Old Time Music

The Peanut Special No.1
Old Time Music in Georgia

25 SUMMER 1977 45p $1

Old Time Music
25 Summer 1977

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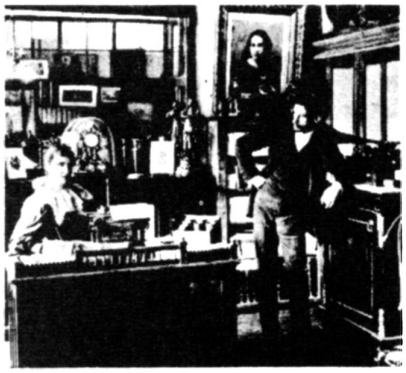


●Our projected coverage of Old Time Music in Georgia proved to need two issues, so this and our next will be chiefly devoted to that subject. Such, however, has been the industry of our contributors that they have produced much more than two OTMs' worth of material - and promises of still more. We hope that their researches will be able to be published in an OTM monograph on Georgia, together with out-of-print material, many more photographs and discographies, and revised versions of earlier OTM articles. More news of this project will be given in due course.

●With the usual regrets we must announce a price-rise. From OTM26 onwards the cover-price will be 60p, or in dollar areas $1.50. Normal surface-rate subscriptions thus become £2.40 or $6.00. Airmail subs vary according to area - see the adjoining column for details. Back issues from 1 to date will cost a flat 45p or $1.00 each.

In the six years or so since OTM commenced publication, printing costs have tripled, postage rates have almost tripled (and the volume of correspondence has increased many times over), and a good deal of capital has been put into the acquisition of photographs and similar materials, as well as into the publication or distribution of our own and other works. Though we make what economies we can, we must call on readers occasionally for further support.

We are always glad to supply OTM to dealers, and welcome enquiries or readers' suggestions.

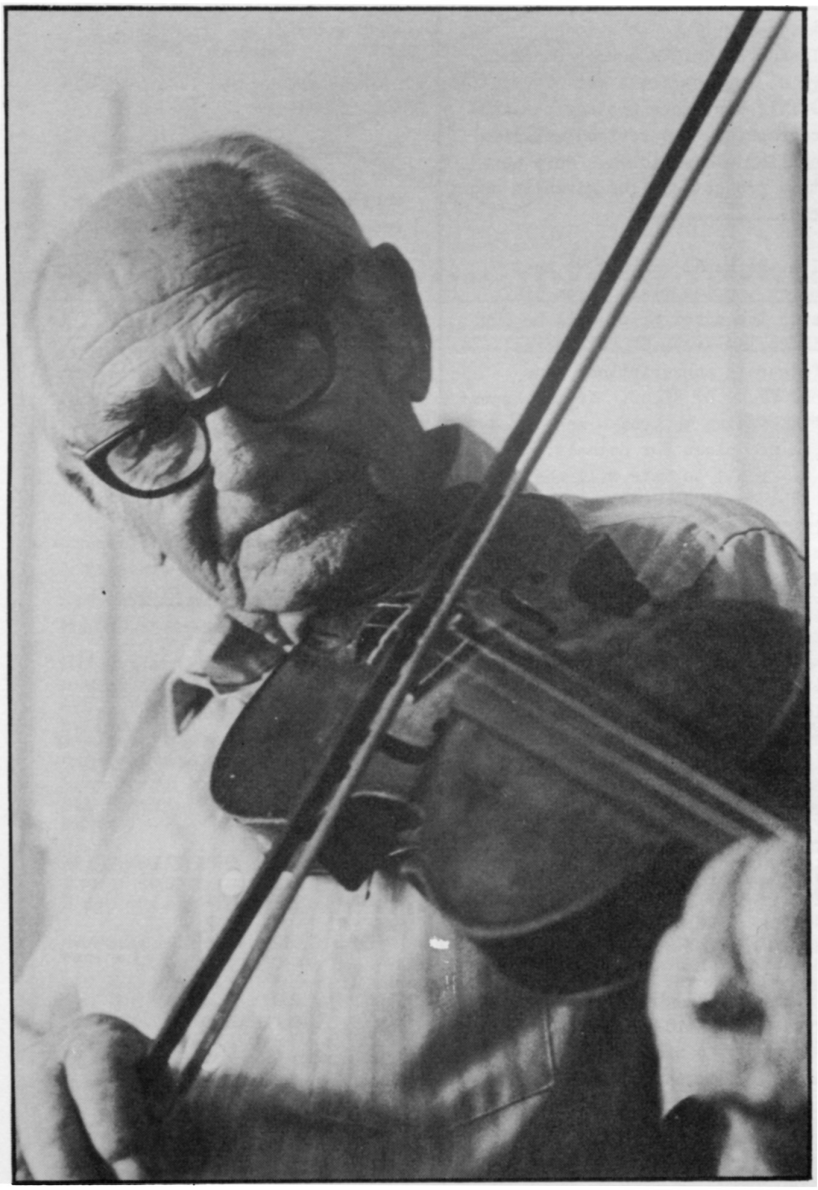
●A final notice about OTM's autumn closure. From mid-September until mid-October the office will be unstaffed. Correspondence, renewals and other communications and articles will be safely received, but answers or acknowledgements must wait until late October.

Contents

FIVE YEARS WITH THE BEST

BILL SHORES AND NORTH GEORGIA FIDDLING

Charles Wolfe



●Was there really a fiddling renaissance in north Georgia in the 1920s? Or do we only think so because the record companies somehow decided to set up their studios in Atlanta and look for targets of opportunity? We may never know; fiddlers in other parts of the country might have been as good as Clayton McMichen, Lowe Stokes, Bill Kiker, Earl Johnson, Bert Layne, Bill Helms, Bill Chitwood, A A Gray. But they would have to be good indeed, for by anyone's standards the Georgia fiddling of the '20s was fine. It maintained enough of the old mountain drive to be exciting, and enough of the long bow technique to be challenging. The continuing appeal of north Georgia styles and recordings can be seen by looking at the way the music has dominated the reissue market during the last ten years.

Yet most of the greats of this period are gone. Lowe Stokes is still alive, as is Bert Layne. Bill Helms, though disabled by a stroke, still lives. Others, like Kiker, remain untraced. It is therefore doubly interesting to find a fiddler who flourished during this period, who knew these men and their music, who made fine recordings himself, and who is willing and able to discuss it with fiddle music pedants. William A Shores, of Rome, Georgia, is just such a man.

I interviewed Shores for the first time on March 6, 1975, at his home in Rome. I have since double-checked several facts with him in telephone interviews and prevailed upon him to answer some questionnaires. As with any interview, the results raise as many questions as they answer, and open up new fields of inquiry. I have pursued some of these related areas - such as the life and career of the amazing Joe Lee - and have had to leave others dangling, in the words of another pedant, slowly, slowly in the air.

Though Bill Shores spent most of his life and career around the Rome area in north Georgia, he was born in a rural area of Cherokee County, Alabama, in 1907. His father was a blacksmith and a carpenter, and had been fiddling long before Bill was born; Bill also had a brother who played some. His first fiddle was a three-quarter size instrument his father purchased for $4-$5. By the time he was 14, young Shores was playing local dances.

His father taught him some basic old time fiddle tunes, but by far his biggest fiddling influence was Joe Lee, a man ten years his senior. Lee was living in Silver Creek, Georgia, when Shores learned from him. "I learned more about old time fiddling from Joe Lee than from any

other man. . . . Joe could sit down with you and play with you all night and never play the same tune twice. . . . And he could fiddle better. He had the most nimble fingers for a big man I ever saw. He never did record, though." Lee is one of the legends of old time Georgia fiddling; it was he who taught Lowe Stokes his style, and Stokes in turn passed it on to Clayton McMichen. McMichen, through his popularity, passed it on to generations of fiddlers. Stokes recalled that Lee pulled a long smooth bow, and that he kept his strings run down to standard or lower pitch; this gave his music a mellow, less rhythmically oriented sound, more in the direction of the so-called Texas style.

Because of his importance to Shores, as well as to Georgia fiddling in general, a further note is in order about Lee. He was born in Alabama, near Birmingham, probably about 1895/6. While his father played some, Joe by and large just "picked up" most of his music. He often played with his brother Jim, a guitarist, and won fiddling prizes at several contests in Atlanta and Alabama before World War I. He often played for local dances, frequently with another fiddler from the northwest Georgia area, Charlie Prophet.

Much of his life Lee worked at the Peprill cotton mill in Lindale, and seemed content to keep his music a hobby. I asked Bill Shores why Lee never recorded.

> "Joe was a hard working fellow, worked in a cotton mill all his life, a loom fixer and a weaver. He'd go out somewhere and play a square dance till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and then go home and get up next morning and go down to the mill and work ten hours a day. He was pretty much a homebody fellow; never did think too much about putting something down for posterity."

Lee died, apparently unrecorded, in 1964; his brother Jim passed away recently. (Oddly enough, the Lees were no relations of the Lee Brothers Trio that recorded "Cotton Mill Blues" for Brunswick in 1930, though Joe Lee's widow does recall that he wrote some sort of song about working in cotton mills.) Lee's fame was spread widely among musicians of the '20s; even Jimmie Tarlton mentioned his work.

By 1921 Bill Shores was in the Rome area and playing with a group called the Armuchee String Band, so named because it was based in the hamlet of that name near Rome. This band included three Salmon brothers, Jimbo, Harry and Dick, and Ralph Voss in addition to Shores. Harry Salmon, Shores recalls, played a harp guitar, with a sort of double neck, much like the models Gibson popularised in that era. In 1924 or '25 the band played over WSB in Atlanta, and Shores remembers going to the old Biltmore hotel out on West Peachtree Street to play for Lambdin Kay. During the mid-'20s this was the major stringband in the Rome area, along with Fiddlin' Bud Silvey's band. Silvey, whose story has been told elsewhere (The Devil's Box XXVI /September 1, 1974/ 54-59), was active in the fiddling contest movement in north Georgia and Alabama.

Shores also continued to develop his style during this time. He made friends with the bandmaster down at nearby Lindale, and through him gained some exposure to formal music. "I used to go and play trumpet with him down there; he'd caution me every once in a while. I used to go up to his home and he'd play 'cello and I'd play the fiddle, and he used to make me pull the long bow. Then after he'd pause and say, 'Now there's certain old time fiddle tunes you've got to jig your bow on. . . .'" After 1925, when Atlanta became a center for recording and traditional fiddle music became available on records, Shores would go into the local record shop and listen closely to the new releases.

> "I had a friend that ran a record shop and if he got in a bunch of new records he would tell me, and I'd go down and listen to them a couple of times. At that time I had a wonderful memory and I'd have a record played a couple of times down in his shop and go home and take out my fiddle and play it. In those days I could play any current old time fiddle tune you'd mention. Did the same thing with Joe Lee; Joe would play three or four times and I could play it with him."

Shores also played with other musicians in the area. There was Iris Rodgers, from Rome, once billed as "Georgia State Champion", who toured with the Skillet-Lickers. From nearby Lindale was a banjo-picker named Big Bob Stephens, who with his son "Punk" played on the first records made by Clayton McMichen. (The younger Stephens, who played clarinet, was killed in an auto accident about 1926.) Two local fiddlers who were very active in the '20s were Jim "Dode" Godwin and a railroad engineer named Charlie Prophet. Apparently neither of these recorded.

Shores was soon attracted to the big annual fiddling contests held in Atlanta. He recalled the way these were often judged:

> "They had judges, but I think the audience applauding influenced the judges. They would have an elimination - the first two days was strictly on an entertainment basis. The judges would attend all sessions and meet people and listen to the program and have a process of elimination for first prize, then it would get down to maybe eight or ten out of a possible 100. And then they'd pick the winners out of that final group."

Prizes for these contests included "some cash, some merchandise. Some merchants would donate one thing, some a suit, another a hat, another one a pair of shoes - always varied. And some people entered them for the cash - money was money back in those days. Others did it for the prestige." Bill modestly admits that he won his share of these early contests.

It was only a matter of time before he was drawn into the recording activity in and around Atlanta. He believes that his first two sessions were as a sideman for other, more established groups.

> "The first time I played on record, in 1926 I believe it was, I met a blind boy in Atlanta named Riley Puckett. Riley was going to record some and he didn't have a fiddler and I happened to know the tunes and I've forgotten them any more. But I played with Riley and that was the first time that I ever played on record. I believe we made four recordings at that time. . . . You went in a soundproof room with a sound tunnel back to the recorder and you'd play a trial and then the recording director, he'd say, 'Well, that's not right, let's move this instrument over here, move this one back,' you know, to balance up the sound. There was no electronic equipment, they recorded on an old wax record and they played it back and if it didn't sound right he'd shift you around, and you might have to play the darn thing a dozen times before you'd get it like he wanted it."

At a later interview Bill looked over the Puckett discography for 1926 and identified the four sides he played on as "Sally Goodwin", "Ida Red", "Down in Arkansas" and "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" (the last-named unissued), recorded on April 22, 1926. Though two other sides recorded that same day have McMichen backing Puckett, it is conceivable that for some reason Mac couldn't stay around for the afternoon session and Riley asked Shores to play.

The fiddle style on these four records does sound a little more old-timey than Mac's typical style.

By this time Shores was also playing occasionally with Gid Tanner and the Skillet-Lickers and thinks he recorded at least one session with them.

> "I had known Gid four to five years when this session came up, met him along about 1923-24, I guess. I was travelin' around, me and somebody else, playin', and I believe we just ran into Gid and them and they was fixing to do some recording and they wanted me to play. Gid played fiddle and I played fiddle; he had a long slim guitar-picker and a banjo-picker, but I can't recall their names. The guitar-picker wasn't Riley, though. Some boy that lived in Dacula, or in that area. And the banjo-picker wasn't Fate Norris; I knew Fate well. This fellow was a little bitty fellow, don't guess he'd weigh over 125 pounds; kind of elderly, and gettin' some years on him. I believe this session was in '27, but I'm not sure. . . . Gid played lead. It was pretty hard for anybody to play lead with Gid Tanner; you just had to play a kind of second to Gid's lead. I don't know of nobody that could play lead along with old Gid."

We have been less successful in pinpointing the sessions Shores played on here. Recent research seems to indicate that the nearly 100 Skillet-Lickers records might well have included members other than the traditional Tanner-McMichen-Puckett constellation (including Stokes, Layne, Norris, Cross and Arthur Tanner). As Shores himself pointed out, "anybody who ever played with Gid Tanner was a Skillet-Licker". As an example of such a "mystery" Skillet-Licker, Shores referred to a Guy Adams, a guitar-player who often played with the Skillet-Lickers as a group and as backup for Stokes and McMichen. Adams later moved to the Covington KY area "and somehow he got hold of a night-club and made a piece of money out of it". Adams, Shores thinks, also recorded with the Skillet-Lickers. Gene Wiggins has found evidence suggesting that a fiddler named L D Snipes also worked with Tanner; and who were the two mystery men Shores recalls recording with? For the record, Shores is quite certain that he did not play on any of the 1927 sides by Arthur Tanner; he recognises a few of the 1927 Skillet-Lickers sides, but these are rather common traditional tunes, and Shores cannot precisely remember if he recorded them with Tanner or simply played them with him.

Above, Bill Shores in 1928.

For, indeed, he did play extensively with both Tanner and his brother Arthur - a fine traditional singer who died only three years ago, apparently uninterviewed. Gid would get bookings at small towns, auditoriums and schoolhouses, and charge 25¢-50¢ admission. Gid would usually do part of the show himself, and then the other members of the troupe would do their specialties. Gid never, Shores recalls, sold records from the stage. "Oh, he might say, 'This is one I recorded, I don't know whether it's any good or not,' something like that; he was always clowning."

By 1927 Shores had formed his own band and was playing for dances and auctions around north Georgia. His main source of livelihood from 1925 to 1930 was his fiddle, and most of that income came from dances and auctions. For a while he played for the J T King auction company and was headquartered at Gadsden AL, about 20 miles from the Georgia line; music was used to liven up auction sales and to attract crowds. (Uncle Dave Macon used to play for similar auctions in middle Tennessee.) While he was at Gadsden, Shores met and heard Y Z Hamilton, a foundryman who was the Alabama State Champion in the '20s and perhaps the state's most noted fiddler. (More details about Hamilton, his life and career, will appear in a forthcoming article.) Other noted fiddlers in the Gadsden area included "Sis" Saxon and a family of Johnsons who lived north of Boaz near

Albertsville. These Johnsons were no relation to Earl Johnson. Uncle John Patterson (see p15) recalls a Johnson, a fine fiddler, who may have been one of this clan.

This band, which Shores was to use as his regular group for the next three or four years, included guitarist Melvin Dupree and mandolin-player Fred Locklear. (Both men could also sing.) Dupree came from a rural area between Centre AL and Cave Springs GA; "he was a poor boy, the son of a tenant farmer," Shores recalls. "I had two or three nights a week around here playing dances; he wanted me to use him, and I liked the way he played. . . . After I got Dupree for a guitar-player, I held on to him as long as he kept the group together." Dupree was present on all the later Shores records, and in fact one session, for Okeh, was released as "Dupree's Rome Boys". But Dupree also recorded on his own in the 1929-30 seasons. He and Locklear backed Uncle Bud Landress of the Georgia Yellow Hammers for some Victor sides in 1929, including the influential "Rubber Doll Rag"; at the same session they recorded an unissued vocal duet, "My Heart Is Broken". A few days later Dupree also recorded with the other Georgia Yellow Hammers, Chitwood, Moody and Reeve. Also in 1929 he may have appeared on record with the Georgia Organ Grinders, a Stokes-McMichen splinter group.

In 1930 Dupree recorded two unissued sides with Gid Tanner and Fate Norris, "I Don't Bother to Work" and "I Shall Not Be Moved". Apparently he was interested in solo guitar work as well as backup; he recorded "Augusta Rag", an original solo, for Gennett in 1929. To the best of Shores' knowledge Dupree is now dead; he apparently went to the west coast for a time, and one report had him living for a while in Marietta.

Fred Locklear was working in a hosiery mill in Rome when Shores first met him. He was from Cedartown, and later moved to nearby Dallas GA. Though his mandolin solos were somewhat unusual for the day, neither he nor Shores was aware of his being any sort of an innovator. After World War 2 sometime Locklear contracted TB and died.

Shores' first recordings as a lead fiddler came in March 1929, when he made four sides for Okeh. "We were first auditioned . . . we'd been notified when the recording session was going to be. . . . There was a fellow named Justin Ring, head of recording in the Atlanta area."* The sides included two waltzes, a blues and a fast piece called "Cat Rag" which Shores wrote and which included bizarre cat-calls. One of the waltzes was "Underneath the Mellow Moon", which had been recorded by McMichen and Puckett three years earlier, but which Shores rearranged and played as an instrumental. "Wedding Bells Waltz" was a Shores original - he once had it and "Cat Rag" transcribed by his band-director friend with the intent of copyrighting it - and "12th Street Blues" "was a modification of an old blues that was pretty popular in the early 1920s."

A few weeks later the trio journeyed to Richmond IN by car for a three-day stint to record for Gennett. Here they may have recorded as many as 10 sides; at present we have details only of the six that were released. The least successful was an effort without Shores, featuring a Dupree solo on one side and a guitar/mandolin duet on the other. The other four titles, released as by the Shores Southern Trio, were circulated fairly widely through their Champion reissues. "Whistling Rufus", a tune which Shores learned from Joe Lee, was issued on at least four occasions. "Going Crazy", a variant of the popular north Georgia standard "I Ain't Got Nobody", was learned when Shores was only 12 or 13 years old; the recording features a solo by Locklear, one of the few such in old time stringband recordings.

Six months later, in October 1929, as the stock market crashed on Wall Street, Shores and Dupree went into the Columbia studios at Atlanta and did two fiddle masterpieces. One was another version of Shores' "Wedding Bells Waltz"; "West Texas Breakdown" was a "modified" tune, of which he recalls that he "added a little to it and took some from it." This coupling, which was released in February 1930, Shores remembers was probably his most successful, best-selling record. Columbia sales, however, were only average, and it might well be that the two versions, the Okeh and the Columbia, together made quite an impact. Shores recalls that he did get some royalties, in addition to expense money and an "advance" on the day of the recording; the royalties "went on for two or three years and then petered out."**

Bill Shores remembers a final recording session which, he thinks, took place in the fall of 1929. Calling themselves the Southern Trio, he, Dupree and Locklear again trouped into the Atlanta studios of Okeh and recorded four tunes. "To my knowledge," says Bill, "they were never released." He does not recall any of the titles, and investigation has failed to unearth any evidence that the masters survived.

Marriage in 1930 and the financial responsibilities of a family, as well as the harsh economic realities of the Depression, caused him to abandon his fulltime musical career. He worked at a variety of odd jobs; his main alternative trade was construction, but "the construction business had gone to heck," and he worked at a number of other trades. For a time he tried to maintain a band on the side. "I had two dances a week that I played for in the '30s, at a meeting hall here in town and at a skating rink. I had a piano, fiddle, guitar, tenor banjo, bull fiddle and drums - it took that volume to do it. There was no amplification in those days; you just had to play like hell and make all the noise you could." Bill also broadcast occasionally over station WFDV in Rome and sometimes played auctions. For the latter he often played with a group called the Miles Family, from Boaz AL: a father, two sons and a daughter, who played guitars, banjo and snare drums. But Bill gave up music pretty much completely by the mid-'30s. About 1948 he lost one of his fingers in an accident and has not played since, though he still owns his own fiddles and hopes to pass them on to a granddaughter.

Bill Shores knew all the greats of Georgia old time music: John Carson ("quite a character" but "kind of a common fiddler"), Clayton McMichen ("I met him about 1923, when he was running a garage and living upstairs over it"), Riley Puckett ("I didn't ever have any trouble with him throwing off my timing"), Darby and Tarlton, Chitwood and Landress, Earl Johnson, Lowe Stokes, Bert Layne . . . the list goes on and on. When asked who he felt was the best of the old

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* Justin Ring was musical director of Okeh in New York from 1924 to 1930. He recorded widely with his trio and as a session musician, playing keyboard and percussion instruments, and was an early performer on New York radio.

** The effective life of a '20s recording seems seldom to have been more than two or three years, unless an item was picked up by a stencil label such as Montgomery Ward or the Sears Roebuck labels.

Atlanta fiddlers, he said:

> "Best old time fiddler in the bunch would have been Lowe Stokes, but Mac was the best all-round fiddler. Now the man who knew the most about music . . . was Bert Layne."

Since three of the people or groups he knew rather well are rather shadowy figures in old time research, his comments on them are especially interesting.

Jim and Andrew Baxter, black musicians from the Calhoun area, about 20 miles from Rome.

> "Andrew was an old time fiddler, and a good one. Old Jim was a good guitar-player. They used to play for dances and all that stuff up around there. Andrew could play some blues, but preferred the old time stuff like 'Katy Hill'. They were cotton farmers. White people up there, when they wanted to give a dance or something, Andrew and Jim would nine times out of ten get the job. . . . One time in Calhoun at the courthouse old Andrew Baxter came down and entered a fiddling contest. Don't remember how he did. There was another group of Negroes that played old time style, somewhere in the north Georgia area here; I heard of them, but never knew them, and don't know what they called themselves."

Fate Norris, banjoist with the Skillet Lickers.

> "I knew old Fate well. He was originally from over here around Chatsworth somewhere, Chatsworth, Clermont, somewhere back in there /i.e. in Whitfield County, on the southern Tennessee border/. He was a tall, slim guy, and I think he was a logger or a sawmiller. Played with Gid a good while, and eventually he moved down there around Dacula. Fate would be gettin' awful old now if he's still alive; for when I was a young guy, say 20 years old, Fate Norris had a grown family."

Hoke Rice, early guitarist with Lowe Stokes and later, with brother Paul, in the Rice Brothers' Gang. Shores recalls that the Rice children, Paul, Hoke and a sister whose name he can't recall, were working, with their widowed mother, in cotton mills around the Manchester or Griffin area, in the cotton mill belt about 40 miles southwest of Atlanta. Perhaps they were natives of that area. Hoke's mother married Bud Silvey, who was from Rome. Hoke played with Shores' group for a while ("he was the only singer I ever had") and then he got an offer to play for somebody in Atlanta and went back there, and the last "time I saw him he was playing with a bunch down there." Later on Shores ran into Paul in Atlanta.

Like many early commercial musicians Bill Shores often wishes he had stuck with his music. But, also like many early musicians whose careers began during the Depression, Bill realises that he didn't really have any choice in the matter. Today many people under 50 in Rome have no idea who Bill Shores is unless they know him as an engineering specialist; but those over 50 often talk to him about his fiddling.

> "I've had a lot of pleasure out of it. . . . I've had a pretty full life of it. Lot of hard work and headaches, but. . . . And you know, I don't guess that either of my daughters had ever heard me play until you brought that record /'Hell Broke Loose in Georgia' on County/ in here."

Bill Shores has every reason to be satisfied: he spent five years playing with some of the best Southern traditional musicians, and held his own. And along the way, he produced some genuine masterpieces of recorded American fiddle music. □

Discography

RILEY PUCKETT: vocal/guitar, with Bill Shores (fiddle).
Atlanta GA, April 22, 1926

142086-2	SALLY GOODWIN	Co 15102-D, Vo 02940
142087-1,2	IDA RED	- , -
142088-1	DOWN IN ARKANSAS	Co 15139-D
142089-1,2	I'LL TAKE YOU HOME KATHLEEN	Co unissued

NOTE: both takes of 142087 were issued on Columbia, but it is uncertain which was used for the Vocalion issue. Vo 02940 carries the dubbing masters 17107-1 (=142086) and 17106-1 (=142087); these dubbings were made on April 1, 1935.

DUPREE'S ROME BOYS: Bill Shores (fiddle), Fred Locklear (mandolin), Melvin Dupree (guitar). Atlanta GA, March 15, 1929

402321-	WEDDING BELLS WALTZ	OK 45320
402322-	UNDERNEATH THE MELLOW MOON	-
402323-A	CAT RAG	OK 45356
402324-B	12TH STREET BLUES	- ; Cy 514

SHORES SOUTHERN TRIO: Bill Shores (fiddle), Fred Locklear (mandolin), Melvin Dupree (guitar). Locklear and Dupree only on 14991; Dupree only on 14992. Richmond IN, early April, 1929

14991	NORFOLK FLIP	Ge 6988
14992	AUGUSTA RAG	-
14995	GOIN' CRAZY	Ge 6927, Ch 15768, 45159, Me 45159; Cy 514
14996	DOWN YONDER	Ge 6927, Ch 15729
14998A	BACK UP AND PUSH	Ge 6842, Ch 15768
14999	WHISTLING RUFUS	- , Ch 15729, 45159, Me 45159; Vetco 102, 104

NOTE: 14993-4, 14997 and 15000 may be unissued titles by these artists. Ge 6988 as DUPREE & LOCKLEAR (14991)/MELVIN DUPREE (14992). Champions as THE AUGUSTA TRIO.

BILL SHORES & MELVIN DUPREE: Bill Shores (fiddle), Melvin Dupree (guitar). Atlanta GA, October 30, 1929

149306-2	WEDDING BELLS	Co 15506-D
149307-1	WEST TEXAS BREAKDOWN	-

HELL BROKE LOOSE IN GORDON COUNTY GEORGIA

an investigation by

GENE WIGGINS with TONY RUSSELL

At least three fiddle tunes have been played under the name *Hell Broke Loose in Georgia*. The title perhaps dates to the gold rush in Georgia before the settlement of Gordon County in 1850. One tune of this name was played by Lowe Stokes to win the fiddlers' contest in Atlanta in 1924, and the title reached the literary world as the tune played by Hillbilly Jim in Stephen Vincent Benet's 'Mountain Whippoorwill' (apparently based on that fiddlers' contest) in 1925. About the time of the contest and the poem, and for a few years more, a flurry of musical activity was evident in Gordon County which one might use the title *Hell Broke Loose in Georgia* to describe. This flurry could not very well be tagged as 'Landress and Chitwood', or 'The Georgia Yellow Hammers' or 'The Baxters', or 'Chitwood's Georgia Mountaineers', or 'The Dixie Crackers', or even 'The Moonshine Hollow Crowd'. It comprised them all and more.

The story does not begin in the 1920s. It is hard to decide where to begin. We could even go back again to the gold rush of the 1830s which led to the expulsion of the Cherokees and brought into the new part of Georgia people who were tough, freedom-loving, militia-orientated and (having just moved) not deeply rooted. A large fraction of the men who fought in the Mexican War were North Georgians. From a Mexican War battle came the name of the town of Resaca, where Bill Chitwood was born and where Bud Landress and Fate Norris lived for years.

There is a different story about the origin of the name Resaca. It is just a local joke and not a true folk etymology, but it may help outlanders to pronounce the name. According to the story, an Indian chief had a daughter so hideous that a sack was kept over her head at all times. When a politically ambitious brave consented to marry her, it was agreed that she should be unveiled at the wedding. She was, and the horrified council warriors cried out (in no-final-'r' Georgia English), 'Re-sack her! Re-sack her!'

George Oscar Landress, who came always to be called Bud (and signed himself B. Landress), was born in Gwinnett County in 1882 and moved to Gordon County in 1905. In 1891 Bill Chitwood was born. Bill was youngest in a family of twelve and had an older brother who had a homemade fiddle. Bill sneaked it out on occasion and learned to play it, and finally to play all string instruments, though his son Gus states that he never much liked the guitar. Bud Landress had the same versatility, and he too preferred the fiddle and banjo. This was a time in which the fiddle and banjo were predominant and the guitar somewhat newfangled. In the South in those days, and for a while later, fiddle and banjo were inseparable. The girl who was to marry Phil Reeve (later associate of Chitwood and Landress) was taught classical piano very young by her music-teacher mother, and she had a preacher father who forbade dancing. But she recalls of her childhood in one of her books, 'We often played stealing partners in the big north room while Bob Watkins fiddled and Lum Finch played the banjo with his twin brother Mack beating straws.'

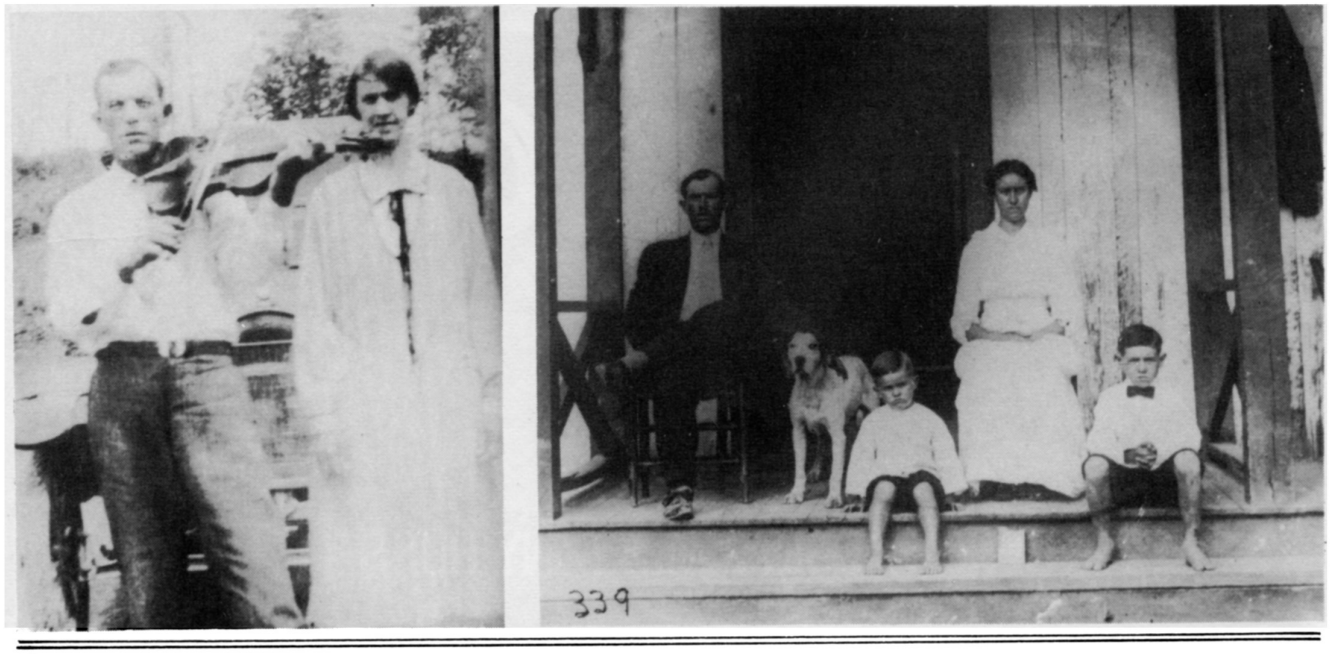
Actually it is with Phil Reeve that we find one of the strongest threads on which to hang various parts of our story. He came to be business manager of both the Yellow Hammers and the Baxters, and the music store with which he was associated brought together and promoted all of Gordon County's musical endeavours.

Phil Reeve's father died in 1900 and left his widow with four small children. To support them she sold musical instruments. From age nine Phil was driving a mule wagon over Gordon County delivering parlour organs. In 1906 his mother married a Mr Moss — hence the name Moss Music Company — and Phil's stepfather encouraged him to stay in the music business. One minor enticement was a cornet which Phil learned to play by ear. A larger one was the offer of a half interest in the business when he got to be 21. Before his marriage in 1916, when both he and his bride were 20, he had been to Indiana to learn piano-tuning and player-piano maintenance. He returned to Gordon County with the sheet music to a tune that had caught his fancy, *Calico Rag*. He found that none of the girls in Calhoun could play it to suit him, but in nearby Sugar Valley was one who could, the classically trained pianist already mentioned. Mrs Jewell Reeve Alderson declares, 'That rag got me a husband.'

Somewhere Phil had learned to yodel. As we hear him on a few of the records, he was somewhere between the Swiss yodellers who had been rather audible in 19th-century entertainment and Jimmie Rodgers. A piece by John Fox Jr tells of a Kentucky mountaineer yodelling, and newspaper items related to WSB Atlanta, which started in 1922, mention the yodelling of Riley Puckett and others. Just how long they had been doing it, and just how any who weren't recorded sounded, cannot be known. Phil may have been one of the first of his kind. His widow states only: 'He was the first I heard, and he was yodelling when I met him in 1916.' (Do not form too vivid a picture of a man going about yodelling as he waved a piece of sheet music challengingly at young lady pianists. Your picture wouldn't be accurate, probably.)

It is likely that Phil and the Moss Music Company were involved in the trip of Bill Chitwood and Bud Landress to New York to record for Brunswick in early 1925. Bill played the fiddle and Bud the banjo on these recordings, which are the oldest form of Gordon County music still extant. They included Bill's favourite

Bud and Mary Landress. Left, *in the '20s;* right, *with their sons Rembert and Roy, 1915.*



Ernest Moody.

Hen Cackle and such scarcer fiddle tunes as *Whoa Mule* and *Over the Sea.*

Several of these Brunswick recordings were songs, but there is little of the sort of vocal sounds we find after Bill and Bud were joined later by Phil Reeve, Clyde Evans, Ernest Moody and others. A religious music influence is strongly apparent in the later recordings. The scanner of the weekly Calhoun *Times* of the 1920s gets the impression that religious singing was far and away the main avocation of Gordon Countians then. The front page of almost every paper announces a 'singing' and often two or three. Bud Landress often appears as an officer in singing conventions. He read shaped notes and sang a good bass. Bud knew that kind of music when he made his earliest recordings, though he did not let it show until later.

However, the latent Yellow Hammer who was the outstanding exponent of church and singing-convention music was Charles Ernest Moody. He was born, like Chitwood, in 1891, near Tilton, but as a small child moved to Tunnel Hill. He taught himself to play banjo and harmonica, and to read music. 'One day,' recalls his daughter Virginia Worth, 'he put his shotgun across his shoulder, walked across to the other side of the mountain, and traded it for a fiddle, which he learned to play.'

Moody was from a note-music clan, and could remember his father and uncles debating whether the seven notes would ever take the place of the four shaped notes. He himself began with round notes, learning these and working his own way through a harmony book as a boy, though he later attended many singing schools, those dealing with shaped notes included. He remembered one school that was taught by a very ugly fellow who always moved the reed organ to the window so that he might spit tobacco out it as he intoned the flowery phrases of the old sacred songs.

A newspaper article, published near the end of Moody's life, recounts that

> 'During the summer of 1916 he walked three miles each way to attend a singing school in order to learn musical harmony. On December 31, 1916, he boarded a train for Asheville, North Carolina to attend a ten-week course in music where he studied voice, harmony, music history, hymn writing and directing. Soon he began writing songs and hymns. Best known of his hymns are two still popular compositions, "Drifting Too Far from the Shore," published in 1923, and "Kneel at the Cross," published in 1924.'

Both hymns were inspired by phrases in sermons. Moody's account of the composition of *Kneel at the Cross* runs thus:

> 'I had been working all day in my brother's grocery store. As I was coming home, the Baptists were having a prayer meeting. I stopped for the last of it, and the preacher said, "Let us all kneel at the cross." My ears shot forward and I went home and wrote down the title. The next night I developed it into a song. The preacher's name was Sam Hare.'

Another Gordon County composition that has been big in its time is *No One to Welcome Me Home*, started by the local songbook publisher J M Hinson and polished by Moody.

There were many musical activities in Gordon County in the 1920s, especially in the county seat, Calhoun, which were not associated with record-making, though they involved record-making people. Most Fourths of July there were fiddlers' contests and contests of other sorts. On July 4, 1924 C F Brown beat Bill Chitwood out of first place in fiddling. The quartet of 'Bud Landers' (his name is spelled thus as often as not in the old papers) also came in second, being nosed out by J H Lewis and his daughters.

By January 8, 1925 Phil Reeve had put his cornet to use and was directing a drum-and-horn group called the Calhoun Band. He announced in the paper of that date that Riley Puckett was appearing with his 'troupe' to play for the benefit of this band. Clayton McMichen and Fate Norris were to be with him.

The paper for February 19, 1925 carried a rather conspicuous ad by the Calhoun Radio Distributing Company indicating that Bud and Bill were to broadcast over WSB Atlanta for an hour and inviting 'Gordon County to come in next Wednesday, the 25th, and hear.' Gus Chitwood remembers that schools were let out; and since many people did not have a radio yet (a concern about this, of course, had prompted the ad) it is probable that a considerable part of the county did *try* to 'come in and hear.'

It is clear that Phil Reeve had teamed with Chitwood and Landress by April 2, 1925, for the Calhoun *Times* of that date states:

> 'Mr C.P. Reeve announces that Calhoun and Gordon County will have charge of WSB's radio program Friday noon and Friday night at 10:45 . . . the numbers consisting of quartettes, duets, and solos. Chitwood and Landress will also be there with their instruments. Mr. C.P. Reeve will also yodel. The quartette is made up of the following: Harley Harper, 1st tenor; C.P. Reeve, 2nd tenor; J.H. Cook, baritone; and Bud Landress, bass . . . . Also while in Atlanta, the Calhoun boys will attend Rich's monthly musicale and take part in the program.'

Bill Chitwood, 1912.

Rich's was and is a large department store which back then presented musical programmes mixing just about every kind of music known to man. The Calhoun *Times* had no follow-up on this event, but the Atlanta *Journal* spoke of a 'veritable deluge' of messages coming in during the radio programmes.

Programmes of interest by old time musicians from outside Gordon County frequently were presented at the Calhoun courthouse. The paper for April 30, 1925 heralds the Hometown Boys (later to be the Skillet-Lickers). That of November 19, 1925 announces Gid Tanner and 'S.L. Norris' but meant Fate Norris because it calls him 'a ventriloquist and blackface of far fame.' Gus Chitwood knew well both SL (Stephen Land) Norris of Dalton and Resaca's Fate Norris, and he remembers that it was Fate who was the ventriloquist. He recalls how Tanner and Fate, as well as many other travelling musicians, would visit his father's home while on the road and sometimes stay several days. It was a big two-storey brick house with lots of room. He and other children sometimes tried to make Fate's dummy talk to them when Fate was not around to protest. A couple of years later, as we shall see, the *Times* first classified Bud Landress as a one-man-band and then corrected it to S.L. Norris, but never got it right, for it was Fate Norris who was the one-man-band too. Newspapers of the '20s did not feel it necessary to be accurate about country music. The

researcher in them is reminded of the lad who had learned to read numerals but not to read words. Concerning road signs, he stated, 'I can tell how far, but I can't tell where to.' The researcher often feels, 'I can tell when, but I can't tell exactly what.'

An interesting item of December 17, 1925, limited to Gordon County people, is as follows:

> 'A committee from Liberty Church announces that a musical concert will be given at the courthouse Saturday night, Dec. 19th, at 7:30 o'clock by Bill Chitwood, Bud Landress, and Fate Norris, blackface comedian. Readings will also be given in connection with the music by Prof. Ernest Neal, Miss Fannie Lou Littlefield, and Miss Agnes Legg.
>
> The entertainment will be for the benefit of the Liberty Church.'

Professor Neal was the poet laureate of Georgia after Frank Stanton. He may have read material actually related to the music. He might even have written something related to it for the occasion, as he was quite prolific. On the other hand, readings having no connection at all with the music would have been normal. The way fiddle music was mixed with 'declamations', 'readings' and 'orations' in the old days is burlesqued on Ernest Stoneman's record *Possum Trot School Exhibition* , and 'exhibition days' at schools are described by a Gene Talmadge biographer as follows:

> 'A signal from the schoolmaster and the fiddlers waded in, their whizzing bows and screaming strings medleying from "Arkansas Traveler" through a repertoire which shook "Old Dan Tucker" and "Billie in the Lowgrounds" in their proverbial boots. Then came the declaimers, and for the next two hours old Greece and Rome rose and fell in seas of gore as embryo orators chased the eagle in unwearied flight. More fiddlin', then came the grand finale . . . .'

(I always thought it was a male Billy in the lowground, but the idea of having a booted female Bille down there is attractive.)

Half of the Georgia Yellow Hammers-to-be had recorded, and early in 1927 the remainder of the imminent group followed suit. From about 1924 Moody and Reeve had been singing in the Sankey Quartet (so named by a local preacher, Brother Hayes, after Ira D Sankey, the colleague of hymnbook-compiler and composer Dwight L Moody) together with Lawrence D (Pete) Neal and George Pickard. In February 1927 Reeve secured for the group a recording date with Victor. Jewell Reeve Alderson, Phil's wife, remembers:

> 'I went with them to Atlanta for the first recording session. Mr Peer wanted them to sing without accompaniment, but Mr Neal could not stay on pitch without the piano. Mr Peer told me to play softly and keep my foot off the pedal. On the record, the only part of the piano heard was the soft opening chord.'

The record was *Life's Railway to Heaven* and *The Church in the Wildwood* (Vi 20543), issued as by the Calhoun Sacred Quartet. The next day Reeve and Moody made a couple of duet recordings, the yodelling songs *Down Where the Watermelon Grows* and *Rock All Our Babies to Sleep*, with their own accompaniment of guitars and ukulele. The former title, coupled with an Ernest Stoneman recording made a little earlier, was actually the first (20540) in a long series of Victor records by Gordon County artists.

The following day, February 18, saw the first studio gathering of the Georgia Yellow Hammers under that name. (As for the name, incidentally, nobody recalls its precise origin. Bud Landress told a reporter many years later that he believed 'that a technician for the recording company thought it up.') The musicians involved were Chitwood, Landress, Reeve and Elias Meadows. Meadows, who sang tenor but did not (it is thought) play an instrument, was head of the weaving department at the new Echota Cotton Mills and was active in the New Echota Baptist Church and in Gordon County singing conventions. He was killed in an automobile accident about 1938 or '39.

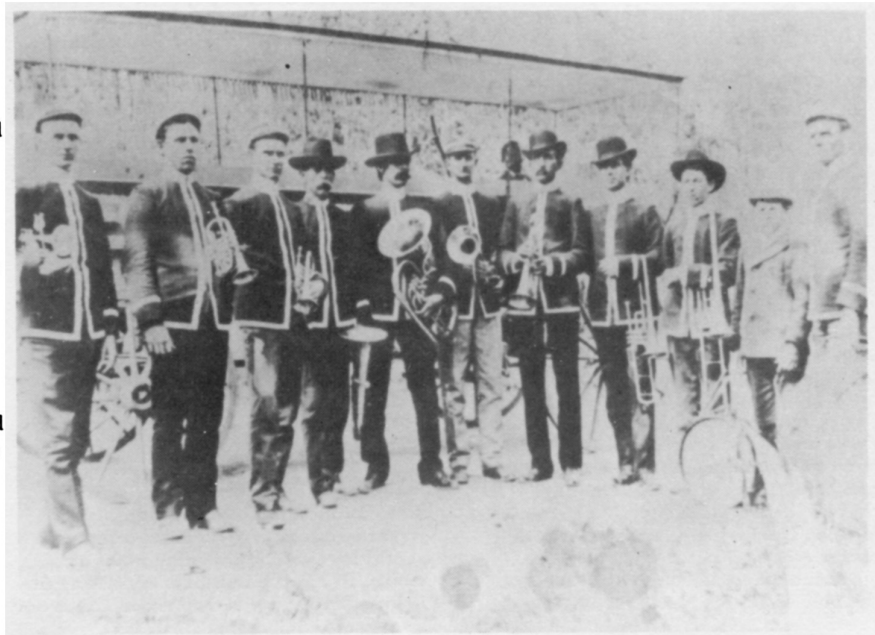
The selections recorded included *Pass Around the Bottle, Going to Ride That Midnight Train*, a version of *Hand Me Down My Walking Cane, Johnson's Old Grey Mule* and a new version of *Fourth of July at a Country Fair*, which Chitwood and Landress had recorded as a duo for Brunswick two years earlier. It is surely no coincidence that the first two titles were treatments of songs already recorded by the Skillet-Lickers, at their first session for Columbia in the previous spring. Perhaps by way of retaliation, the Skillet-Lickers picked up *Johnson's Old Grey Mule* soon afterwards.

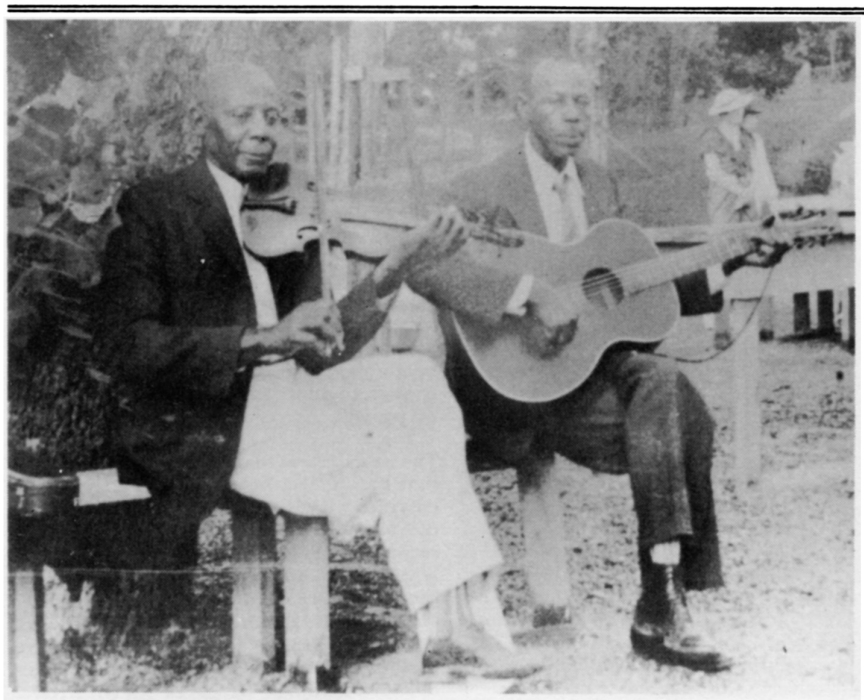
Pass Around the Bottle and *Fourth of July* set the style for the Yellow Hammers' recordings, with their trio harmonising (Meadows tenor, Landress lead and probably Chitwood bass). *Midnight Train* has only Chitwood and Landress singing, and *Grey Mule* was obviously a specialty number for Chitwood, who sings it by himself with mule-snorting effects. These recordings were made on a flat-fee, no-royalty basis — an arrangement which the group were able to change from the next session onwards.

1927 saw two fiddlers' conventions in Calhoun, both sponsored by the American Legion, the first to help erect a marker for the Confederate dead and the other to help build a new gymnasium. The former was held on March 11-12. Earl Johnson placed first and A A Gray second, a 'Mr Andrews' was third, and Bill and Bud came in fourth and fifth. Since this was a community project, the non-cash prizes were donated by the merchants, and they are interesting. We suspect that the $17.50 fiddle received by A A Gray came from the Moss Music Company. (Yes, $17.50; but that was 1927, and Sears Roebuck that year offered a whole fiddle outfit for $4.95. Back in 1894 they had stated, 'We can sell you a violin for 44 cents,' though they piously refused to do so, stating that they dealt only in 'superior instruments' starting at $2.85.) Bill was to get five dollars' worth of anything J A Strain's store had, as well as a $3.50 pair of shoes. Bud got a $3.00 shirt for his fifth-place fiddling and a $1.00 box of stationery for his first-place banjo picking. The winning harmonica player was to get a free haircut whever he wanted it. It could be assumed that in 1927 even a harmonica player would want a haircut finally.

Who was the 'Mr Andrews'? I still lean toward the theory that he was the Mack

This picture, made about 1909, shows a drum-and-horn band ancestral to the one Phil Reeve directed in Calhoun. Jim Reeve, Phil's brother, is the boy with the small drum. Other bandsmen in the picture include Henry Hall, John Ray, Richard Hines and L Moss.





Andrew and Jim Baxter at a Rotary Club fish fry, 1945.

or Mark Andrews appearing in other items, but, as Gus Chitwood suggested, it could have been Andrew Baxter. The exact likelihood of this black fiddler being the only 'Mr' in the bunch but not being accorded a last name is something that would call for an elderly Georgia psychologist with a specialty in racial attitudes and the mechanisms resulting therefrom but Gus and I think it possible. At any rate, this is as good a time as any to mention Andrew and James Baxter. Andrew (half Cherokee, according to Ernest Moody) definitely was an old time fiddler along with his other accomplishments. According to local tradition he was a proficient musician at age nine. Gus Chitwood says that he and his son James, a guitarist, often played with and for Bill Chitwood and other whites. 'They could play breakdowns; they could play blues; they could play church music; they could play *anything*.'

Soon after the first fiddlers' convention of 1927, another assembling of Gordon County musicians took place in Atlanta, when Bill Chitwood 'and his Georgia Mountaineers' cut a half-dozen sides for Okeh. Once again there was some judicious redeploying of motifs already committed to record elsewhere. *How I Got My Wife* had been *Howdy Bill* on Brunswick by Chitwood and Landress; and the song made another showing in 1927 when it was published in Ethel Park Richardson's 'American Mountain Songs,' with the note:

> 'Composed and sung by Bill Chitwood, . . . of Georgia. This homely recital of mountain love and resulting domesticity may be heard on a phonograph record, with lively interludes of fiddle and guitar.'

(It must be the Brunswick *Howdy Bill* to which Mrs Richardson refers, in which case one should correct her to read 'sung by Bud Landress' and 'interludes of fiddle and banjo'. The composer is not likely to have been Chitwood, but quite possibly Landress.)

Smiling Watermelon may have been another 'reply' to the Skillet-Lickers, who did it as *Watermelon on the Vine* at their first session, and *Fourth of July* we are by now familiar with. This Okeh recording is perhaps the finest of that weird and wonderful song. Landress has been identified as the singer again, but the rest of the recording lineup is less than certain, though the overall sound, both vocal and instrumental, is so strongly similar to contemporary Georgia Yellow Hammers work that the personnel is likely to be identical, or virtually so.

In August 1927 the Georgia Yellow Hammers made their second appearance in a Victor recording studio, this time in Charlotte NC. The Calhoun *Times* of August 4 listed the lineup-to-be as 'Bud Landress, fiddler; Ernest Moody, banjo-uke; Clyde Evans, guitar; Phil Reeve, steel guitar.' The band was, in fact, 50% different from that of six months earlier: Moody had joined, replacing Elias Meadows, between the two recording sessions, and Bill Chitwood, for reasons not clear, had ceded the fiddling role to Landress, with guitarist Clyde Evans coming in to strengthen the rhythm. Indeed, Landress, Reeve and Evans may be regarded as the core of the Yellow Hammers at this period, for Moody was never as thorough-going a member, playing with them chiefly on records and at a few fiddlers' conventions, but not at the schoolhouse and courthouse shows.

The 'steel guitar' with which Phil Reeve is credited is so inconspicuous on any of the records that I queried his widow about the item. She informed me that it was absolutely correct, that Phil could not 'finger' a guitar, although he held it in the group's picture as if he could. She also confided that Phil, for all his musical sophistication, could not read music, though when he directed the drum-and-horn band or the church choir people always assumed that he could.

The Charlotte sessions were occasions for several Gordon County groupings to be recorded. The Baxters, who were under a management contract to Phil Reeve, came along to the studio with a couple of blues and *The Moore Girl;* the Yellow Hammers cut eight titles; Reeve and Moody did some more of their duets with Phil's yodelling as a feature, and then the Yellow Hammers quartet reassembled for a couple of sacred selections, subsequently issued under the name of the Turkey Mountain Singers. The accompanist, on the organ, was J M (Max) Barnette.

One of the tunes recorded by the Yellow Hammers at this time, and the only strictly instrumental selection, was *G Rag* , for which, as several informants have confirmed, Andrew Baxter took over the fiddling from Bud Landress (who instead contributes the humorous spoken introduction).

Also recorded at this session was the coupling *The Picture on the Wall/My Carolina Girl* (Vi 20943), which proved far and away the best selling record the Yellow Hammers (or any of their related groups) ever had, and one of the top sellers of the late-'20s Southern market. (Collectors can vouch for its relative commonness even today.) In an article on Bud Landress's career in the Atlanta *Constitution* (February 8, 1953) Lloyd Gulledge recounted:

> 'It was "Uncle Bud" who wrote the popular "Picture on the Wall", the song which sold hundreds of thousands of records for him . . . . Landress, who spent a good deal of his time farming, said he was inspired to write the song one night after he had plowed corn all day. After going to bed, he became fascinated with a picture hanging on the wall in his bedroom and the idea to make a song about it was born. The picture, however, was not one of his mother, about whom the song was written.
>
> He got out of bed, wrote the words and "sawed out the tune" on his old fiddle. Several hours later when the composition was finished, he awakened his wife and sang it to her for an opinion, which probably wasn't very good at that time of night.'

Gulledge also adds the interesting comment:

> 'This was during the era when religious and semi-religious songs were most popular in the hillbilly world. Songs with humor, heavy drama and instrumental numbers were also in heavy demand, but all these later gave way to the demand for blues and yodel numbers.'

According to the journalist, presumably taking his information from Landress, it was Ernest Moody who 'wrote the musical setting for "Picture on the Wall",' but the

record-labels credit Landress alone. Many later recordings of both *The Picture on the Wall* and *My Carolina Girl* were derived from the Yellow Hammers' hit record, which sold over 60,000 copies in 1928 alone, and probably more than twice that in all. (Further information on the Yellow Hammers' record sales and other financial affairs, based on papers left by Phil Reeve, will be provided in a subsequent article.)

About the end of September 1927, there was a second Okeh session by Bill Chitwood and his Georgia Mountaineers, in Atlanta as before. Chitwood, apparently, was not considered one of the Yellow Hammers for Victor's recording purposes, so possibly his own group on Okeh was entirely distinct in personnel. Landress cannot be identified among the singers with any certainty this time, but the ensemble sound still clings close to the Yellow Hammers'. However, a second fiddler can be heard, who has been somewhere alleged to be Earl Johnson. A tempting alternative suggestion is that it is Bud Landress, and that we have here the (probably) sole examples of Landress and Chitwood fiddling together.

When Married Folks Are Out of Cash is a version of the piece Charlie Poole recorded as *Look Before You Leap*, and is related too to the Yellow Hammers' *I'm S-A-V-E-D* recorded the month before. Also echoing the recent Yellow Hammers session was *Raise Rough House Tonight*, which the Victor lineup had done as *Goin' to Raise a Rukus Tonight*. *Bill Wishes He Was Single Again* was a personalised rendering of the wellknown *I Wish I Was Single Again*. *Kitty Hill* strikes a somewhat different note, being a dancetune without a formal vocal (but rich in calls and asides); here the two fiddles are heard at their best.

The October fiddlers' convention of 1927 was managed by Bud Landress, who, as mentioned earlier, was billed also as a one-man-band and blackface comedian. A 'correction' of September 29 repudiated both descriptions (though Bud *was* an occasional blackface comedian, whom Lowe Stokes remembered from his boyhood) but stated that 'S.L. Norris' (it should have said Fate Norris) was a 'six-man-band'. It went on to say: 'Here's what he does; plays a fiddle, two guitars, one banjo, one chime bell, one French harp, one eukakeke [sic] and does a blackface show all at once.' I count seven instruments but must concede that the paper was zeroing in on things gradually. Gus Chitwood remembers Fate Norris's apparatus as quite bulky, filling all of a T-Model truck. It would be nice to know more about Fate, the least known of the Skillet-Lickers, but it is possible that we shall never know much more. Gus says that he did not originate in Resaca, that his only family when there was a wife and daughter, and that he moved away to Trion or Somerville, where he eventually fell dead on the street.

The advertising for that October convention called some big names, and the report on it (October 20) stated 'practically all the artists billed for the convention were present except Uncle Dave Macon, who wired Bud that he had a bale of hay fever and was unable to leave his bed.' One suspects that more failed to show than this suggests. Earl Johnson won first place again, and we can believe without too much strain that he did so over Clayton McMichen, A A Gray, Lowe Stokes and Bud Silvey, all of whom were advertised. That the winner of second place, Mack Andrews, beat them goes down harder. Perhaps some were there and did not compete.

Shortly after this convention the Georgia Yellow Hammers took a day or so off in Atlanta to make a record for the 1927 Christmas market, a pair of sketches entitled *Christmas Time at Moonshine Hollow* and *Candy Pulling at Moonshine Hollow*. Bud Landress, who receives composer credit on each side, is the chief speaker, but Moody, Reeves and Evans are all heard too. As in the Skillet-Licker skits of the time, the Christmas sketch includes an instrumental passage by the band, playing *Give the Fiddler a Dram*. The other side has no playing, but a joke-drunk rendering, by the quartet, of *How Dry I Am*. There is a good deal of talking on both performances, and by comparison with the most enduring sketches of the era, they are somewhat ponderous.

A 'proper' Yellow Hammers session, however, followed in February 1928, with the quartet as before. The invented location of 'Moonshine Hollow', which first appears on the sketches just described, recurs in *The Moonshine Hollow Band*, which seems to have been devised to convey a rural image comparable with Ernest Stoneman's 'Possum Trot' or the 'Wildcat Hollow' once occupied by a Lowe Stokes-Bert Layne group. All these imaginary settlements may have been derived from the 'Pumpkin Center' where many of Cal (Uncle Josh) Stewart's monologues were set. In any case, the song *The Moonshine Hollow Band* incorporates motifs from *Dixie* and *Yankee Doodle*. *The Running Blues* turns out to be (what one could scarcely have reckoned on) a song about rabies, and *Song of the Doodle Bug*, composed by Moody and possibly featuring him on fiddle, continues the nature interest, albeit on a less clinical note. The remaining songs may loosely be described as in the vein of *Picture on the Wall*: nostalgic, at a slow to medium tempo, usually with harmonised chorus singing.

The half-dozen band sides were succeeded by two Reeve-Moody duets — their last as such, and never released — and two monologues by Uncle Bud Landress (as Victor had taken to calling him) which took the Moonshine Hollow saga further: *Coon-Hunting in Moonshine Hollow* and *Visiting Sal's House in Moonshine Hollow*. Each is a repository for some old country quips, and may be compared with some of Uncle Dave Macon's more discursive narrations. Each, too, begins and ends with a few bars of banjo-playing, but nothing substantial enough to constitute a proper instrumental passage.

The newspapers of July 19, 1928 stated that Phil Reeve, Ernest Moody, Gus Boaz (rhymes with 'toes') and Claude Harper of Calhoun were in Chicago making records for Paramount, along with a Mr Worsham of Rome. Later we are told that they recorded *Liberty* and *In That Morning* 'in the old "Christian Harmony" way' and also recorded 'breakdown numbers' as the Dixie Crackers. This appears to be the story behind the Paramount record of *Bile Them Cabbage Down* and *The Old Bell Cow*, which does sound like a splinter group from the Yellow Hammers, with others, doing an imitation, almost a burlesque, of the more imitable aspects of the Skillet-Lickers. Such a description does more justice to *Bile Them Cabbage Down* than to *The Old Bell Cow*, which is really a heck of a thing. While some voices out-Gid Gid Tanner in making such noises as were made to refractory cows when people tried to milk them, other strong, mellifluous voices, obviously more accustomed to singing such lines as 'Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,' are singing lines like 'Oh, the bell cow, catch her by the tail.' Meanwhile somebody, probably Gus Boaz, is making like a very elementary and very primitive fiddler. Yet it is strangely genuine. We don't get the impression that anybody was doing anything he hadn't done, at least rarely, for much of his life.

Discography, however, somewhat conflicts with the newspaper account. Two groups recorded side-by-side for Paramount in July 1928, the Charles Brothers (Philip & Ernest) and a North Georgia Quartette (or Four). The former have been identified as Reeve and Moody (as the first names suggested), while the latter is in all probability the quartet that we know Reeve organised and exchanged contracts with in early June, namely R E Worsham, J H Cook, J H Harper and C C Harper. It is possible that either or both of Reeve and Moody may be heard in place of some of these men. The fiddle and guitar accompaniments which both groups had were presumably by Boaz with Reeve or Moody.

Yet it was neither of these groups that produced *Liberty* or *The Old Bell Cow*, nor were the issued versions of these performances recorded at this July 1928 session. The coupling of *Liberty* and *In That Morning* (Pm 3152) came out as by the Moody Bible Sacred

Harp Singers, the Dixie Crackers' pair was on Pm 3151, and there was a further North Georgia Four record (3174) of *Bye Bye Mama* and *She Was a Lulu.* All these date from a Chicago session about January 1929. The Sacred Harp quartet may be the foursome mentioned above, or the four given in the newspaper, but either way it looks as if the titles were recorded unsuccessfully (or successfully, but later lost in factory processing) in 1928 and had to be remade, by a reassembled group not necessarily identical with the original one, some six months later. The same explanation would hold for the Dixie Crackers' record. The North Georgia Four on 3174 has more of a Yellow Hammers sound, with quartet harmonising, and may be presumed to be by much the same group as constituted the Moody Bible Sacred Harp Singers.

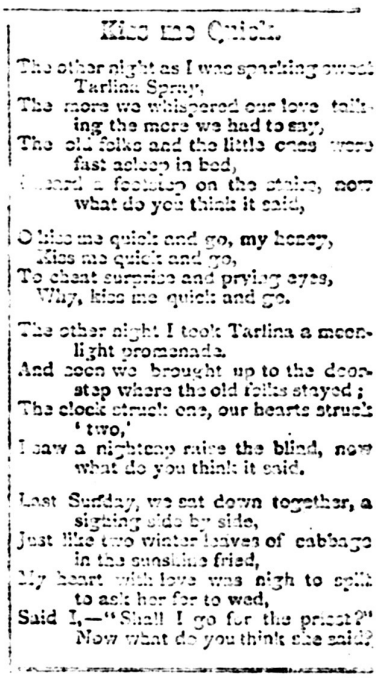
Between the two Paramount dates there was a further Victor session by the Yellow Hammers in Atlanta in mid-October 1928. It is probable that Bill Chitwood had rejoined the band — he was present among the Turkey Mountain Singers a few days later, with the expected Landress-Moody-Reeve constellation — but the stylistic similarity of his and Landress' fiddling makes a decision difficult. Oddly, both Victor files and personal papers of the Yellow Hammers neglect to specify the personnel on this session.

Of Landress's presence as singer we are in no doubt; and he is further credited with the composition of all eight titles recorded. Some of these are among the group's most delightful recordings. *Big Ball in Memphis* is familiar enough in its many variants, and the odd title *Warhorse Game* merely conceals *Old Hen Cackle,* but *Come Over and See Me Sometime* is a humorous number that seems quintessentially Yellow Hammerish, and the harmonised choruses of *Kiss Me Quick* (which has been traced back to a British broadside) are very elegant. *The Deacon's Calf* is another comic tale, with a laughing chorus like Charlie Poole's in *Monkey on a String. Sale of Simon Slick,* in two parts, is by comparison a lesser thing, but more successfully constructed than the earlier sketches, and with more music, including passages of *Buckin' Mule* and *Hump Backed Mule.*

Three days later the Turkey Mountain Singers made four sacred selections, accompanied by Ira Mashburn on organ. (Mashburn was also the organist with the Moody Bible Sacred Harp Singers for Paramount a few months later.) The Baxters also recorded at this time, cutting eight titles of which only *Georgia Stomp* and *Forty Drops* (Vi V-38002) were issued.

It was remarked above, of the Dixie Crackers, that everybody sounded as if he were singing or playing a music thoroughly natural to him. The same is true of the much more numerous Georgia Yellow Hammers records. One may prefer the more homogeneous early records of Chitwood and Landress alone, but the Yellow Hammers' records, in a way, were more representative because they were less homogeneous. They show some influence of nearly all the short-hair music being played in Gordon County in the '20s. They have the fiddle tunes, the heart songs, the minstrel songs, a trace of the blues and rags. Though the words are generally secular, they show a strong influence of the 'singings'. There is little or no influence of the Calhoun drum-and-horn band, though in *Black Annie* (from the last session referred to) there may be even a trace of that. All of this was their music. They had grown up with it all.

Above, *the Calhoun Methodist Church orchestra in the early '20s. Phil Reeve is the cornet-player, his wife Jewell sits* front row centre, *and Gus Boaz is the fiddler at* front row right. Below, Kiss Me Quick *from a Such songbook of the very late 1800s or early 1900s.*



Kiss me Quick.

The other night as I was sparkling sweet Tarlina Spray,
The more we whispered our love talking the more we had to say,
The old folks and the little ones were fast asleep in bed,
I heard a footstep on the stairs, now what do you think it said,

O kiss me quick and go, my honey,
Kiss me quick and go,
To cheat surprise and prying eyes,
Why, kiss me quick and go.

The other night I took Tarlina a moonlight promenade,
And soon we brought up to the door-step where the old folks stayed;
The clock struck one, our hearts struck two,
I saw a nightcap raise the blind, now what do you think it said.

Last Sunday, we sat down together, a sighing side by side,
Just like two winter leaves of cabbage in the sunshine fried,
My heart with love was nigh to split to ask her for to wed,
Said I,—"Shall I go for the priest?"
Now what do you think she said?

The Georgia Yellow Hammers stayed faithful to Victor — even the Paramount sides were done with Ralph Peer's agreement — and the Okeh-Chitwood connection did not last beyond 1927. Late in 1929, however, Columbia took an interest in Gordon County music and secured a recording by a Clyde Evans Band (Co 15597-D). The sound is pure Yellow Hammers and may well have been made by sometime members; a plausible lineup would be Chitwood, Reeve and Evans. One of the titles, *How I Got My Gal,* was by now practically a Gordon County standard, having been previously recorded (as we saw above) by Chitwood and Landress (*Howdy Bill,* Brunswick) and by Chitwood's Georgia Mountaineers (*How I Got My Wife* , Okeh). This Columbia version is a vocal solo, presumably by Evans (or Chitwood), while the reverse side, *All Gone Now,* has fine chorus harmony.

Later that month (November 1929) was the last Georgia Yellow Hammers session — or rather sessions, for two substantially different groups recorded in that name within a week; and for the same company (Victor) at that. 'Uncle Bud Landress with Georgia Yellow Hammers' was the label credit on *Rubber Doll Rag* and *Rip Van Winkle Blues* (Vi V-40252), played by Landress, Fred Locklear (mandolin) and Melvin Dupree (guitar). (Locklear and Dupree worked and recorded with Bill Shores, and further information on them may be found in Charles Wolfe's article on Shores in this issue.) The 'Georgia Yellow Hammers' credit did not appear on Landress's two-part *The Daddy Song* (Vi 23606) — though both accompanists were present to some extent, as also was

Bud's wife, singing — but it resurfaced a few days later as the overall group-name for a quartet of Chitwood, Reeve, Moody and Dupree, who recorded two heart songs in waltz time, *Childhood Days* and Moody's *No One to Welcome Me Home*, both with trio singing, and two fiddle tunes, *White Lightning* and *Peaches Down in Georgia*. There had been some disagreement between Landress and the rest of the Yellow Hammers over the division of income from records, and Reeve, Chitwood and Moody had signed an agreement with each other which tacitly excluded Landress. It cannot, however, have been a serious rift, for the core members of the Yellow Hammers were together again on record in the following year. Phil Reeve, incidentally, had also signed a managerial contract with Earl Johnson and secured him a recording session with Victor at this time. Reeve's regulars, the Baxters, also recorded at the November session.

Throughout all the Yellow Hammers' activity of 1927-29 Ernest Moody had kept up his position on the sacred quartet scene, and one of the groups he organised recorded in early 1930, for a label new in this region's musical history, Vocalion. *Kneel at the Cross*, Moody's celebrated composition mentioned earlier, was coupled with *I Believe in God* (Vo 5448) and issued as by The Moody Quartet, the personnel being Frank Harmon, Lawrence (Pete) Neal, Moody and Clyde Evans, with an unknown organist.

A couple of months later another of these quartets was on record, as the Gordon County Quartet on Columbia. The probable lineup on *Walking in the King's Highway* and *Beyond the Clouds Is Light* (Co 15713-D) is Reeve, Moody, Landress and Tom Chitwood, Bill's brother; with Bill himself playing fiddle, and an unknown pianist. According to Moody, Bill Chitwood arranged the session and chose the selections. This record marks the last appearance in country music discography of any of the Georgia Yellow Hammers and their immediate circle.

The final Gordon County connection, however, came just a little later, when, in May 1931, Phil Reeve took the young Nichols Brothers to Charlotte NC to record for Victor. The Depression had already hit, but the extent of its effects on country recordings was not yet foreseen, and it was expected that *I'm Lonely Since Mother's Gone*, written and performed by this talented Pine Chapel trio (close friends of the Yellow Hammers), would be another *Picture on the Wall*. Actually the best-selling record of the Nichols Brothers was one shared with the Carolina Tar Heels (as the Pine Mountain Boys, to be exact), on which the Nichols side was *She's Killing Me* (Vi 23582). I don't think we should attribute the better sales to the fact of the Tar Heels being on the other side. *She's Killing Me* is my favourite of the Nichols Brothers sides I have heard. Bob Wills must have liked it too, for he seems to have used it as the basis for a number he recorded. Claude Nichols writes: 'We composed all we recorded, and I was responsible for the "She's Killing Me" number. It was just a bit off-color forty-five years ago, but it sold more than any of the others.'

Gordon Co. Musicians Make Victor Records

The Nichols Brothers, of near Pine Chapel, had a mighty pleasant trip with C. P. Reeve to Charlotte, N. C., last week and put a number of North Georgia tunes on Victor records. These boys, who are all Gordon county products, put on some of the best numbers that Victor recorded in the whole southern trip. They recorded ballards, comics and sentimentals. One number, especially, "I'm Lonely Since Mother's Away," was said to be the most outstanding number recorded since the famous "Picture On the Wall" was put out several years ago by another Gordon county organization, The Georgia Yellowhammers.

The boys had a wonderful trip and enjoyed their stay in Charlotte very much. They drove through in a car going by Atlanta, Athens, Anderson, S. C., Greenville and Spartanburg to Charlotte, and coming back by Asheville, Lake Lure, Chimney Rock, Nantahala Gorge and over the Kinsey Mountain Highway.

These boys have a very bright future in the recording game and Gordon county should feel proud to produce such artists. The boys used the following instruments: Lawrence Nichols, guitarist and leader of the trio; Claude Nichols, violinst, and, last, least, and best of their organization is Stanton Nichols, the twelve year old wonder. He played a tenor guitar and sang and yodeled on all numbers. This youngster certainly made a hit with the recorders.

These boys featured close harmony singing with fine string instrument background. Their records will be on sale at L. Moss Music Co., as they are released.

The oldest Nichols Brother, though he was only in his early 20s, was Lawrence lead singer and guitarist. Next was Claude, fiddler and tenor singer. Youngest was Stanton, tenor guitarist. He was only 12, his voice had not changed, and Claude describes his part as 'alto'. Because of his age as well as his ability, Stanton attracted much attention. Claude recalls a fiddlers' convention at which Stanton sang two solos and a special collection for him took in more money than the Nichols Brothers made as a group.

The Depression pretty much stopped not only the recordings but also the music store. Phil gave it up to work with the Department of Agriculture. The others turned to their other work, happily enough, I think, except in the case of Bud Landress. Bud was doing some show work in the '40s with a group called the Georgia Mountaineers, who played over WRGA in Rome, as well as putting on shows. Pearl Barton, who was a sort of child prodigy with this group, remembered him as doing blackface comedy, but did not remember him playing any instruments. Mitchell Chastain, who fiddled for the group, said, 'Bud had a hard time getting over show business.'

Phil Reeve died in 1949, both Andrew and James Baxter in the early '50s, Bill Chitwood in 1962, Bud Landress in 1966 and Clyde Evans about two years ago. Moody died on June 21 this year, having lived long enough to see, in his last few months, a good deal of interest shown in his career by both music researchers and local newspaper reporters. All their major musical associates are known to be dead or probably are. There isn't much of a tangible nature left in Gordon County of what I have talked about — a few old 78s, a few old pictures, the drum that Mrs Jewell Reeve Alverson keeps in front of her fireplace. It passed to the black band when the white band played out and was returned after that had played out too and a black friend had died.

But there have to be many memories. And tape copies of the records, along with a few numbers on LP reissues, are being played all over the world, though admittedly not by any large fraction of the world's population. May their tribe increase.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An earlier version of this article, by Gene Wiggins alone, was published in *The Devil's Box* 11:1 (March 1, 1977). This expanded and revised version draws on his considerable further research and correspondence in Gordon County. It also incorporates substantial additions by me, chiefly concerned with the recording sessions and the music they produced. The essence of the article, however, is Gene Wiggins' original piece, and his is the voice that readers will generally be hearing.

Both collaborators acknowledge their great debt to the late Ernest Moody and his daughter Virginia Worth; to Bud Landress' daughter Dixie Landress and granddaughter Mildred Dutton; to Mrs Jewell Reeve Alverson; and to Gus Chitwood, Pearl Barton, Mitchell Chastain, Claude Nichols, John M Brown (for pictures from his collection) and Charles K Wolfe. T.R.

A DISCOGRAPHY of old time music in GORDON COUNTY

BILL CHITWOOD AND BUD LANDRESS: Bill Chitwood-f, Bud Landress-bj/v. No v-*.
New York NY, ? c. January 1925

	Jerusalem, Mourn	Br 2809, Sv 3048
	Howdy, Bill	- , -
	I Got Mine	Br 2810, Sv 3049
	*Over The Sea	- , -
	*Hen Cackle	Br 2811, Sv 3050
	*Whoa Mule	- , -

The following sides may have been recorded at the above session or somewhat later, perhaps c. April 1925.

	Fourth Of July	Br 2883
	Johnny, Get Your Gun	-
	Furniture Man	Br 2884, Sv 3095
	Pa, Ma And Me	- , -

NOTE: Sv 3095 as McCLELLAND & ELLIS.

CALHOUN SACRED QUARTET: Lawrence D Neal-tv, C Philip Reeve-tv, C Ernest Moody-bv, George Pickard-bsv, Jewell Reeve-p. Atlanta GA, February 16, 1927

37904-2	Purer In Heart	Vi unissued
37905-1	Life's Railway To Heaven	Vi 20543
37906-2	Just Outside The Door	Vi unissued
37907-1	The Church In The Wildwood	Vi 20543, MW M-8116

NOTE: rev. M-8116 Vaughan's Texas Quartet.

PHIL REEVE - ERNEST MOODY: Phil Reeve-v/y/g, Ernest Moody-v/u-1/g-2.
February 17, 1927

37908-2	Down Where The Watermelon Grows-1	Vi 20540
37909-3	Rock All Our Babies To Sleep-2	Vi unissued

NOTE: rev. Vi 20540 Ernest Stoneman-Kahl Brewer.

GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: Bill Chitwood-f/bsv, Bud Landress-bj/lv, Phil Reeve-g, Elias Meadows-tv. Spoken introduction and solo v on 37921 by Chitwood. Meadows does not sing on 37920. February 18, 1927

37919-1	Pass Around The Bottle	Vi 20550, MW M-8054
37920-2	Going To Ride That Midnight Train	Vi 20549
37921-1	Johnson's Old Grey Mule	Vi 20550
37922-2	Fourth Of July At A Country Fair	Vi 20549

NOTE: rev. M-8054 Bud Billings.

BILL CHITWOOD & HIS GEORGIA MOUNTAINEERS: Bill Chitwood-f, Bud Landress-bj/v, poss. Clyde Evans-g, another unknown-g. Lead v probably by Landress throughout, with chorus v by two or all three other members.
Atlanta GA, March 22 or 23, 1927

80619-B	How I Got My Wife	OK 45100
80620-A	Smiling Watermelon	OK 45110
80621-A	Preacher Blues	OK 45131
80622-B	I Had But Fifteen Cents	-
80623-A	It Won't Happen Again For Months	OK 45110
80624-B	Fourth Of July At The Country Fair	OK 45100

GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: Bud Landress-f/lv, Ernest Moody-bj-u/v, Phil Reeve-g/v, Clyde Evans-g/v. On 39783 Andrew Baxter plays f rather than Landress, who makes the spoken introduction; no v on this item.
Charlotte NC, August 9, 1927

39777-2	Tennessee Coon	Vi 21073
39778-2	All Old Bachelors Are Hard To Please	-
39779-2	Mary, Don't You Weep	Vi 20928
39780-2	Goin' To Raise A Rukus Tonight	-
39781-1	I'm S-A-V-E-D	Vi 21195
39782-2	The Picture On The Wall	Vi 20943
39783-2	G Rag	Vi 21195

ANDREW AND JIM BAXTER: Andrew Baxter-f, Jim Baxter-g/v. Speech, and prob v, on 39786 by Andrew Baxter.

39784-2	Bamalong Blues	Vi 20962
39785-1	K. C. Railroad Blues	-
39786-2	The Moore Girl	Vi 21475

NOTE: rev. Vi 21475 Richard ("Rabbit") Brown.

GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: as above. August 10, 1927

39787-2	My Carolina Girl	Vi 20943

PHIL REEVE - ERNEST MOODY: Phil Reeve-v/y/g, Ernest Moody-v/g, Clyde Watts (sic Victor files, presumably for Evans)-g-3.

37909-5	Rock All Our Babies To Sleep	Vi 20929
39788-2	Never Alone-3	Vi unissued
39789-2	Bees Are Humming Around The Flowers	Vi 20929
39790-	Sweet Evelina	Vi 21188

NOTE: rev. Vi 21188 Frank & James McCravy.

TURKEY MOUNTAIN SINGERS: prob.: Bud Landress-v, Ernest Moody-v, Phil Reeve-v, Clyde Evans-v, with J M Barnette-o.

39791-2	I Am Bound For The Promised Land	Vi 20942
39792-2	He Loves Me	-

BILL CHITWOOD & HIS GEORGIA MOUNTAINEERS: Bill Chitwood-f, another unknown-f (poss. Earl Johnson), poss. Bud Landress-bj, one or two unknown(s)-g. Lead v prob. by Chitwood on at least some items, with chorus v by two or three others. Spoken introduction by Chitwood on 81657.

Atlanta GA, September 30, 1927

81652-A	When Married Folks Are Out Of Cash	OK 45162
81653-		
81654-A	Raise Rough House Tonight	OK 45236
81655-B	Bill Wishes He Was Single Again	-
81656-		
81657-B	Kitty Hill	OK 45162

UNCLE BUD LANDRESS AND GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: Bud Landress-f/v/sp, Ernest Moody-bj-u/v/sp, Phil Reeve-g/v/sp, Clyde Evans-g/v/sp. (Instruments heard only on 40351, v only on 40352; sp on both.)

Atlanta GA, October 24, 1927

40351-2	Christmas Time At Moonshine Hollow	Vi 21036
40352-1	Candy Pulling At Moonshine Hollow	-

GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: Bud Landress-f/lv, Ernest Moody-bj-u/v, Phil Reeve-g/v, Clyde Evans-g/v. Solo v by Landress-**.

Atlanta GA, February 21, 1928

41924-2	Song Of The Doodle Bug	Vi 21362
41925-1	**The Moonshine Hollow Band	Vi 21626
41926-2	My Eyes Are Growing Dimmer Every Day	Vi 21486
41927-1	**The Running Blues	Vi 21626
41928-1	When The Birds Begin Their Singing In The Trees	Vi 21362

February 22, 1928

41945-1	**The Old Rock Jail Behind The Old Iron Gate	Vi 21486

PHIL REEVE - ERNEST MOODY: Phil Reeve-v/y/g, Ernest Moody-v/u.

February 23, 1928

41946-2	I Want You Every Day	Vi unissued
41947-2	Miss Lucy Long	Vi unissued

UNCLE BUD LANDRESS: Bud Landress-sp/bj.

41948-1	Coon-Hunting In Moonshine Hollow	Vi 21354
41949-1	Visiting Sal's House In Moonshine Hollow	-

CHARLES BROTHERS (Philip & Ernest): Phil Reeve-v, Ernest Moody-v, poss. Gus Boaz-f, unknown-g. Chicago IL, mid-July 1928

20690-2	Oh How I Love Jesus	Pm 3120, Bw 8222
20693-1	Looking This Way	Pm 3114, Bw 8209

NOTE: Bw 8209 as ALABAMA FOUR (sic), 8222 as PHILLIPS BROTHERS.

NORTH GEORGIA QUARTETTE: poss.: R E Worsham, J H Cook, J H Harper, C C Harper - v quartet, with poss. Gus Boaz-f, unknown-g. No accompaniment on 20701.

20694-2	How Beautiful Heaven Must Be	Pm 3114, Bw 8209
20695-1	Each Day I'll Do A Golden Deed	Pm 3120, Bw 8222
20698-1	I Can, I Do, I Will	Pm 3135
20701-1	Wandering Child Come Home	-
	Amazing Grace	Pm 3149
	Redeemed	-

NOTE: intervening matrices untraced; two of them presumably apply to Pm 3149. Pm 3135, 3149 as NORTH GEORGIA FOUR. Bw 8209 as ALABAMA FOUR, 8222 as PHILLIPS BROTHERS.

ANDREW AND JIM BAXTER: Andrew Baxter-f, Jim Baxter-g/v/sp (where heard). Atlanta GA, October 16, 1928

47175-2	Done Wrong Blues	Vi unissued
47176-2	You May Leave My House	Vi unissued
47177-3	Tickle My Chin	Vi unissued
47178-3	Treat Him Right	Vi unissued
47179-2	East 9th Street Blues	Vi unissued
47180-3	Goodbye Blues	Vi unissued
47181-3	Georgia Stomp	Vi V-38002
47182-3	Forty Drops	-

GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: poss.: Bud Landress-f/lv, Ernest Moody-g/u/v, Phil Reeve-g/v. Bill Chitwood may be present also, playing f, in which case Landress plays bj. Solo v by Landress-**. Speech by all members on 47191 and 47192. October 18, 1928

47189-3	Big Ball In Memphis	Vi V-40138
47190-2	Come Over And See Me Sometime	Vi V-40091, Zo 4235
47191-1	Sale Of Simon Slick - Part 1	Vi V-40069
47192-3	Sale Of Simon Slick - Part 2	-
47193-3	Kiss Me Quick	Vi V-40091, Zo 4235
47194-3	**Black Annie	Vi V-40138
47195-2	Warhorse Game	Vi V-40004
47196-3	The Deacon's Calf	-

TURKEY MOUNTAIN SINGERS: Bud Landress-tv, Ernest Moody-tv, Phil Reeve-bv, Bill Chitwood-bsv, Ira Mashburn-o. October 21, 1928

47217-2	Does The Pathway Lead Straight	Vi 23602
47218-	He Will Never Leave Me	Bb B-5542
47219-	Precious Memories	-
47220-2	Keep Marching All The Time	Vi 23602

MOODY BIBLE SACRED HARP SINGERS: poss.: Phil Reeve, Ernest Moody, R E Worsham, C C Harper - v quartet, with Gus Boaz-f, Ira Mashburn-o, unknown-g. Chicago IL, January 1929

21121-2	Liberty	Pm 3152
21123-2	In That Morning	-

NOTE: Matrix 21122 untraced.

DIXIE CRACKERS: Gus Boaz-f, unknown-g, unknown lead v, chorus v.

21131-1	The Old Bell Cow	Pm 3151

NORTH GEORGIA FOUR: v quartet poss. as for 21121/3, with Gus Boaz-f, unknown-g.

21136-2	Bye Bye Mama	Pm 3174
21137-1	She Was A Lulu	-

DIXIE CRACKERS: as for 21131.

21138-1	Bile Them Cabbage Down	Pm 3151

CLYDE EVANS BAND: poss.: Bill Chitwood-f, Phil Reeve-g, Clyde Evans-g. Solo v, poss. by Evans, on 149365; lead v with chorus v on 149366.
Atlanta GA, November 4, 1929

149365-2	How I Got My Gal	Co 15597-D
149366-2	All Gone Now	-

ANDREW AND JIM BAXTER: Andrew Baxter-f, Jim Baxter-g/v.
Atlanta GA, November 20, 1929

56546-	Done Wrong Blues	Vi 23394
56547-	It Tickles Me (Stop Your Girl Ticklin' Me)	Vi V-38603
56548-	Treat Your Friends Right	Vi 23394
56549-	Operator Blues	Vi 23404

UNCLE BUD LANDRESS WITH GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: Bud Landress-f/v, Fred Locklear-m/v-4, Melvin Dupree-g/v-5. November 21, 1929

56551-1	Rubber Doll Rag	Vi V-40252
56552-2	Rip Van Winkle Blues	-
56553-2	The Picture Of Mother's Love	Vi unissued
56554-2	My Heart Is Broken-4,5	Vi unissued

ANDREW AND JIM BAXTER: as above.

56558-	Goodbye Blues	Vi 23404
56559-	Dance The Georgia Poss	Vi V-38603

UNCLE BUDD LANDRESS: Bud Landress-v, Fred Locklear-m-6, Melvin Dupree-g, Mrs Mary Landress-v-7. November 22, 1929

56569-1	The Daddy Song - Part 1 -6	Vi 23606
56570-1	The Daddy Song - Part 2 -7	-

GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS: Bill Chitwood-f, Ernest Moody-u, Phil Reeve-g, Melvin Dupree-g. Second f, poss. Moody, on 56614. Trio v (prob. Chitwood, Moody and Reeve) on 56613 and 56614. No v-*. November 27, 1929

56613-1	Childhood Days	Vi 23542
56614-2	No One To Welcome Me Home	-
56615-1	*White Lightning	Vi 23683, Au 406, Bb B-5126, Su S-3207
56616-1	*Peaches Down In Georgia	Vi 23683, Au 406, Bb B-5126, Su S-3207

THE MOODY QUARTET: Frank Harmon-lv, Lawrence Neal-tv, Ernest Moody-bv, Clyde Evans-bsv, with unknown-o. Atlanta GA, February/March 1930

TATL-933	Kneel At The Cross	Vo 5448
TATL-934	I Believe In God	-

GORDON COUNTY QUARTET: prob.: Phil Reeve-lv, Ernest Moody-tv, Bud Landress-bv, Tom Chitwood-bsv, with Bill Chitwood-f, unknown-p.
Atlanta GA, April 18, 1930

150281-2	Walking In The King's Highway	Co 15713-D
150282-2	Beyond The Clouds Is Light	-

CLAUDE AND LAWRENCE NICHOLS: Claude Nichols-f, Lawrence Nichols-g/v, Stanton Nichols-tg. Charlotte NC, May 28, 1931

69366-	She's Killing Me	Vi 23582

NOTE: rev. Pine Mountain Boys.

THE NICHOLS BROTHERS: Claude Nichols-f/v-8, Lawrence Nichols-g/v/y, Stanton Nichols-tg/v/y-9.

69372-	Dear Old Tennessee	Vi 23596
69373-	I'm Lonely Since Mother's Gone-8,9	-

compiled by

TONY RUSSELL

with the assistance of Joe Bussard, Dave Freeman, Paul Garon, Frank Mare, Gene Wiggins and Charles Wolfe. Also the Country Music Foundation, Godrich & Dixon's "Blues & Gospel Records 1902-1942" and Rust's "Victor Master Book Vol. 2".

LESTER SMALLWOOD

HIS COTTON MILL SONG

●One of the most famous and authentic Southern labor songs is "Cotton Mill Girl", with its famous first lines

I worked in a cotton mill all my life,
I ain't got nothin' but a Barlow knife.

It has been recorded by any number of recent folksingers.* The earliest apparent recording of the song, though, was a 1928 Victor recording made in Atlanta by a man who accompanied himself on banjo and harmonica, a man named Lester Smallwood. Mr Smallwood is very much alive and kicking - he calls himself "Grandpaw Smallwood" on stage - and recently he shared some of his memories about his early career and his famous recording of "Cotton Mill Girl".

Smallwood was born in Gainesville, Georgia, in 1900, and began working in the local New Holland mills when he was only 14.. It was hard, brutalising work: "run by steam, grass ropes, blowed the whistle, ten hours a day, fifty cents a day. I was a sweeper. We'd come home for the dinner hour, go back at 1, work till 6." To help ease the work, Lester began to play on a homemade banjo. "I learned on a tin pan banjo my brother made - started playin' when I was 12 years old. I'd get my brother to tune it; he'd sorta pick mandolin."

Sometime in the early 1920s Lester put together his version of "Cotton Mill Girl" and filled it with the names of some of his bosses at the mill. One stanza in the recording mentions a Peterson; another refers to Andrews:

Old Jack Andrews, thinks he's fine,
Hands in his pocket and can't show a dime.

Peterson was a supervisor, Andrews an overseer at the mill. The young Smallwood would entertain his fellow millworkers with this song, playing it for them on lunch breaks or on their Saturday afternoons off. "I made it up to sing to those people; they weren't making nothin' in the cotton mill. I was makin' $3.25 a week for 55 hours. They got kind of a kick out of the song." Smallwood was not especially angry when he came up with the song - it was just something he put together for entertainment.

After he left the mill a few years later, Smallwood continued to sing his song. He also continued to play the banjo, appearing occasionally with Fiddlin' John Carson, and listening to the records and music of Uncle Dave Macon. Uncle Dave was an admitted influence on Lester, but he is careful to point out that their styles are different: "he rapped the banjo, I pick one." Most of his time now Smallwood farmed, though he performed frequently. On one occasion he and a guitar-player named Cary Carter were hired to play for a big Sears sale in Atlanta. "They had us sittin' on a bale of cotton, wearin' a big old straw hat, playing and singing for a couple of hours. . . . The people were swarming in." Smallwood also played at a nearby place called Quillian's Corner, and it was there that in October 1928 Victor talent scout Ralph Peer heard him. Peer called up to Smallwood's farm to ask him to come down to Atlanta to record. "When they called I was up on Walker Mountain squirrel hunting," lester recalls.

Arriving at the Peachtree Street studio in Atlanta, Smallwood noticed a fine fiddle-guitar team ahead of him, and was surprised to learn that Peer had turned them down. When he got his chance, he recorded four songs: "Cotton Mill Girl", his version of the regionally wellknown tune "I'm Satisfied", an original composition called "Sitting in the Parlor" and the traditional "Going Down the Road Feeling Bad". Peer was very pleased. Lester recalls what happened after he had finished. "He played that song /"Cotton Mill Girl"/ right back to me, you know, it was on wax, and he drug his chair up there right next to me, and he said, 'How do you like that? That sure is fine.' Got his pen out and everything while it was still playin' and said, 'If you're interested, I'd like you to sign a contract with me.' Told me a thousand dollars a year for three years, and all expenses and hotel bills and what all, and I would have done the recordin' for him and nobody else." But Smallwood refused - "back then I thought too much of the bottles and the women" - and he's regretted it ever since.

Thus Smallwood received the standard fee of $50 payment for his one record (the last two sides supposedly got broken in shipment back to the factory) and never saw any royalties. (Oddly enough, he recalls the check for his recording being mailed to him from Dallas.) The records were very successful locally; "they couldn't keep 'em." The record went on out to do its work influencing all kinds of singers, and Smallwood went back to his farm. In 1930 the Lee Brothers Trio recorded another version of the cotton mill song ("Cotton Mill Blues") for Brunswick in Atlanta, but Smallwood knew nothing of the trio, nor even that they had recorded the song.

In recent years Smallwood has been rediscovered by the local fans of old time music, and is often called to perform at local festivals and concerts. His repertory extends from old Jimmie Rodgers songs to newer Grandpa Jones material, interspersed with chaste quips and "talking about old timey stuff". Lester has appeared before classes at the University of Georgia, and has recently been the subject of a 30-minute videotape show, "Goin' Down That Road Feeling Bad", produced by Jeff Glasserow. The show has been broadcast numerous times, and shown as far away as California. Friends and family have wanted Lester to record an LP - he still plays banjo and sings though "I can't hold out now to blow that harp" - but so far he hasn't gotten around to it. But he's spry and alert and he has a lot of friends; "and I got a good wood stove and lots of corn bread." He's, in short, a neat, happy footnote to the history of old time music.□

CHARLES WOLFE

LESTER SMALLWOOD: vocal, with own banjo and harmonica.
Atlanta GA, October 18, 1928

47197-	COTTON MILL GIRL	Vi V-40181
47198-	I'M SATISFIED	-
47199-	SITTING IN THE PARLOR	Vi unissued
47200-	GOIN' DOWN THE ROAD FEELIN' BAD	Vi unissued

■PHOTOGRAPH (facing page): Lester Smallwood at the Georgia Grassroots Music Festival, Atlanta GA, October 24, 1976. Photograph by John Miller for the Georgia Folklore Society.

* For a history and discography see Archie Green's notes to Mike Seeger's 'Tipple, Loom & Rail' (Folkways FH5273).

UNCLE JOHN PATTERSON
THEN AND NOW

Robert Nobley

●John W Patterson was born in 1910 in Carroll County, Georgia, where he has spent most of his life. As a boy, he was taught banjo by his mother, who was reputed to be "the best" and won many a contest. Since she died in 1924 and never recorded we will never know just what her style was like.

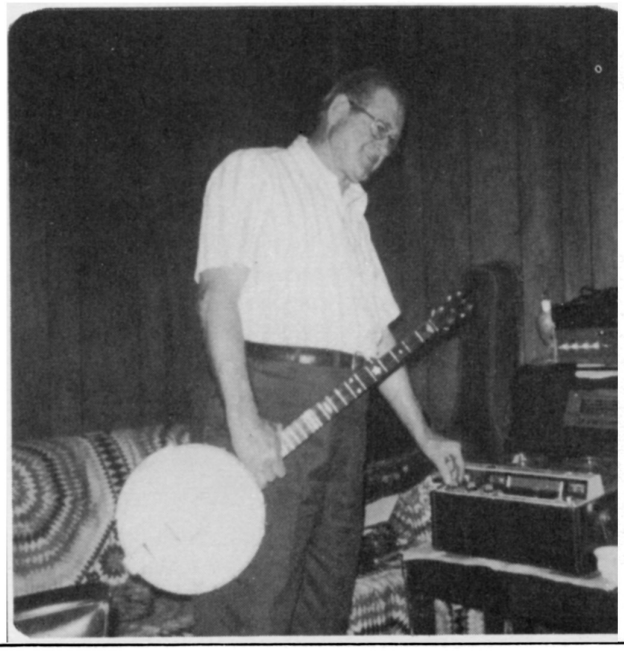
After his mother's death, Uncle John (as he was then already called) sort of took her place at contests and won many with his unique picking style. However, only one record was ever made of his early playing, which does not fully convey his style to the listener. The record, issued under the name of the Carroll County Revelers, featured Uncle John and the Chamblie brothers, Jess on fiddle and Henry on guitar. It displays a style unlike anyone else's. There is a strange drumlike sound, in places, on both performances. When asked how this was done, Uncle John explained that he hit the banjo bridge with his thumb to produce it, but he never recreated the sound for me. I know little more about his early life, except that he played with most of the early musicians around Georgia.

The 1940s found Uncle John playing with local musicians over a small radio station in Carrollton GA. He knew many of the people who played on WSB in Atlanta at that time and played for James and Martha Carson at their wedding. By this time he was married and had a family. His son James took up guitar and still plays with him occasionally.

Uncle John entered politics during the 1950s and '60s and was elected representative several times. He used his banjo-playing to help him gain popularity with the voters. He also worked for an aircraft firm and lost his right forefinger in an accident there. For a man of less determination, this would have ended his banjo-playing. But not Uncle John: he simply learned to use his middle finger instead! His style then became somewhat different, owing a lot to his admiration for Chet Atkins' guitar style. He uses a two-finger style, with many chords and runs (not unlike guitar runs) in his playing. If he plays without amplification, the style is quite close to bluegrass (but without picks). When using an electric banjo, it sounds a lot like Chet Atkins' guitar-playing.

Uncle John also plays barrelhouse blues piano but admits that the absence of his finger sometimes causes him to miss a few notes. He is also capable of playing fiddle and singing at the same time in the style of Fiddlin' John Carson and knows some of Carson's songs, such as "I'm Glad My Wife's in Europe". However, he says he hasn't played fiddle in years, and really doesn't seem interested in playing old time music.

He has recorded a few 45s in recent years, using electric banjo and dubbing in his own piano work. The only other instruments heard are electric bass and sometimes rhythm guitar. Such strange titles are heard as "First Lady Waltz", "Watergate Blues" and "The Muddy Roads of Viet Nam". Another tune, "Make My Coffee Black", was first recorded by Uncle John about 15 years back, with just banjo and kazoo. (The other side was titled "New Orleans".) The reverse of the newer "Make My Coffee Black" is called "Rome Georgia Bound" but bears no resemblance to the tune of this name on the Carroll County Revelers' record! All these are instrumentals only, and sound very similar to each other.□



DISCOGRAPHY

CARROLL COUNTY REVELERS: Jess Chamblie (fiddle), John Patterson (banjo), Henry Chamblie (guitar), with vocal.
Atlanta GA, March 1930

ATL-971	ROME GEORGIA BOUND	Vo 5433
ATL-973	GEORGIA WOBBLE BLUES	- ; Historical HLP8003

LAYBOY Part 3 DAYS

You know, I'm always accusing Haggard, I say, "Well, you guys, all you want me around for is to see that a man's been in this business this long is still living." (Laughs.) Most all of 'em's all gone now, see. Course, I been a guy, I used to do a little drinking, but I haven't hardly done any in the last 35 years. And I've been fortunate because people don't normally live too long in this business. It's a nervewracking type of business. Course, so many of the guys that I was with have been dead for years that fought it hard, y'see. Can't burn that candle all the time, it'll finally catch up with you. (Laughs.)

I go to a heart doctor up here, I had a little problem, and when I come off of this trip in December I had to go see him about the 5th of December, and he examined me, weight and everything, and he told me, "Well, you better stay on the road. It's agreeing with you." (Laughs.)

WIlls' band never was stable like Haggard's band. You had change of people and then it was an unpredictable situation. Well, you had a lot of guys that done a lot of drinking, you didn't know how many you was gonna have or what. Man, it was just one big ball all the time. Whereas with Haggard's crew it's calm and collected and you don't have all that uncertainty that generally goes with most musicians. Haggard's musicians are not unpredictable; Wills' musicians were always unpredictable.

I'd heard that Bob was a pretty stern disciplinarian.

He was to a point, as long as he stayed straight himself. But when he went off of the bounds then everbody went off of the bounds.

You mean with the drinking?

Right. So it threw your organisation all in a mess, and you never knew when it was going to happen. And it happened quite a lot sometimes.

Did it ever really affect the performance?

Oh, absolutely. You bet it did. It was a hassle. Well, just about as bad as it can get, really. But you get to where you cope with it because it's part of the makeup. . . . It's just like I said, without these guys that are running the thing you haven't got much. When Bob wasn't there you had nothing. Course, as long as he's there you've got a good organisation. But boy, when they're not there you've got nothin'.

So occasionally he wouldn't show.

Yeah, right. It happened quite - it happened. But people even accepted that as a part of the deal. But I tell you the thing that I've found out, people that go for that type of music, most of 'em are pretty good drinkers to begin with. Now I've watched this; it's part of the whole situation. Most of 'em are drinkers and they expect it to a degree.

Of the musicians.

Yeah, right. Now where you're playing shows it's a different situation. It's something that where you're playing dances you can cope with it. But you can't do it and play shows.

Did Oklahoma's prolonged Prohibition on everything but beer affect the music scene?

I don't think that it did. . . . Most places that you played, the Law was fairly liberal. With the situation like it was they pretty near had to be. How you gonna keep people from drinking? Impossible, right? Everybody that wanted to drink always had plenty to drink.

When beer first came in in Oklahoma, that was the first music job I got in Oklahoma City, I played right off of Reno & Broadway at the Liberty Hotel. First place in downtown Oklahoma City had free dancing. That would've been in '34.

What kind of stuff were you playing?

Mostly old pop tunes. Just requests. Country and Western musicians, I class the difference, most country musicians don't play pop tunes. Western musicians generally do. You take Western musicians, they can play most anything. They can go any route, like the normal tunes people request in a joint. Western musicians can generally cope with that, where country musicians can't. So you just played good tunes: "Stardust" and all the other. And then there was a guy I worked with, fine club musician, his name was Billy Hughes; he's a guy I started out with there in Oklahoma City. I saw him here not too long ago and I didn't know it but he's the guy that wrote this "Tennessee Saturday Night". That was a real big hit back around '48, '49.

There was a change in country music about that time when Hank Williams and people like that started coming in.

Yeah. The dance music wasn't gettin' it. I tell you what really affected it, TV. See, back in the days when we were going strong, TV played very little part and people had to get up and do somethin', so a lot of 'em chose to go to dances. When TV came in it changed the pattern because the dance business became smaller.

I got out of it about '57, and I went down and was out in West Texas for about for or five years with /Hoyle/ Nix. And then I came back here and I didn't pursue the music business for several years.

When were you with Leon /McAuliffe/'s band?

'54 and '55 I was with him, and of course in '46 when he started I was with him.

Then you were with Wills' band up until '54.

Yeah, but then I went with him after I left Leon's

Eldon Shamblin talking to Mark Humphrey

band, see. In the first part of '56, I think. And then I decided I was getting to the point in life where it was time to make a move. Get into something that's a little more secure. So that's when I started studying piano work. And I came to Tulsa in 1960, and I worked in these little "Get 'n' Go" grocery stores; about like "7-Eleven". I run one of them for about five years while I was building up a clientele in my piano work. I didn't play hardly; in fact, in my mind, probably, I thought I never would play any more. Because you reach a point in life where you have to get in something that's a little more stable. And that takes a long time. Boy, you get branded in a profession, it's hard to get into something else where you can make a living, see. I managed one of them grocery stores for five years and then I taught for five years at a place called Guitar House. It was fine, but I just don't like teaching. Course, I was doing my piano work at the same time, and when my piano work got to where I could make it I quit teaching. And then, it seems like when I quit teaching I started getting a lot of jobs playing again. I worked a little trio here in town for three or four years, I guess. We worked two or three nights a week, country clubs and stuff. No Western music, strictly modern type music, a little rock.

Did you play with Speedy West awhile?

Yeah, we worked this place out here, the Caravan, on Friday and Saturday nights. Speedy's not in there any more; the guy that had this Guitar House bought it. When I started working with Haggard it got to where when I'd go out with Haggard I'd come back in and I'd work in there. When Haggard decided he was going to use me quite a bit more I quit out there.

Is Speedy doing much any more?

I really don't know. . . . If somebody had told me that when I got as old as I am that I'd still be playing music, I'd have said, well, man, you gotta be crazy.

You know the violinist that played with Reinhardt, Stephane Grappelli, is still going strong and he's in his 70s.

That's what they tell me. Old Haggard and I was talking about him the other day. Haggard said, "I'd sure like to go see that guy play." I said, "By golly, I would too." He was talking about he's in France; I said, "Well, why don't we book some dates over there, we'll go see him." He said, "We oughta do it." But he was talking about him, said that old boy's 70-some years old and still's playing.

Funny, I have a little trouble with arthritis, not anything bad. You can have arthritis in your shoulder and everything, but playing never bothers me. That's kinda weird, you know, when you think -

It's probably second nature to you.

Right. You've done so much of it that you don't pay any attention to it. Never no problem.

I wanted to ask you about the change from basically the string group to the horn band.

Now Smokey Dacus, the drummer we worked with on the Wills band, he'd worked with big bands, horn bands, so he was right at home when we got the horns. And myself, I hadn't really worked with many horn bands, but it was my first love, you see. So it fell in with the men he had, because the guys he had loved that stuff. So it really didn't present any problems because he had already changed some of his key rhythm men to fit that circumstance, you see.

But it wasn't dictated by the audience.

No. It was strictly Wills. You bet; absolutely. Because that's one thing, Wills didn't let nobody dictate nothing to him. He had his ideas and that's what he was pursuing, and he wasn't going to let nobody change his mind. You know, most guys let dollars interfere with their ideas, right? Not Wills. He had his idea of what he wanted to do, money or no money. Course, he had to survive, but by the same token he could've survived with a small unit and done all right. Why couldn't he? But that ain't what he wanted; that didn't do nothing to him. He wanted to hear that band behind him, man.

I always laugh and think about one of the things he'd say, like somebody 'd come up and say, "Why doncha holler, Bob?" He'd say, "Well, why don't you tell that good lookin' gal standin' by there to kick her leg up here and it might give me somethin' to holler about." And that's the way he was about a band, man. He wanted something back there that would make him get it, you know.

He had a very loyal following.

Man, you ain't lying. This was always a mystery to me, kind of. Lotta people, back before World War 2, we'd have a lotta people - a man and his wife and family take their vacation, they would write to get a schedule, for two weeks they'd go every place we went. That'd be their vacation. A man and his wife and children, now, mind you. You know back in those days a lot of people brought their kids to these dances. Kind of a family deal; kids enjoyed it. And when you think about it that kinda puts an impact on what you're doing. What is it that causes people to do that? Somethin', right? It's like I am about Johnny Cash. I don't think that Cash has anything to offer, really. But he represents something good. He represents somebody that started out and went to the bottom of the heap and recovered and took to religion and has done all right with it, and it's not really what he is, it's what he represents that's good. That's how I look at Cash. I like Cash; I mean, I think he's quite a story. And you know that's kinda how I look at Wills. Wills himself represents really something good because Wills never gypped anybody in his life and if he had anybody that did he'd fire them. Strictly an upright organisation as far as treating people right and honest. And I can say that for Wills. I'd have bet my life on him. He never gypped nobody in his life; if he owed somebody a nickel he paid them. That's the way the guy lived. . . . Boy, if he told you something, you could bet your life on it. If he told you he was going to do something that's just exactly what he done. And this old boy down in the West, old Hoyle Nix, is the same kind of a guy.

I think one of the things that's been overlooked in the history of Western Swing is its influence on early rock 'n' roll. I wondered if you had any reaction to that.

Not as such. I like a lot of things that rock 'n' roll does. It's a different element. It's like I tell guys, I say, well, I'm not a rock 'n' roll man because I wasn't raised in that era. I don't feel it; I like it, but I can't play it.

I think of early rock as being a dance music like Western Swing. Chuck Berry wrote a tune called "Maybelline" that he said he based on "Ida Red".

Oh, is that right? I remember that tune. I didn't know he did that. Well, I'll be danged. (Laughs.) Well, you never know. Old Tiny was telling me about this, there's an old boy that's got a band, some guy in New York City, he's got a Western type of band. Commander Cody. Tiny said old Commander Cody was tellin' him, said,

"I went down and bought some of them old Wills records." Said, "I bought 'em to make fun of 'em. I listened to 'em for a few days and every time I listened to 'em they sounded a little better. After a course of a few weeks, why, they got to sounding so good I decided to start me a band." (Laughs.) Said every time he listened to 'em he'd hear something else.

Years ago when we used to play we had a lot of critics; people who'd make fun of you. I think maybe they hadn't listened to enough of it to find out that there was any art to playing it, you know. Just like this saxman, Ray DeGear, he died here not long ago, but he worked with some of the best bands; he was tops. And old Red Nichols, one of the top musicians in the country way back there - Red Nichols and the Five Pennies - well, he wrote a big page in Downbeat one time about this tenor man that was on Bob's band, said he was the greatest tenor man of all time. And of course, this tenor man worked with Krupa and all them big bands. And he was the guy that started out with the Alabama Boys.

So the Alabama Boys had a tenor sax quite early.

Right. Course, they were copying the Wills combination. And then when he added drums then they added drums. So they were going along for the ride but they had a good outfit. In fact, they had a better outfit than Wills did as far as musically. But they didn't have the salesman that Wills was. That makes the difference.

Where's Leon /McAuliffe/ these days?

He's down in Rogers, Arkansas. He's got a radio station, FM. He's pretty well got his made, of course, and I work for a living so I just coast along with the tide.

Is Al Stricklin doing anything these days?

He's in the newspaper business out in Cleburne, Texas. But I hardly ever see the guys because they're busy too and I'm busy trying to make a living. . . .

You and Leon did a twin thing on a recording, "Honey What You Gonna Do?"

Yeah. We done a four-way deal on there, didn't we? We was playing two parts apiece on that. I heard it the other day; my wife got the album and I played it one time and I'd forgot all about doing that thing. That was done before World War 2. He was playing the lead and the harmony and I was playing the other two harmonies, playing four ways. I heard it on that record and I said, "God dang, man, did we do that back then?" Because I was amazed. We was a little hesitant at doing four-way but we was into it deep enough then that we figured we could get by with it, see. Instead of two parts like we done on all those other things we done four parts on that. I was playing two notes and he was playing the other two. Four-way deal, like you was using four guitars in effect. . . .

You like to do it 'cause you get a kick out of it, you can get it all blended together, see. That makes it nice; course, it takes a lot of work, a lot of theory to get this stuff intact. About the only thing we ever do four-way with Haggard is an ending or two. We got a little section where we'll do four-way. Most of the time three is about as far as we'll go.

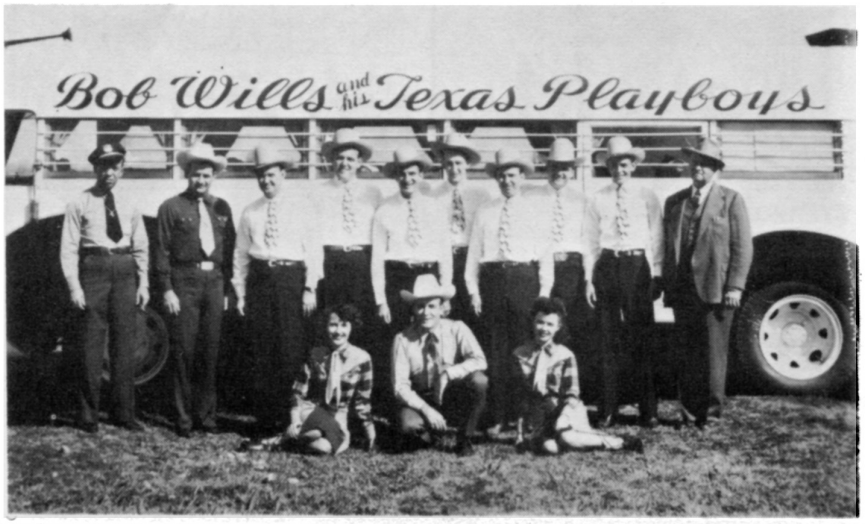
You do that with Tiny and Roy Nichols?

Yeah. This tune that he's got out that's been real good for him, "It's All in the Movies". You know those major sevenths and stuff and the chord patterns, well, normally for Western music that's a little far out. But that un went. So I don't know whether that tells you something or not. There's a station here that I listen to that never played a Haggard record in their lives and they play that thing about six or seven times a day. That's the only record they ever played that Haggard put out. Course, with that sax and everything it's got a good sound to it. And it's been good all over the country. Every place we play we get about as good a reaction on that as we do on anything we do.

I really enjoyed that one he did, "The Old Man from the Mountain". That to me had very much of a Texas Playboys kind of sound.

Yeah. That had a lot of that feel; that type of thing. Boy, he digs that stuff. Oh, goddamn. He really gets on that stuff. □

On the road, c1947. Standing, driver, Tommy Duncan, Ocie Stockard, Tiny Moore, Johnny Cuviello, Herb Remington, Millard Kelso, Eldon Shamblin, Billy Jack Wills, Chip Esley (manager). Seated, the McKinney Sisters and Bob.



News

▼NONNIE PRESSON, of the Perry County Music Makers, died August 2 after a brief period of hospitalisation. Known to many otm enthusiasts as the zither-player in the Linden, Tenn. family band, Nonnie and her brother Bulow Smith found a new musical career opening after their rediscovery in 1974 and their LP 'Sunset Memories' for Davis Unlimited (DU33009). Charles Wolfe writes: "Ironically, when I last saw Nonnie things were looking up for all of them. They had been beset by troubles last year . . . but in May when I was down there they were playing again, and Nonnie was creating new material." A second LP, 'Going Back to Tennessee' (DU33024) was released last year, and further performances by Nonnie, on both zither and piano, may one day see issue - the last notes of a musical career that was sadly stifled for many years by the lack of interest in Nonnie's unique gifts. Not only was she practically the only zither-player working within otm, but she also possessed a rare ability to write new tunes in traditional format. Wolfe's story of the Perry County Music Makers was published in OTM14.

▲The Country Music Foundation Library recently received a donation of ROY ACUFF materials from Elizabeth Schlappi consisting of records, movies and ephemera. Schlappi, who has researched Acuff's career for 20 years, has also written a biography due for publication soon. The collection, to which Acuff himself has added materials from his own archives, will occupy a special place in the CMF Library area.

●Texas bluegrass band ROANOKE cut an LP for Ridge Runner Records recently, to be released in August (RRR0010). The band includes dobro-player Dan Huckabee, Mark Maniscalco (banjo), Joe Carr (mandolin) and Mike Anderson (bass), and guests include fiddler Dave Ferguson.

△The University of London-sponsored evening classes in Country Music begin again, for their third year, September 21, conducted by Philip Strick. The venue is Morley College, 61 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7HT; enrolments may be made at the first session, 6:30. Information: call 01-928 8501. The 24-session course is weekly on Wednesdays and lasts until March 29, 1978. All periods in country music are covered, with recorded music, film shows and talks.

●PHILO RECORDS' fall releases include third LPs by MARY McCASLIN and JIM RINGER and new issues by ROSALIE SORRELS, ERIC VON SCHMIDT ('Champagne Don't Hurt Me Baby'), PRISCILLA HERDMAN, JAY UNGAR & LYN HARDY (recent British visitors at the Cambridge Folk Festival) and JEAN CARIGNAN.

●CLIFF BRUNER, influential Texas WS fiddler, writes that he has made an LP for Jay Miller which will be released shortly. More on this in our next.

■Latest issue of the NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE JOURNAL carries a variety of tributes to BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD. We recommend this journal as a whole to readers with folkloric interests: $4.00 annually (1977 sub includes the Lunsford issue) from NC Folklore Society, POB 376, Appalachian State University, Boone NC 28608.

●NEW FLYING FISH: 'S'Wonderful: 4 Giants of Swing' (FF035) features JOE VENUTI, ELDON SHAMBLIN, JETHRO BURNS and CURLEY CHALKER on Ellington, Gershwin &c. 'DILLARD-HARTFORD-DILLARD' (FF-036) features Doug & Rodney D with the inimitable JH. The Dillards as such have a new FF on the way too, and the label also shows up with a VASSAR CLEMENTS bluegrass fiddle LP.

Reviews

NASHVILLE: THE EARLY STRING BANDS
Volume 1
County 541

DR HUMPHREY BATE & HIS POSSUM HUNTERS My Wife Died Saturday Night/Eighth of January/Throw the Old Cow Over the Fence/Green Backed Dollar Bill/UNCLE DAVE MACON Railroadin' & Gamblin'/I'm Goin' Away in the Morn/PAUL WARMACK & HIS GULLY JUMPERS Robertson County/ Stone Rag/SAM & KIRK McGEE Salt Lake City Blues/UNCLE BUNT STEPHENS Candy Girl/SAM McGEE Chevrolet Car/BINKLEY BROTHERS' DIXIE CLODHOPPERS Give Me Back My Fifteen Cents/SID HARKREADER & GRADY MOORE Old Joe

Volume 2
County 542

CROOK BROTHERS STRING BAND Jobbin Gettin' There/Going Across the Sea/ UNCLE DAVE MACON Over the Road I'm Bound to Go/Bake That Chicken Pie/ THERON HALE & DAUGHTERS Hale's Rag/ Jolly Blacksmith/DEFORD BAILEY Muscle Shoals Blues/Pan American Blues/SAM & KIRK McGEE Old Master's Runaway/ Brown's Ferry Blues/UNCLE JIMMY THOMPSON Karo/Billy Wilson/BLIND JOE MANGRUM & FRED SCHREIBER Bill Cheatam

With these records County does for the Nashville stringband scene of the '20s what the label has already done for Arkansas and Mississippi: gather most of the best music by the best of the recorded groups, and present it in orderly and attractive selections. We now have, as far as records can provide it, the sound of the early Opry bands, and thus the core of the programme itself in its earliest days.

All the landmarks are here: Deford Bailey's "Pan American", which is part of the tale of how the Opry got its name; Uncle Jimmy Thompson, who was in at the start; Dr Bate and his band, who formed a cornerstone of early Nashville radio; and of course Uncle Dave, with whom, correctly or no, the Opry legend is highly seasoned.

It's all, of course, a world away from the Opry of the Ryman days. On these records, most of what you hear is oldfashioned dance music, with a handful of vocal refrains and only a hint of even the 1930s sound. The LPs are not only an Opry documentary; they include many of the sources of whatever theory we may ever arrive at about the stringband approaches of middle Tennessee. So far as that goes, the picture proves a complicated one, sparse in the tidily recurrent characteristics that aid categorisation. So let's leave that job for another day, and consider the music from the standpoint (which many readers will inevitably occupy, for this is largely unfamiliar music outside collectors' circles) of the relative newcomer.

Harmonica bands - that is, bands with harmonica as a lead or joint-lead instrument - seem to have enjoyed a good run on the Opry and roundabout. The Crook Brothers band had two harps, and they make for a lively sound in their two selections. Dr Bate's harp is prominent in some of his band's pieces, while others are fiddle-led. Here, we have both his fiddlers, Bill Barret on "Old Cow" and "Eighth of January", Oscar Stone on "Green Backed Dollar". Stone's composition "Stone Rag", which he never himself recorded, is heard in the version by Paul Warmack & his Gully Jumpers.

There's some oddity here. "Eighth of January", in the Bate-Barret treatment, is not the tune normally associated with this name, but it <u>is</u> the same tune as Warmack's "Robertson County", heard earlier on the same side of 541.

While speaking of retitlings, it may be noted that the old favourite "Flop Eared Mule" turns up both as "Jolly Blacksmith" by Theron Hale and as "Karo" by Uncle Jimmy Thompson. Hale's family band is particularly delightful to hear, its measured vamp-piano rhythm singling it out from the guitar-based groups. Also very welcome is the Binkley Brothers track, "Give Me Back My Fifteen Cents", sung by Jack Jackson. The flowing twin-fiddling has an Arkansas air about it.

Uncle Jimmy Thompson's pair of tunes are of course of great historical interest, not least because they constitute half his recorded output. Also of great interest, though not quite for the same reasons, is the lone track by fiddler Blind Joe Mangrum, with vamp accordion accompaniment by Fred Schreiber (or Shriver). This must be one of the most "educated" recordings of a traditional fiddle tune in its day: Mangrum employs a number of what you might call parlour-violin devices, after the fashion of a Scott Skinner, and it is a pity that this white-collar kind of music was not more recorded, for it stemmed from a taste in which many Southern fiddlers partook, though they did not often have opportunities to demonstrate it publicly.

Uncle Dave is appropriately represented by a couple of solos and a couple of Fruit Jar Drinkers performances, "Goin' Away in the Morn" and "Chicken Pie". Apparently the intention behind these band sides was a Skillet-Lickers sort of sound, but the vocal harmony on the refrains is closer to, say, the Georgia Yellow Hammers. Fine tracks, in any case - but overshadowed, in my view, by the superb McGee Brothers versions of "Old Master's Runaway" ("Year of Jubilo") and "Salt Lake City Blues". Sam is further heard (as he should be, Opry mainstay that he was for so long) in "Chevrolet" and "Brown's Ferry", playing banjo-guitar in both. The latter track, learned from the Delmore Brothers, is the only explicit indication of the new '30s generation of Opry performers, which quickly put so many of the stringbands out in the cold. Sam and Kirk could weather the change, but then, they were young men. Most of the personnel of the stringbands were middle-aged when these recordings were made, and the solo fiddlers tended to be even older.

An excellent booklet by Charles Wolfe accompanies both records, enabling him to summarise (and add a little to) his more detailed essays in the GRAND OLE OPRY book - which these LPs impeccably complement (and <u>vice versa</u>). Good sleeves, photographs and transfers; first-class records. TR

ReDECCAration

FROM THE SOUTHEAST TO THE SOUTHWEST: 1930'S DECCA HILLBILLY SERIES MCA (JAPAN) VIM-4009-4018

SONS OF THE PIONEERS
MCA VIM-4009

Ridin' Home/Moon Light on the Prairie/ When Our Old Age Pension Check Comes to Our Door/I Follow the Stream/There's a Roundup in the Sky/Echoes from the Hills/Songs of the Pioneers/Kilocycle Stomp/When I Leave This World Behind/ Texas Star/Over the Santa Fe Trail/ Blue Bonnet Girl/Empty Saddles/We'll Rest at the End of the Trail (39½m)

COWBOY IMAGE
MCA VIM-4010

STUART HAMBLEN JUBILEE Poor Unlucky Cowboy/TEX OWENS Cattle Call/RANCH BOYS When It's Springtime in the Rockies/ TEXAS RANGERS Dude Ranch Party Parts 1 & 2/MACK BROTHERS On the Good Old Santa Fe/RAY WHITLEY That Green Back Dollar Bill/MARC WILLIAMS Old Chisolm Trail/ PEACEFUL VALLEY FOLKS Boots and Saddle/ LEO SOILEAU & HIS FOUR ACES Red River Valley/NEW DIXIE DEMONS I'm a Rootin' Shootin' Tootin' Man from Texas/TEX FLETCHER I'm Going Back to Red River Valley/REX GRIFFIN Yodeling Cowboy's Last Song/ZORA LAYMAN & HOMETOWNERS Old Cowboy/RED RIVER DAVE Down Del Rio Way (43½m)

THE SHELTON BROTHERS/THE CARLISLE BROTHERS
MCA VIM-4011

SHELTON BROTHERS Beautiful Louisiana/ Hang Out the Front Door Key/Message from Home Sweet Home/Answer to Just Because/'Leven Miles from Leavenworth/ I'm Sittin' on Top of the World/JOE SHELTON Stayed in the Wagon Yard/CLIFF CARLISLE & SONNY BOY TOMMY Two Eyes in Tennessee/CLIFF CARLISLE & HIS BUCKLE BUSTERS Footprints in the Snow/BILL CARLISLE'S KENTUCKY BOYS Sally Let Your Bangs Hang Down/CARLISLE BROTHERS Gonna Raise a Ruckus Tonight/There Is No More That I Can Say/Broken Heart/ I'm Sorry That's All I Can Say (40½m)

THE CARTER FAMILY
MCA VIM-4012

There's No One Like Mother to Me/ Answer to Weeping Willow/In the Shadow of the Pines/In the Shadow of Clinch Mountain/Lover's Lane/He Never Came Back/Dark Haired True Lover/Look How This World Made a Change/When This Evening Sun Goes Down/They Call Her Mother/Who's That Knockin' on My Window/Just a Few More Days/Farewell Nellie/Little Girl That Played on My Knee (41½m)

OLD TIMEY MUSIC
MCA VIM-4013

FLANNERY SISTERS Carry Me Back to the Mountains/STRIPLING BROTHERS Possum Hollow Breakdown/BUCK NATION Blue Ridge Mountain Sweetheart/LOG CABIN BOYS New Brown's Ferry Blues/CHEROKEE RAMBLERS Home Brew Rag/CURLEY FOX Tennessee Roll/FRANK & BUDDY ROSS Plant a Weeping Willow on My Grave/ SCOTT & BOONE Don't Dig Mother's Grave Before She Is Dead/RILEY PUCKETT Take Me Back to My Carolina Home/BILL COX In 1992/EDITH & SHERMAN COLLINS You're a Flower Blooming in the Wildwood/JACK & LESLIE I'm in the Glory Land Way/ FRED KIRBY'S CAROLINA BOYS Columbus Stockade Blues/WHITEY & HOGAN Turn Your Radio On (40m)

MILTON BROWN/CLAYTON McMICHEN
MCA VIM-4014

MILTON BROWN & HIS MUSICAL BROWNIES In El Rancho Grande/Love in Bloom/Wabash Blues/Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet/If You Can't Get Five Take Two/Memphis Blues/There'll Be Some Changes Made/ CLAYTON McMICHEN'S GEORGIA WILD CATS Sweet Bunch of Daisies/Farewell Blues/ Under Old Kentucky Moon/Alexander's Ragtime Band/St Louis Woman/My Gal's a Lulu/I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now (40½m)

WESTERN SWING AND COUNTRY JAZZ
MCA VIM-4015

NORMAN PHELPS & THE VIRGINIA ROUNDERS It's Tight Like That/Honeysuckle Rose/ LOUISIANA STROLLERS Married Woman's Blues/LEON'S LONE STAR COWBOYS 31st Street Blues/Mistreated Blues/EAST TEXAS SERENADERS Arizona Stomp/HUGH & SHUG'S RADIO PALS Sugar Babe/ROSS RHYTHM RASCALS Boogie-Woo Blues/BAR-X COWBOYS Drifting and Dreaming/RAY WHITLEY & HIS 6-BAR COWBOYS Come On Boys We're Ridin' into Town/SELPH'S BLUE RIDGE PLAYBOYS What Difference Does It Make/BOB DUNN'S VAGABONDS Blue Skies/Wednesday Rag/TEXAS WANDERERS I'll Never Let You Cry (39m)

CLIFF BRUNER/THE RICE BROTHERS' GANG
MCA VIM-4016

CLIFF BRUNER'S TEXAS WANDERERS (*CLIFF BRUNER & HIS BOYS) Bringin' Home the Bacon/Corrina Corrina/Under the Silvery Moon/Old Fashioned Love/*Beaumont Rag/ *San Antonio Rose/*I'll Forgive You/ RICE BROTHERS' GANG King Cotton Stomp/ Sugar Blues/On the Sunny Side of the Street/When I'm Walking with My Sweetness/Alabama Jubilee/You Are My Sunshine/Is It True What They Say About Dixie? (39m)

THE DELMORE BROTHERS
MCA VIM-4017

Silver Dollar/There's Trouble on My Mind Today/Old Mountain Dew/In the Blue Hills of Virginia/Make Room in the Lifeboat for Me/Gathering Flowers from the Hillside/She Won't Be My Little Darling/Will You Be Lonesome Too?/ Precious Jewel/Gospel Cannon Ball/ I Now Have a Bugle to Play/Last Night I Was Your Only Darling/Baby Girl/I Wonder Where My Darling Is Tonight (38¾m)

JIMMIE DAVIS/BUDDY JONES
MCA VIM-4018

JIMMIE DAVIS Good Time Papa Blues/ Jellyroll Blues/When It's Round-Up Time in Heaven/Bed Bug Blues/In My Cabin Tonight/Mama's Getting Hot and Papa's Getting Cold/That's Why I'm Nobody's Darling/BUDDY JONES The Women/ Mean Old Lonesome Blues/Drunkard's Blues/Ragged But Right/Streamlined Mama/ She's Sellin' What She Used to Give Away/Butcher Man Blues (40½m)

1930's DECCA HILLBILLY RECORDS (ADDITIONAL ALBUM)
MCA MCX-16

GOEBEL REEVES Yodelin' Teacher/TEX RITTER Sam Hall/Lady Killin' Cowboy/ SALLY FOSTER & THE TRAVELERS Don't Take the Sweet Out of Sweetheart/GENE AUTRY Blue Days/T B Blues/Pistol Packin' Papa/BILL CARLISLE'S KENTUCKY BOYS Are You Goin' to Leave Me, Lil/ROY ROGERS Nobody's Fault But My Own/JIMMY WAKELY & THE ROUGH RIDERS Cimarron/ RED FOLEY It Makes No Never Mind/PATSY MONTANA Shy Anne from Old Cheyenne/ CALLAHAN BROTHERS They're at Rest Together/PETE CASSELL Freight Train Blues (39¾m)

●Decca Records commenced their US operation in the summer of 1934. The British parent company was then some five years old, and recovering from early troubles, chiefly by the success of hit records from their popular dancebands. At first glance it might seem that 1934 was no very auspicious year to start business in the US; despite a gradual economic readjustment after the Depression, record sales were not the most obvious growth market. Perhaps Decca took heart from Victor's experiment with the Bluebird line (started in 1933), which for the first time put low-priced (35¢) discs into wide circulation. Decca too was a 35¢ label, and unlike Bluebird it did not open business by reissuing from a large back catalogue; from August 1934 it initiated a recording programme on several fronts, and very quickly offered the public new product in virtually every musical idiom: pop and jazz, blues, hillbilly, Irish, Mexican, cajun and so on.

The 5000 series of "Hill Billy" records - they were called just that, not "Old Time" or "Old Familiar" or any of the '20s euphemisms - was run by Jack and Dave Kapp, of whom Jack at least had experience with Southern repertoire, gained while working in the late '20s for Brunswick and Vocalion. Not surprisingly, artists from those old rosters were quickly called into the service of the new company. Early figures in Decca's 7000 Race series included Peetie Wheatstraw, the McCoy brothers and Bumble Bee Slim, all of whom Jack Kapp would have known from his previous post; and similarly the 5000 list was given impetus by Br/Vo veterans like the Stripling Brothers, Bradley Kincaid and Marc Williams. But it was not long before captures were made from present competitors: Milton Brown from Bluebird, and Jimmie Davis; the Carlisle brothers from ARC. And Decca was not slow to develop its own, entirely new, names.

It is the thesis of Toru Mitsui, the Japanese music scholar who has compiled this series of LPs, that Decca "significantly changed the general hillbilly scene /by/ reflecting such Southwestern influences as cowboy music, big band swing music, blues, Cajun music, Mexican music and so on," and this is the rationale of his series title, "From the Southeast to the Southwest". To underline his argument, he asserts that "hillbilly music . . . started as a commercialization of Southeastern traditional music." It is not difficult to give a quick assent to this hypothesis, but further reflection raises many countering arguments. The first Southern traditional music to be recorded, after all, was Texan - the fiddling of Eck Robertson - and in the early and middle '20s Okeh, the first company to be active in field-recording, visited Dallas more than once; as did Columbia and Victor later. Carl T Sprague's "When the Work's All Done This Fall" (1925) was one of the early hits of the country music business. It would be hard to maintain that Jimmie Rodgers was in any useful sense Southeastern, and reasonable to argue that his influence was primarily of a "western" nature.

Nevertheless, it is true that a Southeastern emphasis coloured the Victor and Columbia catalogues of the late '20s, and that from the Southeastern stringbands came a flood of popular and influential recordings, which in turn dictated more attention to their areas of origin. Doubtless we do not appreciate how much the contents of those catalogues were reflections of the tastes, and the connections, of the A&R-men who oversaw them. To look from New York to Atlanta, or Memphis, was no very problematic prospect for Ralph Peer or Frank Walker; to look to what was going on in Dallas or Houston, however, was to strain one's gaze a little. Besides, it was a much longer haul for a team loaded with recording equipment. Very likely it was simply a tougher market, too - towns more scattered, the open spaces between more complicated to explore for either talent or retailers.

I think it is wrong to see Decca as a ground-breaker. The company happened to start at a time when, as Bob Coltman described in OTM23, the country music landscape was rapidly altering; the Kapps merely took steps to be in on whatever was developing, and in this they were not notably swifter or more sure-footed than their competitors. Take western swing, for example, in which the 5000 series was rich: at a rough estimate, Decca secured no more than 20% of these particular genre recordings, while Bluebird picked up over 30% and ARC nearly 50%. Of the ten most prolific WS bands, Decca had only two, Milton Brown's and Cliff Bruner's.

What may be true - the statistics are complex - is that Decca directed more of its attention to the Southwest than did its rivals. In other words, though it may not have had more Southwestern product than Bluebird or ARC, it certainly had more of it in its own catalogue than of any other regional idioms. An estimate - again, an approximate one - shows a breakdown more or less of this sort: WS (by a moderately strict definition) 18%, other Southwestern idioms 35%, citybilly (loosely defined) 5%, WLS-orientated product (of this, more below) 3%, Southeastern 18%, others 21%. So rather more than half of the 5000 series was derived from artists based in the Southwest; and I would guess that no other company's analysis shows a more pronounced Southwestern inclination, though ARC at least may have leaned nearly as far.

Properly, then, there is a corresponding Southwestern bias to the series under review: five entire LPs, two half-LPs and most of the "additional album" are of that persuasion. It is time to look at them individually, but first a few words about the overall presentation.

The 10 LPs are available separately; the "additional album" (MCX-16) is free to anyone who buys the set. Each LP has an insert containing notes (in Japanese) and (except in the case of MCX-16) lyric transcriptions (in English, and on the whole well done, considering the circumstances). The material, supplied by MCA (US), seems to have been derived from new pressings from original metalwork; the generally quiet surfaces could scarcely have been secured from original Decca pressings, which were commonly rather noisy. The one substantial fault - and it occurs quite often - is distortion, evidently from eccentric pressings. Usually it is no more than mildly annoying, but a few items are ruined by it, such as the Striplings' "Possum Hollow" (4013) and the Rice Brothers' Gang's "King Cotton Stomp" (4016). In terms of LP-pressing quality and packaging, the records are well up to the admirably

high standard of the Japanese record industry. The jackets feature familiar but appropriate photographs, and all carry a general introduction to the series (in English), in which Mitsui very laudably describes his principles of selection and the accomodations he had to make to MCA's requirements, such as the devoting of a whole LP to the Delmores, who were not among the "core" artists of the 5000 series. (Incidentally, Mitsui speaks of the 6000s as if they were a separate series and implicitly apologises for drawing on them. This is inappropriate; the 6000s were merely a continuation of the 5000s, and in no sense a discrete catalogue.)

* * *

The commencing volume is drawn from the SONS OF THE PIONEERS' earliest work, 1934-36, and thus presents the original quartet of Bob Nolan, Tim Spencer, Leonard Slye (Roy Rogers to be) and fiddler Hugh Farr. The JEMF booklet's discography is unclear on the point, but Karl Farr comes in on guitar at some stage; I believe I hear him on the one fiddling piece, "Kilocycle Stomp". The group's singing had not yet acquired the lushness which one can discover on the JEMF LP (taken from later ETs), but the material, much of it by Nolan, is cut from the same roll.

It is worth noting that Jack Kapp would have known of the West Coast groups that prefigured the Sons, for Brunswick recorded the Beverly Hill Billies on several occasions. In bringing the BHB circle back to record (as "Pappy, Ezra & Elton") on Decca, Kapp may have been attempting to develop, rather than simply document, an idiomatic process - Hollywood Hillbilly - but it evidently failed to come off; even the Sons deserted him after a while. However, Decca's early fascination with western wistfulness is excellently commemorated on COWBOY IMAGE.

Likely there is not a real cowboy in earshot on this LP, but Decca were in the entertainment business, after all, not sociology, and as dude cowboys many of the featured artists are thoroughly charming. The items by Stuart Hamblen and Ray Whitley are well chosen, as is Rex Griffin's, which shows vividly how the Rodgers manner could be transformed and the ground prepared for later vocal approaches. Considering Griffin's output on Decca (17 releases, more than almost any solo on the label at the time), I think we should have had more than a single track. The Mack Brothers sound nominally suspicious, and I have a feeling they may be the McCravys. The Ranch Boys are of the Vagabonds' school, the Peaceful Valley Folks likewise, and the New Dixie Demons a kind of westernised Hoosier Hotshots. The Texas Rangers perform a "rural drama" quite adeptly, but the jokes fall a little ponderously. In amongst all this amiable posturing, however, the raw cajun fiddling of Leo Soileau irrupts with a very strange effect, though of course it is pleasant to hear some of his inimitable cajunbilly. The LP closes with a choice example of early Red River Dave, pertly borrowing the framework of "South of the Border" to construct a near-soundalike.

The SHELTON BROTHERS have been shamefully bypassed by record-compilers and historians alike, and their half-LP is apt in this series; indeed, as the most prolific artists in the whole of Decca's hillbilly roster (73 releases), they could have stood more exposure, but even a friendly commentator must admit that their work tends to repeat itself a good deal. This selection is not impeccable, but it will certainly do. It includes the witty "Hang Out the Front Door Key", the superb blues fiddling of Curley Fox in "Sittin' on Top of the World", and Joe Shelton's solo rendition of that quintessential country-mouse song, "(I Wish I'd) Stayed in the Wagon Yard". The close-harmony singing of "Beautiful Louisiana" (a simple rewrite of "Beautiful Texas") and some other tracks is also pleasant.

The reverse side, by the CARLISLE BROTHERS, is a slightly peculiar selection, less bluesy than one would expect of either Bill or Cliff, and less fruitful in hot picking too, though "Sally" is brisk and delightful ("Ruckus" too), and Cliff's reading of "Footprints in the Snow" is most refreshing to one jaded by a hundred bluegrass versions.

The Carlisles were the leaders in Decca's Southeastern section (with 38 releases), and may have attracted the label's notice with their radio popularity (though both were of course experienced recording artists). Also popular through radio, and, like Cliff at one time, on Charlotte's WBT, were the CARTER FAMILY (30 releases on Decca), and indeed at least one of their recording sessions was in the midst of other Charlotte personalities and, contrary to all published discographies, I believe held in Charlotte. The programme Mitsui has assembled was intended to complement previous LP reissues, so most of the best-known, and indeed best, of the Decca sides are not here. But there is excellent stuff yet: "In the Shadow of Clinch Mountain", with its extraordinary story of trees and fountains talking (indeed, a rural drama in something more than the usual sense); the admonitory gospel song "Look How This World Made a Change"; the comic song "He Never Came Back", delivered with typical Carter sobriety, and made richly incongruous thereby.

OLD TIMEY MUSIC handily rounds up a number of Decca's not-so-prolific figures, most of them Southeastern, and for the researcher opens up a gang of interesting trails. The Flannery Sisters (Billie & Allie) are nice to have if only because "Carry Me Back to the Mountains" was one side of Decca 5000, the debut release, but they are likeable too in a Girls of the Golden West fashion. The Striplings were worth including because they lasted longer on the label than any other "old time fiddling" act (12 releases); when they were finally dropped, one of

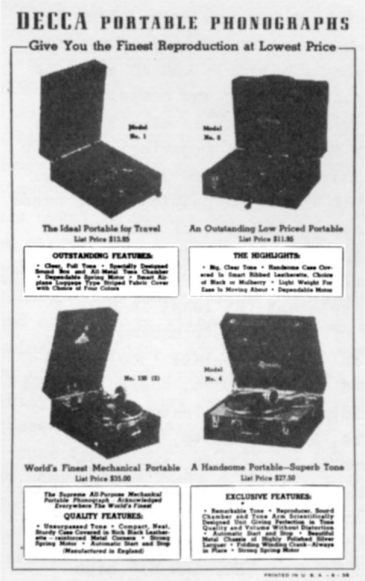
◀◀Cliff Carlisle; ◀Buck Nation.

the few whiffs of the '20s that had ever hung over the Decca catalogue was blown away. A distinctly '30s fiddle style (somewhat McMichenish at that) is offered by Curley Fox, with Joe Shelton on backup guitar.

There were other '20s veterans than the Striplings on Decca, and Riley Puckett and Bill Cox have adjacent places on this LP, which they justify with two fine tracks. Puckett is mellow and paces himself beautifully in "Carolina Home"; Cox's "1992" is a characteristically humorous and detailed composition, which I trust we shall all be around to refer to, 15 years from now. (It should be noted that this item is not an original Decca recording, but a Gennett one from 1931, reissued according to the terms under which Decca, in June 1935, acquired the Champion catalogue. The Gene Autry tracks on MCX-16 are of a similar provenance.)

Like its rivals, though less adventurously, Decca took to the field for its repertoire, and from March 1936 onwards a substantial portion of the Decca 5000 output was location-recorded: the Southwestern product in New Orleans, Dallas or Houston, the Southeastern on at least one occasion (already alluded to), in Charlotte NC, in June 1938. From this session, which may well have been tied up with station WBT in some way, come the sides on this LP by Scott & Boone, Jack & Leslie and Fred Kirby. (One of several testimonies to the location of these June '38 recordings is that of Odus Maggard, of Odus & Woodrow; see George Edens' article in OTM13.) The raw and soulful harmony of Scott & Boone (the former is Leon Scott, the latter perhaps Claude Boone, and their subsidiary credit should be Elk, not Elm, Mountain Boys) is underpinned by two guitars, one probably steel-bodied. Jack Hilliard and Leslie Palmer, with guitar and dobro, deliver a gospel song with muted fervour. Whitey & Hogan, working a similar furrow, sing what may be the first recording of "Turn Your Radio On", to their own mandolin and guitar. (This is unhappily one of the items most marred by distortion.) Of the remaining tracks Buck Nation's is noteworthy for its advanced crooning manner, the Log Cabin Boys' is a rather woodenly sung Delmore-derived "New Brown's Ferry", and the Cherokee Ramblers' an effervescent "Home Brew Rag", played on mouth harp, banjo and guitar with Bill Gatin blowing jug. This was a Georgia band, and Gatin remained a radio personality in that state, and elsewhere in the Southeast, for a couple of decades.

Freddie Owen and Frankie More—"The Log Cabin Boys"



The coupling of MILTON BROWN with CLAYTON McMICHEN is not such a bad idea, at that. Topside, seminal WS; turn over, and you have Mac's unique experiment in Southeastern hillbilly jazz, Quintette du Hot Club d'Atlanta. (Actually, by this time he would have been based in Kentucky or Ohio, playing the big stations like WLW or WCKY.) The Brownies' selections are good, at least one from each of their three sessions. The Wildcats' stuff was picked on similar principles, and I regret only the dull starter. "St Louis Woman" is Mac's rewrite of the famous blues, "Lulu" the stag-party song that Acuff also recorded, and the rest are standards that give plenty of space for twin-fiddle choruses, tenor banjo solos and the other characteristics of this unusual band.

WESTERN SWING AND COUNTRY JAZZ is a reasonable enough anthology, if you allow a certain latitude in the interpretation of the title - which, after all, is a very general one. By a hardnosed definition of WS, about half the LP qualifies. Leon Chappelear's Lone Star Cowboys with their two blues, one medium and one brisker, are of the category of WS bands that feature clarinet (and no steel guitar). The Bar-X Cowboys are a twin fiddle lineup. Leon Selph's Blue Ridge Playboys are here, apparently, Selph backed by Cliff Bruner's band (for union reasons), with vocal by Floyd Tillman. Some of the same musicians appear as Bob Dunn's Vagabonds: Moon Mullican is perceptibly on both Dunn tracks (singing in "Blue Skies"), as is mandolinist Leo Raley. The Texas Wanderers' item is a typical Dickie McBride vocal number, none too memorable. On the borderline of WS and unclassifiable are Phelps' Virginia Rounders, a vaguely Brownies-flavoured combination with fiddle and tenor banjo making the solo running. The band worked with and may well accompany Ray Whitley on his "Come On Boys". The Ross Rhythm Rascals sound like virtually legit WS on a Harlem Hamfatsish number, with sax and trumpet solos; one feels like saying: almost too jazzy to be WS. Hugh (Cross) and Shug (Fisher)'s Radio Pals are jolly but without intrusive jazz inflections; accordion and fiddle solo. The East Texas Serenaders play one of their loveliest rags. And the Louisiana Strollers are a piquantly mysterious band - angular blues fiddling, thoughtful lead guitar taking a couple of solos, undramatic singer.

The CLIFF BRUNER/RICE BROTHERS' GANG pairing is not as happy as the Brown/McMichen one, and I can think of no way it could be justified other than as a convenience, but neither side loses in the encounter. Cliff Bruner led a busy band (41 releases) and recorded some exciting material in the late '30s. The pieces chosen are not all of high interest - "Bacon" is a stupid song, "Silvery Moon" a tedious one - but there is customarily a solo or two worth hearing, and on the earlier recordings it is as often as not by Leo Raley, for whom "Beaumont Rag" is virtually a showcase (Bruner himself is inaudible on this track). The carefreely played "San Antonio Rose" is good fun.

As for the Rice Brothers' Gang, what can best describe them to readers unacquainted with their (certainly not much sought after) records? There is nothing else like this in '30s country music. Imagine a combo of Larry Adler,

a sweet alto sax man from one of the hotel bands, a moderately progressive WS rhythm guitarist, and an electric lead guitar-player who occasionally swaps with, or doubles as, the steel guitar man. And a repertoire of '30s pops and some standard jazz numbers. This was the blend peddled on 28 Decca releases by the RBG, of whom we can certainly identify only the brothers themselves, Hoke and Paul - Gainesville boys, veterans (at least in Hoke's case) of the '20s stringband scene, now (in the mid-to-late '30s) transplanted to Shreveport, where they had a residency on KWKH featuring girl singers, accordionists, clarinet-players in funny hats, the whole uptown-hillbilly business. From Hoke to hokum, in fact, and neatly done - but why in the 5000 series?

The DELMORE BROTHERS had nine Decca releases near the end of the series, from which the 14 cuts on 4017 are a good selection, though my own favourite Decca side is absent, "When It's Time for the Whip-poor-will to Sing", and it <u>was</u> one of their better known works. As a whole the Decca output was less striking than most of that on Bluebird, and it is odd how the recurrent bluesiness of the earlier recordings, which was to resurface after WW2 on King, is entirely missing on these sessions.

The final volume is quite excellent, making a pioneering foray into the vast and virtually ignored '30s work of JIMMIE DAVIS, who with 70 releases was the most prolific single artist in the 5000 catalogue, and complementing it with a side-worth of his associate, the even more neglected BUDDY JONES (whose 35 Decca releases put him only a few places behind Davis in the prolificity table). Davis at this stage - the middle '30s - was moving away from the blue-yodeller image of his Victor days towards a middle-of-the-road country singer position. The selection illustrates both stages: the three blues are cut more or less to the Victor pattern (though "Bed Bug" has a low-down fiddler and comes closer to, say, the Shelton-Fox recordings), and the three sentimental songs represent the style of the bulk of his later-'30s material. "Mama's Getting Hot" is a sort of WS song (Bill Boyd also did it), very chipper and artful.

Above, the Rice Brothers' Gang on stage, date unknown. Below, left, Jimmie Davis.

Buddy Jones' selections show what Davis left behind; they are all, in one way or another, of the rowdier honky-tonk world, epitomised in "She's Sellin' What She Used to Give Away", where Jones is backed by some of the Cliff Bruner band of the time. Some earlier pieces (i.e. the first three tracks) have a strong Rodgers flavour, and "The Women" is a recasting of his "Last Blue Yodel"; these have just steel and rhythm guitar accompaniment. "Butcher Man", from the same session, is a salty talking blues similar to the celebrated "Huntin' Blues". The remaining tracks are like "She's Sellin'" in having a more WS-derived accompaniment, featuring Bob Dunn. All are splendid examples of a great low-life storyteller (Jones wrote much of his own material) and an archetypical white bluesman.

Davis's "Bed Bug" - to return to it a moment - is in a sense appropriate to either side of the LP, for he shares it with Jones; Davis sings the verses, Jones the refrain line and yodel. One itches to know more of what must have been a colourful association, which involved a good deal of joint composition (in which a mysterious Buster Jones also collaborated).

The additional album MCX-16 partly presents especially famous artists connected with Decca but bypassed in the LP series because of the relative familiarity of their material: Reeves, Autry and Ritter. It also includes a WLS-associated figure - one of several whom Decca approached - in the 99%-urban Sally Foster, with what amounts to a sweet danceband accompaniment. Rubbish, but marginally relevant. Most of the rest is late-Decca (i.e. early-'40s) material by artists who went on to more substantial fame after WW2: Wakely, Foley, Cassell (a tremendous singer on one of his most stylish performances), Rogers. The Carlisle track seems inapt but does have some flyaway mandolin picking. Mandolin is also a feature, though in more relaxed style, of the Callahans' piece, and perhaps one can view these selections as bluegrass in the making. The LP is altogether a hotchpotch, but one can hardly complain much about a giveaway.

* * *

This is the most ambitious reissue project attempted in this genre, and both Mitsui and MCA must be congratulated on a most successful representation of one of the 1930s' major catalogues. A poorly known period of country music's development is now in sharp focus, and a fascinating library of valuable music is accessible again. It's to be hoped that the series remains in catalogue long enough to reach all the enthusiasts and students it should attract. TR

WESTERN SWING

BOB WILLS & HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS
THE TIFFANY TRANSCRIPTIONS
Tishomingo TSHO-BW01

Texas Playboy Theme/Roly Poly/Woodchoppers Ball/Keep a Knockin' But You Can't Come In/Bring It on Down to My House, Honey/Riding on a Hump Backed Mule/Little Liza Jane/Cotton Eyed Joe/Fat Boy Rag/It's Your Red Wagon/My Window Faces the Sou h/Honeysuckle Rose/Oh Monah/Ida Red/I'm Gonna Be Boss/C Jam Blues/Don't Cry Baby/Chinatown/Take Me Back to Tulsa/Texas Playboy Theme

Apart from the Columbia 'Anthology', which has unassailable strengths, this should be reckoned, by many lovers of hot WS, among the best Wills LPs. The fan who can't quite take the riper sentimental pieces will find this selection almost uninterruptedly satisfying, for it is mostly hot music by possibly the jazziest outfit Wills ever headed. It dates from 1945-48 and originates in the celebrated ETs Wills cut for Tiffany. These in fact contained examples of every kind of music the Playboys knew, but this LP concentrates on the swingingest.

The personnel varies somewhat, but featured names include Louis Tierney and Joe Holley (fiddles), Herb Remington or Roy Honeycutt or Noel Boggs (steel), Tiny Moore (mandolin), Eldon Shamblin and Junior Barnard (guitars). Barnard contributes some fiery blues solos, and the Holley-Tierney team is great both as a duo and individually. The recording quality is exceptionally good for the time: Duncan's singing has real warmth, and the band sounds <u>like</u> a band - something modern WS producers seem not to care about much.

No WS enthusiast should be without this first-rate LP, but unfortunately it seems to be elusive already, and a rumour has reached us that it may have been withdrawn for legal reasons - which, if true, puts at risk the planned further volumes of Tiffany-derived material. One always regrets records quickly becoming collectors' items - but particularly when they have as much good music as this. TR

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL
WHEELIN' AND DEALIN'
Capitol E-ST11546

Route 66/Miles and Miles of Texas/The Trouble with Lovin' Today/Shout Wa Hey/Blues for Dixie/Cajun Stripper/If I Can't Love You/Lost Mind/They Raided the Joint/We've Gone As Far As We Can Go

THE WHEEL
Capitol E-ST11620

The Wheel/I Wonder/Am I High?/A Dollar Short and a Day Late/My Baby Thinks She's a Train/Ragtime Annie/When Love Goes Wrong/Somebody Stole His Body/Let's Face Up/I Can't Handle It Now/Red Stick

Only in the earliest days did a WS band stick to a rigidly WS repertoire - and that for the sufficient reason that the music was originally dance music, and a consistency of sound suited dancers. Once WS began to be at all a showband music, it opened itself to anything in the entire country repertoire.

This is why AATW are in no sense unfaithful to WS tradition if they play songs that could just as easily have rolled up on a Tammy Wynette LP, or have tumbled out of some cosmic-cowboy bag. There's little enough of the latter; AATW are of the breed that respects the old warhorses, George Jones and Lefty Frizzell, I'd guess, and the rest of the deep-country league of the '50s and '60s. More of their music, in fact, lives in that corner of country than it does on WS terrain. Or so the records suggest; a recent London appearance by the band had more of a mellow bigband atmosphere than quite comes across on disc.

Readers unfamiliar with AATW may need a pocket description: 10-11 pieces (2f/sg/3g/p/bs/d/horns &c), with occasional guests (Gimble, Moore, Shamblin and others on the former LP, Leon Rausch on the latter); broad Texas country/country-rock repertoire with some standards ("Blues for Dixie", "Ragtime Annie"). These are their fourth and fifth LPs.

Without mere revivalism, this is, I think, as apt a kind of present-day-WS as we are likely to see patronised by major record-companies. It contains enough of the old and tried balance between looseness and tightness, and this ought to please the conservative. The songs, many of them original, are up-to-date enough to appeal to Mr & Mrs Country Music Lover. AATW have found a good combination without parodying their musical heritage. At the moment they are not quite as exciting as Cody; partly because they lack (or are not interested in making anything of) an intense feel for '50s rock and R&B. "My Baby Thinks She's a Train", with its studied Sun-studio sound, may mark a change of attitude here. But they do possess the sunny bonhomie of vintage WS, and in that they seem to lead their field. TR

BOB WILLS' ORIGINAL TEXAS PLAYBOYS TODAY
Capitol ST11612

Bring It On Down to My House/Gambling Polka Dot Blues/Lily Dale/T-U-L-S-A Straight Ahead/Osage Stomp/You're O.K./Sugar Moon/Panhandle Rag/The Convict and the Rose/Party for the Old Folks (28½m)

The exPlayboys here reunited for a set of old WS favourites are McAuliffe-sg/v, Keith Coleman-f, Gimble-f, Joe Ferguson-bs/v, Stricklin-p, Dacus-d, Bob Kizer-g and Leon Rausch-v. Nobody would contest their qualifications or the selected tunes, but I maintain that Tommy Allsup, who produced this (and many other recent WS records, including AATW's), has an inappropriately Nashvillean ear and just doesn't mix this sort of music right. (Haggard felt the same about the 'For the Last Time' tapes and allegedly remixed them to his own taste.) There is just not enough band-feel; as soon as anyone takes a solo, virtually everything else drops into inaudibility. The fiddles are too far back and sound like mere colouring (a thoroughly Nashville touch) on many numbers. Even "Osage Stomp" is weakened. This is no way to handle Bob Wills' legacy.

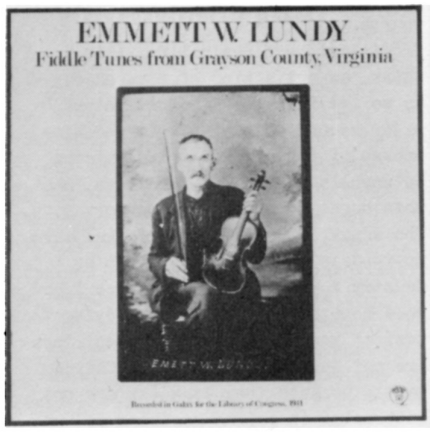
WS specialists will nevertheless be advised to hear the record. Rausch was one of the better singers to work with Wills, and one cannot fault his idiomatic command. There is not as much truly striking solo work as you might expect, but Gimble has some good choruses.

I think what one misses most is - not surprisingly - the presence of Wills himself. No asides, no solo call-ons, precious little humour. It's like chile without the bite. TR

WS Notes

CAPITOL has also released a double LP □BOB WILLS AND HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS IN CONCERT (SKBB11550), containing 15 tracks from a show which I tentatively place in 1964/5. (No details of their origin are provided in Charles Townsend's otherwise good liner notes.)

George Clayborn-f and Joe Andrews-v are among the few named musicians. Another double is MGM's □24 GREAT HITS BY BOB WILLS AND HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS (MG-2-5303), spanning Wills' entire MGM period (1947-54). This is a clear improvement on 'The History of Bob Wills' (SE-4866), some of which it duplicates, and is now the definitive MGM collection. Unfortunately Bob Pinson's lengthy notes have been decimated to a half-dozen paragraphs. TR



EMMETT W LUNDY
FIDDLE TUNES FROM GRAYSON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
String STR802

Julie Ann Johnson/Talking About Green Leonard/Fisher's Hornpipe/Flatwoods/Evening Star Waltz/Sugar Hill/Highlander's Farewell/Sheep Shell Corn by the Rattlin' of His Horn/Piney Woods Gal/Talking About His First Fiddle/Chapel Hill March/Forky Deer/Molly Put the Kettle On/Waves on the Ocean/Deaf Woman's Courtship/Ducks on the Millpond/The Lost Girl/Bonaparte's Retreat/Talking About the Fiddle and the Devil/Susanna Gal/Wild Goose Chase/Cleveland's March/Belle of Lexington (41¼m)

Though Emmett Lundy was born over a century ago and has been dead for almost 30 years, he is still remembered and even revered by older musicians in Galax and surrounding Grayson County. Considering his reputation, Lundy's legacy on commercial 78rpm recordings is unsatisfying - only two sides for Okeh in 1925, neither of which prominently features his fiddling. But unlike a good many hillbilly recording artists, for whom we know little besides a name on a ledger sheet and a handful of records, Lundy was recorded again in 1941 by the Lomaxes for the Archive of Folk Song in the Library of Congress. This more extensive collection contains some extraordinarily beautiful material and String Records has presented a good portion of it here with obvious care and expertise. The entire production effort is magnificent: 19 of the 38 tunes from the AFS collection are included here, resulting in full but uncluttered listening. Lundy's fiddling is remarkably strong, despite his 81 years of age at the time these recordings were made. Some brief excerpts from Elizabeth Lomax's interview with Lundy give added presence to the album, for they satisfy the natural desire to know something of the fiddler as well as his music; Lundy's comments about his mentor, Green Leonard, and the manner in which he "caught" Leonard's tunes are especially delightful. The sound quality is surprisingly excellent and the jacket design is quite striking.

And there's more, too! A lovely 12-page insert by Tom Carter presents a well-researched portrait of Lundy, his music and, more generally, the fiddle tradition around Galax before the turn of the century. Carter suggests, for example, that the more familiar, hard-driving, big-band Galax sound is a rather recent development, quite unlike Lundy's playing here which reflects the style and repertoire of an earlier generation of Galax fiddlers. There are some currently wellknown pieces here, though hardly "standards" the way Lundy plays them: "Sugar Hill", "Molly Put the Kettle On", "Ducks on the Millpond", "Susanna Gal", all nicely accompanied by Kelly Lundy on guitar and Geedy Lundy on banjo. But then there are less familiar sounding titles too, beautiful tunes like "Highlander's Farewell", "Belle of Lexington", "Piney Woods Gal" (a welcome addition since Ernest Stoneman's harmonica all but conceals the fiddle on the original Okeh recording), "The Lost Girl", "Waves on the Ocean" and others. These pieces are tied to an older fiddle tradition in Grayson County and, unfortunately, are no longer found in the repertoires of currently active fiddlers in the area. "So though these tunes come from a rather late recording date, they appear as the earliest recorded documentation of fiddling in the area - fiddling traceable through Lundy's association with Green Leonard back to the early 1800s." (The fiddling here is traceable forward too. Listen to the changes that have taken place from Lundy's "Flatwoods" here, to the bluegrass adaptation on Rounder 0020 by Jerry Lundy, his grandson, and Ted Lundy, Jerry's second cousin.)

While this LP will certainly be treasured for its rare material, and appreciated for its insightful analysis of "old" Galax fiddling, it should above all be enjoyed for the beautiful music it contains.

BARRY POSS

MELVIN WINE
COLD FROSTY MORNING
Poplar 1

Cold Frosty Morning/Black Cat in the Briar Patch/Going Down to Georgie-O/Old Sledge/My Father's Violin/Old Skedaddalink/Lady's Waist Ribbon/Tippy Get Your Hair Cut/Walk Chalk Chicken/Down by the Old Garden Gate/The Green Fields of America/Hunting with Ferrets/Jump Jim Crow/Christmas Morning/The Calhoun Swing/Waiting for the Boatsman

Melvin Wine is a farmer and fiddler in his 60s. He lives in Copen, Braxton County, West Virginia, where he has spent most of his adult life, working in coal mines, raising 10 children, and occasionally playing the fiddle. Music came down to him through father, grandfather and great-grandfather (two of them fiddlers) but he has rarely played fulltime, and for most of the '40s and '50s he put fiddle-tunes aside for spiritual reasons. His interest was revived by the annual folk festival at Glenville and developed in the evenings of babysitting with his granddaughter.

Emmett and Kelly Lundy "at the old homeplace", date unknown.

In the last three or four years he has spent a good deal of time with Carl Fleischhauer, playing and talking, and a portrait composed from these materials has now been brought out by Carl: 14 fiddle-tunes, two narratives, and a portfolio, in effect, of photographs and notes - the whole very attractively presented on a gatefold jacket.

Braxton County adjoins Clay and Calhoun, and Wine's fiddling has obvious connections with, say, French Carpenter's, though there is not much shared repertoire. ("Christmas Morning" is a fine exception.) There is some broad similarity, too, to the playing of Burl Hammons. Wine seems, however, to have a more eclectic repertory; for example, he plays a couple of song-tunes, "Old Garden Gate" and "Boatsman", and the little-recorded "Jump Jim Crow". Many of the performances are unaccompanied, but some have his sons Grafton and Denzil on tenor banjo and guitar. If Wine lacks something of the fineness of tone one associates with Carpenter, or the fluidity of Clark Kessinger, he is all the same a player of great character. The two narratives, and various snatches of conversation following tunes, take one behind the music and considerably enhance the record as a whole. So too do the sections of oral family history that form part of the notes, and Carl's characteristically varied photographs. In fact, the record has been put together exactly as such records ought to be, with an understanding of what lies behind, and in, old time music, and a concern to make that understanding accessible to others. TR

THE TENNESSEE RAIL SPLITTERS
FIDDLIN' SOUNDS OF THE OLD MAN FROM THE MOUNTAIN
Staff BP3286

Cricket on the Hearth/Sugar Tree Stomp/Banjo Signal/Old Hen She Cackles/ Sail Away Ladies/Last of Calahan/ Raggedy Anne/Rocky Road to Georgia/ Carrol County Blues/Walkin' in My Sleep/Huntsville/Lost Train

This band, which has played in the Chicago area for many years, straddles old time music and bluegrass and does it to rather exhilarating effect. The fiddler, Artie P Crowder, and guitar-player, Harold Lamb, are Tennesseans in their middle years, and the sound of '30s music, particularly that of Arthur Smith, is evidently one of their inspirations. Collectors may have heard them on the 1974 and '75 Battle Melvin and Grafton Wine. Copen WV, 1974.

Ground LPs issued by Log Cabin. Bill Jackson, banjo, and Vern Henning, bass, are younger men, and the bluegrass feel of the band is chiefly due to Jackson. However, the selection speaks for itself: these are all old Southern fiddle tunes except "Banjo Signal", and Crowder plays them with immense energy. There are only a few solos, and no singing.

I see this as a fiddle album, at heart, and so the banjo comes through a little too prominently for me, but since it's virtually confined to the left channel a small adjustment to the stereo balance will emphasise Crowder enough for fiddle buffs. It remains good band music, hard-driving and very invigorating. Not exceptionally well recorded, but it will do.

Chicago reader Ron Brown put this my way. I don't know how easily it can be obtained, since it's on a custom label, but anyone interested could try writing to the producer, Bud Pressner, Gary, Ind. 46409. TR

MIKE PARIS
& CHRIS COMBER

JIMMIE THE KID

the Life of Jimmie Rodgers

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