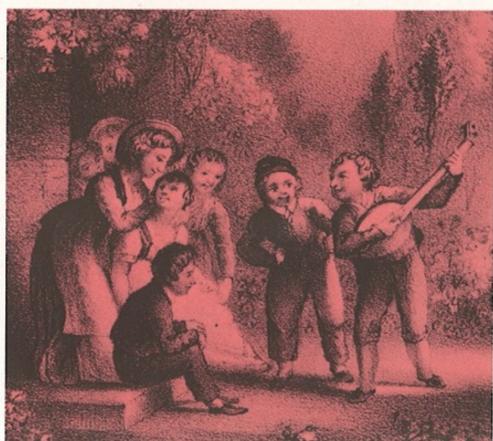
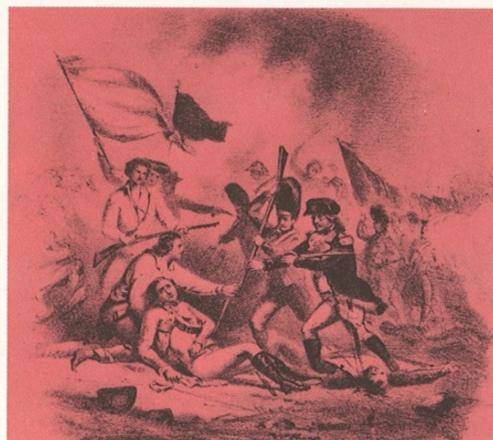
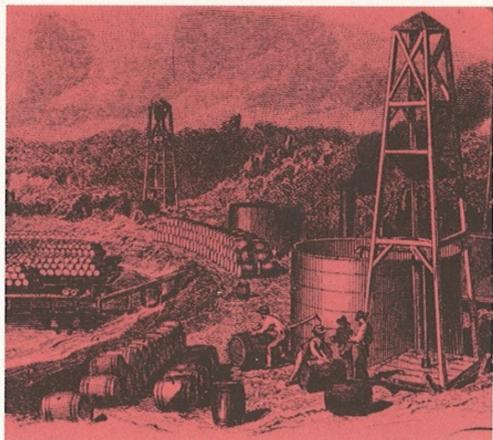
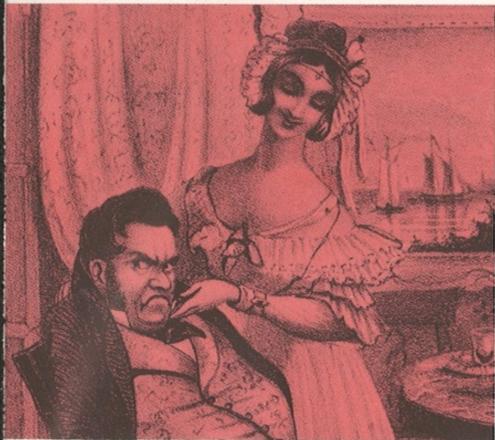
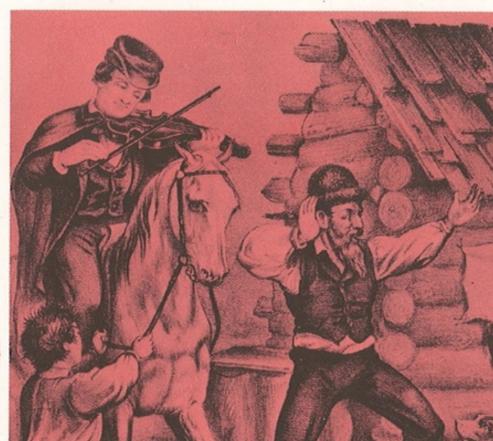
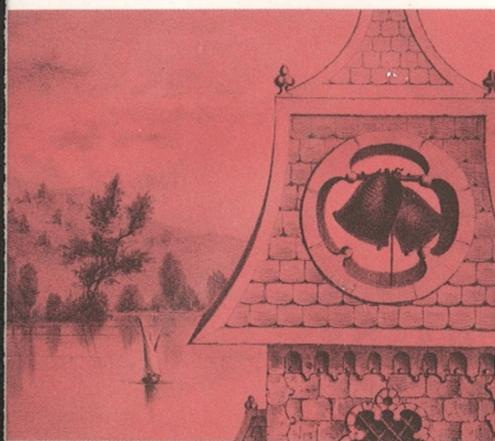


FOLK MUSIC IN AMERICA

Volume 12

Songs of Local History & Events

Edited by Richard K. Spottswood



A project of the Library of Congress American Revolution Bicentennial Program
supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, MUSIC DIVISION, RECORDING LABORATORY LBC 12

LBC 12

FOLK MUSIC IN AMERICA is published in celebration of the American Revolution Bicentennial by the Library of Congress with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. This series of 15 recordings provides many examples of the traditional music which forms an essential part of the American heritage. The selections have been chosen from field and commercial sources and include recordings made from the nineteenth century to the present.

THE ARCHIVE OF FOLK SONG in the Library of Congress has been since 1928 the chief repository for field recordings of American folk music and folklore. From this extensive collection the Library has been publishing selected documentary recordings for public purchase; many have accompanying brochures which supply transcriptions of the texts, historical background, stylistic analysis, and references to other publications. A catalog of these recordings is available from the Library at the address below.

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Volume 12

Songs of Local History & Events

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Library of Congress Washington 1978



LOCALITIES AND LOCAL EVENTS are the themes of these songs. Americans are attached to their cities, towns, and rural areas. A birthplace or growing-up place is an obvious source of nostalgia, especially when one has moved away and good memories have displaced the bad. Even a place merely visited can produce the special associations that form the basis for a song. And many songs depend on the prevailing reputation of a place or its well-known features—the steep hills and cable cars of San Francisco, the cuisine and jazz of New Orleans, and New York's Harlem, Central Park, and theater district need little explanation to audiences far away from them.

These songs of places and local events derive from different sources, some evolving from personal proximity in time and place, others from a heritage of oral tradition. Papa Charlie Jackson describes the sights of Lexington, Ky., and the people casually encountered there on a brief trip. "The Boston Burglar" and "Trail to Mexico" are based on centuries-old ballads that have been recast—often many times over—to narrate different events and circumstances. New songs describing local events have been composed well into the present century and frequently continue to be popular beyond the actual memory of the events chronicled. A good example is "Wreck of the Old 97," a version of which is included in volume 9 of this series. Widely known through Vernon Dalhart's Victor recording and important in the development of the country music record industry, the song itself is today more significant than the event.

Other songwriters followed in Dalhart's footsteps, notably the Reverend Andrew (Blind Andy) Jenkins, who created songs like "The Death of Floyd Collins" and "The John T. Scopes Trial" from contemporary newspaper accounts, reinforcing popular interest through the medium of the phonograph record. The "Hatfield-McCoy Feud," an obvious and occasionally confusing extraction from historical and folk sources, conforms stylistically to the Jenkins models and is included here.

Popular corridos, represented here by "Una Vuelta a Texas" and "Gregorio Cortez," made early appearances on records. Abrego y Picazo, Rosales y Robinsón, and other artists were performing these Mexican and Mexican-American narrative ballads on Columbia and Victor records before World War I.

Several songs are apparently personal expressions of encounters and reflect regional stereotypes, primarily of locals whose ways seem backward to outsiders claiming greater sophistication. Uncle Dave Macon and Jimmie Davis deal with the people of Nashville, Tenn., and Arkansas in this fashion, and the mutually derogatory views of the Trio Melodias Mexicanas and Lonnie Johnson are particularly en-



Lone Star Cowboys, 1931; left to right: Leon Chappellear, Bob Shelton, Joe Shelton

lightening in their mock-serious expression of regional and cultural prejudices.

The selections and recordings cited in the notes are from commercial and private sources as well as from unpublished recordings in the collections of the Archive of Folk Song, and standard discographical information is provided. The AFS number is the accession number assigned to the recording in the Archive's files, and the last name in an AFS entry is the name of the collector.

Besides those credited elsewhere in these notes, I would like to thank Francis Smith, John Cowley, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Phipps, Chris Strachwitz, Sister Ann Brady, Bob Pinson of the Country Music Foundation, and Guthrie T. Meade, all of whom have helped in the production of this record.

Lone Star Cowboys

A1. Deep Elm Blues

Leon Chappelle, lead vocal, guitar; Joe Shelton, vocal, mandolin; Bob Shelton, vocal, ukulele; Chicago, Ill., August 4, 1933. (2:41) Victor 23843, Bluebird B-6001 (BVE 76869-1); used by permission of RCA Records.

Now when you go down to Deep Elm just to have a little fun
You better have your fifteen dollars when the police man comes

Aw sweet mama, Daddy's got them Deep Elm blues

Now when you go down to Deep Elm put your money in your shoe
'Cause the women in Deep Elm got them Deep Elm blues

Once I had a sweetheart, she meant the world to me
She took a trip to Deep Elm, now she ain't what she used to be

Pick that thing boy, pick it!

Once I knew a preacher, he preached the Bible through and through
He took a trip to Deep Elm, now his preachin' days are through

Aw, work on it!

Now when you go down in Deep Elm put your money in your socks
Or the women in Deep Elm, well they'll put you on the rocks

Bob and Joe Attlesey were the oldest children in a family of 10. Born in 1909 and 1911, respectively, they grew up in Reilly Springs, a small community in the southeast part of Hopkins County, Tex. Their parents were farmers and times were hard, so they left home in 1929 to try to make it on their own. They traveled to the oil fields of east Texas, entertaining for tips and root beer at hamburger stands. They reached Tyler, Tex., in 1930 and were

given a 30-minute radio spot six days a week on station KGKB. For their six-dollar weekly salary they were also expected to keep the studio clean. They changed their last name and became the Shelton Brothers, moving to Shreveport, La., in 1932 with the singer and guitarist Leon Chappelle. It was here that they changed their group name from the Lone Star Cowboys to the Sunshine Boys during a contest for listeners sponsored by their new station, KWKH.

Their first records were made for Victor in 1933 and included both of the successful songs which have been identified with the Shelton Brothers over the years, "Just Because" and "Deep Elm Blues," though neither song sold well in its original version. Both songs were recorded again after the Sheltons switched to Decca in 1935, and several versions of each song were released. In 1936 they went to Dallas to work on WFAA's "Early Birds" program, and they began to tour regularly, playing for radio stations and personal appearances in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Though they still make an occasional appearance, Bob and Joe Shelton have been retired from music for a number of years.

"Deep Elm Blues" commemorates the old Dallas red-light district which was razed during urban renewal projects following World War II.

—Joe Shelton

Related recordings

Dallas Jamboree Jug Band, "Elm Street Woman Blues," Vocalion 03092 (DAL 103-), 1935.

Texas Bill Day and Billiken Johnson, "Elm Street Blues," Columbia 14514-D (w149538-2), 1929.

Georgia Crackers, "Georgia Black Bottom," Okeh 45111 (w80-596-A), 1927.

Doc Roberts Trio, "Coal Tipple Blues," Banner 33242, Conqueror 8510, Melotone M-13209, Oriole 5392, Perfect 13073, Romeo 5392 (15749-), 1934.

Shelton Brothers (Bob and Joe), "Deep Elem Blues," Decca 5099, 46008 (C 9809-A), 1935; "Deep Elem Blues No. 2," Decca 5198, ca. 1936; "Deep Elem Blues No. 3," Decca 5244, ca. 1937.

The Carter Family

A2. It'll Aggravate Your Soul

A. P. Carter, vocal; Maybelle Carter, guitar; Sara Carter, autoharp; Camden, N.J., May 8, 1934. (3:24) Bluebird B-5817, Montgomery Ward M-4541 (BVE 83140-1); used by permission of RCA Records.

Come all of you people, take warning from me
Don't take no girl to Tennessee
For if you get married and don't agree
It'll aggravate your soul



A. P. Carter, left, with Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Phipps, 1954

We left Maces early in the night
Expect to get married before daylight
So many things happened to hinder our flight
It aggravated my soul

Arrived into Bristol at eleven o'clock
The parson was there right on the spot
We found that the license had been forgot
It aggravated my soul

We went for the license in an automobile
Run so fast (you) couldn't see the wheel
No one can explain how bad I did feel
It aggravated my soul

We stayed all night at the Bristol Hotel
Just to make folks think we were swell
Next morning they put it in the Bristol *Herald*
It aggravated my soul

And when the new style book's comin' around
She began to get ready to go to town
You know right then she's millinery shop bound
It'll aggravate your soul

She wants a new coat and a hobble skirt
And you can't get in for the young 'uns and dirt
And when she gets out, oh how she will flirt
It'll aggravate your soul

And when depression [the pressure?] gather around
your head
You'll think of what your dear old mother said
With a pain in your back and heart and head
It'll aggravate your soul

Now young men, take warning from me
Don't take no girl to Tennessee
For if you get married and don't agree
It'll aggravate your soul

"It'll Aggravate Your Soul" is one of a handful of recordings which featured the solo voice of Alvin Pleasant Carter (1891-1960), whose singing was usually confined to harmony with Sara and Maybelle. According to A. L. Phipps, this song was Carter's own

composition and in part commemorated the comical series of events surrounding his 1915 marriage to Sara. By 1932 they had separated, though they continued to perform and record together. Their recording of this song together two years later must have been a poignant occasion.

Gail Gardner

A3. The Syerry Petes

Prescott, Ariz., April 23, 1975, recorded by James S. Griffith and Richard K. Spottswood. (2:45) AFS 18,002 A2.

Away up high in the Syerry Petes
Where the yeller pines grows tall
Old Sandy Bob and Buster Jig
Had a rodeer camp last fall

They taken their horses and their runnin' irons
And maybe a dog or two
And they 'lowed they'd brand all the long-eared calves
That come within their view

And any old dogie that flapped long ears
And didn't bush up by day
Got his long ears whittled and his old hide sizzled
In the most artistic way

Now one fine day old Sandy Bob
He threwed his seago down
"I'm sick of the smell of burnin' hair
And I 'lows I'm a-goin' to town"

So they saddles up and they hits 'em a lope
For it weren't no sight of a ride
And them was the days when a buckaroo
Could oil up his insides

Oh they starts her in at the Kaintucky Bar
At the head of Whiskey Row
And they winds up down by the Depot House
Some forty drinks below

They then sets up and turns around
And goes her the other way
And to tell you the God-forsaken truth
Them boys got stewed that day

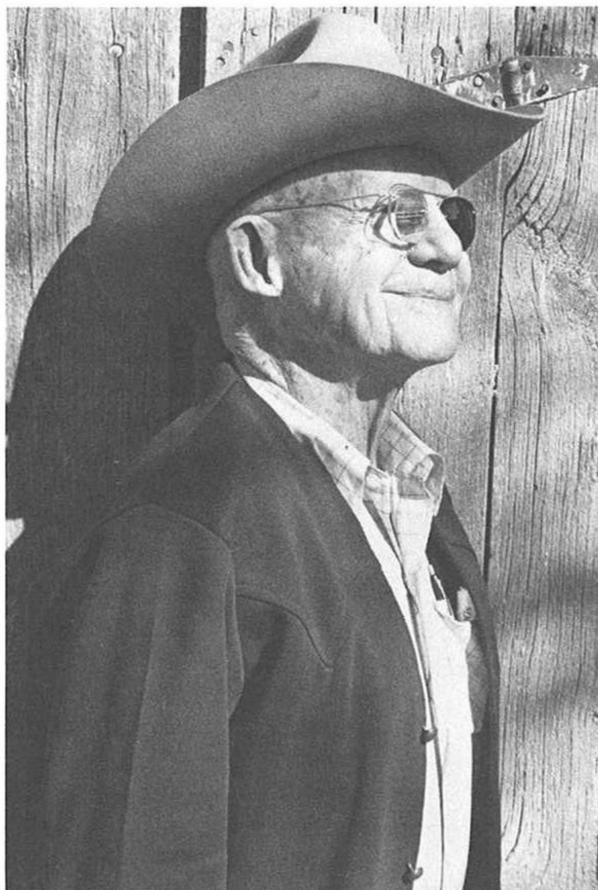
As they was a-ridin' back to camp
A-packin' a pretty good load
Who should they meet but the devil himself
A-prancin' down the road

Says he, "You ornery cowboy skunks
You'd better hunt your holes
For I've come up from hell's rimrock
To gather in your souls"

Says Sandy Bob, "Old devil be damned
We boys is kinda tight
But you ain't gonna gather no cowboy souls
(With)out you has some kind of a fight"

So Sandy Bob punched a hole in his rope
And he swang her straight and true
He lapped it onto the devil's horns
And he taken his dallies too

Now Buster Jig was a riata man
With his gut-line coiled up neat



Gail Gardner, 1976. Photo by Jon Gripe

So he shaken her out and he built him a loop
And he lashed the devil's hind feet

Oh they stretched him out and they tailed him down
And while the irons was a-gettin' hot
They cropped and they swaller-forked his yeres [ears]
And they branded him up a lot

They pruned him up with a de-hornin' saw
And knotted his tail for a joke
They then rode off and left him there
Necked to a black jack oak

If you're ever up high in the Syerry Petes
And you hear one hell of a wail
You'll know it's that devil a-bellerin' around
About them knots in his tail

This good-humored tall tale is the work of the singer himself, Gail I. Gardner, and was recorded in his home, where he was born in 1892. The "Syerry Petes" was the name an old prospector gave to the mountain range west of Prescott, Ariz., which was better known as the Sierra Prietas. Gardner explains that the song "rests on a slender foundation of fact." He was camped in the mountains with another cowboy named Bob Heckle when they decided to come into Prescott to drink, gamble, raise some Cain, and visit some women whom Gardner delicately refers to as "dispensers of delight." While they were returning to camp, Heckle said, "The devil gets cowboys that do what we been doing." Another man traveling with them replied, "Well, the devil, if he

comes and jumps us, why we'll neck him up to a black jack oak the way we've been tying up these outlaw steers," that is, tie him to a tree until he is tamed, like wild cattle.

Traveling east in 1917 to join the Aviation Corps, Gardner was riding the train through Kansas when he wrote the words as a poem and sent it back to his sister for safekeeping. He recovered it several years later and showed it to a friend, Bill Simon, who began singing it to the tune of "Polly Wolly Doodle." It spread quickly and by the 1930s folklorists were collecting it as a traditional cowboy song.

According to Gardner, a rodeer camp is a cattle roundup camp, and a seago "is a grass rope. It's also called a Plymouth yacht line. We always called 'em a seago, I suppose, because we thought they was made of sea grass." To have "taken his dallies" means the cowboy had tied his rope around the saddle horn; a riata, or gut-line, is a braided rawhide rope; and "swaller-forked" ears are notched, a method of marking cattle for ownership.

Gail Gardner has been a cowboy as much by choice as necessity. His father brought his family to Prescott in 1879 and opened a general merchandise store which prospered over the years. Young Gail graduated from Prescott High School in a class of seven and was sent east to Phillips Exeter Academy and Dartmouth College to complete his education in mathematics and science. Nevertheless, when he returned to Arizona, it was as a cattle rancher, a profession he never abandoned until his retirement in 1960. Another song by Gardner is included in volume 11 of this series.

Related recordings

Gail Gardner, Arizona Friends of Folklore AFF 33-1 (33 1/3, *Cowboy Songs*), 1971.

Powder River Jack and Kitty Lee, "Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail," Victor 23527, Montgomery Ward M-4462 (BVE 61049-2), 1930. Also on RCA Victor LPV 522 (33 1/3, *Authentic Cowboys and Their Western Folksongs*).

Reference

John I. White, *Git Along Little Dogies: Songs and Songmakers of the American West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), pp. 117-25.

Papa Charlie Jackson

A4. Lexington Kentucky Blues
With banjo, Chicago, Ill., ca. September 1928. (2:59) Paramount 12700 (20861-1); used by permission of Jazzology-Southland Records, Atlanta, Ga.

Went down to Kentucky just to play the fair
Went down to Kentucky just to play the fair
It's a mighty fine place, you all ought to go there

Lord I'm leavin' my baby, leaving her all alone
Lord I'm leavin' my baby, leaving her all alone
Then my baby cried out, "Papa, come back and let me
hear you moan"

Lord I went to see the horse they call Man O'War
I went to see Man O'War, the horse that had a lead
Then my baby said he's fast, but he really haven't got
my speed

I stopped by Mr. O'Neal's, down on Limestone Street
I stopped by Mr. O'Neal's, down on Limestone Street
He's mighty fine man, had a crowd of people for me
to meet

Went by Mr. Wright Porter's, president of the fair
Went by Mr. Wright Porter's, president of the fair
He's a mighty fine man, he's always on the square

Went out to the race track, races hadn't started yet
Went out to the race track, races hadn't started yet
Someone say the track is sloppy, boys, and I swear it
was wet

Stopped by Mr. Steve Lee's, 'cross from the Jackson
Hall

Stopped by Mr. Steve Lee's, 'cross from the Jackson
Hall

Got a letter from my baby, she love me see me and it
ain't no stall

When I leave Kentucky I know I really can lose
When I leave Kentucky I know I really can lose
I'm coming back to my baby but I'll have the
Lexington 'tucky blues

Papa Charlie Jackson was a popular entertainer in the 1920s and one of the first male artists to sell a large number of blues records. Two were especially successful—"Salty Dog Blues" (Paramount 12236) in 1924 and "Shake That Thing" (Paramount 12281) in 1925. Both became popular nationally and must have provided Jackson with opportunities to travel professionally, including an appearance, around the summer of 1928, in the Lexington fair described in this song.

Unlike "Old Timbrook Blues," which documents a celebrated event, Jackson here gives us more of a personal memoir, very nearly in the form of a musical postcard. Attempts to track down the people and places he mentions have not been successful, leaving us to deduce what we can from the song itself. Man O'War's record-breaking career was over by 1928, but he was in Lexington siring future champion racers. Jackson identifies Wright Porter with the fair at which he was performing. Perhaps Mr. O'Neal owned a record store and had arranged for an autograph party for the visiting celebrity, hence the crowd of people. Steve Lee may have been postmaster, and the reference to Jackson Hall is too brief to tell us whether it was a local landmark or just a place which had special significance to Jackson's stay in Lexington. Actually, it is fairly clear that these details

probably were important only to those involved. For them the recording was a gracious gesture and memento of a pleasant encounter. For us it offers a glimpse of a traveling bluesman's life half a century ago.

Lonnie Johnson

A5. Got the Blues for Murder Only

With guitar, New York City, November 22, 1930. (3:20) Okeh 8846 (w404560-A); used by permission of CBS Records.

Down in old Mexico where a child will slap your face
Down in old Mexico where a child will slap your face
They make up bread with [?] peppers, drink gun-
powder to kill the taste

Women down in Mexico is bad as bad can be
Women in old Mexico, they're bad as bad can be
They eats rattlesnakes for breakfast and drinks the
rattlesnakes' blood for tea

Down in old Mexico their bed is made out of thorns
and trees
Bed is made out of thorn trees and the pillows out of
rocks and stones
They got rattlesnakes for bodyguards, wildcats to
watch over 'em all night long

I'm going back to old Mexico where there's long long
reachin' guns
I'm going to old Mexico where there's long long
reachin' guns
When they want real excitement they kill each other
one by one

Down in old Mexico where everybody's wild and free
Down in old Mexico where everybody's wild and free
'Cause over here in this country they don't kill 'em fast
enough for me

Down in old Mexico where they kill 'em both night and
day

Down in old Mexico where they kill 'em both night and
day

Where the chief locks up the jailhouse and the judge
goes home and stays

For notes, see A6.

Trio Melodias Mexicanas

A6. Una Vuelta a Texas (A Whirl at Texas)

(?) Herrera, (?) Quiroga, (?) Gonzales, vocal, accompanied by guitar and requinto; Chicago, Ill., January 28, 1935. (3:05) Decca 10093 (C 9739-A). Transcription and translation by Georgette Dorn.

Soy de puro Guanajuato la tierra de los valientes
Dónde por una mirada se tumban todos los dientes
Y al venirme pa' Laredo para pasear por estado de
Texas

En dónde dicen que mandan a los maridos las viejas
Y cuando llegué a Falfurrias me dijo una artesanita
"A que pelado tan fiero y que cara tan bonita"

Y al pasar por San Benito me dijo una vieja fea
"No te aflijas mi chivo pues veletas alean"
Y despues en Cotula me dijo una mexicana

"Si quieres tratar de amores pagalos de buena gana"
Pero si vas a San Antonio y le faltan los dineros
Se pomen en gran peligro que lo agarren los terreros

Vámonos pa' nuestra tierra que Texas es un infierno
Porque allá en toditas partes pues están a purito cuerno
Y por eso a todas horas oigo opinarse el alarde
El que a México no quiere que vaya y vuelva en la
tarde

I am from Guanajuato, the land of the brave
Where you can get your teeth knocked out for looking
the wrong way

Upon arriving in Laredo to have a whirl at Texas
I heard that the old women have their husbands in
their pockets

On arriving in Falfurrias a little working girl said to me
"What an ugly bald head, but you have a cute face"

On passing through San Benito, a homely old woman
told me

"Don't worry, lamb, everything will come out fine"

Later in Cotula a Mexican girl said

"If you want love, you'll have to pay for it"

But in San Antonio if you don't have ready cash

You'll be in danger from the gunslingers

Let's go back to our land, for life in Texas is sheer hell

Everywhere there are people being cuckolded

And so I hear people say

He who doesn't like Mexico should go up to Texas

And come back in the afternoon.

In a tradition of mutual suspicion as old as time, this and the preceding song both express the same opinion—that the people across the border are barbarians—but from opposite points of view. Lonnie Johnson is known to have been to Texas on at least one occasion, with an Okeh field expedition in 1928 to San Antonio. A number of Spanish-language recordings were made then, and this may have formed the germ of an idea for a song. However, Bessie Smith's "Black Mountain Blues," recorded exactly four months before this performance and released on Columbia 14554-D, had a remarkably similar theme and therefore might also have provided a basis for "Got the Blues for Murder Only."

On the other hand, "Una Vuelta a Texas" describes the experiences of a man from the southern part of Mexico who makes a swing across southern Texas, encountering only prostitutes, bandits, and insults in the towns he visits. Nothing is known of the Trio Melodias Mexicanas, which recorded several times for Decca in the 1930s.

Jimmie Davis

A7. In Arkansas

With guitar and slide-guitar, Memphis, Tenn., November 29, 1930. (2:50) Victor 23525 (BVE 64756-2); used by permission of RCA Records.

Talk about the place where the folks are tough
Way down in Arkansas
The babies all dip Garrett snuff

Way down in Arkansas
 They use possums for yard dogs
 Way down in Arkansas
 The people sleep in hollow logs
 Way down in Arkansas

They climb grapevines and scale the trees
 Way down in Arkansas
 And they crack hickory nuts on their knees
 Way down in Arkansas
 They run 'em down to comb their hair
 Way down in Arkansas
 And the old grandpas look like bears
 Way down in Arkansas

They eat wildcats at early morn
 Way down in Arkansas
 They don't drink coffee, they drink corn
 Way down in Arkansas
 The women grow tall and big around
 Way down in Arkansas
 The men look up and reach way around
 Way down in Arkansas

They don't wear pants, haven't got 'em for sale
 Way down in Arkansas
 They wear long shirts with great long tails
 Way down in Arkansas
 The women wear dresses that drag the ground
 Way down in Arkansas
 And the boys and the gals go round and round
 Way down in Arkansas

Arkansas has provided a frequent target for humorous description in print and song since the first half of the nineteenth century. Satirical accounts written by early visitors (some of whom never bothered to visit), popular songs such as "The Arkansas Traveller," and the cartoons and sketches of the Dogpatch School of comic art have created a myth of a land at the back of the beyond, peopled by a wild, shiftless, shrewd cast of characters indifferent to or at odds with the mainstream of American life. This song, which has variants related to "Uncle Dave's Travels In and Around Nashville" and the Irish song of the famine years "Over Here," represents a tough, aggressive view of the folks "down in Arkansas."

Jimmie Davis (b. 1902), best remembered by country music fans as the composer of "You Are My Sunshine" and "Nobody's Darlin' But Mine," incorporated large amounts of folk and folk-influenced material in his repertoire. Not only was he a successful professional performer, he also served as a professor of history and political science at Dodd College and was twice elected governor of Louisiana. Like the Gail Gardner song on this record, Davis' song is here set to "Polly Wolly Doodle."

—Erika Brady

Related recording

Pickard Family (Dad, Mother, Bubb, and Ruth), "Down in Arkansas," Brunswick 348 (C 3949-), 1929.

References

- Austin E. and Alta S. Fife, *Cowboy and Western Songs* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1969), pp. 96-97.
 Patrick Galvin, *Irish Songs of Resistance* (London: Workers' Music Association, 1955), p. 44.
 James R. Masterson, *Tall Tales of Arkansas* (Boston: Chapman & Grimes, 1942).
 Walter Peterson, *Walter Peterson's Sensational Collection of Mountain Ballads and Old Time Songs* (Chicago: M. M. Cobb, 1935), pp. 6-7.
 Vance Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs*, 4 vols. (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50), 3:34-35.

Uncle Dave Macon

- A8. Uncle Dave's Travels, Part 3 (In and Around Nashville)
With banjo, Chicago, Ill., June 20, 1929. (2:50) Brunswick 355 (C 3669-).

Well, folks, you know I live with my mother-in-law's daughter forty-two miles from Nashville, and I been in and around Nashville and in there and out. And I've heard [?] some things and I've seen a-right smart, and now I'll sing you a little about 'em.

Oh, the girls are all sweet in Nashville
 Oh, the girls are all sweet in Nashville
 Oh, the girls are all sweet and they dress up so neat
 But they've got such great big feet in Nashville

Oh, the men chew tobacco thin in Nashville
 Oh, the men chew tobacco thin in Nashville
 They chew tobacco thin and it runs down on their chin
 But they lick it in again in Nashville

Oh, the girls dress knee-high in Nashville
 Oh, the girls dress knee-high in Nashville
 Oh, the girls dress knee-high and as they go walking by
 Oh, they make the old men cry in Nashville

If you want to get a drink in Nashville
 If you want to get a drink in Nashville
 If you want to get a drink, give a Democrat the wink
 And you'll get it 'fore you think in Nashville

Well, Hoover was elected from Nashville
 Well, Hoover was elected from Nashville
 Hoover was elected, Al Smith was rejected
 But he's very highly respected around Nashville

Oh, they grow potatoes small around Nashville
 Oh, they grow potatoes small around Nashville
 Oh, they grow potatoes small and they dig 'em in the fall
 And they eat 'em skin and all around Nashville

It is curious that one of the most poignant songs concerning the Irish potato famine should have generated in this country the robust parody applied to different areas, including "In Arkansas" and "In Kansas." The original speaks of starving men who do not even scrape their tiny potatoes before devouring them:

Oh, the praties they grow small over here, over here
 Oh, the praties they grow small over here,
 Oh, the praties they grow small
 And we dig them in the fall
 And we eat them, coats and all, over here

The same behavior in the parody becomes the carelessness of boorish wastrels.

This recording is one of a series of four by the Grand Ole Opry entertainer Uncle Dave Macon. Parts 1, 2, and 4 included songs about Arkansas, Louisville, Ky., and "A Visit at the Old Maid's," released on Brunswick 349, 340, and 362, respectively.

—Erika Brady

References

- H. M. Belden, *Ballads and Songs Collected by the Missouri Folklore Society* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1940), pp. 428-29.
 Ed Cray, *The Erotic Muse* (New York: Oak Publications, 1969), p. 13.
 Austin E. and Alta S. Fife, *Cowboy and Western Songs* (New York: Clarkson S. Potter, Inc., 1969), pp. 96-97.
 Patrick Galvin, *Irish Songs of Resistance* (London: Workers' Music Association, 1955), p. 44.
 Vance Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs*, 4 vols. (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50), 3:17-19.

The Johnson Family Singers

- B1. The Death of Ellenton
Vocal sextet with guitar, probably Nashville, Tenn., May 7, 1951. (2:13) Columbia 20896 (CO 45883); used by permission of CBS Records.

Where the broad Savannah flows along to meet the mighty sea
 There stood a peaceful village that meant all the world to me
 'Twas the home of happy people, I knew each and every one
 All my kin and all the friends I loved, the town was Ellenton

But the military came one day and filled our hearts with woe
 "We'll study war right here," they said, "the little town must go"
 Then they came with trucks and dynamite, the din and dust rose high
 As I stood and gazed in silence there and watched my hometown die

Then they brought bulldozers by the score where children used to play
 Pushed over all the trees we loved and scraped the flowers away
 Now the homes are gone, the schoolhouse too, the sweat and toil of years
 And with them all of our hopes and joys of past and future years



The Johnson Family Singers, 1947; Betty at the piano with, left to right, Bob, Red, Jim, Ma, and Pa

The little church was hauled away, the fields are
brown and bare
And in their place a mighty plant—they build the
H-bomb there
Now the smoke hangs o'er the valley like the mist
before my eyes
That has been there ever since the day I saw my
hometown die

All the friends we've known and loved we'll meet
upon some other shore
But Ellenton, fair Ellenton, is gone forevermore

On November 28, 1950, President Truman announced plans for the construction of an atomic energy facility along the banks of the Savannah River in Aiken County, S. C. The local residents were stunned. With only five-weeks notice for some, the townspeople of Jackson, Dunbarton, Snelling, and Ellenton had to leave the land their families had occupied since the eighteenth century. Approximately 8,000 people in the area were displaced; every building not relocated was razed.

Ellenton was the largest of the towns, with a population of 750, eight stores, three churches, and a paved main street. A new \$30,000 addition to the

school had been completed only a month before the evacuation notice.

The government promised to pay fair market value for the property it acquired, and the former residents were given job preference in the new facility. The local economy in the adjacent communities boomed. A former dairy farmer was quoted in the *New York Times* (October 4, 1951) as saying, "Nobody has suffered except for sentimental reasons." But emotional impact was probably the true cost of the project. Despite their new-found prosperity, the former residents began calling themselves the "first displaced persons of World War III." A sign appeared within a week of Truman's announcement, tacked to the name and population marker on the outskirts of Ellenton, which read: "It is hard to understand why our town must be destroyed to make a bomb that will destroy someone else's town that they love as much as we love ours. But we feel that they picked not just the best spot in the U.S. but in the world. We love these dear hearts and gentle people who live in our home town."

—Holly C. Baker

John Byrd

B2. Old Timbrook Blues

With 12-string guitar, Grafton, Wis., ca. April 1930. (3:20) Paramount 12997 (L 291-1); used by permission of Jazzology-Southland Records, Atlanta, Ga.

Old Timbrook was a black horse, black as any crow
Old Timbrook was a black horse, black as any crow
Had a white ring 'round his forepaw, white as any
snow

Yes old Timbrook he come dartin' like a bullet from a
gun

Old Timbrook he come dartin' like a bullet from a gun
And old Molly she come creepin' like a prisoner to be
hung

Johnny Walker, Johnny Walker, Johnny Walker my
dear son

Johnny Walker, Johnny Walker, Johnny Walker my
dear son

Hold tight rein on Timbrook so that horse can run

Ah, the cuckoo was a fine bird, hollers when he flies
Ah, the cuckoo was a fine bird, hollers when he flies
But he never hollers cuckoo 'til the fourth day (of)
July

Ah, the race track it was dusty and the wind was high
Ah, the race track it was dusty and the wind was high
Well you couldn't see old Timbrook as he came dartin'
by

Ah, the children they did holler and they also squalled
Ah, the children they did holler and they also squalled
But old Timbrook he beat Molly to the hole in the
wall

I love my race horse, like to have my fun
Yes I love my race horse, like to have my fun
Old Missus went to the race track, lost alla her mon

When the Kentucky Derby was first run in 1875, grueling four-mile contests were in fashion in the racing world. The July 4, 1878, match between the Kentucky thoroughbred Ten Broeck and the California mare Miss Mollie McCarthy at Churchill Downs (then called the Louisville Racetrack) was the last of these. In 1957, Mrs. Evelyn Polk Eldred of Princeton, Ky., reported that she had learned a ballad of Ten Broeck and Mollie at the age of eight from a family servant, placing the date of the earliest known version of this song in 1884. Ten Broeck's name appears variously as Tenbrook, Tenbrooks, Tinpenny, and here as Timbrook. It is apparently a form of the Anglo-Irish ballad "Skew Ball" which had appeared in print in the 1820s. In many areas where both songs enjoyed popularity their words and stories became almost interchangeable.

Virtually nothing is known about John Byrd.

—Judith R. Harway

Related recordings

Texas Gladden, "Old Kimball," AFS 5233 B, Salem, Va., 1941, Alan and Elizabeth Lomax; released by

the Library on AFS 4 and L 1 (33 1/3).

Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, "Molly and Tenbrooks (The Race Horse Song)," Columbia 20612, 2-323 (33 1/3), CS 1065 (33 1/3), Harmony HL 7388 (33 1/3) (CCO 4887), 1947; Decca 30486 (45), ED 2585 (45), DL 8731 (33 1/3), DL 75010 (33 1/3), DL 75025 (33 1/3) (9822:102740), 1957.

The Stanley Brothers, "Molly and Tenbrook," Rich-R-Tone 418, Melodeon MLP 7322 (33 1/3) (9754), ca. 1947.

Henry Thomas ("Ragtime Texas"), "Run Mollie, Run," Vocalion 1141, Herwin H 209 (33 1/3) (C 1222-), 1927.

References

William Hugh Jansen, "Ten Broeck and Mollie' and 'The Rose of Kentucky,'" *Kentucky Folklore Record* 4 (October-December 1958): 149-53.

G. Malcolm Laws, *Native American Balladry* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964), p. 242, H 27.

D. K. Wilgus, "Ten Broeck and Mollie: A Race and a Ballad," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 2 (July-September 1956): 77-89.

—, "Ten Broeck and Mollie: A Further Note," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 2 (October-December 1956): 141-42.

Amede Ardoin

- B3. La Valse ah Abe (Abe's Waltz)
Amede Ardoin, vocal, accordion; Dennis McGee, fiddle; New Orleans, La., December 9, 1929. (3:01) Columbia 40511-F (w111388-2); used by permission of CBS Records. Transcription and translation by Ann Allen and Marc Savoy.

Mon je m'en vas à la maison
Mon, tout seul, quoi faire ton 'tit neg?
Pas personne pour faire mon besoin
Comment je vas faire, prends tout la, ouais, du chemin?

Ton papa et mes parents
Pense je vas faire jamais vous autres vas me voir encore
Mes souffrances sont 'près m'en aller
Tu te rappelles, mon aller, mon tout seul

Moi, je connais pas si jamais je vas revenir encore
Sera pour voir mes parents, ouais, et ma femme
Je [suis?] condamné pour quatre-vingt dix neuf ans
Je connais pas si je vas revenir donc, jamais

Oh toi, 'tite fille
Mon tout seul, je m'en aller, pour tout ça
Quand quiqu'un quitte chagrin pour muser
Je comptais pas si tu peux remercier ton papa et ta maman

I'm going home
All alone, what will your sweetheart do?
No one will tend to my needs
What will I do, you're taking to the road?



Abe Boudreaux,
of Abe's Palace

Your father and my parents
Think I'll make it, so that you others won't see me
again
My sufferings are leaving me
You remember, I'm going all alone

I don't know if I'll ever return
It will be to see my parents and my wife
I'm condemned for ninety-nine years
I don't know if I'll ever come back

Oh you, little girl
I'm leaving all alone for all that
When someone leaves sorrow behind for amusement
I didn't think you could have thanked your mother
and father for that

"La Valse ah Abe," spelled in typically garbled record company French, commemorates Abraham Edward Boudreaux (1880-1975), a Eunice, La., merchant and owner of Abe's Palace, a second-floor dance hall. Abe's Palace began in the early 1920s to provide entertainment for a young clientele from Acadia and adjoining parishes. The fine Eunice fiddler Sady D. Courville remembers playing the Saturday night fais-do-dos at Abe's with Amede Ardoin and a second fiddler, Shelby Vidrine, as early as 1924. Admission was 25 cents per person, and people would begin arriving in wagons and buggies, on horseback, and in automobiles in the late afternoon. The musicians would start playing around 8 or 8:30 while the girls talked in the hall until the boys came in to ask them to dance. The affairs usually lasted about four hours. Fathers stood in the streets or in nearby stores, visiting among themselves, and mothers watched the dancing inside Abe's, acting as chaperones until the end of the evening, when they escorted the couples outside.

Abe's Palace was equally well known for its band dances on Sunday evenings, which usually featured jazz groups from out of town like Papa Celestin's from New Orleans and the Nine Black Devils from Thibodeaux and Donaldsonville. Sady Courville him-

self took up tenor banjo for awhile and worked at Abe's with a short-lived group called the Cajun Jazz Band, which also included a trumpet, clarinet, two saxophones, and drums. The band dances were more expensive to produce, and \$2.50 admission was charged. When Courville couldn't afford the admission, Boudreaux allowed him to check hats and coats until intermission, when he was free to join the dancing until closing.

Another piece by Amede Ardoin is included in volume 14 of this series.

Related recordings

- Vin Bruce, "Convict Waltz," Swallow LP-6016 (33 1/3, *Vin Bruce's Cajun Country*), ca. 1970.
Iry Le June (*sic*), "Convict Waltz," Goldband GBLP 7740, (33 1/3, *The Greatest Iry Le June or The Legendary Iry Le June*), ca. 1953.
The Rambling Aces, "99 Year Waltz," Swallow 45-111, ca. 1961.
Rufus Thibodeaux, "Convict Waltz," La Louisianne LL-129 (33 1/3, *The Cajun Country Fiddle of Rufus Thibodeaux*), ca. 1971.

Red Brush Rowdies

- B4. Hatfield-McCoy Feud
With fiddle, banjo, and guitar, Chicago, Ill., ca. August 1928. (2:57) Paramount 3122 (20807-1); used by permission of Jazzology-Southland Records, Atlanta, Ga.

Up in the sticks where the politics
Were very much in vogue
The mountain roosters they run wild
And the people talk of rogues

The story runs, so it all begun
With Satan's smoke and fog
A love triangle was the first
Then a razorback wild hog

A son and daughter fell in love
The parents they made strife
She tried to elope but they brought her back
She could not be his wife

The election come with a little rum
Made anger in their breast
They murdered one of their fellow men
And laid him down to rest

'Twas all in Ringo [i.e. Mingo] County
A little mountain state
In the hills of West Virginia
Where many met their fate

The trouble grew until they drew
Their weapons and took aim
And many noble men they fell
The parties all were game

For twenty years the blood and tears
They flowed until we see
A friend who stepped upon the scene
The son of Galilee

In mountain shacks we hear the smack
Congratulations paid
It now is raining in the hills
The marriage it was made

A daughter fair and a son declare
Their vows go hand in hand
There has been born of noble blood
A governor for our land

The Hatfield-McCoy feud began in 1882 after a series of bitter controversies. Ill feeling started during the Civil War when the families fought on separate sides, then grew until a quarrel over the possession of a hog went to court. As a result of the legal battle, a relative of the Hatfields was mysteriously murdered.

A thorn in the side of both families was the clandestine love affair between "Devil" Anse Hatfield's son and Randolph McCoy's daughter. The parents would not approve the relationship, and they were never allowed to marry.

Both families made moonshine, and their gatherings generally ended as drunken brawls. On August 7, 1882, Randolph McCoy and three sons had a fight at an election gathering with Ellison Hatfield, which resulted in Hatfield's murder. The day after his death, the McCoy brothers were found shot to death. Randolph McCoy was infuriated and took revenge on the Hatfields. The Hatfields shot back, and for 20 years a vicious battle was waged.

This song appears to have been written at some distance in both time and place from the events it describes, as the singer's mispronunciation of Mingo County suggests. Even more obscure are the lines about "the son of Galilee," usually a reference to Christ, and "a governor for our land."

Although the Red Brush Rowdies are not identified, they probably included the popular singers Frank Welling and John McGhee, who were recording at the same time. One song by McGhee is included in volume 7 of this series.

—Sue Manos

Related recording

Lowe Stokes, Homer Miller, Walt McKinney, Heavy Martin, Roger Williams, Bill Brown, "The Great Hatfield-McCoy Feud," Parts 1-4, Brunswick 422, 423 (K 8106- , K 8111- , K 8112- , K 8113-), 1930.

Leola Manning

B5. The Arcade Building Moan
With piano and guitar, Knoxville, Tenn., ca. April 6, 1930. (3:02) Vocation 1492 (K8086-).

It was on one Thursday morning, March the twentieth day

I think it was about two a.m., I believe I can firmly say
The women and the children was screamin' and cryin'
Not only that, they was slowly dyin'
Oh listen, listen how the bell did ring
When the Arcade Building burnt down

I want you to listen, listen how the bells was ringing
And the people fell to the ground
They jumped through the windows, ran down the stairways and out the door
They was looking for safety or they could not live no more
Oh, it was sad, sad, oh how sad
When the Arcade Building burnt down

The brave [?] firemen they could not go home to eat
The Salvation women with coffees and cakes kept them up on their feet
But the lord saved Clark David, death was so nigh
Carl Melcher and his wife were separated by the fire
Oh listen, listen, how the bells did ring
When the Arcade Building burnt down

Play it
Oh, it was sad that morning
Several people lost their lives when the Arcade Building burnt down
What a moan in Knoxville

They jumped through the windows, ran down the stairways and out the door
They were looking for safety or they could not live no more
Oh it was sad, sad, oh how sad
When the Arcade Building burnt down

The Arcade Building on Union Avenue in Knoxville was a two-story structure containing businesses and 15 apartments. As the song tells us, it caught fire at 2 a.m. on March 20, 1930, only two weeks before Manning's recording. Firemen fought the blaze for hours, but it eventually consumed the Arcade and several neighboring structures as well.

Because the fire began with an explosion, police suspected arson. At first Carl Melcher, who owned a barber supply business in the building, was suspected. His electrocuted body was found several doors away and it was thought he might have died in trying to escape. Subsequently a coroner's jury determined that he had died trying to combat the flames.

The Salvation Army supplied 20 gallons of coffee to firemen. Clyde Davis (Clark David in the song) was an auto mechanic who lived in the building. He jumped from the second story to save Rachel Godwin who had jumped earlier and ensnared herself in overhead power lines.

Reference

Knoxville *Journal*, March 20-30, 1930.

Pete Steele

B6. The Boston Burglar
With banjo, Hamilton, Ohio, March 30, 1938,

recorded by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax. (2:33) AFS 1704 A1.

I was born and raised in Boston
A city you all know well
I was raised by honest parents
The truth to you I'll tell

I was raised by honest parents
And raised most tenderly
I came to be a sporting man
At the age of twenty-three

I first learned to ramble
Ramble, rob and steal
Whenever a big haul I would make
How happy I did feel

Up stepped that old jailer
One night about ten o'clock
The keys were in his pocket
The jail to be unlocked

They put me on that northbound train
One cold December day
And every city I passed through
I heard the people say:

"Well yonder goes that Boston burglar
They got him handcuffed down
It's for some crime or another
He's bound for Charlestown"

There stands my old father
A-pleading at the bar
There stands my old mother
A-tugging out her hair

Tugging out them old grey locks
And tears come pouring down
Saying "Oh my darling son
You're bound for Charlestown"

The young man described in this song may actually have been arrested in Boston and jailed in Charlestown, as this and many other versions of the song state. The song may also be an intentional parody of an Australian song, "Botany Bay," which tells in similar terms of a young criminal being deported from England to an Australian penal colony.

Pete Steele (b. 1891) was one of the most outstanding performers recorded for the Archive of Folk Song in the 1930s. He recorded "Boston Burglar" during a four-day visit by Alan Lomax to his home. He remembers first hearing the song when he was 10, and old folks were singing it then. Other Pete Steele songs are on several Library of Congress releases, and he recorded an album for Folkways in the 1950s.

Related recordings

Green Bailey, "Twenty Years in Prison," Conqueror 7255 (as Amos Baker), 1928.

Al Bernard, Grey Gull 4173, Madison 50048, Radiex 4173 (2791), 1927.

Fiddlin' John Carson, Okeh 40419 (73459-), 1925.
Vernon Dalhart, Brunswick 2942, Aurora 22029,



Pete and Lilly Steele, 1974. Photo by Margo Newmark Rosenbaum

- Supertone S2005, Vocalion 15216, 5085 (E 1977-78: E16055-56), 1925.
 Vernon Dalhart, Edison 51608, 5129 (cylinder) (10540-), 1925.
 Hickory Nuts, "Louisville Burglar," Okeh 45169 (w81612-A), 1927.
 Frank Hutchison, Okeh (w401109-B), unissued, 1928.
 Frank Hutchison, Okeh 45425 (w402504-), 1929.
 Celia Kelder, AFS 12309 B11, Phoenicia, N.Y., 1958.
 Bascom Lamar Lunsford, AFS 9514 A3, Washington, D.C., 1949, Library of Congress.
 Pie Plant Pete (Claude Moye), Gennett 6758, Champion 15752 (as Asparagus Joe), Supertone 9351, ca. 1929.
 Pie Plant Pete, Conqueror 8435 (C 769-1), 1934.
 Riley Puckett, Columbia 15050-D (w141081-), 1925.

References

- Library of Congress, Music Division, *Check-List of Recorded Songs in the English Language in the Archive of American Folk Song to July, 1940* (Washington, D.C., 1942), pp. 34-35. Lists 13 additional recorded versions.
 G. Malcolm Laws, *American Balladry From British Broad-sides* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957), pp. 14, 174-75, L 16 A & B.

The Blue Sky Boys

- B7. Trail to Mexico

Bill Bolick, tenor vocal, mandolin; Earl Bolick, lead vocal, guitar; Curly Parker, fiddle; Atlanta, Ga., 1946. (2:30) AFS 17,976 A14.

Right now, Earl and I have a real old-timer for you, "Trail to Mexico."

It was in the merry month of May
 When I started for Texas far away
 I left my darling girl behind
 She said her heart was only mine

When I embraced her in my arms
 I thought she had ten thousand charms
 Her caresses were soft, her kisses were sweet
 Saying, "We'll get married next time we meet"

It was in the year of '83
 That A. J. Stimpson hired me
 He says "Young man, I want you to go
 And follow this herd into Mexico"

Well, it was early in the year
 When I started out to drive those steers
 Through sleet and snow 'twas a lonesome go
 As the herd rolled on into Mexico

Well, I started back to my once-loved home
 Inquired for the girl I had my own
 They said she'd married a richer life
 Therefore, wild cowboy, seek another wife

Oh curse your gold and your silver too
 God pity a girl that won't prove true
 I'll travel west where the bullets fly
 I'll stay on the trail till the day I die

"Trail to Mexico provides an interesting contrast to the Blue Sky Boys' "Midnight on the Stormy Deep," included in volume 2 of this series. Several scholars claim it is a reworking of the older song with

cowboy language and imagery. "Midnight" usually has a preliminary verse, not included in the Bolicks' text, which compares strikingly with the opening verse of this song:

Early, early in the spring
 I went on board to serve my king
 I left my own dear girl behind
 Who had often told me her heart was mine
Leroy Roberson, Victor 23522

In contrast with the final two lines, Roberson sings:

I'll go to the sea, sail till I die
 And sweep the decks where the bullets fly

This song has been excerpted from a radio broadcast transcription made in the WBT studios in Atlanta. Other songs by the Blue Sky Boys are included in volumes 2, 8, 9, and 10 of this series.

Related recordings

- Jules Allen, "The Cow Trail to Mexico," Victor 23757 (BVE 50567-2), 1929.
 Bill Bender, Elite X17, ca. 1940.
 Cass County Boys, Bluebird B-8806, ca. 1941.
 Daca, AFS 3652 A2 & B1, New York City, 1939, Herbert Halpert.
 Frank Goodwyn, AFS 2622 A1, Falfurrias, Tex., 1939, John A. and Ruby T. Lomax.
 Mrs. Lucile Henson, AFS 658 B1, San Antonio, Tex., 1936, John A. Lomax.

The Blue Sky Boys, Bill, standing, and Earl, mid-1940s



The Massey Family, American Record Corp. (C 641-) and (C 669-), unissued, 1933.
 Harry McClintock and his Haywire Orchestra, Victor V-40016 (BVE 42074-2), 1929.
 "Mac" (Harry McClintock) and his Haywire Orchestra, Victor (BVE 42121-2), unissued, 1929.
 Len Nash and his Country Boys, Brunswick 354, Supertone 2069 (LAE 547-), ca. 1929.
 Carl T. Sprague, "Following the Cow Trail," Victor 20067 (BVE 33143-3), 1926.
 Texas Rangers, Decca 5183 (C 9903-), 1935.

Reference

G. Malcolm Laws, *Native American Balladry*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964). pp. 17, 139, B 13.

Timoteo Cantu and Jesus Maya

- B8. Gregorio Cortez
Vocal duet, with Narciso Martinez, accordion; Santiago Almeida, bajo sexto; Merced Martinez, contrabajo; probably San Antonio, Tex., mid-1950s. (2:54) Ideal 294. Transcription and translation by Philip Sonnichsen.

En el condado del Carmen
 Miren lo que ha sucedido
 Murió el sherife mayor
 Quedando Román herido

Otro día por la mañana
 Cuando la gente llegó
 Unos a los otros dicen
 No saben quien lo mató

Se anduvieron informando
 Como tres horas después
 Supieron que el malhechor
 Era Gregorio Cortez

Insortaron a Cortez
 Por toditito el estado
 Vivo o muerto que se aprenda
 Porque a varios ha matado

Decía Gregorio Cortez
 Con su pistola en la mano,
 "No siento haberlo matado
 Al que siento es a mi hermano"

Decía Gregorio Cortez
 Con su alma muy encendida
 "No siento haberlo matado
 La defensa es permitida"

Decían los americanos
 "Si lo vemos que le haremos
 Si le entramos por derecho
 Muy poquitos volveremos"

Gregorio le dice a Juan,
 "Muy pronto lo vas a ver,
 Anda hablale a los sherifes
 Que me vengan a prender"

Cuando llegan los sherifes
 Gregorio se presentó,
 "Por la buena si me llevan
 Porque de otro modo no"

Ya agarraron a Cortez
 Ya terminó la cuestion,
 La pobre de su familia
 La lleva en el corazón

In the country of the Carmen
 Look what has happened
 The main sheriff died
 Leaving Roman wounded

The following morning
 When the people arrived
 Some to the others said
 They don't know who killed him

They were investigating
 And about three hours later
 They found out that the wrongdoer
 Was Gregorio Cortez

Cortez was wanted
 Throughout the state
 Alive or dead may he be apprehended
 For several he has killed

Said Gregorio Cortez
 With his pistol in his hand,
 "I'm not sorry for having killed him
 It's for my brother that I feel sorry"

Said Gregorio Cortez
 With his soul aflame
 "I'm not sorry for having killed him
 Self defense is permitted"

The Americans would say
 "If we see him what shall we do to him,
 If we face him head on
 Very few will return"

Gregorio says to Juan,
 "Very soon you will see him,
 Go on talk to the sheriffs
 To come to arrest me"

When the sheriffs arrive
 Gregorio presented himself,
 "You'll take me if I wish it,
 Because there is no other way"

Now they caught Cortez
 Now the case is closed,
 His poor family
 He carries in his heart

Leaving his Reynosa, Mexico, birthplace at age 12 in 1887, Gregorio Cortez went to Texas and joined his older brother Romaldo, who was working as a cowboy and farm laborer. They acquired property and had settled in Karnes County, Tex., by 1901,

when he was confronted by Sheriff Brack Morris, who accused him falsely of stealing a horse. Shooting broke out, in which Morris wounded Romaldo and was in turn killed in self defense by Gregorio, who then fled. He eluded his pursuers for over a year but was finally captured on June 22, 1902, when he was spotted by someone who turned him in for the \$1,000 reward. During his flight, Gregorio was involved with another sheriff and deputy in a gun battle. Both of them died, though it was uncertain whether or not by Cortez' hand. These incidents achieved wide publicity, nevertheless, and his series of trials lasted for three and a half years. On January 1, 1905, he began serving a life sentence but was pardoned in 1913 by Texas governor O.B. Colquitt. Going to Nuevo Laredo on the Mexican side of the border, he joined the revolutionary forces and was fatally wounded in 1916.

A long ballad about him was soon in circulation, achieving lasting fame for its subject and serving as inspiration to the exploited native Mexicans and Indians in the border region. Cortez became a folk hero, one who stood up for his rights *con su pistola en su mano* and was willing to die for his honor. This corrido (literally, running song) is one of the most famous and typical of a large genre which emerged during the last century and continues to flourish today. Américo Paredes has devoted a book, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), to the story and background of "Gregorio Cortez" and has explored the border-song genre in *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). A collection of vintage corrido recordings has been released as *Texas-Mexican Border Music, Volumes 2 & 3 (Corridos, Parts 1 & 2)* on Folklyric 9004 and 9005. It includes a fuller version of "Gregorio Cortez."

There is no information about the performers in this recording.

Related recordings

Los Alegres de Teran, Falcon FLP 2035 (33 1/3, *Corridos Famosos*), 1960s.
 Trovadores Regionales (Pedro Rocha and Lupe Martinez), Vocalion 8351, Folklyric 9004 (33 1/3, *Texas-Mexican Border Music, Volume 2*) (SA 283-A/SA 284-A), 1934.

Reference

Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 96-99.