialist in Russian cultural history, he is the author of *The Icon and the Axe* and *Fire in the Minds of Men*. In June, Dr. Billington was part of the American delegation that journeyed to Moscow for the summit talks between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. He stayed on to participate in celebrations of the Millennium of Christianity in Russia. The interview from which the following is excerpted and edited took place in the Librarian's office in the James Madison Memorial Building on June 28, 1988.*

Hardin: In *The Icon and the Axe*, you say that the highest good in Muscovy was not knowledge but memory, and that the ideal Russian prince is the guardian of tradition. I wonder if you think Mikhail Gorbachev is an "ideal Russian prince."

Billington: Well, I wouldn't quite describe him as an ideal Russian prince, but I think there is no question that he is seen as paying greater attention to Russian tradition. . . . Having talked about a society that was going to build a new Soviet man, was going to get rid of ethnic diversity in a kind of homogenized new heroic proletarian society, they are now—and they have been for some time—slowly realizing that not simply the preservation of the artifacts of their culture but the preservation and enrichment of memory as a social phenomenon is essential to the health of the society, particularly to a large multi-ethnic and diverse society like theirs. And so they are simultaneously acknowledging the failure of communism as a totally satisfying ideology and acknowledging the positive importance and worth of diverse



James H. Billington. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer

The preservation and enrichment of memory as a social phenomenon is essential to the health of the society.

literary and artistic traditions. . . . They're more interested now in memory than they were, both to honor

a past which they no longer look down on quite as much as they once did, particularly their religious past, and also to find an identity for the Russian people that's something other than Stalinism . . . , which was the most distinct political identity of the Soviet system. . . .

But it's also seen as something that might help them with their contemporary problem, which is not just an

administrative, political, economic problem, it's a cultural, psychological, spiritual problem of identity: What is the affirmative identity of the dominant Russian people? And the very fact that the other nationalities—we've read of the Armenians and the Baltic republics, and these people are anxious to get more distinctive recognition—that only increases the anguish of the dominant majority nationality to find out who they are and what they are

Hardin: Then there's a good deal more going on in the Soviet Union than just the sense that the economic system has not worked, that the economic system needs reform and decentralization—there's a sense, too, that there is something to be drawn upon and learned from the past.

Billington: Oh, very much so. I can give you two examples: One is architectural restoration. The society for the restoration of historic monuments now has 35 million members in the Soviet Union. So it's, in a way I suppose, the largest private organization in the Soviet Union. Now, it's not a very powerful organization—they just pay small dues, all those members. But the fact that many people would pay anything at all, and affiliate themselves with historic preservation, the restoration of old historic monuments, is an indication of the importance of this—and, by the way, they're not all Russians. Other nationalities are as numerous as the Russians. A second illustration would be the enormous interest in the . . . restoration of icons and the restoration cleaning of old Russian religious paintings. But you could point to other aspects of their artistic and creative culture—great interest in old Russian music . . . [and] the revival and the ringing of bells. They destroyed many of the bells in the early anti-religious campaigns of the Soviet period, and now there's an almost desperate desire to recover that lost link, to recreate the old sound-scape, as well as the landscape of old Russia. . . .

Hardin: Most people in this country would be surprised to hear about the

“deep strain of religious life” in Russia, which you describe in your book. Has that survived the repression and brutality of the Stalin era? Is there still a deep strain of religious life?

Billington: Yes, and I think again it's partly as a result of the failure of communism as an ideology to prove very spiritually satisfying. It never dealt with the great mysteries of life and death, creation, marriage, new life—all that was never part of it. It was a social and political ideology, and people have increasingly found, not only in the Communist world but generally, that social and political ideologies, when they overextend themselves and purport to explain all the aspects of life, prove very unsatisfying. Of course, in [the Russian] case, their social and political ideology hasn't even been a very satisfying explanation of social and political reality.

Social and political ideologies, when they overextend themselves and purport to explain all the aspects of life, prove very unsatisfying.

But beyond that, their culture is so permeated with a thousand years of Christian history, Orthodox Christian history, and many of the other nationalities have rich traditions. . . . To have an atheist ideology that rejects all of these religious traditions superimposed on it left a lot of dissatisfaction. Khrushchev, incidentally, persecuted the Church almost as much as Stalin did, that wasn't generally realized. . . . He was to some extent a liberal reformer, but he was simultaneously a tremendous persecutor of the Church. He cut the number of open churches to less than half. So it's only recently that the Church has begun to make a return, and it's not just the Orthodox church, but there's a very active Protestant church—the Baptists are faster growing than the Orthodox, the Pentecostals some feel are even faster growing, Adventists, various groups.

Hardin: When you say “growing,”

do you mean in numbers of people who are attending the services?

Billington: In numbers of people who are believers and affiliate themselves with that denomination—it isn't always possible for them to attend services. You have to have state permission to run a church There are many church buildings, deserted church buildings, but there are many less churches licensed to exist than there are believers. You see them in the big cities, but if you were to travel in the great interior there are large sections where they just don't allow them to open up, but where there are many believers. . . . Remember you're thinking of something almost the size of America and Canada combined—vast recesses of the interior, where a lot of these older traditions are beautiful. Wild cold weather, forbidding nature, for the most part, but a great deal of beauty and a great deal of mysticism about nature. It enriches and envelopes their whole literary and formal cultural tradition and has left a substratum of folkloristic and ethnographic traditions and forms of expression—which is sometimes [expressed as] modern kitsch versions of the Moiseyev Dancers, the little dolls in the foreign currency stores, or the knitted aprons, with patterns on them, all of that kind of thing which is kitsch touristic folklore.

Hardin: Does that derive from a state attempt to manipulate folk culture?

Billington: Not so much manipulate as—they view it as harmless because it's something colorful to entertain tourists with. You see in restaurants and hotels in the Soviet Union, you see people dressed up in old peasant garb playing balalaikas, which is not something you'd see in the countryside anymore. They'd have guitars rather than balalaikas, for instance, and they'd be playing things that represent partly old Russian things and partly things they've heard on cheap Japanese tape recorders and were recorded from the Voice of America and increasingly from some of their own rock bands.

But, of course, folklore, like religion,

has had a revival in the last twenty years in Russia, not only to some extent tolerated by the officials but promoted by many people who are anxious to find a distinctively Russian identity and are concerned about creeping Westernization and creeping uniformity in their culture—some of whom, incidentally, view Marxism as a kind of Western ideology that was imported and has ruined the native, indigenous traditions. . . .

Hardin: In your book, you talk about the “passive, vegetable life,” the “brutal, earthbound life of the average peasant.” Have the peasants been able to sustain any sort of rich folklife that is satisfying to themselves and might too contribute to this search for identity in Russia? Or has it been destroyed by the communes?

Billington: Yes, it’s been pretty largely destroyed. . . . Collectivization was so bloody and so destructive of the old peasant culture, particularly in the Ukraine and Great Russia itself, where the horrors of collectivization were primarily felt, so many people were killed that if they were to de-collectivize or seriously modify the system [now], they would have to own up to what was perhaps the greatest of all internal atrocities committed during the Stalin era. . . .

But despite this terrible devastation of the peasantry, in this search for memory of the last twenty years, the recovery of rural Russia, of those threads of authentic memory that do exist, has been a very important part of the activity of writers, painters, musicians. And so a lot of traditions in the peasant culture and in the forest culture of Russia have been preserved and to some extent are reviving. . . . Now the great question that scholars always ask: Is this just urban people romanticizing? And that’s a fundamental problem in anthropological research and folkloristic and ethnographic research. Are we just [projecting] the wish fantasies of urban intellectuals who are unhappy with uniform housing and creeping technological debasement of the environment? . . .

[But there is a] great tradition in Russia of returning to the earth for

strength, returning to the country, returning to the peasant, returning to the countryside for your subject matter, for your inspiration. And in a deeper sense then, the culture, the high culture of the cities, has always drawn [upon these sources], ever since it’s defined itself. . . . And the recorded literature and the number of museums and repositories, and the amount of academic study of ethnography and folklore—this began in pre-revolutionary Russia, this is a Russian tradition more than a Soviet tradition, but the Soviets have sustained and developed it pretty well—is very impressive. . . .

A lot of traditions in the peasant culture and in the forest culture of Russia have been preserved and to some extent are reviving.

I spent a year as a guest professor twenty years ago in Moscow and worked in the Institute of History, which at that time was an extremely dull place; they were also not very friendly because it was a place for ideological Party hacks. But the Institute of Ethnography that was in the same building was a place where the imagination could roam and where an awful lot of bright people would be doing intellectual or cultural history of the kind that I was doing . . . in fact, fled there because the atmosphere was better, the tolerance was greater.

Hardin: Is that because folklore was “harmless”?

Billington: Folklore was thought to be harmless, and thought to be good for producing colorful dancers that could make politicians feel good at big peace festivals. . . .

Hardin: One final question: In your book, you talk about the sense in Russia of a special destiny. Is this still true? Do they still think of themselves as having a special destiny?

Billington: Many of them do. I think that’s not quite as marked as it used

to be, but it’s certainly there. . . . Many of them feel that, first of all, their traditions, the great writers, that they came late to world culture but really produced titanic things. They certainly did: Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky are really almost without parallel. . . . And, of course, defeating Napoleon, defeating Hitler Some people certainly think that the Bolshevik Revolution was a unique event in world history.

But I think all that’s waning a bit. Although, part of this return to Russian roots is an attempt to say, well look, maybe communism didn’t work but Russians are still the greatest people around, and aren’t we wonderful. . . . What really saved Russia in World War II was the Russian people, was the same thing that Tolstoy describes as saving them against Napoleon, was this dumb, stubborn resistance—dumb in the technical sense of being inarticulate, not in the sense of being stupid.

Hardin: The enduring strength of “Mother Russia”?

Billington: The enduring strength of “Mother Russia.” But the war ended forty-three years ago, and to go on waving the bloody shirt when, you know, you really haven’t done as much as you should have in the forty-three years since then is, for a lot of the young people in particular, no longer really satisfactory, and they don’t want to hear about the uniqueness of Russia’s suffering. They want to hear about what are we doing now, you know, as we’re nearing the twenty-first century. . . . So there’s a certain restiveness. But it’s a restiveness that looks out to the West for technical and managerial and economic ideas, but it still looks inside for spiritual, psychological, cultural values. And that’s why this whole inventory of memory is very important.

Hardin: And they’re still there to be found?

Billington: And they’re still there to be found. □

Carl Fleischhauer provided technical assistance for this interview.

SUMMER 88 CONCERTS UNDERWAY ON NEPTUNE PLAZA



The Cumberland Music Tour, from a remote Appalachian section of Kentucky and Tennessee, led off the Folklife Center's concert series this year with a variety of mountain music, banjo and fiddle tunes, buckdancing, blues and lyric songs, ballads and stories. From left to right: Willard Anderson, Clyde Troxell, and Ralph Troxell. *Photo by Reid Baker*

Irish dancers, California bluegrass, Vietnamese and Mexican music are all on the program for this year's Neptune Plaza Concerts at the Library of Congress. Since 1977 the concerts have entertained congressional members and staff, Library of Congress and other federal workers, Capitol Hill friends and neighbors, and visitors to the nation's capital. The influx of new ethnic groups to the Washington area has enabled the series to provide a wide range of musical experiences from a variety of traditional performers.

The Neptune Plaza Concerts are sponsored by the American Folklife Center in cooperation with the National Council for the Traditional

Arts. Concerts are held on the third Thursday of each month between April and October, from 12 noon until 1:30 p. m. This year's concerts are broadcast live on WAMU, 88 FIVE FM.

- Apr. 21 The Cumberland Music Tour. Old-time music from Kentucky and Tennessee
- May 19 Seamus Egan, Mick Moloney, and Liam Harney. Irish music and dance from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts
- June 16 Laurie Lewis and the Grant Street Band. Bluegrass from California

- July 21 John Cephas and Phil Wiggins. Blues from Washington, D.C.
- Aug. 18 Nguyễn Đình Nghĩa family. Vietnamese from Washington, D.C.
- Sept. 15 Mariachis from San Cristóbal, Mexico
- Oct. 20 The Four Echos; and Linda Gore and the Gospel Spiritualettes. Black gospel from Washington, D.C.

Magdalena Gilinsky contributed to this report.

PANEL RECOMMENDS BEST FOLK RECORDINGS OF 1987

By Carl Fleischhauer
and Jennifer Cutting

Thirty-four sound recordings have been selected for inclusion in *American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1987: A Selected List*. The selection was made by a panel of five American music specialists who met at the Library of Congress on March 17 and 18. A list of the titles selected appears at the end of this article; an annotated list describing each of the recordings will be published later this year.

Most folk recordings are published by small, independent, and sometimes hard-to-find companies, and the Folklife Center has been compiling its selected lists for the past five years with the idea of helping interested persons identify these recordings for purchase. By the same token, the companies often have difficulty in reaching educational and library markets, as well as the general public. So the hope is that both buyer and seller will be served. For the purposes of librarians and teachers, this brief, annotated publication should be more useful than a comprehensive discography. The *Selected List* is limited to about thirty titles, a number that can easily be reviewed, and the list represents a process of critical appraisal. To qualify for consideration the recordings must

- (1) have been released in the previous calendar year;
- (2) feature cultural traditions found within the United States;
- (3) emphasize "root traditions" over popular adaptations of traditional materials;
- (4) be conveniently available to American purchasers;
- (5) include liner notes or accompanying booklets relating the recordings to the performers, their communities, genres, styles, or other pertinent information.

This year's selection panel included Dorothy Sara Lee from the Archives

of Traditional Music, Indiana University; Michael Licht, folklorist at the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities; Richard March, folk arts coordinator at the Wisconsin Arts Board; Jay Orr from the Country Music Foundation; and Kay Shelemay, an ethnomusicologist at New York University.

The panel found that two of the criteria for consideration were especially prominent during their discussions, the requirement that the recordings feature cultural traditions from within the United States and that they include written annotations. In about a half dozen instances, the panel considered the residence, influences, and movement of artists from place to place. Records were not selected in some cases because the artists had neither lived in nor visited the United States and in others because the performances or notes focused wholly on the musical traditions of the Old Country with no attention paid to New World influences.

In considering the criterion on annotation, Richard March argued that this requirement would exclude interesting community-produced recordings, few of which have written documentation. Mike Licht, who coordinated the *Selected List* project for three years, recalled his conversations with several small, community-based record labels in which he told them that "although they are on top of their own local market with their current packaging, they should view written liner notes as a key to the expansion of their market. Good liner notes will help them reach new customers." March suggested that the forty-odd state folk arts coordinators might try to seek out one or two worthy albums each year and offer to write notes for them.

The discussion of annotation led to other comments on form and content. The panel thought that only a few products called for lengthy musicological analysis. Usually, they agreed, only a few paragraphs of background

information were needed—the brief introduction to community, style, or artist suggested by the criteria. Nevertheless, they did admire the attractive, thoroughgoing booklets that accompanied a number of this year's selections.

Dorothy Lee pointed out that some American Indian communities preferred that certain sensitive information be left unwritten. Richard March added that some musicological descriptions could introduce comparisons between cultural groups that would cause discomfort in some communities. In short, the panel felt that certain information might best be presented in other types of publications.

Although the panel agreed that the *Selected List* should be limited to "roots traditions," they pointed out that the submissions showed that producers had trouble understanding this requirement. A number of examples contained performances by singer-songwriters, albums of the sort likely to be filed in "contemporary folk" bins in a record store, while a handful of others featured what one might call "European art music," recreations of ensemble music from the past or adaptations of folk songs in an orchestral setting.

The panel's final selections include fourteen Afro-American recordings, fifteen Anglo-American recordings, and fifteen recordings from a variety of other traditions. The panel felt that their choice was reasonably representative of what had been produced in the categories. But the sense of balance that the list conveys is a little deceptive: the fifteen Afro-American recordings are not fifteen distinct titles, including as they do one five-volume set, one four-volume set, and two volumes from a four-volume anthology. Some panelists asked whether this meant that more Anglo-American than Afro-American "roots" albums had been produced in 1987.

This question led to a consideration of the representation of other musical

categories. Several panelists pointed out that dozens of titles were released every year in the polka, tamburitza, and American Indian fields, and possibly others. Why do so few of these reach the Folklife Center? No one was able to answer the question, although there was some speculation that many titles in "underrepresented" categories probably would not represent the roots of those traditions or, more likely, would not be very well annotated. The Folklife Center's coordinators promised to do what they could to encourage as many submissions as possible for the 1988 list.

The 1987 *Selected List* should be available in early autumn, when copies may be requested from the Folklife Center free of charge. Copies of the 1985 and 1986 lists are available while supplies last. The Center does encourage producers and artists to submit records for the 1988 list.

Recordings to be included in the 1987 list (alphabetically by label):

AFRO-AMERICAN

- Various artists: *The New Bluebloods* (Alligator 7707)
 Various artists: *New York Grassroots Gospel: The Black Sacred Quartet Tradition* (a series of five cassettes; Global Village C 207 through 211)
 The Gospel Christian Singers: *A Cappella Since 1929* (Global Village C 212)
 Various artists: *Jailhouse Blues* (Rosetta RR1316)
 Various artists: *National Downhome Blues Festival—Volumes One through Four* (a series of four long-playing records; Southland SLP-21 through 24)

ANGLO-AMERICAN

- Harvey Sampson and the Big Possum String Band: *Flatfoot in the Ashes* (Augusta Heritage AHR 004)
 The Louvin Brothers: *Radio Favorites '51-'57* (Country Music Foundation CMF 009)
 Bob Wills: *Bob Wills Fiddle* (Country Music Foundation CMF 010-L)
 Various artists: *The Bristol Sessions* (Country Music Foundation CMF 011-L)
 Luther Davis, Roscoe Parish, and Leone Parish: *The Old Time Way*

- (Heritage 070)
 Charlie Walden with Emily & Dennis Buckhannon: *Traditional Fiddle Music of Missouri* (Marimac 9011)
 Everett Pitt: *Up Agin the Mountain* (Marimac 9200)
 Various artists: *Home in West Virginia: West Virginia Project—Volume II* (Old Homestead OHCS-177)
 Chris Bouchillon: "The Original Talking Blues Man" (Old Homestead OHCS-181)
 Emry Arthur: *I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow—Volume One* (Old Homestead OHCS-190)
 Dykes "Magic City" Trio: *String Band Classics—Volume I* (Old Homestead OHCS-191)
 Johnson Mountain Boys: *Let the Whole World Talk* (Rounder 0225)
 The McCoury Brothers: *The McCoury Brothers* (Rounder 0230)
 Jim and Jesse & The Virginia Boys: *In the Tradition* (Rounder 0234)
 Various artists: *Lonesome Homesteader: Old-time Fiddling in Wyoming* (Wyoming Arts Foundation 1987)

ANTHOLOGY

- Various artists: *Blues Roots, African-American Gospel Music, Cajun & Creole Music, Cuban and Puerto Rican Music* (a series of four cassettes: World Music Institute/Music of the World WMI-001, WMI-002, T-110, and T-111)

ETHNIC AND REGIONAL

- Clifton Chenier: *The King of Zydeco Sings the Blues* (Arhoolie 1097)
 The Moostash Joe Polka Band: *Our Favorite Music Volume IV* (Czech Records SCR-80)
 Lifshe Schaechter-Widman: *Az di furst avek* (Global Village C 111)
 Various artists: *Cantate Con Noi: Choral Songs from Istria and the Alps and Vintage Popular Music from South-Central Italy* (Global Village GVM 678)
 Various artists: *Nā Mele o Paniolo: Songs of Hawaiian Cowboys* (Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts)
 Various artists: *Taos Pueblo Round Dance Songs—Volume I* (Indian House IH 1006)
 Turtle Mountain Singers: *Navajo Social Dance Songs* (Indian House IH 1523)

- Southern Maiden Singers: *Navajo Skip Dance & Two-Step Songs* (Indian House IH 1535)
 Ironwood Singers: *Live at the 106th Rosebud Sioux Fair* (Indian House IH 4322)
 Los Reyes de Albuquerque con Los Violines de Lorenzo: *Tradicion y Cultura* (MORE Records MO-0811)
 Various artists: *Nova Domovina/A New Homeland: Balkan Slavic Music from the Industrial Midwest* (Ohio Arts Council OAC 601)
 Various artists: *Louisiana Cajun and Creole Music 1934: The Lomax Recordings* (Swallow LP-8003-2)
 Various artists: *The Wisconsin Patchwork* (Wisconsin Public Radio [producer] and the University of Wisconsin [distributor])

ETHNIC FOLKLIFE DISSERTATIONS

A bibliography listing dissertations on indigenous and immigrant ethnic folklife is available free of charge from the American Folklife Center: *Ethnic Folklife Dissertations from the United States and Canada, 1960-1980: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography* by Catherine Hiebert Kerst.

Ethnic studies developed into a legitimate field of study in the United States and Canada during the early 1960s, along with the realization that ethnic cultures were maintaining values, attitudes, and behaviors that set them apart from other groups. And recently attention has been paid to examining the dynamic and complex processes by which ethnic groups keep their identities. *Ethnic Folklife Dissertations* lists only those dissertations that give primary attention to folklife and shared folk cultural traditions as they operate within the context of a pluralistic society. The bibliography reveals major trends in ethnic folklife scholarship and indicates the various approaches that have been taken to the subject. It may be obtained by writing the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

HELEN HEFFRON ROBERTS, 1888-1985

Word has come recently to the Folklife Center that Helen Roberts died on March 26, 1985, at her home in North Haven, Connecticut. She was ninety-six.

Roberts was one of the pioneers of ethnographic field documentation, and her donations of wax cylinder recordings to the Archive of Folk Culture in 1936 provided the Archive's first substantial ethnographic and international material. The Archive now holds over four hundred wax cylinders Roberts collected during the 1920s and 1930s—material from Jamaica, Hawaii, California, and New Mexico. She also donated disc copies of an additional 375 cylinders collected by nineteen other anthropologists and writers, primarily containing Polynesian, African, and California Indian songs.

Trained in piano and music theory at the Chicago Music College and the American Conservatory of Music, both in her hometown, Roberts conceived an interest in anthropology and archaeology while spending several summers visiting the Pueblo Indians in the Southwest. She studied with Franz Boas at Columbia University and in 1919 received an M.A. degree in anthropology. Boas told her that the music and anthropology combination would give her a field to herself.

During the 1920s Helen Roberts studied North American Indian music, as well as musical instruments in the museums of Europe. In 1923-4, she conducted a survey of ancient Hawaiian music. She did field work in Jamaica, New Mexico, and California (with J. P. Harrington of the Bureau of American Ethnology). During the 1930s she continued her work with American Indian, Polynesian, Tahitian, and South African music and culture. She was on the staff of Yale University, where she set up an early recording laboratory. She was able to duplicate wax cylinders onto aluminum discs, and numerous collectors sent her cylinders for copying and transcribing.



Helen Heffron Roberts in California, 1926. Photo by J. P. Harrington. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution

In 1937 Roberts went to Tryon, North Carolina, to look after her father. In the 1940s her eyesight began to fail, and she was unable to be as active in her own research and study. After her father's death in 1944, she returned to Connecticut, where she devoted much of her time to supporting the New Haven Symphony.

In December 1979, Maria La Vigna of the Folklife Center's Federal Cylinder Project and David McAllester of Wesleyan University conducted an

interview with Helen Roberts at her home. The lady was ninety-one, and her memory of some periods of her career was dim. But the session proved to be informative and interesting. The following comments are characteristic:

On her facility for languages: I had a good ear. I was a musician, you see, and I had a good ear for language, and I was interested in it. . . . It wasn't any special training . . . I just had to go at it the raw way.

On collecting methods: I tried to get as much information about the individual, about his background or his tribe as I could, you know. But I realize that that was something that nobody was paying any attention to, and it would have its day someday, and I tried to make good records.

On relations with her informants and singers: . . . for the most part they were very friendly. They weren't in the beginning, but they knew they could trust me, and I made a rule, I never made a promise that I didn't keep. It didn't make any difference how awkward it was later to do it, or how time consuming. If I had said I would do it, I did it. . . . If I had said I would

not tell about this, they knew I would not tell. And they would give me material that they might not have given to somebody else.

On using a phonograph to record singers: . . . finally I got my phonograph from New York and records, and so I called him in [one of the singers in Jamaica she had been working with], and I asked him to sing into it. Well, he was a little dubious, it looked kind of funny to him, you know, and he didn't know whether it was going to jump at him or not. But anyway, he got down and he sang in and I said, "now would you like to hear this?" "Oh, yes," he wanted to hear it. So I put it onto reproducing instead of

recording and it sang it through and he looked at me. "Missy, you sure am God! You am the Lord himself!" he said, and with that he got down on the porch and did somersaults all the way to one end of the porch and back again as fast as he could! . . . So when I get discouraged, I say "You am God!" □

In addition to the materials in the Folk Archive's collection, there are Helen Roberts papers in the archives of Yale University. An article by Maria La Vigna on her 1979 interview, "A Visit with Helen Roberts," appeared in Folklife Center News, vol. 3, no. 1 (January 1980). Judith Gray and Joseph C. Hickerson contributed to the article above.

Center welcomes new board members: At the spring 1988 meeting of the American Folklife Center's Board of Trustees, Marta Weigle, William Kinney, Johnnetta Cole, and Alan Jabbour look over a passage in *Folklife: Our Living Heritage*, a report on folklife in Australia that refers to the Center. Marta Weigle and Johnnetta Cole, from New Mexico and Georgia, respectively, recently joined the board, and William Kinney, from South Carolina, was reappointed for a second term. *Photo by Reid Baker*





The Original Trinidad and Tobago Steelband of Washington, D.C., performed on the Neptune Plaza of the Library of Congress on July 16, 1987. The program for this year's concert series is listed on page 7. *Photo by John Gibbs*

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