

# Worried Now, Won't be Worried Long

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





Rosa Lee (or Rosalie) Hill on Fred McDowell's porch.  
Como, Mississippi.

## SIDE ONE

Al.

Worried Now, Won't Be Worried Long.

Sidney Hemphill Carter, vocal.

Senatobia, Mississippi.

September 26, 1959.

Sidney Carter was the daughter of Sid Hemphill, legendary multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, bandleader, and musical patriarch of the Mis-

issippi Hill Country. Lomax had recorded Blind Sid and his band in 1942, but when he returned to Panola County in 1959 he worried that he'd find, as he had on many other occasions, "that the best people had passed away or withered and their communities had gone to pieces." However, not only was Sid "still alive and fiddling," as Lomax wrote, but his extended family was on hand with music of their own. Ms. Carter's ring-play songs, comic ditties, and lullabies made her especially popular with children. This blues was a departure from her typical family-friendly fare.

A2. Walking In the Parlor.

Norman Edmonds & the Old Timers: Norman Edmonds, fiddle; Paul Edmonds, guitar; Rufus Quesinberry, banjo  
Hillsville, Virginia. August 28, 1959.

Fiddler Norman Edmonds had the distinction of being one of only two artists recorded by Lomax in 1959 who had made a commercial record in the pre-war hillbilly recording era. In Edmonds' case, it was at Ralph Peer's legendary 1927 Bristol sessions, no less, that he cut two gold-standard sides with singer and banjo player J.P. Nestor. When Lomax met Uncle Norman, he was seventy years old and still going strong with his string-band, the Old Timers, featuring his sons Paul, John, and Cecil on guitar and Rufus Quesinberry on banjo. (Paul was the only son to play for Lomax.) The group was a fixture on the radio in nearby Galax, Virginia, broadcasting for fifteen minutes a week for over a dozen years.

A3. Rolled and Tumbled.

Rosalie Hill, vocal and guitar.  
Como, Mississippi. September 25, 1959.

Rosalie Hill was another of Sid Hemphill's talented daughters. Sid taught Rosalie to play the guitar when she was six; by the time she was ten she was playing dances with him. The only two songs she recorded for Alan were marked by a desolate, keening intensity, although by all accounts she was a jolly woman. Her father died in 1961, after which, as she told blues researcher George Mitchell, most of the very

musical Hemphills "just didn't feel like playing no more." Rosie hung up her guitar for a time, but by the time Mitchell visited in 1967 she was playing again, and recorded for him a barely less spry version of "Rolled and Tumbled." She died a year later. (Hill's first name often appears "Rosa Lee," but she signed her contract with Lomax "Rosalie.")

A4. The Old Ship of Zion.

Ishman Williams & the William Singers, vocals and guitar.  
St. Peter's Church, Tate County, Mississippi.  
September 30, 1959.

When Lomax stopped by St. Peter's Church in the Mississippi Hill Country to record local congregational music traditions, two visiting gospel groups - the William Singers of St. Louis, Missouri, and Detroit's Morning Echoes - were holding forth. He recorded a portion of the evening, but because modern, electric gospel played by touring Midwestern quartets wasn't representative of the sacred music of Hill Country churches, this powerful performance was never issued.

Ishman Williams and the William Singers cut a 45 for the Nashboro label in 1964. Two other singles followed on the small vanity labels Redi-Soul and Merge in the late '60s, although Ishman was no longer part of the group. It's not known whether any of the other members present for Lomax's recording appear on the William Singers' Checker LP of 1973.



From right: John Davis, Mable Hillery, Ed Young, with unidentified woman and children. Williamsburg, Virginia.

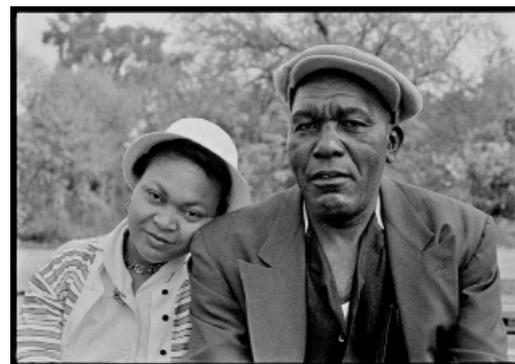
#### A5. Hop Along Let's Get Her.

John Davis & Henry Morrison, lead vocals, with Joe Armstrong, Peter Davis, Willis Proctor, and Ben Ramsey.

St. Simons Island, Georgia. October 12, 1959.

The "Hessie" referred to in this rowing chantey was one of several steamers that brought summer visitors from mainland Georgia to what was, around the turn of the last century, a remote and rustic coastal island. Despite the vacationers, however, St. Simons Island remained a trove of rich, heavily African-in uenced folklore for much of the twentieth century. When Lomax first visited in 1935, his collaborator Zora Neale Hurston blacked his face with walnut juice oil so as not to call attention to their inter-

racial research group. It was also on this trip that Lomax met the leaders of the Spiritual Singers of Coastal Georgia, among them sherman Henry Morrison and Big John Davis, a former sailor and stevedore and a singer with a considerable repertoire of chanties, roustabout songs, slavery-era ring-plays, and religious material. Lomax recalled that when he "returned twenty- ve years later in 1959 with a stereo rig adequate to record this multipart music, I was greeted as an old friend." When he included the singers of St. Simons on two LPs in the 1960s, Lomax named them the Georgia Sea Island Singers, and they went on to make dozens of concert appearances in the 1960s - at the Newport Folk Festival, the Montreal World's Fair, and the Poor People's March on Washington, but also on college campuses and at nightclubs like Los Angeles' Ash Grove. The singers' awareness that performing publicly could compromise their musical traditions is illustrated by what John Davis told Alan's sister Bess Lomax Hawes backstage at the Ash Grove in 1963: "Singing in front of these people might change what we do, because of what *they* do," he said. "We need someone to let us know if we're changing the way we do things."



A6. Hallelujah (#146).

United Sacred Harp Convention. Led by Buford King. 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." "Lovely piece" was Lomax's description of this singing of "Hallelujah," page 146 in *The Sacred Harp*. Composed in 1746, it was one of the 6,500 hymns composed by Charles Wesley, and remains a perennial favorite of Sacred Harp singers. The United Sacred Harp Musical Association commemorated the ftieth anniversary of Lomax's historic recordings by returning to Old Corinth Church for their annual convention in September, 2009.

A7. The Cabin On the Hill.

E.C. Ball, vocal and guitar; Orna Ball, vocal and accordion; Blair Reedy, vocal. 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 and his wife Orna were first recorded for the Library of Congress in 1937, when John A. Lomax met them at the Galax Fiddlers' Convention; Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger made more recordings of them at Galax in 1941. Alan recalled that "when I again went calling at their mountain home in 1959 - which 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, the Balls had also gotten religion, and their gospel trio and quartet - sometimes called the Friendly Gospel Singers - appeared frequently on the radio and in churches around Southwest Virginia, Northwest North Carolina, and East Tennessee. But religion didn't curtail the couple's massive songbook. They not only sang hymns, spirituals, and country gospel, but also ballads, blues, play-party songs, and sentimental numbers like "Cabin On the Hill." Composed by Mississippi songwriter B.L. Shook in the early 1940s, "The Cabin On the Hill" gave Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs their first Billboard hit, in April of 1959.



Ed Young, with fife, and Lonnie Young, Sr.  
Como, Mississippi.

A8. Ida Reed.

Ed Young, fife; Lonnie Young, Sr., bass drum;  
G.D. Young, snare drum.  
Como, Mississippi. September 21, 1959.

In 1942, during a joint recording project between the Library of Congress and Nashville's Fisk University, Alan Lomax made the first-ever recordings of the fife and drum music of the Mississippi Hill Country, east of the Delta. "Finding this music still alive," he later wrote, "was the greatest surprise of all my collecting trips in America." Played now exclusively for entertainment at country picnics and dances, its roots stretch to before the Revolutionary War, when black fife and drum corps accompanied local militias - one of Thomas Jefferson's slaves is said to have played in such a corps. Their music is considered to be one of the

oldest extant forms of African music in North America. Lomax recalled in 1993: "Watching the Young brothers' line of fife and drums sashay across the yard, enclosed by their dancing family, I saw in my mind's eye the jazz parades of New Orleans.... I remembered the Mardi Gras parades in Trinidad and Rio and the wild rara parades of Haiti and the films I'd seen of African processions, and I could see that this family party in northern Mississippi belonged to that African tradition."

"Oree" was the title that Lomax originally gave to this dance tune when he issued it in 1960, explaining that "When I asked Ed why he named his tune 'Oree,' he said, 'I don't know, it just sound that way to me.'" David Evans discovered, however, during Hill Country field work in 1970, that that title was Lomax's mishearing of "Ida Reed," most likely a local variation of the fiddle tune and earlier bad-man ballad "Ida Red." Evans warns that the wily folk process adds another complicating dimension: "Oh! Red" was the 1936 debut and hit record of the Harlem Hamfats, and when Chuck Berry combined it with a strain of the "Ida Red" tune, he created "Maybelline." "Ida Reed" was also known locally as "Shimmy She Wobble," after the dance done to it, and "Soft Black Jersey Cow," after the lyrics sometimes sung to it.

The Young brothers' band was later christened the Southern Fife and Drum Corps and appeared at the Newport Folk Festival and a Friends of Old-Time Music concert in 1960s.

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SIDE TWO

B1. I'm Tired.

Bright Light Quartet: Shedrick Cain, James Campbell, Arnold Fisher, and Lawrence Hodge, vocals; Robert Beane, guitar.

Weems or White Stone, Virginia. April 6, 1960.

The Bright Light Quartet were a group of menhaden fishermen who worked 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. When the Quartet weren't singing net-pulling chanties at work aboard the trawlers, they gave performances in churches throughout the region, and occasionally as far away as New York City, showcasing their tight, polished jubilee gospel style on numbers like "I'm Tired."

B2. I'm Going Home to Live With Jesus.

Viola James, vocal.

Free Springs Methodist Church, Harmontown, Mississippi. September 20, 1959.

Viola James was a sought-after soloist who performed at churches throughout the Mississippi

Hill Country, among them Independence Church in Tate County; Hunter's Chapel in Panola County; and at Free Springs Methodist Church in Lafayette County. As she remarks here, she had been requested to sing this hymn, with the intensity of her delivery and the reception she receives from the congregation testifying to her renown. Dating from the nineteenth century, the lyrics are a detailed catalog of what lies in store for the saved in Heaven - a common subject of black religious song that provided solace and comfort from the hardships of the African American experience. Sister James was a neighbor of Ed and Lonnie Young, with whom she occasionally performed spirituals, and of bluesman Fred McDowell. Lomax recorded her providing "patting" accompaniment to one of Fred's blues, but she would sing only sacred material.

Lonnie Young, Sr.  
Como, Mississippi.



B3. You Got Dimples In Your Jaws.

Joe Lee, vocal and guitar; Boy Blue, harmonica;  
and Darnel Walker, drums.

Hughes, Arkansas. October 1, 1959.

Lomax spent one very late September night at Charley Houlin's juke joint in Hughes, Arkansas, recording the local blues talent. Houlin, an East Texas-born U.S. Marshall, was a white "mercy man" to African Americans in the region who had, as Lomax wrote in *The Land Where the Blues Began*, "shot down the sheriff to protect his renters." His place was a popular spot for many miles around, where the likes of Memphis Slim and B.B. King had played and drank regularly.

Alan set the scene of the recording: "No New York technician would have approved of the acoustics. Between takes, the place was a bedlam, but the emotional atmosphere was mellow and marvelous." Joe Lee (real name Willie Jones) led this spirited rendition of John Lee Hooker's "Dimples," accompanied by his half-brother Boy Blue (Roland Hayes) on harp and Darnel Walker behind the drum kit. "At three-thirty A.M. I could scarcely see the typewriter to type out the contracts with these young eager beavers of the Arkansas blues," Lomax recalled. "At four, I loaded the machine into the car. The youngsters went off to get two hours sleep before their cotton picking day began."



Wade Ward listening to playback.  
Galax, Virginia.

B4. Cumberland Gap.

Wade Ward, banjo.

Galax, Virginia. August 31, 1959.

Uncle Wade Ward (1892-1971) was the scion of a musical family whose roots in Southwestern Virginia went back generations. He learned to pick the banjo at eleven and play the fiddle at sixteen; by the time he was eighteen he and his older brother Davy Crockett Ward were playing as a duo popular at dances, house-raising, and other social functions around their home in Independence, Virginia. Wade recorded commercially, both solo and with his Buck Mountain Band, for the Okeh label in the 1920s. Alan Lomax's father, John A. Lomax, recorded him in 1937 with Crockett's string band, the Bogtrotters, and solo on fiddle and banjo, before Alan and Pete Seeger met him at the 1939 Galax

Fiddler's Convention. Another session in 1941 brought the total number of Library of Congress records featuring Ward to nearly two hundred--one of which was a version of "Cumberland Gap"--but Alan wanted his virtuosic banjo playing featured in the Southern Folk Heritage Series. Lomax wrote therein of Uncle Wade: "He had a good few drinks in his time and played a few dances, and all of this mellowed him till he became as kindly and gentle as the green hills among which he spent his life. When he plays, you realize that the real secret of musicianship lies, not in the number of notes per second or in difficult passages mastered or in surprises or in great ideas, but in the message that each note carries."

B5. Levee camp holler (Downtown Money Waster). Johnny Lee Moore, vocal. Camp B, Parchman Farm (Mississippi State Penitentiary), Parchman, Mississippi. September 19 or 20, 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. One of the musical holdovers from those dark days was the old holler - the free-metered, unaccompanied solo song of protest and complaint that sired the blues. This holler, with its references to the equally brutal levee camps, transferred easily into the context of the prison farm. Johnny Lee Moore had come to Parchman from Greenville, Mississippi.

B6. Lonesome Dove. Almeda Riddle, vocal. Greers Ferry, Arkansas. Early October, 1959.

For decades one of America's foremost traditional singers was Almeda "Granny" Riddle of Cleburne County, Arkansas, renowned for her singing and her song-collecting. Although tornados - a common scourge of Northwestern Arkansas - had killed her husband and son, destroyed her home, and wiped out her treasured hand-written collection of ballads, she was still dedicated to seeking out and preserving the old songs. She had learned the maudlin "Lonesome Dove" - eerily relevant to her own experience with loss - from her mother, and considered it a rare combination of a love ballad and a religious song. Granny Riddle became a fixture on the folk-festival circuit from the mid-1960s through the early '80s, and made a number of albums that drew upon her huge collection of ballads, lyric songs, children's material, and hymns. Lomax's 1959 recordings were her first. She died in 1986.



Almeda Riddle, Greers Ferry, Arkansas.

B7. Turnip Greens.

Neal Morris, vocal and guitar.

Mountain View, Arkansas. October 6, 1959.

Neal Morris was the father of Jimmie Driftwood - singer, songwriter ("Tennessee Stud" was his composition), and de facto folk-music ambassador of the Ozarks - and himself a font of Ozark ballads, lyric pieces, and irreverent comic numbers like "Turnip Greens." Lomax saw this minstrel song as an expression of a specially Ozark frontier perspective: "In the dark and tangled hills of the state of Arkansas, the approved mode of conduct was nonconformism, whether this meant a life of train robbing like that of Jesse James, or simply of reciting songs and bawdy stories." Variations of it turned up on commercial records made by a regional and racial diversity of artists in the 1920s - Mississippi's Bo Carter; Texas's Shorty Godwin and M.S. Dillehay (the latter's as "Mexican Beans"); Arkansas' Wonder State Harmonizers - but Neal Morris' grandfather had sung it well back into the nineteenth century.



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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Front cover photo: Ed Young with fife;  
Hobart Smith with banjo. Williamsburg, Virginia.  
This page: Ed Young. Williamsburg, Virginia.

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