

PROPOSED RECORDING EXPEDITION INTO  
THE FLORIDAS

So far as material worthy of preservation by recordings, Florida stands out from the other forty-eight states culturally as it does geographically.

Area I.

Got my knap-sack on my back  
My rifle on my shoulder  
Kill me a nigger 'fore Saturday Night  
If I have to hunt Floray over.

(Sung by Waldo Wishart, Ocala, Florida)

West Florida extends from the Perdido river on the west to Lake City on the east, ~~From~~ the Alabama-Georgia state lines on the north to as far south as Gilchrist County on the south. This is the Florida so well known to Spanish-French-English-Indian fighting tradition. The material is plentiful. There are men and women still alive who know and can tell of the struggles of four different groups of people to control this area. There are the Creole songs and customs of Pensacola and surrounding area. There are the African-American Negro folk tales in abundance and the religious and secular songs in plenty. This is a sort of culture pocket that is not being drained off so rapidly as other sections of the state.

The reason for this is that this section of Florida is the cotton-corn-tobacco region. Here people live under the patriarchal agrarian system. The old rules of life hold here. Down on the Gulf Coast of this section are large fishing and oyster settlements with their songs and traditions. West Florida is <sup>α</sup>very rich and little touched area. It is worth an expedition in itself. In addition to the purely cultural

material to be found it is possible to make recordings that bear on the economic and sociological set-up of the area. The new is hurling itself, not so effectually, against the old and the feudal life. The interviews should be particularly interesting. The shipyards and the like are the culture beds of other maritime folk creations. A serious study of blank verse in the form of traditional sermons and prayers.

## Area II.

De Cap'n cant read, de Cap'n cant write  
How does he know that the time is right?  
I asked my Cap'n what de time of day  
He got mad and throwed his watch away.

(Sung by Willie Joe Roberts, Jacksonville, Fla.)

From the St. Mary's river, which is the Georgia-Florida boundary line, to Gainesville on the south, and from Lake City to the Atlantic Ocean is Northeast Florida.

In this area we have a conglomerate of many cultures. There is the Georgia-Alabama "Cracker" with his farms and cows, his old-English traditions and ways. But here also are the descendants of the great old English, French and Spanish families and their monuments and culture. And occupation, the matrix of culture creation among peoples is in this area in a lavish way. In addition to the vast number of songs and the like handed down from England, there is a lavish of the stuff created by both black and white around their works. From Fernandina, Mayport and St. Augustine there is the lusty material of the sea folk, Jacksonville is a great port with its hustling, chanting stevedores and roustabouts. The

Proposed Recording Expedition  
#3

Jacksonville-Callahan area is full of railroad songs, chants and stories.

Ah Mobile!  
Hauh!  
Ah in Alabama!  
Hauh!  
Ah Fort Myers!  
Hauh!  
Ah in Florida!  
Hauh!  
Ah lets shake it!  
Hauh!  
Ah lets break it!  
Hauh!  
Ah lets shake it!  
Hauh!  
Ah just a hair!  
Hauh!

(Sung by Fred James Watson, 1225 W.Duval St.  
(Jacksonville, Florida)

In this same area there are men like old "Pap" Drummond of Fernandina who tell tales of the Pirates who roamed the Spanish Main and tell of buried treasures. Pap Drummond lives in his shack on the outskirts of Fernandina with his "family" of rattlesnakes rustling now and then in their dugout near at hand, and draws a long bow on the lawless men of the skull and cross-bones of yesteryear. He claims to have aided in the last recovery of pirate treasure.

Interviews with the Turpentine-Timber workers of this area would be extremely interesting. There has seeped in some impulse to change the old for the new and the comments of the laborers are very interesting from a sociological viewpoint.

There are rivermen in this area who have plied the St.John's River for more than one generation with their songs, stories and

observations. Some have seen the last of the Indian fighters go. Look for the roots of traditional sermons and prayers.

Area III.

I got a woman, she shake like jelly all over  
I got a woman she shake like jelly all over  
Her hips so broad Lawd, Lawd her hips so broad.

(Sung by Richard Jenkins, Mulberry, Fla.)

And they found him, found him in between two mountains  
And they found him, found him in between two mountains  
With head hung down, Lawd, Lawd with head hung down.

(Sung by Richard Jenkins, Mulberry, Fla.)

From the Palatka - Gainesville <sup>n</sup>like south to Tarpon Springs on the West Coast and Fore Pierce on the East Coast is a section of Peninsular Florida devoted to citrus fruits, turpentine, lumber, phosphate, celery and tourists. This area includes the justly famous Polk County, so full of varied industries that it is full of song and story. The most robust and lusty songs of road and camp sprout in this area like corn in April. "Uncle Bud" Planchita" "Ella Wall" and other real characters poured into song and shaped into legend. It would be profitable in this region to make a series of recordings on John, Jack, Big John, de Conquer (or) that great hero of Negro folklore who is Brer Rabbit and Brer Rabbit is him.

Look for fine examples of those folk poems in blank verse known as sermons and prayers.

Area IV.

Evalina, Evalina you know the baby dont favor me, Eh,  
Eh, you know the baby dont favor me.

(Sung by Lias Strawn, Miami, Fla. Drummed by "Stew Beef"

South Florida: This is the foreign culture area of Florida. That is foreign culture has not yet absorbed into the general pattern of the locality, or just beginning to make its influence felt in American culture. This foreign area really should be designated as a collection of areas. The Sanctified Church is strong in this area with its rebirth of spiritual and anthem making.

A. Tarpon Springs - A Greek sponge-fishing area with its Greek Orthodox ceremonies and other folk songs and customs.

B. Tampa - With the largest latin colony in the United States. Here the Cuban songs, dances and folk ways color the soil and flavor the air.

C. Miami - A polyglot of Caribbean and South American cultures.

1. More than 30,000 Bahamans with their songs, dances and stories, and instrumentation.
2. Haitian songs, dances, instrumentation and celebrations.
3. American Negro songs, games and dances.
4. American white songs and stories.
5. African songs, dances and instrumentation. There is a pure African colony there.

D. Everglades - Raw, teeming life of the frontiers and mining or construction camp type. A hot mixture of all the types of material of the area. Worth the whole trip alone. The life histories, Social, Ethnic studies would be rare and vital.

E. Key West to Palm Beach - Bahaman and Cuban elements in

abundance. Also the ~~can~~ settlement at Riviera. All new to study and worth a great deal of investigation.

SUMMARY: There is no state in the union with as much to record in a musical, folk lore, Social-Ethnic way as Florida has. To be sure California has the Chinese, Japanese, Philipino population which Florida lacks, but these Asiatic cultures seem so far from our own that they do not enter the stream of American culture at all. No other state in the union has had the history of races blended and contending. Nowhere else is there such a variety of materials. Florida is still a frontier with its varying elements still unassimilated. There is still an opportunity to observe the wombs of folk culture still heavy with life. Recordings in Florida will be like back-tracking a large part of the United States, Europe and Africa for these elements have been attracted here and brought a gift to Florida culture each in its own way. The drums throb: Africa by way of Cuba; Africa by way of the British West Indies; Africa by way of Haiti and Martin<sup>i</sup>que; Africa by way of Central and South America. Old Spain speaks through many interpreters. Old England speaks through black, <sup>h</sup>white and intermediate lips. Florida, the inner melting pot of the great melting pot - America.

Proposed Recording Expedition  
#7

(Sanctified Anthem)

O Lord, O Lord  
Let the words of my mouth, O Lord  
Let the words of my mouth, meditations of my heart  
Be accepted in Thy sight, O Lord.

(Sung by Mrs. Orrie Jones, Palm Beach, Florida)

Respectfully submitted

Zora Neale Hurston