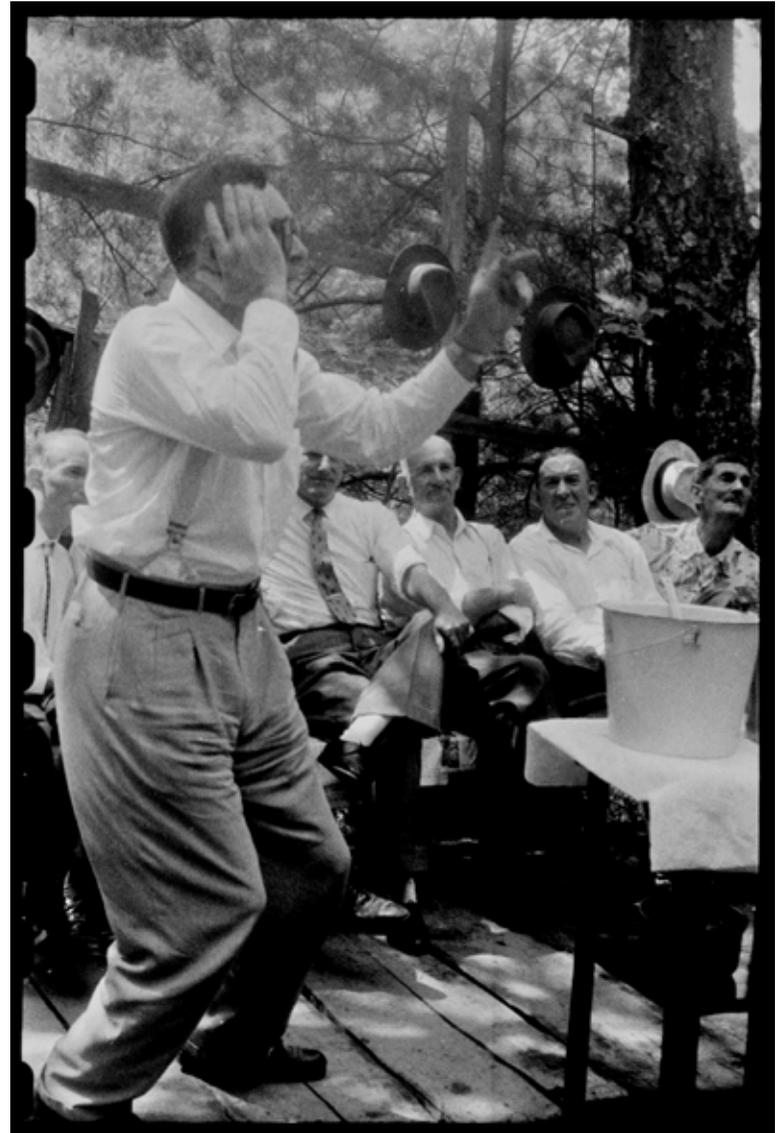


I'm Gonna Live Anyhow Until I Die

Field recordings from Alan Lomax's
"Southern Journey"
1959 - 1960



SIDE ONE

A1. Number 111.

J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers: J.E. Mainer, Jim Dillon, Glenn Mainer, Floyd Overcash.
Concord, North Carolina. October 13, 1959.

The handful of recordings of North Carolina's J.E. Mainer and his band, the Mountaineers, were the last of Lomax's 1959 trip and were not made under the most pleasant conditions. Alan had made an appointment to meet Mainer that evening, but he and Collins had met with engine trouble, bad weather, and a broken windshield-wiper on their long drive northwest from the Georgia Sea Islands. They finally arrived at eleven p.m. to a chilly reception from the band, who had been waiting for four hours, but who nevertheless ran through a solid set of breakdowns, old ballads ("Three Nights Drunk") and some of more recent vintage ("Columbus Stockade Blues"), and this fine rendition of "Southern Number 111." The Roane County Ramblers of East Tennessee were the first to record the train-imitation piece, in which Number 111 travels north from Knoxville to Danville, Kentucky. J.E. Mainer and the Mountaineers first cut their version, in which 111 departs Louisville for Raleigh and points southwest, for Bluebird on Valentine's Day, 1936. At one in the morning, Mainer bid Lomax and Collins a curt good night, leaving them to spend their last five dollars on a motel before they returned to New York City.

A2. 61 Highway.

Fred McDowell, vocal and guitar.
Como, Mississippi. September 25, 1959.

Fred McDowell was a farmer who emerged from the



Alan Lomax recording the Pratcher brothers,
Como, Mississippi.

woods on the first day of fall, 1959, and ambled over to his neighbor Lonnie Young's front porch in his overalls with a guitar in hand. Lomax had no idea what he was in for, but after McDowell's first song he knew he was in the presence of one of the most original, talented, and affecting country bluesmen ever recorded.

There are many close cognates of Fred's version of "61 Highway." Versions by Jack Kelly's South Memphis Jug Band and by Kelly's fiddler, Will Batts -

lyrically identical and cut the same day in 1933 - share with Fred's not only the highway itself (an important one for Memphians in the pre-Interstate era) but also its distinction as the "longest road I know." McDowell's references to the Greyhound bus, and his request to be buried along the highway, echo Robert Johnson's "Me and the Devil Blues" (1937) and Curtis Jones's "Highway No. 51" (as well as Tommy McClennan's 1940 adaptation of the latter, "New Highway No. 51"). But McDowell's "61 Highway" is in text, delivery, and spirit very much his own. Lomax typed one word after this performance's entry in his field log: "Perfect."

A3. Chantey medley: Evalina / The Promised Land / Cap'n, Don't You Know / Bitin' Spider / Jack O' Diamonds.

Bright Light Quartet: Shedrick Cain, James Campbell, Arnold Fisher, and Lawrence Hodge.
Weems or White Stone, Virginia. April 6, 1960.

The Bright Light Quartet were a group of menhaden fishermen whose chanteys reflected their work hauling nets aboard the fishing packets that plied the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic, from Long Island to the Gulf of Mexico. Menhaden, a bony, inedible fish processed for its oil and its use in livestock feed, provided well-paying work to young African American men in the Northern Neck of Virginia and the Outer Banks of North Carolina - the industry's two centers of production being in Reedville, VA, and Beaufort, NC. Lomax remarked that "for reasons unknown to me, the work songs we found in the Negro prisons along the Atlantic coast form the basis of the menhaden fleet repertoire." The work being seasonal, the singers of these songs were migratory, and many had experience as muleskinners, gandy-dancers, and roustabouts, and with the Southern prison farms - thus with the work-song

repertoire. The labor was grueling and, as with tie-tamping on the railroad or timbering on the farm, singing coordinated and energized the workers and gave them an outlet for their exhaustion and frustration. William Hudnall, former leader of the Northern Neck Chantey Singers - a revival group of retired menhaden fishermen - recalled in 1991: "You'd be pulling as hard as you possibly could pull. And I mean you'd be straining. And you couldn't get them to come up at all. Somebody hit that chantey, and started to get into it. And after awhile you see, here it starts coming up. Inch by inch.... After awhile they'd start showing. That's where you'd see all this foam start dripping. You hadn't killed them and they hadn't killed you. But it was fifty-fifty - you were nearly dead and so were they." Like their railroad and penitentiary counterparts, the majority of menhaden fishermen were black, the captains and mates white; working conditions were often abusive, pay could be arbitrarily withheld, and the young fishermen were away from home and loved ones for weeks at a time. This medley of chanties speaks to these hardships and the men's determination to overcome them.

A4. Tribulations.

E.C. Ball, vocal and guitar; Lacey Richardson, harmony vocal and second guitar.
Rugby, Virginia. August 30, 1959.

Estil Cortez Ball owned a service station, drove a school bus, and was a gifted guitarist and baritone singer. He first recorded for the Library of Congress in 1937, when John A. Lomax met him at the Galax Fiddlers' Convention. Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger made more recordings of E.C. at Galax in 1941. Alan recalled that "when I again went calling at their mountain home in 1959 - which



Bessie Jones, Williamsburg, Virginia.

perches on the highest ridge between Virginia and North Carolina - it seemed to me that Estil Ball had been waiting for the visit for years. He had vastly improved his guitar playing; his voice had deepened and become more sure." In the intervening eighteen years, Ball had also gotten religion, founded several gospel groups, and had added to his cache of play-party songs, dance tunes, and ballads a large quantity of hymns, country gospel numbers, and religious pieces of his own composition. "Tribulations" was one of the latter - a stark and unsettling meditation on the end of days as envisioned by the Book of Revelation and a celebration of a hard-won faith in redemption. E.C. and his wife Orna made several albums in the 1960s and '70s, and became frequent performers in regional churches and over the radio, appearing on weekly gospel music broadcasts. He died in 1978.

A5. Daniel In the Lion's Den.

Bessie Jones, lead vocal, with Joe Armstrong, Jerome Davis, John Davis, Peter Davis, Henry Morrison, Willis Proctor, and Ben Ramsay. St. Simons Island, Georgia. May 5, 1960.

Lomax first visited the Georgia Sea Island of St. Simons in 1935, a trip for which his collaborator Zora Neale Hurston blacked his face with walnut juice oil so as not to call attention to their interracial research group. He found there an ensemble called the Spiritual Singers of Coastal Georgia, organized by Lydia Parrish (wife of painter Maxfield Parrish) two years earlier. Parrish was devoted to the task of preserving the spirituals, ring-plays, and shouts of the island's rich, isolated folk culture, with its roots running deep through the Antebellum South to West Africa.

In the years since Lomax's last visit, the musical community of St. Simons had been enriched by the presence of Bessie Jones, a singer and song-bearer of monumental proportions. Bessie had been raised in North Georgia in a large and deeply musical family, in which if someone couldn't sing they could play an instrument. She learned many of her songs from her mother, Julia - a dancer, singer, and autoharp player - and her step-grandfather, Jet Sampson. Sampson, who was born in Africa in 1836 and sold into slavery as a child, taught young Bessie about the slave experience and "the old ways." Jones moved to St. Simons with her husband Cassius Davis around 1929, and joined the Spiritual Singers in the late 1930s, bringing her considerable abilities and repertoire.

Alan Lomax and Bessie Jones saw their roles not just as preservers of folk material but as teachers of it. In 1961 Bessie visited Alan and his wife in New York and over the course of three

months they recorded over fifty hours of interviews, stories, and songs. During this time she and Lomax also worked up a formula for the Georgia Sea Island Singers to become an independent touring group and present their material to a diverse spectrum of audiences. Throughout the 1960s and '70s she toured with the Singers, performing at folk festivals, universities, nightclubs, and, most proudly, at the Poor People's March on Washington in 1968. Bessie Jones died in Brunswick, Georgia, in 1984.

A6. Heaven Is Mine.

Unidentified woman, lead vocal, with the Pentecostal Temple congregation.

Pentecostal Temple Church of God In Christ, Memphis, Tennessee. October 4, 1959.

The evening worship service at Bishop J.O. Patterson's Pentecostal Temple marked the only occasion Alan Lomax ever recorded the ecstatic music of the Church of God In Christ. The black Pentecostal Holiness church separated itself from the Baptists through shouting, speech-in-tongues, spirit possession, and musical instruments; it was first in introducing electric instruments to its services. The experience of being overcome and possessed by the presence of the Holy Spirit was called "holy rolling," and gave the Pentecostals the name "Holy Rollers."

This Memphis COGIC congregation had been meeting since 1924, but the Pentecostal Temple was a new construction, completed in the summer of 1952 and opened under the charismatic leadership of Bishop Patterson. Lomax described it as "one of the finest and richest of the Pentecostal establishments, a church with its own private recording studios, with a huge trailer-truck to carry its revival



Members of the Union Choir of the Church of God and Saints Of Christ. Solomon Carey, left. Belleville, Virginia.

tent up and down the country. It is impossible, even for stereo, to catch the great golden crash of the music there."

SIDE TWO

B1. Shout Lula.

Emma Hammond, banjo.

Lexington, Alabama. September 8 or 9, 1959.

Also known as "Fish On A Hook" and "Hook and Line," this dance tune been recorded by dozens of fiddlers and banjo players from across the South, including early hillbilly-era recording artists Uncle Dave Macon, Samantha Bumgarner, and Henry Whitter. Emma's catfish lines are of minstrel deri-

vation; another of her verses is a variation on a slavery-era ring-play - although she told Lomax that after joining the church she had misgivings about singing it and consequently mumbles her words. First collected in the late nineteenth century, usually in some form of the popular "Raise A Ruckus Tonight," the verse went: "My old mistress promised me / When she died she'd set me free / Now she's dead and gone to hell / I hope the devil burns her well." Emma recalled learning "Shout Lula" at the age of seventeen from a boy who came courting her.

B2. I'm Going Home.

Ervin Webb and prisoners, vocals.

Dairy Camp, Parchman Farm (Mississippi State Penitentiary), Parchman, Mississippi. October 7-9, 1959.

Alan Lomax first experienced the group work songs of Southern black prisoners in 1933, when he was seventeen years old. He and his father John A. Lomax visited penitentiaries that year in Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Mississippi, making the first audio recordings of a music remarkable for its intensity, creativity, and nobility in spite of the brutal conditions in which it was spawned. The Lomaxes were initially interested in the remote, insulated prison farms as potential repositories of antebellum black song; as Alan Lomax, Bruce Jackson, and others have noted, they were for all intents and purposes twentieth-century replicas of the slave plantation, with unpaid black laborers working under the whip and the gun. But what the Lomaxes found there was nothing less than a new music. The work songs adapted the field holler - the free-metered, unaccompanied solo song of protest and complaint that sired the blues - into many-voiced chants propelled by the rhythmic

Ervin Webb, Dairy Camp,
Parchman Farm
(Mississippi State
Penitentiary)



striking of axes and hoes, and whose purpose was, as Jackson has put it, "making it in Hell."

Lomax wrote in 1960: "The penitentiary, with its hours of hard work and loneliness, has been a song factory. Even in my last visit in 1959, I found three or four new pieces, among which this touching and noble song was, perhaps, the best." Its leader and composer, Ervin Webb, told Lomax that it was "just a make-up." Five years earlier he was "out on the line (the work gang), but I was thinking about going home. I believe it was on a Saturday evening - one of the biggest times I have out in the free world.... Just started singing it. Just got on my mind, and just started hummin' to myself, and just continued.... A few days later, we was workin' together, the whole line, and I started on it and they began to help me." It had since become part of the Parchman repertoire. This intimate version was recorded a capella, without the hoes or axes that would typically accompany it "out on the line."

B3. WROS Scottsboro Old-Time Religious Hour excerpt.

In transit between Scottsboro and Huntsville, Alabama. September 12, 1959.

Lomax captured this piece of religious radio testimony while he was driving, onto a machine called a Midgetape. This forerunner of the Dictaphone was promoted by the Mohawk Business Machines Company as "the World's First Battery-Operated Pocket Tape Recorder." WROS was based in Scottsboro in 1959, but later moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where it continues to broadcast preaching, sermons, and gospel music at "5000 crystal clear watts." Nothing is known about this preacher.

B4. The Devil's Dream.

Hobart Smith, fiddle.

Williamsburg, Virginia. April 28, 1960.

Over a dozen years had passed since Lomax had last seen the talented multi-instrumentalist Hobart Smith and his gifted ballad-singing sister, Texas Gladden. In 1946 the siblings had left their homes in Southwest Virginia's Blue Ridge for a trip to New York, a concert with Jean Ritchie at Columbia University, and a session at Decca Studios, where Lomax was then serving as a producer of an American folk music album series. Lomax's first stop in 1959 was to visit the Smith family, although he found that failing health had somewhat constricted the abilities Texas had demonstrated in '46 and earlier, in 1941, when Alan first recorded her. Hobart, on the other hand, was still as spry as ever - on guitar, fiddle, banjo, even piano.

The following spring Lomax visited Williamsburg, Virginia, as a consultant to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's "Music of Williamsburg"

film. Charged with recreating the music of the colony, Alan invited Hobart Smith to travel from his Blue Ridge Mountain home to take part in a multi-racial musical ensemble that also featured members of the Georgia Sea Island Singers. It was in Williamsburg that Lomax recorded "The Devil's Dream," alternately known as "John Brown's Dream (The Devil Was Dead)," which Hobart had learned from his grandfather.

Lomax's 1946 sessions (issued on Moses Asch's Disc label in 1948) and, later, his Southern Journey recordings of Hobart Smith deeply inspired many young folk revivalists, who set in earnestly trying to copy Smith's fiddle, banjo, and guitar styles. Meanwhile, according to John Cohen, Hobart was "going on old-age pension and worrying about his future." In 1963 Alan helped arrange concerts for him at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music, Club 47 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and for the Friends of Old-Time Music in New York; a Newport Folk Festival appearance came in the summer of 1964. In this period, Cohen continues, "Hobart Smith's music was as fine and as distinctive as it was when he made his early recordings, but his chances of achieving the stature of his contemporaries" - other heroes of the Revival like Clarence Ashley and Roscoe Holcomb - "were cut short by death." Smith's health began failing later that year, and he died in January of 1965.

B5. The Devil's Dream.

Sid Hemphill, four-note quills and vocal effects; Lucius Smith, drum.

Senatobia, Mississippi. September 22, 1959.

Multi-instrumentalist, band-leader, and composer Sid Hemphill was for decades the musical patriarch of the Mississippi Hill Country. He and his

band - comprised of Alec Askew, Will Head, and Lucius Head - were a fixture at dances and picnics for rich and poor, black and white alike; Sid made many of their instruments and wrote a number of their songs. "I can play... I don't know, sir, hardly," he told Lomax. "Lemme see: play guitar, fiddle, mandolin, snare drums, fife, bass drum, quills, banjo, pretty good organ player."

Alan first recorded Blind Sid in 1942, at a country picnic near Sledge, Mississippi, where the Hemphill band was appearing. It was here that Lomax first saw the cane panpipes, or "quills," played. Sid had two sets, one with ten notes, the other with four, and explained them as "old folks' music. Music of olden time. Back yonder everybody used to play on quills. Now, ain't hardly common no more." Lomax recorded Sid playing "The Devil's Dream" on the ten-note quills in 1942; seventeen years later, at the age of ninety, he performed it on the four-note variety. The piece is arguably distantly related to the fiddle tune of the same name above, and with Sid's very African vocalizations, the performance style is much older. David Evans has noted that the harmonica largely replaced the quills, although the "whooping" or "hooting" that accompanied them persisted. Lomax recorded a similar effect in Johnston County, North Carolina, in 1978, with the performer blowing into two Pepsi bottles he had "tuned" by filling them with different amounts of water.

Sid Hemphill and Lucius Smith played together for 54 years, and Sid's death in 1963 left Lucius with no one to play with. When Lomax visited Smith again in 1978, he was ninety years old but could still frail the banjo. "Sid was a good man. He learnt all us," Lucius recalled. "But all them dead but Lucius. Left me by myself." He died in 1980.

B6. The Last Words of Copernicus (#112).
United Sacred Harp Convention. Led by Velma Johnson. Old Corinth Church,
Fyffe, Alabama, September 12, 1959.

The recordings made at the 1959 United Sacred Harp Convention in Fyffe, Alabama, were the first made of four-part "fa-so-la" singing in stereo. Lomax had, as he later wrote, "tried and failed, as had many others, to record this music monaurally," at the Sacred Harp Singing Society of Birmingham, Alabama, in 1942, and hoped to "finally do justice to its haunting beauty." Over the course of the two-day convention nearly two hundred songs, memorial lessons, and prayers passed over the heads of his Ampex recorder, with Alan's notations filling the margins of his notebook: "stately," "militant," "lively," "marvelous," "fascinating performance," "exciting sound." "Vigorous," was how Lomax characterized this ode, composed by Georgia's Sarah Lancaster, a highly regarded Sacred Harp composer of the nineteenth century. The United Sacred Harp Musical Association commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Lomax's historic recordings by returning to Old Corinth Church for their annual convention in September, 2009.

B7. Poor Pilgrim of Sorrow.
Elder I.D. Back, vocal.
Mount Olivet Old Regular Baptist Church,
Blackey, Kentucky. September 5, 1959.

The somber lined-out hymnody of the Old Regular Baptists - in which a leader "lines out" a verse for the congregants to sing back, in their own fashion and their own time - takes a very different approach to congregational singing than that of the Sacred Harp. And unlike Sacred Harp singing, which is currently enjoying a remark-

able upsurge of interest, the lining hymns are a rare hold-over of a once-widespread singing style that are only getting rarer. Dating to the middle of the seventeenth century, lining was practiced throughout the British Isles and New England, but by 1959, they were being sung in just a handful of remote locales: in Presbyterian churches of Scotland's Gaelic-speaking Western Isles; among some African American Baptist (and, occasionally, Methodist) churches in the deep South; and in the Old Regular Baptist meeting-houses of the Central Appalachians. Elder Back here performs a solo version of "Poor Pilgrim of Sorrow," usually lined out at Old Regular Baptist meetings.

Alan Lomax read the melancholy texts of hymns like this one as reflections of the early American Revivalists' lonely struggles for survival and salvation on the frontier. "The authority of the established church was broken" upon coming to America, Lomax remarked in 1982, and the pioneers found that now "every man had his own personal relationship to God, to heaven, to morality - he was responsible for himself. And Americans took this burden first. This was what made their faces so flinty. This is why they had to have such a strong and rigid morality. That's what made it possible for them to go as individuals and in small groups across the Appalachians into the unknown, and survive as human beings."

I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow,
Cast out in this wide world to roam;
I have no promise of tomorrow,
I've started to make heaven my home.

B8. What Month Was Jesus Born In (The Last Month of the Year).

Vera Ward Hall, vocal.

Livingston, Alabama. October 10, 1959.

Adele "Vera" Ward Hall, who worked all of her life as a washerwoman, nursemaid, and cook, was regarded by the Lomaxes as one of America's greatest singers. She first came to the attention of John A. Lomax in 1937, when Ruby Pickens Tartt, folklorist and chair of the Federal Writers' Project of Sumter County, Alabama, introduced them; Lomax recorded Hall during three separate sessions in '37, 1939, and 1940, writing that she had "the loveliest voice I have ever recorded." She sang Baptist hymns with her cousin Dock Reed and other Livingston friends, but she was also willing to record blues, ballads, and "worldly songs" such as "Stagolee," "John Henry," and "Boll Weevil," learned from her friend Rich Amerson, and forbidden by her family. Alan Lomax met Hall in 1948, when he arranged for her and Reed to come New York City for an American Music Festival. Their time together resulted in six-and-a-half hours of recordings and the raw material for her oral biography, which Lomax published in *The Rainbow Sign* (1959). In that book Vera is called "Nora" to protect her identity and honor her confidences.

Making his first trip to Vera's home in Livingston, Lomax found her voice and her eagerness to sing undiminished, especially when it came to a sacred piece like "What Month Was Jesus Born In." Hall held the story of Mary's being turned away from the inn and delivering her baby in the manger close to her heart, and annually recounted the circumstances of it in story and song to her Sunday School charges. "I'm all alone in this big old world," Nora (Vera) says in *The Rainbow Sign*, "and sometimes I'm sad and I cries to myself when I be

alone in the house workin'. But then I think about what needy times I have went through and that Jesus was always with me when I called him, so I feels better. And lots of times I thinks about how he was by himself in the cruel world, how nobody give him a place to be born in.... I just feel like cryin' over it right now."

Vera Ward Hall died in 1964 and Lomax wrote in her obituary in *Sing Out!*: "The sound comes from deep within her when she sings, from a source of gold and light, otherwise hidden, and falls directly upon your ear like sunlight.... It is from singers like Vera Hall that all of us who love folk music in American have everything to learn. Her performances were all graced with dignity and love."

B9. I'm Gonna Live Anyhow Until I Die.
Miles Pratcher, vocal and guitar; Bob Pratcher, fiddle.
Como, Mississippi. September 22, 1959.

The Pratcher brothers were neighbors of Fred McDowell in Como, and also farmers, but were of an earlier musical generation. Miles and Bob were repositories of the raggy country dance music that would have been heard at picnics and other social occasions in the fin-de-siecle Mississippi Hill Country. Lomax wrote of this performance in 1978 that he "always thought of this genre as a bluesy ballad in ragtime," lying chronologically and stylistically "between black square dance music and the first true instrumental blues." "I'm Going to Live Anyhow Until I Die" was composed in 1901 by the black rag-writer Shepard N. Edmonds, for whom it was a huge hit, and it found a renewed popularity in 1920s as "Tennessee Coon" or "Coon from Tennessee" - about a wicked fellow who "never be-

lieved in church or Sunday school" - for hillbilly performers Charlie Poole, the Georgia Crackers, and the Georgia Yellow Hammers. In the hands of the Pratchers, Lomax wrote, "the blues are still happy. The Pratchers grinned bawdily through all their performances." They no doubt meant it when they sang: "I'm gonna shake it well for my Lord."





All recordings made by Alan Lomax on an Ampex 602-2, "Suitcase Model" tape machine. Assisted by Shirley Collins (1959) and Anna Lomax (1960). Photo of Alan Lomax and Wade Ward by Shirley Collins. All others by Alan Lomax.

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