



# CLASSIC OLD-TIME FIDDLE

from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



*Classic* **OLD-TIME FIDDLE**  
FROM SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

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Compiled by Jake Krack and Jeff Place Annotated by Jeff Place and Jake Krack  
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## INTRODUCTION

This collection continues the series of “classic” releases drawing from the breadth of the Folkways collection. *Classic Old-Time Fiddle from Smithsonian Folkways* represents social and instrumental music and spotlights instrumental prowess. Old-time music differs from bluegrass, although it is often mentioned in the same breath, being older and featuring different playing styles. String bands have existed throughout most of U.S. history, and the music has evolved from both African-American and Anglo-American elements. Whereas the banjo’s origins are African, those of the violin or fiddle are European.

Although much of the old-time music originated in the American South, string bands could be found all over the country. Some of the tunes were instrumentals, and some were songs. They often were performed at community events, fairs, concerts, and occasions like molasses making or barn raisings. In the days before radio and television, old-time musicians would frequently get together in the evenings to make their own fun (with an appreciative audience, no doubt). There has always been a sense of competition between country string musicians, and many songs were played by many groups, allowing individuals to mold the music into their own unique version. Even now particular versions of a song may be traced back to a particularly important recording of it by a particular group (e.g., Eck Robertson’s rendition of “Sally Goodin”). Fiddle contests (which included contests on other instruments as well as band contests) came into existence in the 1730s and still take place. Many music fans travel every year to Galax, Virginia, or Union Grove, North Carolina, for the contests. One can find enthusiasts of old-time music all over the world. In the United States it is also very strong in the Midwest, Northeast, and Pacific Northwest. We are very aware of the wonderful music coming from these areas, but for this collection we have almost entirely focused on the music of the southern Appalachian region. Hopefully the other areas will be addressed in a future release.

Over the years, Folkways Records (now Smithsonian Folkways) has been one of the American record labels that, more than others, has continuously produced and distributed high-quality recordings of traditional American folk music. Folkways founder Moses Asch made a commitment to artists that their Folkways recordings would never go out of print. This collection is intended as an introduction to many of these recordings on the label, and a chance for listeners to experience them perhaps again, or perhaps for the first time.

Moses Asch (1905–1986) founded Folkways in 1948 in New York. He had been involved in the record business since 1939 with his former Asch and Disc labels. In 1940, acting on a tip from Broadway producer Sy Rudy, Asch recorded blues songster Lead Belly, which marked Asch’s first stab at releasing American vernacular music. During the 1940s, Asch released recordings by other well-known American folk musicians such as Burl Ives, Pete Seeger, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Woody Guthrie, and Virginia mountain musicians Hobart Smith and Texas Gladden.

It was no stretch that Asch would become involved in releasing traditional old-time music. A square dance album by Paiute Pete (Folkways 2001) was one of the first such recordings. Asch’s release in 1952 of Harry Smith’s legendary compilation, the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, made available for the first time in decades vintage commercial recordings of mountain music and string bands from the 1920s and 1930s. Smith’s *Anthology*, which included one whole side dedicated to different types of fiddle tunes, would have a major effect on a new generation of young folk music performers and enthusiasts. Previously the folk music recordings you were likely to find in stores were by urban performers like Pete Seeger and Burl Ives. The *Anthology* made available authentic voices from the mountains and a whole repertoire of songs dating back centuries to a new audience, which craved this authenticity.

A major change in the musical landscape occurred in 1958, when the folk group The Kingston Trio had a nationwide hit with the North Carolina ballad, “Tom Dooley,” a song which had been collected by Frank Warner from North Carolina banjo player Frank Proffitt. Soon every major record label was looking for its own “Kingston Trio” to cash in on the folk music craze. College students were forming bands, and musicians were going for material to the great song collections by the Lomaxes, Seegers, Sandburg, Botkin, and others, as well as the venerable *Sing Out!* magazine. Some of the more adventurous of these musicians traveled to the South seeking the sources of these songs and their singers, including performers who had been recorded in the 1920s, some of whom were on the *Anthology*. It was from these folklorists and collectors that Asch received the recordings he used to create the vast collection of classic traditional folk albums he was to release in the next eight years. During the Folk Song Revival, roughly 1958–1966, Asch released 78 albums of old-time music, some

of which were among the most influential of their time.

These titles included recordings of Clark Kessinger, Wade Ward, Dock Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, The McGee Brothers, Jean Ritchie, Doc Watson, Clarence Ashley, Kilby Snow, and others. Folk music fans in the 1960s would frequently have a copy of a Folkways Jean Ritchie or Doc Watson recording in their collections along with Peter, Paul and Mary or Judy Collins. Singer Eric Von Schmidt, himself from the influential Cambridge, Massachusetts, folk scene, recalled, “No longer are you listening to the Limelinters on Victor, The Brothers Four on Columbia, and the Chad Mitchell Trio on Mercury. You are now hooked on Folkways Records. They cost a lot for records back then, but what authority they had! No slick and shiny jackets like the rest, but all pebble-grained and thick matte paper. They even weighed more than the others. Three layers of heavy cardboard, a multipaged booklet of notes and lyrics, and the disc itself a slab of vinyl like we are not likely to see again” (Von Schmidt, notes to SFW CD 40090).

Several of the individuals who brought projects to Asch deserve mention. In New York in the late 1950s, one of the young groups on the scene was the New Lost City Ramblers. The Ramblers made a point of recording older country and old-time music and staying true to the original sound. Unlike many groups who appropriated older songs and claimed to have written them, the Ramblers always included discographical information on the originals in their liner notes. They educated their fans about the music, and not surprisingly two of their members, Mike Seeger and John Cohen, were and continue to be involved in collecting and documenting traditional music.

Mike Seeger is a member of the musical Seeger family, half-brother to Pete and son of the musicologist Charles. As a musician and a member of the New Lost City Ramblers, Seeger was also one of the more prolific recording artists on the Folkways label. In addition, Seeger was involved in producing recordings by fiddlers Arthur Smith and Eck Robertson. He also produced recordings by the McGee Brothers, Kilby Snow, the Stoneman Family, Dock Boggs, Elizabeth Cotten, and others. Another Rambler, John Cohen, a musician, filmmaker, photographer, and musicologist, also traveled south and brought back many classic recordings. One from his 1959 Kentucky visit introduced the world to Roscoe Holcomb, and others came from his recordings in the ballad-rich area of Sodom-Laurel, North Carolina.

Seeger brought his friend Ralph Rinzler (1934–1994) in to help with the notes to a Folkways Scruggs banjo-style album, and Rinzler himself then began to produce recordings for Folkways. As a chief talent scout for the Newport Folk Festival, Rinzler was the first to discover and record Doc Watson in 1960 (Folkways 2355, 1961). Others such as Ed Kahn, Peter Siegel, and Sandy Paton also

produced recordings during this time. Along with Rinzler and Izzy Young, John Cohen founded an organization called Friends of Old Time Music to bring traditional musicians to New York. Their concerts gave urban audiences the opportunity to experience firsthand the music of many of these mountain performers. Some of this material saw release on Folkways (1964) in recordings produced by Peter Siegel and again in 2006 as a 3-CD box set called *The Friends of Old Time Music: The Folk Arrival 1961–1965* (SFW CD 40160).

In 1966, Eric Davidson, an old-time musician and biologist, traveled south from New York and with the help of his wife Lyn and Paul Newman recorded old-time and bluegrass musicians in the rich musical environment around Grayson and Carroll counties, Virginia. Davidson provided numerous recordings of old-time music to Asch both as a recordist and as a performer with the Iron Mountain String Band. One of the recordings he made was of legendary fiddler Tommy Jarrell performing with North Carolina guitarist Frank Bode.



Among the old-time fiddle recordings released by Moses Asch were two of West Virginia fiddler Clark Kessinger. They were provided by record company owner Ken Davidson. Folklorist Art Rosenbaum also produced albums of field recordings of old-time music, among them a collection that included fiddle tunes from Indiana. Folkways also released collections from the Galax and Union Grove fiddler's conventions in 1964 and 1962, respectively.

In 1987, Ralph Rinzler, then Assistant Secretary for Public Service at the Smithsonian Institution, negotiated the donation of the Folkways label to the museum, and the following year the Smithsonian Folkways record label was founded. From its beginnings Smithsonian Folkways has set out to reissue material from its vast archives with expanded liner notes and updated sound. As the first reissues were being planned, Rinzler made a point of being involved, and so traditional old-time music was guaranteed to be a priority. Frequently after his day job was over, Rinzler would venture over to the archives and help put together reissues of many of the recordings he had initially participated in making. Old friends Mike Seeger and John Cohen were occasionally present to give advice. Seeger and Cohen themselves also continue to revisit their old recording projects and have been working to

reissue their classic material. The year 2001 saw the release of John Cohen's *There Is No Eye: Music for Photographs* (SFW CD 40091), a collection of his recordings of traditional musicians to accompany the book of the same name. The CD booklet contains some of the stunning photographs from his book.

Apart from his Newport Folk Festival work, over his career Ralph Rinzler was at one time the manager of both Bill Monroe and Doc Watson, and a producer of numerous records. During the course of his travels he recorded over 800 reels of concerts, back-porch picking parties, and interviews. These recordings now reside in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Smithsonian.

*Classic Old-Time Fiddle from Smithsonian Folkways* also includes tracks taken from recordings of the forty-year history of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (previously the Festival of American Folklife) and recordings made at the 1997 tribute concert to the *Anthology of American Folk Music* at the Barns of Wolf Trap in Vienna, Virginia.

In the last nineteen years, Smithsonian Folkways has reissued the Doc Watson-Clarence Ashley recordings, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Dock Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, anthologies of the New Lost City Ramblers, a collection of *Classic Old-Time Music* (2003), and the heralded 1997 Grammy-winning reissue of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. A complete list of other fiddle recordings available through Smithsonian Folkways can be found on [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu). We will continue to mine the vaults for new collections in the future and remain committed to this thriving American musical form.

—JEFF PLACE, MARCH 2006

There are still many music festivals and gatherings occurring all through the year, but mainly in the summer. It is easy for an old-time musician to find friends and people to play with in a number of different locations across the country. The festivals are one of the greatest places to learn the music and about the music, because each person has spent time studying under someone different and in a different method. The festivals and gatherings are a strong method of keeping the traditions alive and allowing the past to become part of the present and the future, so that young, aspiring musicians can grow up in the same atmosphere their elders did.

—JAKE KRACK, MARCH 2006

## THE SONGS

At the end of the annotations, there are citations to Guthrie Meade's *Country Music Sources*, for those who wish to learn more about the history of recordings of the tune, as well as references to the earlier recordings themselves.

The complete liner notes for all of the original Folkways recordings are available for free download at [smithsonianglobalsound.org](http://smithsonianglobalsound.org). All tracks from the source recordings for this compilation are available as listening samples, and full versions are available for purchase, by download from the Smithsonian Global Sound website.

### 1. PRETTY LITTLE GIRL WITH THE BLUE DRESS ON Doug Wallin

Doug Wallin, fiddle and vocal

(from *Doug and Jack Wallin: Family Songs and Stories from the North Carolina Mountains* SFW CD 40013, 1995)

Doug Wallin (1919–2000) was from around Sodom, North Carolina, an area rich in ballad singers, and none stronger than the Wallin and Chandler families. His mother Berzilla had been recorded by John Cohen years earlier, and it is from her that Doug learned many of his songs. Many other songs were collected from Wallin's

relatives by British folklorist Cecil Sharp in the early 20th century. Wallin was the winner of a prestigious National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment of the Arts in 1990. Wallin appeared at various festivals including the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife and Wolf Trap Farm Park's Folk Masters Series. A recording of Doug and his brother Jack was released by Smithsonian Folkways in 1995 in conjunction with the North Carolina Arts Council.

Wallin learned this song from his father (Wayne Martin, notes to SFW 40013). The song

is related to “Who’s Been Here Since I’ve Been Gone” and “Gate to Go Through” (Meade 2002, 778).

Meade, 778.

## **2. SUGAR HILL Tommy Jarrell with Frank Bode**

Tommy Jarrell, fiddle; Frank Bode, guitar and vocal (from *Been Riding with Old Mosby Folkways* 31109, 1986; recorded 1984)

Tommy Jarrell (1901–1985), from Toast, North Carolina, was one of the most beloved fiddlers of the late 20th century. His father Ben had been a member of the early recording group, The DaCosta Woltz Southern Broadcasters, and Tommy learned to play at an early age. In his later years, he was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts. Young fiddlers visited Tommy so frequently to learn from him that a neighbor tacked up a sign which read “first two nights free and after that \$20 a night” ([www.oldtimemusic.com/FHOF/jarrell.html](http://www.oldtimemusic.com/FHOF/jarrell.html)).

Frank Bode is a guitarist and banjo player also from Toast, which is located near Mt. Airy and in one of the North Carolina hotbeds of old-time music. He currently plays with both the Toast String Stretchers and the Smokey Valley Boys. This recording comes from an album recorded by Eric Davidson.

The song probably refers to drunken binges during “sugaring-off” (the preparation of maple sugar) (Davidson, notes to FW 2477). It was first recorded by Crockett Ward and His Boys in 1928, and a version similar to Jarrell’s was recorded by Dad Crockett in August 1929 for Brunswick (Meade 2002, 530). Jarrell learned it from his father Ben.

Meade, 530; Dad Crockett (on County 3502 [CD]); Crockett Ward (on County 534 [LP]).

## **3. SALLY IN THE GARDEN J.D. Cornett**

J.D. Cornett, vocal  
(from *Mountain Music of Kentucky Folkways* 2317, 1960/SFW CD 40077, 1996)

## **4. SALLY IN THE GARDEN Marion Sumner**

Marion Sumner, fiddle  
(from *Mountain Music of Kentucky Folkways* 2317, 1960/SFW CD 40077, 1996)

John Cohen recorded both J.D. Cornett (1896–1970) and Marion Sumner (1920–1997) during his 1959 trip to Kentucky, and their music appears on Cohen’s *Mountain Music of Kentucky* collection. Sumner had moved back to Hazard, Kentucky, after spending some years in Nashville playing with the country duo Johnny and Jack (Cohen, notes to SFW CD 40077). James D. Cornett was recorded by Cohen in his home

in Viper, Kentucky. Here we have two versions of the song “Sally in the Garden” from that collection.

The song is quite old. Gus Meade found it published under the title “Hog-Eye Jig” as early as 1853 in Septimus Winner’s *Winner’s Collection for the Violin*. It was first recorded by Crockett’s Kentucky Mountaineers in November 1928 (Meade 2002, 706).

Meade, 706; *Crockett’s Kentucky Mountaineers* (Brunswick 59000 [LP]).

## **5. MUDDY ROADS Gaither Carlton with Doc Watson**

Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar  
(from *The Watson Family Folkways* 2366, 1963/SFW CD 40012, 1990)

Gaither Carlton (1901–1972) was a great old-time fiddler from North Carolina. A member of the highly musical Watson Family, Carlton was recorded by Ralph Rinzler in the early 1960s along with his more famous son-in-law, Doc Watson. When revisiting the Watson Family recordings in 1989 for the compact disc reissue, producer Ralph Rinzler was reminded of the wonder of Carlton’s music.

Doc’s uncle Ben Miller used to play this song around the house on his fiddle when Doc was a child. Miller was an outstanding comedian, banjo

player, and fiddler. Apparently, Doc’s father knew some verses to it, but it is done as an instrumental here (Jeff Place, notes to SFW CD 40012, 1990).

## **6. WON’T COME UNTIL MORNING Greg Hooven with the Greg Hooven String Band**

Greg Hooven, fiddle; Heidi Sanders Hooven, bass; Judy Chaudet, banjo; Bill Giltinan, guitar  
(from the Tribute to the *Anthology of American Folk Music* Concerts, October 1997, archive CD #264)

Greg Hooven (1969–2005) was a fine practitioner of the Galax-Hillsville, Virginia, string band tradition. Galax has long been a cultural center in the South for traditional fiddle and banjo music, and it is still home to one of the most famous fiddle contests in the United States. Having learned from his father and grandfather, Hooven came from a long line of master musicians from the area including Pop Stoneman, Eck Dunford, Wade and Fields Ward, Norman Edmonds, Oscar Jenkins, and Kahle Brewer. He was joined in the band by his wife Heidi, Judy Chaudet, and Bill Giltinan.

## **7. WEDNESDAY NIGHT WALTZ Clark Kessinger**

Clark Kessinger, fiddle; Gene Meade, guitar; Wayne Hauser, banjo  
(from *Clark Kessinger, Fiddler: Old-Time Country Music Folkways* 2336, 1966)

Like many of his contemporaries, Clark Kessinger (1896–1975) was a performer who was rediscovered during the great Folk Song Revival of the 1960s, returning to recording after a thirty-year lay-off. Kessinger and his nephew Luches recorded over 70 sides for the Brunswick Record Company in the 1920s and 1930s as the Kessinger Brothers.

Kessinger was born near Charleston, West Virginia, and spent much of his life in and around Kanawha County. In 1928, after having been recommended by a local violin teacher, the Kessinger Brothers ventured to Ashland, Kentucky, to record for Brunswick. James O’Keefe was in charge of the session and anxious to hear the Clark Kessinger everyone was talking about. A rival record company, Columbia, had a current hit with “Wednesday Night Waltz” as performed by the Leake County Revelers. O’Keefe got the Kessingers to record a version of the waltz (Brunswick 219), which quickly became the bigger hit and the biggest hit of their career (Wolfe 1999, 27).

In 1963, Ken Davidson began to record Kessinger for his Folk Promotions label, and this recording comes from his material.

Meade, 834; *Kessinger Brothers* (Document 8010 [CD]); *Leake County Revelers* (County 3514 [CD]).

## 8. DANCE ALL NIGHT Arthur Smith with the McGee Brothers

Arthur Smith, fiddle; Sam McGee, guitar; Kirk McGee, banjo  
(from *Milk 'Em in the Evening Blues* Folkways 31007, 1968)

Arthur Smith (1898–1971) was a legendary East Tennessee fiddler. Smith first began to perform on the Grand Ole Opry in 1927 while also working for the railroad. Smith is joined on this recording by brothers Sam and Kirk McGee, also former Opry regulars. He and the McGees were all members of the influential 1930s string band, the Dixieliners. Smith also performed and recorded with the Delmore Brothers. Throughout his career, he fiddled with numerous groups and country singers on both coasts.

In 1957, Mike Seeger recombined the McGee Brothers and Smith for a recording session that became two Folkways albums. Seeger also arranged to have the group appear at the Newport Folk Festival, where they were warmly received.

“Dance All Night” was first recorded as “Alabama Girl, Give the Fiddler a Dram” in 1924 by Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett (Meade 2002, 791).

Meade, 791.

## 9. GIVE THE FIDDLER A DRAM Bill Hicks

Bill Hicks, fiddle  
(from *The Red Clay Ramblers with Fiddlin’ Al McCanless* Folkways 31039, 1974)

The Red Clay Ramblers are the most important group formed in the 1970s during the string band revival that occurred in central North Carolina in the area around Durham. This recording comes from the first album by the Ramblers. They have made a number of recordings over the years and are also known for the music they have composed to accompany theatrical productions, including Sam Shepherd’s *A Lie of the Mind*. Having gone through many personnel changes, the Ramblers continue to perform. (More information can be found at [www.redclayramblers.com](http://www.redclayramblers.com).)

Bill Hicks learned his version of this piece from the Library of Congress recording of Hazard, Kentucky, fiddler Luther Strong, recorded by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax in 1937 (AFS 1534 B3).

Meade, 707; 754; 791.



## 10. LITTLE BROWN JUG Joe and Odell Thompson

Joe Thompson, fiddle; Odell Thompson, banjo  
(from *Black Banjo Songsters of North Carolina and Virginia* SFW CD 40079, 1998)

Here “Little Brown Jug” is performed by African-American fiddler Joe Thompson (1918– ), from Mebane, North Carolina, along with his cousin Odell Thompson (1911–1995), whom he played with for many years. They were some of the last African-American string band musicians from a rich tradition dating back to the days of slavery. African-American string bands had a great influence on many of their Anglo-American neighbors, and elements of the style can be heard in the playing of many White players. This

recording comes from a collection of African-American banjo music recorded and produced by CeCe Conway and Scott Odell.

Joe Thompson is the winner of a North Carolina Folk Heritage Award.

“Little Brown Jug” was composed by Joseph Eastburn Winner (1837–1918) and published in 1869 (Meade 2002, 382). Winner ran a publishing house in Philadelphia from 1854 to 1907.

Meade, 382–83.

### **11. BLACK EYED SUSIE Tracy Schwarz and Mike Seeger with the New Lost City Ramblers**

Tracy Schwarz, fiddle; Mike Seeger, fiddle and vocal; John Cohen, guitar  
(from *String Band Instrumentals: The New Lost City Ramblers* Folkways 2492, 1951)

The New Lost City Ramblers came together in New York in mid-1958, dedicated to preserving and performing important old-time American music that all three members had grown to love. The Ramblers included Mike Seeger (1933–), John Cohen (1932–), and banjo player Tom Paley (1928–). The group formed during the beginnings of the great folk music boom of the late 1950s, a time when many young musicians were turning to American folk music. Influenced by Harry Smith’s *Anthology of American Folk*

*Music*, the members of the Ramblers began to actively seek more and more older recordings, taking part in exchanges of reels of tape through a network of collectors who held dubs of vintage 78 rpm recordings. Mike Seeger and his friend Ralph Rinzler offered to help catalog Harry Smith’s record collection, which by that time had been sold to the New York Public Library, in order to attain access to those sounds. There was no such thing as too much old music.

During a period when hundreds of urban folk groups were coming into being, there was a constant search for older songs to fill out set lists. Songs were appropriated by groups and singers who often claimed to be the author or arranger. The Ramblers made a point of including rich discographical information on the source of their songs in their notes, giving full credit to and helping educate their fans about their musical forefathers. They also revived the older country humor of earlier recordings by groups like the Skillet Lickers and mixed it into their performances. Paley left the group in 1962 and was replaced by Tracy Schwarz (1938–), who is featured on this recording.

The group learned the song from the 1927 Bristol, Tennessee, recordings of J.P. Nestor—the famous “Bristol Sessions,” which were responsible for the discovery of both the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers. The song was first recorded by Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett in 1924 (Meade 2002, 517).

Meade, 517; *Al Hopkins and His Buckle Busters* (Brunswick 59000 [LP]); J.P. Nestor (CMF 011 [CD]); *Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett* (Document 8057 [CD]).

### **12. SNOWBIRD Ross Brown**

Ross Brown, fiddle; Howard Cunningham, guitar  
(from *Folk Vision and Voices: Traditional Music & Song in Northern Georgia, Vol. 1* Folkways 34161, 1984; recorded 1983)

Ross Brown (1909–2001), a many-time fiddle contest champion, was from the north Georgia town of Hiawassee and was influenced by the north Georgia style of string band music popularized by the Skillet Lickers. Brown made a recording for Art Rosenbaum with Lawrence (b. 1916) and Vaughan Elder (b. 1918), with whom he had been playing since the 1930s. This was subsequently released by Flyright Records. Brown spent his life as a peach farmer and nursery man, performing with the Elders for local square dances. He is joined here by his brother-in-law, Howard Cunningham.

These recordings come from Rosenbaum’s “Folk Vision and Voices” fieldwork project in north Georgia.

### **13. AIN’T GONNA RAIN NO MORE Hoyt Ming with the Pep Steppers**

Hoyt Ming, fiddle; Rozelle Ming, mandolin; Hoyt Ming Jr., or Wayne Dawkins, bass guitar; James Alford, guitar  
(from the Festival of American Folklife; archive reel FP-1974-RR-0055, recorded 7 July 1974)

The Pep Steppers, from Tupelo, were a family band who played at dances in the Mississippi area. The group’s name refers to the energetic foot stomping of Rozelle Ming, which can be heard on their recordings. Rozelle felt that the stomping got in the way of the sound, but producer Ralph Peer encouraged its inclusion (Russell 1976, 13). The band had auditioned for Peer at a local drug store and eventually recorded four songs for him.

Fiddler Hoyt Ming (1902–1985) was erroneously listed as Floyd on the original release. Hoyt Ming worked most of his life as a potato farmer, playing local fairs and dances with the family band. By 1957 he had given up playing. However, interest generated by the *Anthology* eventually led to the re-formation of the band. The Mings played the National Folk Festival in 1973 and were part of a Mississippi contingent at the 1974 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife. The group also made an appearance in the film, *Ode to Billy Joe*.

“Ain’t Gonna Rain No More” was the most popular song written by Wendell Hall. Hall, “The Red Headed Music Maker,” was a composer,



singer, and ukulele player. He was involved in radio in the 1920s and 1930s.

Meade, 502.

#### **14. CACKLIN' HEN** Roy Pope with the Carolina Homeboys

Roy Pope, fiddle; Skip Henry, banjo; Alfred Thomas, guitar  
(also known as “Hen Cackle,” “The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster Crowed”; from *Hand Me Down Music: Old Songs, Old Friends* Folkways 34151, 1979; recorded 1979)

In the late 1970s, Karen G. Helms made a number of recordings in Union County, which is located in the North Carolina Piedmont, between the tidewater area near the ocean and the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. She recorded local musicians, and many of these recordings subsequently were released by Folkways as a two-LP series.

“Cacklin’ Hen” is a frequently played fiddle tune, one of a number where the instrument imitates the sound of a chicken. A version of “Cacklin’ Hen” was one of the first country records ever released (John Carson’s “Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster Is Going to Crow”) in 1923. The Carolina Homeboys were a string band from Marshville, North Carolina, made up of farmer-businessman Roy Pope (1912–1996),

Alfred Thomas, and Skip Henry (Helms, notes to FW 34151, 1979).

Meade, 771; *John Carson* (Rounder 1003); *Earl Johnson and His Dixie Entertainers* (County 503).

#### **15. OLD JOE** Johnny Warren with Nashville Grass

Johnny Warren, fiddle; Kenny Ingram, banjo  
(from *China Grove, My Hometown* Folkways 31095, 1983)

In 1969, the legendary bluegrass band Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, and the Foggy Mountain Boys went their separate ways. Earl and his sons became the nucleus of the Earl Scruggs Revue, moving in more of a rock direction, with drums and electric guitars, although maintaining a bluegrass influence. Lester, on the other hand, stuck to the roots of the music and formed Lester Flatt and the Nashville Grass. By 1979, Curly Seckler was about to take over a prime position in the band. He had been a member of the Foggy Mountain Boys in the 1950s, and, when Lester Flatt’s health began to fail, he asked Seckler to help out, Seckler eventually becoming band leader (Lee Michael Demsey, notes to SFW CD 40092). This recording features a duet by two band members and highlights fiddler Johnny Warren.

Similar versions of this song were recorded by



Dr. Humphrey Bates and His Possum Hunters (1928) and Sid Harkreader (1928). Here the song gets a full bluegrass treatment.

Meade, 762; *Dr. Humphrey Bates* (Rounder 1033 [LP]); *Sid Harkreader* (County 3521 [CD]), Yazoo 2029 [CD]).

### 16. OLD MAN BELOW Gaither Carlton

Gaither Carlton, fiddle and vocal  
(from *The Watson Family* SFW CD 40012, 1990)

For information about Gaither Carlton see track 5.

### 17. UNNAMED TUNE John W. Summers

John W. Summers, fiddle  
(from *Fine Times at Our House: Indiana Ballads, Fiddle Tunes, Songs* Folkways 3809, 1964; recorded 1964)

Born in Indiana, John W. “Dick” Summers (1887–1970) was a renowned Midwestern violinist and violin maker. He learned many of the old fiddle tunes from his family and neighbors. Bob Carlin produced a fine recording of Summers’s work, *Indiana Fiddler*, in 1984.

This recording comes from an album of old-time music from Indiana recorded by Art Rosenbaum.

### 18. BEAUMONT RAG David and Billie Ray Johnson

David Johnson, fiddle, banjo, mandolin, bass; Billie Ray Johnson, guitar  
(from *David and Billie Ray Johnson: Bluegrass Folkways* 31056, 1983)

Multi-instrumentalist David Johnson (1954–) recorded three albums for Folkways in the 1980s, one solo banjo record and two with his father, Billie Ray. He grew up in Wilkes County, North Carolina, in a musical family, his parents and uncles appearing on live radio. As a youth he began to play banjo and then eventually fiddle, mandolin, bass, autoharp, drums, and pedal steel guitar. From age twelve, Johnson played in professional bands. Starting in the 1970s he also became involved in studio work.

In recent years Johnson has been performing Southern gospel music in North Carolina and working at a recording studio. More information can be found at [www.davesworldofmusic.homestead.com](http://www.davesworldofmusic.homestead.com).

The song was first recorded by Smith’s Garage Fiddle Band in December 1928 in Dallas. It has since become a standard in both Western swing music and bluegrass. One of the most influential versions was by Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys.

Meade, 869; *Smith’s Garage Fiddle Band* (County 517 [LP]).

### 19. RICHMOND BLUES Fred Price with Clint Howard

Fred Price, fiddle; Clint Howard, guitar and vocal  
(from *The Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley 1960–1962* Folkways 2355, 1961/ SFW CD 40029/30, 1994)

This is a string band tune originally recorded as “All Night Long.” Various versions were recorded in the early days of commercial discs by Roba Stanley, Frank Hutchison, Earl Johnson, Burnett and Rutherford, and others (Meade 2002, 548). Burnett and Rutherford’s version is quite similar to the one performed here. Fred Price learned the piece from Clarence Ashley, who had recorded it as “Baby, All Night Long” with Gwen Foster in November 1931 (Rinzler, notes to SFW CD 40029).

Ralph Rinzler had taken a group on the road consisting of Clarence Ashley, Doc Watson (see track 7), and Watson’s North Carolina neighbors Fred Price and Clint Howard.

Meade, 548; *Burnett and Rutherford* (County 504 [LP]); *Earl Johnson and His Dixie Entertainers* (Old Timey 101 [LP]).

### 20. MISSISSIPPI SAWYER Wade Ward

Wade Ward, fiddle  
(from *The Music of Roscoe Holcomb and Wade Ward* Folkways 2363, 1962; recorded 1961)

Wade Ward (1892–1971) was a beloved member of the musical family around the Galax–Hillsville, Virginia, area throughout his long life. Ward, along with his older brother Crockett, his nephew Fields, and neighbor Eck Dunford, were members of the important Galax string band, the Bogtrotters, renowned in the area in the 1930s and 1940s. Alan Lomax recorded them for the Library of Congress in 1937.

Based on the Bogtrotters’ recordings, young folklorists began to seek out the members of the band in the 1950s. A farmer, Wade Ward was a frequent participant at regional festivals and fiddlers’ contests for years. Both John Cohen and Eric Davidson recorded Ward for Folkways. Young music enthusiasts traveled to Galax to visit and learn from Wade Ward.

“Mississippi Sawyer” is another frequently played old-time fiddle tune. Many of Ward’s Virginia neighbors such as Ernest Stoneman, Henry Whitter, and Earl Johnson recorded the piece during the 1920s. Gus Meade turned up a published version from as far back as 1839 (Meade 2002, 721).

Meade, 721.

**21. BILL CHEATHAM** Buddy Pendleton with the Stony Mountain Boys

Buddy Pendleton, fiddle; Ted Lundy, banjo  
(from *Galax, Virginia: Old Fiddler's Convention Folkways* 2435, 1964; recorded 1961–1963)

This great fiddle tune was recorded at the Galax Old Fiddler's Convention. The Stony Mountain Boys were a string band from Stuart, Virginia, featuring fiddler Buddy Pendleton, who was a winner of the fiddle competition at Galax. Pendleton later moved briefly to New York and played and recorded with the Greenbriar Boys.

Meade, 777; Eck Robertson as part of the song "Brilliancy" (SFW CD 40090).

**22. RED BIRD** Clark Kessinger

Clark Kessinger, fiddle; Gene Meade, guitar; Wayne Hauser, banjo  
(from *Clark Kessinger, Fiddler: Old-Time Country Music Folkways* 2336, 1966)

For more information on Clark Kessinger see track 7.

In his notes to *Clark Kessinger, Fiddler* (FW 2336), Ken Davidson observes that Kessinger's "Red Bird" is quite similar to Uncle Jimmy Thompson's recording of "Billy Wilson." Thompson (1848–1931) was a performer

who appeared on WSM radio in Nashville and was the first old-time musician to do so. The popular response to his performance was so great that WSM decided to start a weekly program dedicated to old-time music—hence the creation of the Grand Ole Opry. Thompson's performances were widely heard, and this possibly could be the source for "Red Bird."

"Billy Wilson" by Uncle Jimmy Thompson  
(County 3522 [(CD)]).

**23. JOHNSON BOYS** Caleb Finch with the Iron Mountain String Band

Caleb Finch, fiddle; Eric Davidson, banjo and vocal; Peggy Haine, guitar and vocal  
(from *An Old Time Southern Mountain String Band Folkways* 2473, 1973)

The Iron Mountain String Band has been playing old-time music for forty years. The core of the group has been Eric Davidson (1937– ) and Caleb Finch on banjo and fiddle, respectively. Davidson and Finch and their associates began traveling to the southern Appalachians to seek out the older old-time string band musicians from whom they could learn (Davidson, notes to FW 2477). The recordings they made of these musicians led to numerous Folkways releases.

Founded in New York City, the group was influenced by the music of the legendary Grayson



County Bogtrotters, the greatest of the Galax, Virginia, string bands in the 1930s (Davidson, notes to FW 2477). They were able to play and study with Wade and Fields Ward, two of the original members of the Bogtrotters.

Working as biologists in southern California, Finch and Davidson still have the group together and recorded a new album in 2003. The vocals here are handled by group members Eric Davidson and Peggy Haine.

Davidson commented, "I got the lyrics if I recall from Vester Jones. Many people my colleagues and I recorded knew that song, and

it was in fact among the more widely preserved Civil War songs still to be found in Grayson and Carroll counties in the '50s and '60s. It was common heritage, probably because clawhammer banjo and fiddle players enjoyed it so much" (personal communication, 2006).

Gus Meade identifies the song as an adaptation of the old ballad "Doran's Ass," dating from around 1860 (Meade 2002, 127).

Meade, 127; *Grant Brothers and Their Music* (County 3502 [CD]).

## 24. SALLY GOODIN' Eck Robertson

Eck Robertson, fiddle

(from *There Is No Eye: Music for Photographs* SFW CD 40091, 2001)

Alexander “Eck” Robertson (1887–1975) was born in Delaney, Arkansas. It was Robertson’s 1922 recording of “Sally Goodin” that is considered the first commercial recording of traditional American country music. In 1923, he played the song over the radio, thereby becoming the first artist to advertise his recording on the new medium (Malone 1985, 35). When Robertson and his frequent musical partner, Civil War veteran Henry Gilliland, appeared in New York during the 1922 recording session, they were dressed as they frequently performed, in a cowboy outfit and Civil War uniform respectively. This undoubtedly was a rather odd sight in New York City at the time (John Cohen, *Sing Out!* 14 [2] 1964, 55). Robertson toured with traveling medicine shows from 1903 to 1906 and also worked at one time supplying the music for silent movie houses.

He spent most all of his life living in Amarillo, Texas, and participated in numerous fiddle contests from the 1930s to the 1960s; he made his living as a piano tuner. He was rediscovered in the early '60s playing these contests and was interviewed by the members of the folk group, the New Lost City Ramblers, who were aware of Robertson through the *Anthology*. Eck appeared

at a number of folk festivals during his remaining years, including the 1964 UCLA Folk Festival and the 1965 Newport Festival. He died in 1975. His grave bears the inscription, “World’s Champion Fiddler.”

This piece comes from a collection of recordings made by John Cohen.

Meade, 766; *Eck Robertson* (County 3515 [CD]).

## 25. UNNAMED TUNE Tony Alderman

Tony Alderman, fiddle

(from the Smithsonian Folklife Festival archival recording FP-1969-RR-0043; recorded 4 July 1969)

Elvis “Tony” Alderman (1900–1983) was a Galax barber and fiddler, and was a member of one of the most influential string bands of the 1920s, The Hillbillies (later Al Hopkins and the Buckle Busters). When producer Ralph Peer was attempting to find a name for the group, he got this response from Al Hopkins: “Call us anything you want, we’re just a bunch of old hillbillies from North Carolina and Virginia” (Malone 1985, 40). In addition to being the name of the band, “hillbilly” became the marketing term applied to all of the country records that were released for a number of years. The Hillbillies were the first string band to play New York, the first to perform for a president (Coolidge), and

the first to appear in a movie (Malone 1985, 40).

A fan of old-time music, Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife director Ralph Rinzler brought a number of the important string band musicians from the early days of commercial recording to the Festival in its first years. This recording was made on the 4th of July in 1969.

## 26. FINE TIMES AT OUR HOUSE

John W. Summers

John W. Summers, fiddle

(from *Fine Times at Our House: Indiana Ballads, Fiddle Tunes, Songs* Folkways 3809, 1964; recorded 1963)

For information about John W. Summers see track 17.

## 27. YEW PINEY MOUNTAIN Melvin Wine

Melvin Wine, fiddle; Pat Shields, guitar

(from Smithsonian Folklife Festival archival recording FP-1976-RR-0279, recorded 7 July 1976)

Melvin Wine (1909–2003), of Copen, West Virginia, was one of the most sought-after fiddlers of his time. Wine performed with his brother Clarence (a banjo and guitar player as well as a singer) when they were young. He had begun playing when he was nine years old and continued until the work required to feed ten children consumed his time and took him

away from fiddling. Many years later, when reprimanding a young granddaughter in the usual ways failed to succeed, Melvin thought that maybe playing a fiddle tune would do the trick. It did. From then on Wine played the fiddle to give people pleasure through music.

The tune “Yew Piney Mountain” quite possibly is one of the most common fiddle tunes in West Virginia. But there are no two versions alike. Although many versions are on the slower side, Wine’s version was upbeat and lively. Wine liked to use the tune to get dancers out on the dance floor.

Pat Shields (from Bearpaw, West Virginia) was born in Alton, Illinois, and eventually his family settled in Athens, Georgia. Pat taught folklore for thirty years, but has since moved on and is now a musician, potter, and storyteller. Shields plays guitar with Wine on this track, but he is also a respected mandolin player.



**28. DARLING COREY** Greg Hooven with the Greg Hooven String Band

Greg Hooven, fiddle; Heidi Sanders Hooven, bass; Judy Chaudet, banjo; Bill Giltinan, guitar  
(from *A Tribute to the Anthology of American Folk Music Concerts*, October 1997, archive CD #264)

For more information on Greg Hooven see track 6.

“Darling Corey” is another folk song standard that Hooven learned growing up. The arrangement he uses here is a staple of the Folk Song Revival and the bluegrass world. It tells of the fate of Corey, guarding her moonshine still against revenue officers.

Meade, 526.

**29. BLACKBERRY BLOSSOM** Charlie Higgins with the Buck Mountain Band

Charlie Higgins, fiddle; Wade Ward, banjo; Dale Poe, guitar  
(from *Galax, Virginia: Old Fiddler's Convention Folkways* 2435, 1964)

This is a recording from the legendary *Galax Old Fiddler's Convention* recording released by Folkways in 1964 and made by Lisa Chiera. “Uncle” Charlie Higgins (1878–1967) was the fiddler in the Buck Mountain Band, which also



included Wade Ward and Dale Poe. According to the original liner notes, as of 1964, Higgins had attended every Galax fiddler's contest and carried off first prize in fiddling many times (notes to FW 2435).

The tune is best known in northeastern Kentucky, where it is reputed to have originated from the whistling of General James Garfield (later U.S. president) while he was stationed on the Big Sandy during the Civil War (Meade 2002, 710).

Meade, 710; *Burnett and Rutherford* (Document 8025 [CD]).

**30. KENTUCKY WALTZ** David and Billie Ray Johnson

David Johnson, fiddle, banjo, mandolin, harmony fiddle; Billie Ray Johnson, guitar  
(from *David and Billie Ray Johnson: Bluegrass Folkways* 31056, 1983)

For information on David Johnson see track 18. Here Johnson performs Bill Monroe's “Kentucky Waltz.”

*Bill Monroe* (MCA 10082 [CD]).

**31. LEE HIGHWAY BLUES** Fred Price with Clint Howard and Doc Watson

Fred Price, fiddle; Clint Howard, guitar; Doc Watson, guitar  
(from *The Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley 1960-1962 Folkways* 2359, 1963/ SFW CD 40029/30, 1994; recorded April 1962)

For more information on the musicians see track 19.

Ralph Rinzler remembered that “this was one of Fred's favorite show pieces and he performed it nightly to Doc's wonderful accompaniment. It was written by blind fiddler G. B. Grayson, who Price learned it from” (Rinzler, notes to SFW 40029, 1994).

Meade, 885; “Going Down Lee Highway” by Grayson and Whitter (County 3517 [CD]).



**32. PINEY WOODS GAL** Tommy Jarrell with Frank Bode and Paul Brown

Tommy Jarrell, fiddle; Frank Bode, guitar; Paul Brown, banjo  
(from *Been Riding with Old Mosby Folkways* 31109, 1986; recorded 1984)

For more information on Jarrell and Bode see track 2.

This tune, one of Tommy Jarrell's favorites, is a piece he learned in the 1920s while playing with Frank Jenkins and Bryce Goodson (Ellen Victoria and Eric Davidson, notes to FW 31109).

**33. JENNY ON THE RAILROAD** Tracy Schwarz and Mike Seeger with the New Lost City Ramblers

Tracy Schwarz, fiddle; Mike Seeger, fiddle  
(from *String Band Instrumentals: The New Lost City Ramblers* Folkways 2492, 1951)

For more information about the New Lost City Ramblers see track 11.

This is another very old tune, appearing in Knauff's ca. 1839 collection of fiddle tunes, *Virginia Reels*, and listed under the title "Captain Crockett" (Meade 2002, 707). The group learned the song from the recording of the Carter Brothers and Son (Vocalion 5297).

Meade, 707; *Carter Brothers and Son* (County 3513 [CD]).



**34. BILLY IN THE LOWGROUND** Buddy Griffin with Red Allen and the Kentuckians

Buddy Griffin, fiddle; Greg Allen, banjo; Dorsey Harvey, Jr., mandolin; Red Hartley, bass; Harley Allen, Jr., lead guitar  
(from *Live and Let Live* Folkways 31065, 1979; recorded 1978)

Red Allen (1930–1993) was an important bluegrass musician and vocalist who for many years led the Kentuckians. At the time of this recording, the membership of the Kentuckians consisted of Red and his sons, Harley, Jr., and Greg, with Buddy Griffin, Dorsey Harvey, and Red Hartley. Griffin is featured on this recording.

Buddy Griffin is from Sutton, West Virginia, and was the featured fiddler in the WWVA Jamboree USA in Wheeling. A professional musician for over thirty-five years, he has also played with Bill Monroe, Maybelle Carter, Mac Wiseman, the Goins Brothers, and Jim and Jesse. He had a stint of sixteen years fiddling in Branson, Missouri. Griffin currently teaches strings at Glenville State College in West Virginia.

This is one of the most frequently played of the old-time fiddle tunes with hundreds of recorded versions.

Meade, 720; *Eck Robertson* (County 202 [LP]).

**35. FISHER'S HORNPIPE** David and Billie Ray Johnson

David Johnson, fiddle, banjo, mandolin, bass; Billie Ray Johnson, guitar  
(from *David and Billie Ray Johnson: Bluegrass* Folkways 31056, 1983)

For more information on David Johnson see track 18.

"Fisher's Hornpipe" was written and first published in 1780 by James A. Fishar, the Ballet Master at the Royal Theatre in Covent Garden, London. It became a well-known piece in the Southern mountains and one of the most popular hornpipes played there ([www.ceolas.org/tunes/fc](http://www.ceolas.org/tunes/fc)). It was recorded as early as 1912 on an Edison cylinder by Charles D'Almaine (Meade 2002, 743).

Meade, 743.

**36. TROMBONE RAG** Clark Kessinger

Clark Kessinger, fiddle; Gene Meade, guitar; Dene Parker, banjo  
(from *Clark Kessinger, Fiddle: Live at Union Grove* Folkways 2337, 1976; recorded 1968)

For information on Clark Kessinger see track 7.

**37. BONAPARTE'S RETREAT** Mike Seeger

Mike Seeger, fiddle  
(from *Mike Seeger: Old Time Country Music* Folkways 2325, 1962; recorded 1962)

In 1962, Mike Seeger recorded an album of old-time music where he played all the instruments. New Lost City Ramblers bandmate Tracy Schwarz did the recording. As a solo effort separate from the Ramblers, Seeger was able to showcase many of the songs he had learned from older recordings.

"Bonaparte's Retreat" is a familiar fiddle tune also known as "Bonaparte Crossing the Alps." Seeger learned it from a recording by A.A. Gray (Okeh 40110) made in August 1924, the first recording of the tune.

Meade, 710.

**38. CARROLL COUNTY BLUES** Gordon Tanner with Joe Miller and John Patterson

Gordon Tanner, fiddle; Joe Miller, guitar; John Patterson, banjo  
(from *Down Yonder: Old-Time String Band Music from Georgia* Folkways 31089, 1982; recorded 1979)

"Carroll County Blues" is a string band classic from the recordings of Narmour and Smith, a string band with whom Mississippi John Hurt occasionally played, and has become a standard in

old-time music. It was so popular that Narmour and Smith recorded it in three separate versions.

The Dacula, Georgia, Skillet Lickers have been one of the great Georgia string bands for eighty years and have gone through various generations of the Tanner family. The original band of Gid Tanner (1885–1962) and the Skillet Lickers were one of the most popular country string bands of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1934, the Skillet Lickers went into the studio where they recorded their last hit song, “Down Yonder,” now joined by Gid’s young son, Gordon.

Gordon Tanner (1916–1982) led the group for many years after his father’s death. His Georgia neighbors, Joe Miller and Uncle John Patterson, accompany him here. The group continues today with Gordon’s son Phil and grandson Russ leading the band.

Mead, 882; *Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson* (SFW CD 40029); *Narmour and Smith* (County 3514 [CD]).



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For more information visit the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Smithsonian, [www.rinzlerarchives@si.edu](http://www.rinzlerarchives@si.edu).

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