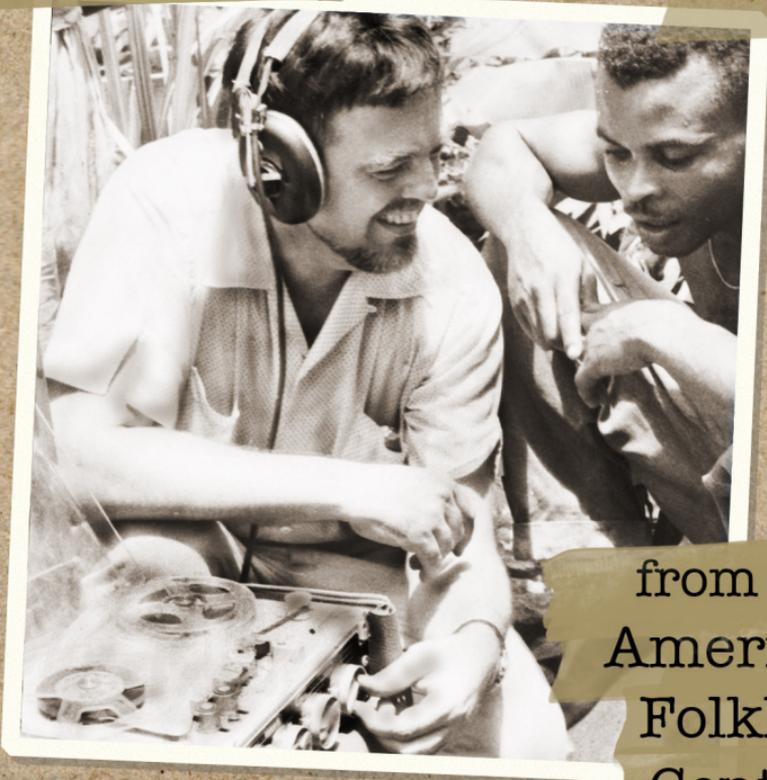


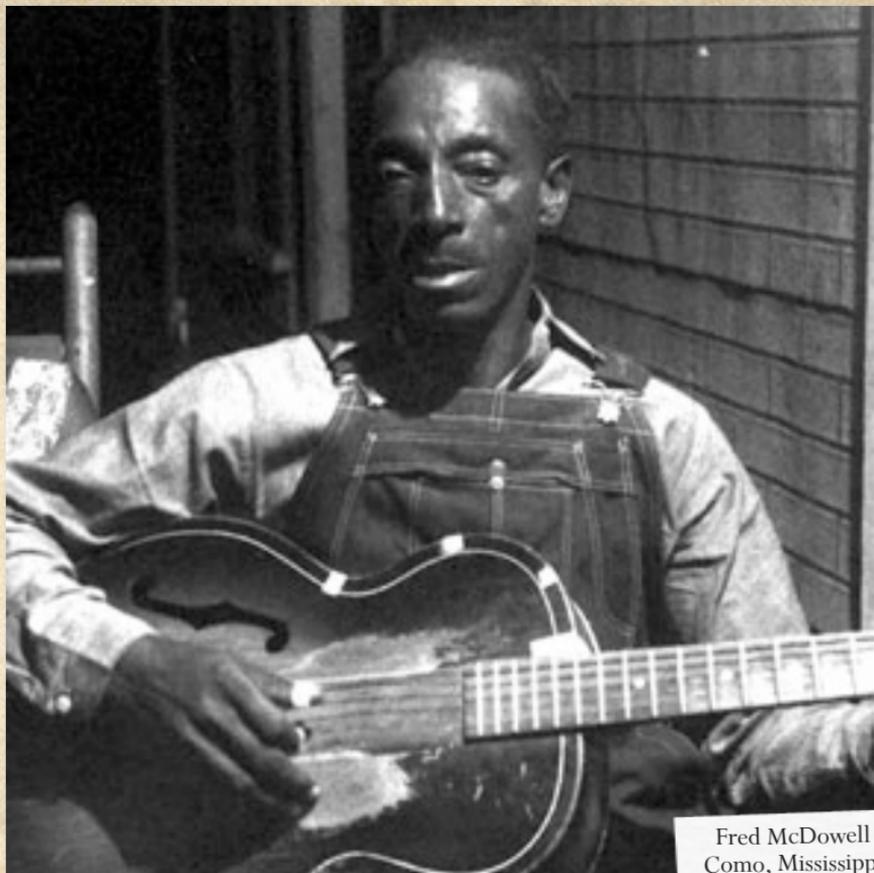
The Alan Lomax Collection



from the
American
Folklife
Center

Alan Lomax spent his life in transit, documenting folk music from across the United States, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, North Africa, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern Caribbean. Featured here are sixteen selections from Lomax's U.S and international field-recording collections — including four previously unreleased songs and one previously unreleased version — from his collections at the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center, recorded between 1947 and 1982. Introduced by a paean to America's greatest folk hero, John Henry, and concluding with one of the country's most enduring lullabies, the compilation combines ballads, blues, dance tunes, and sacred songs from around the U.S. with a Gaelic ode, Galician *alborada* (dawn song), Genoan chorale, Grenadan Shango ritual, Trinidadian calypso, and the *ashug* bardic music of Azerbaijan. Here is a view of the Lomax collection in all of its breadth, joy, and dignity.

In 2004 the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress acquired the original recordings and photographs, library, manuscripts, and research materials that had been assembled by Alan Lomax over the course of six decades, uniting them with the recordings made by Alan and his father, John A. Lomax, for the Library from 1933 to 1942.



Fred McDowell
Como, Mississippi
September 1959

1. **John Henry**

“Bama” (W.D. Stewart), “22” (Benny Will Richardson), and prisoners

Recorded at Parchman Farm (Mississippi State Penitentiary). Late November / early December, 1947.

“Bama” was one of the most prolific prison singers, with the exception of Lead Belly, that Alan Lomax ever encountered. He recorded not only work songs and field hollers, but also unaccompanied blues ballads, tall-tales, and toasts. He had been in Parchman for 18 years when Lomax met him in 1947; he was considered the pen’s “star singer.” He ingratiated himself to (and subsequently kept peace with) the Farm’s guards by keeping up a steady stream of clowning and “uncle-Tomming,” as he referred to it, but the intensity of his work-song performances — exemplified by his leading of the ubiquitous “John Henry” in its Parchman iteration — reveals far deeper sides of his personality and artistry.

2. Nottamun Town

Jean Ritchie

Recorded in New York City. May 5, 1949.

Born in the tiny mountain settlement of Viper, Kentucky, Jean Ritchie would arguably become America's foremost exponent of traditional Appalachian balladry. Working at the Henry Street Settlement School in New York City, she was discovered by Mitch Miller as she strummed a dulcimer at a midtown music shop; a year later she was performing on WNYC radio with leading folk revivalists like Oscar Brand and the Weavers. Lomax recorded her for both the Library of Congress in the late '40s and at his Third Street apartment in New York in 1949 and 1950. Jean's version of "Nottamun Town" was a favorite of the Ritchie children back in Viper; its tune was famously adapted later by Bob Dylan for his "Masters of War."

3. Eilean Mo Chridh (Isle of My Heart)

John Carlin

Recorded in Earsary, Barra, Scotland. Late June, 1951.

Lomax recorded this adolescent singer on the Isle of Barra, in Scotland's Outer Hebrides. The song dates from World War I, when

it was composed in the trenches by a young soldier named John Maclean as an ode to his native Skye. It has since become a kind of unofficial anthem of the Gaelic-speaking Western Isles. Carlin told Lomax before this performance that he had been studying the language for two years.

4. Mental pictures (interview)

Texas Gladden

Recorded in New York City. 1946.

Alan Lomax considered Texas Gladden one of the three best ballad singers he ever recorded (the others being Almeda Riddle of Arkansas and Scotland's Jeannie Robertson). He wasn't alone in admiring her — several folklorists had collected her songs in the 1930s, and, two years after hearing her sing at the White Top (Va.) Festival in 1933, Eleanor Roosevelt invited Texas and her brother Hobart Smith to perform at the White House. In 1946, Alan recorded several hours of songs, stories, and interviews with the siblings at Decca Records in New York City; this interview, about the “mental pictures” she keeps of the many hundreds of ballads in her repertoire, was recorded then. Come the folk revival of the 1960s, Ms. Gladden was a sought-after performer, but she was never much inclined to travel for the concerts

the revivalists were putting on. Besides, when Lomax wondered why she'd never made much "professional use" of her singing, she replied that she'd "been too busy raising babies! When you bring up nine, you have your hands full. All I could sing was lullabies."

5. She Moved Through the Fair

Margaret Barry

Recorded in London. November 1, 1953.

The indefatigable Traveller singer Margaret Barry spent years tramping the roads of County Cork and the streets of Cork City, traveling by bike to busk with her banjo at football matches, county fairs, and in cinema queues. Lomax met her at the Dundalk Fair, Co. Louth, in 1951, where he was startled to find her singing "Goodnight Irene" to the fairgoers; her first recordings were made a year later by Lomax's collaborator Peter Kennedy. She soon thereafter moved to London to take advantage of the thriving Irish music scene in the Camden Town pubs, where she became a fixture for years with her fiddler companion Michael Gorman (to whom she was introduced by Lomax). Alan recorded her at his flat in Camden in a 1953 session, from whence this performance comes, and again in 1957.

6. Alborada De Vigo

José Maria Rodriguez

Recorded in Faramontaos, Galicia, Spain. November 27, 1952.

José Maria Rodriguez was an itinerant farm laborer, knife grinder, and *capador* (pig castrator) who announced his arrival in town with this melody. Rodriguez played the *alborada* — “dawn song” — on an eight-hole panpipe carved from a single piece of wood and bearing a horse-head-shaped handle. The tune was an inspiration to Gil Evans and Miles Davis, whose “The Pan Piper” on the “Sketches of Spain” album bears echoes of Rodriguez’s *alborada*.

7. La Partenza

Trallaleri of Genoa

Recorded at the “Longshoreman Inn,” Genoa, Italy. October 15, 1954.

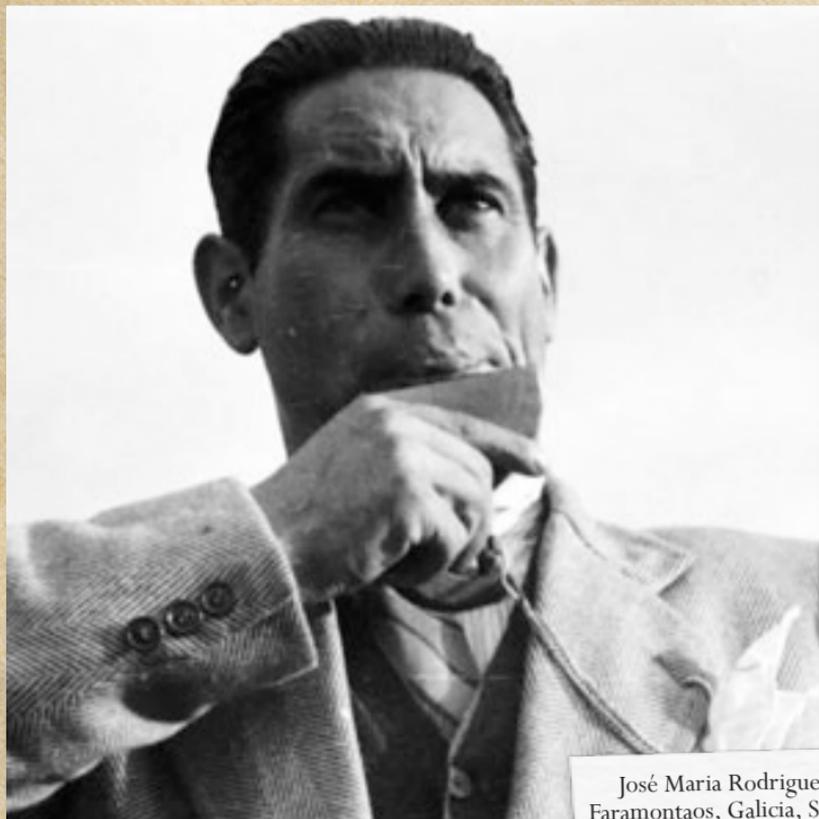
The *trallaleri* sing in five parts: bass, baritone, tenor, and falsetto with *chitarra* — the impersonation of a guitar — in the middle. Their music is an offshoot of an ancient Ligurian polyphonic tradition that thrived along the Genoa’s waterfront, where the longshoremen and other dock workers, organized into *squadre*, would engage each other in singing bouts. This particular *squadra* has never been identified, but

their music, and specifically this piece, made the *trallalero* famous when it was first broadcast over BBC radio in the mid 1950s.

8. When the Train Comes Along

Rosalie (Rosa Lee) Hill with Sidney Carter and Fred McDowell
Recorded in Como, Mississippi. September 25, 1959.

Born in Rossville, Tennessee, around 1905, Fred McDowell was farming cotton in the Mississippi Hill Country hamlet of Como when he heard there was a man going around town making tape recordings. McDowell turned up after his day in the field, still in his overalls, with a guitar, and, as soon as Fred began to play, Lomax realized he was in the presence of a master musician. The farmer ultimately went on to make a dozen albums, tour extensively, and have his “You Got to Move” covered by the Rolling Stones. When he died in 1972, he was recognized as one of the most influential, individual, and idiosyncratic bluesmen ever recorded. Rosalie Hill and Sidney Carter were both daughters of the Hill Country’s long-time musical patriarch, Sid Hemphill, whom Lomax first recorded in 1942. Sid taught Rosalie to play the guitar when she was six; by the time she was ten she was playing dances with him. Sidney was a popular singer of both sacred



José María Rodríguez
Faramontaos, Galicia, Spain
November 1952

and secular songs. Children especially enjoyed her large repertoire of lullabies.

9. Trials, Troubles, Tribulations

E.C. Ball

Recorded in Rugby, Virginia. August 30, 1959.

A school-bus driver and a service-station owner based in Rugby, Virginia, Estil Cortez Ball was also a renowned guitarist and country gospel composer. First recorded by Alan Lomax's father John A. Lomax in 1937, Ball had a huge repertoire that encompassed traditional ballads, play-party songs, ragtime guitar instrumentals, blues, and hundreds of sacred pieces. With his wife Orna and their Friendly Gospel Singers, Ball performed for many years at churches and on Sunday-morning radio broadcasts in Southwestern Virginia and Northwestern North Carolina. His most famous composition, entitled "Tribulations" (and popularly known as "Trials, Troubles, Tribulations"), was first recorded by Lomax in 1959. It has since been recorded by the likes of Geoff Muldaur and Andrew Bird. E.C. Ball died in 1978.

10. Joe Turner

Ed Young & Hobart Smith

Recorded in Williamsburg, Virginia. April 28, 1960.

In 1960 Lomax was engaged by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation to provide music to a film entitled *Music of Williamsburg*. The aim was to recreate the sound of African American music as it might have been heard in Colonial Williamsburg, and, according to a press release from the Foundation, “to portray the important contributions of the Negro race to the nation’s heritage.” Lomax assembled a novel cast, with the Georgia Sea Island Singers of St. Simons Island as the vocal group at the ensemble’s core. Ed Young, leader of the Young brothers’ fife-and-drum band from Como, Mississippi, came north to provide the necessary fife-blowing. Lomax had recorded them in September 1959; six years later Ed and his brother Lonnie’s band would appear at the Newport Folk Festival, rechristened as the Southern Fife and Drum Corps. The multi-instrumentalist Hobart Smith traveled east from Saltville, Virginia, in the Blue Ridge Mountains, with his four-string banjo and a clawhammer technique learned, in part, from an African American. Lomax had first recorded Smith in 1946 and again in 1959. Hobart’s influence would be heard soon after in the burgeoning urban folk revival, where his version of “Railroad Bill” was one of the most



E.C. Ball and his wife Orna
Rugby, Virginia
August 1959

popular songs in circulation. After filming was completed, Lomax wrote, the “musicians stayed on for what turned out to be a day of extraordinary music-making and musical cross-fertilization.” “Joe Turner” was recorded then.

11. The Old Tar River

John Davis & the Georgia Sea Island Singers

Recorded in St. Simons, Georgia. April 11, 1960.

Alan Lomax first visited the Georgia Sea Island of St. Simons in June of 1935 with folklorist Mary Elizabeth Barnicle and author Zora Neale Hurston. There they met the Spiritual Singers of Coastal Georgia, a remarkable ensemble organized by Lydia Parrish (wife of painter Maxfield Parrish) and devoted to preserving the native spirituals, ring-plays, and game songs of the island, with their deep antebellum roots. Two of the group’s leaders were fisherman Henry Morrison and Big John Davis, a former sailor and stevedore and a singer with a large repertoire of chanties, roustabout songs, slavery-era shouts, and religious material. Lomax recalled that when he “returned twenty-five years later [in 1959] with a stereo rig adequate to record this multipart music, I was greeted as an old friend.” When he included the

singers of St. Simons on two LPs in the 1960s, Lomax renamed them the Georgia Sea Island Singers, and they went on to make dozens of concert appearances in the 1960s — at the Newport Folk Festival, the Montreal World's Fair, the Poor People's March on Washington, and Jimmy Carter's inauguration.

12. È-wè, È-wè-lo, Ogoun Bayamba

Emmanuelle Babsy McQueen and Shango group

Recorded in Levera, Grenada. August 6, 1962.

Babsy McQueen leads a ritual performance of Grenadian Shango, or African Work, as it's known locally — one of the rarer and least known expressions of the West African Yoruba diaspora. Drumming invokes the *orishas* (deities) for the Shango possession ceremonies; this particular song is dedicated to Ogoun, patron of warriors and metal-smiths.

Ed Young (left) and Hobart Smith
Williamsburg, Virginia
April 1960



13. Señorita Panchita

The Growling Tiger (Neville Marcano)

Recorded in Port Of Spain, Trinidad. August 17, 1962.

The Growling Tiger was a popular Calypsonian from the 1930s “Golden Era” of the genre, which also featured Lord Beginner, Lord Pretender, and Attila the Hun. A bantamweight boxer who won the Trinidadian belt in 1929, Marcano cut his first sides in New York in 1935 for the Decca label. When Lomax undertook his landmark 1962 Eastern Caribbean field-recording trip, he visited Marcano at his home in Port Of Spain and made a number of recordings of him there. They met again in 1966 when Marcano was invited to perform at the Newport Folk Festival. He died in 1993.

14. Jelili (Lelili)

Akbar Jaffarov & Museyib Abbasov

Likely recorded at Radio Moscow, Russia. August 13, 1964.

Alan Lomax visited the Soviet Union in 1964 to attend the International Anthropological and Ethnological Congress in Moscow and to collect recordings for his research on comparative folk-song style. Given the era and his nationality, he wasn't free to travel at will

searching for singers, but his hosts did arrange performances by a number of professional musicians representing regional folk traditions. Akbar Jaffarov and Museyib Abbasov were both “Merited Artists” of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Jaffarov was well-known singer of *ashug* epic poetry, who accompanies himself here on the *saz*; Abbasov played the double-reed flute known as the Azeri *balaban* (Persian, *ney*; Armenian, *duduk*). They hailed from the Tovuz region of Western Azerbaijan.

15. Just Because

John “Doodle” Thrower & Golden River Grass

Recorded in Dahlonega, Georgia. September 11, 1982.

When not working at his Tallapoosa auto garage, watching Georgia Bulldogs football, or hunting rabbits with hounds and a tally-ho stick, Doodle was blowing harmonica and singing as the charismatic and mischievous front-man of West Georgia’s Golden River Grass. The band, whom Lomax filmed at a bluegrass festival at Dahlonega’s Mountain Music Park, also featured James Watson on banjo, fiddler Bill Kee, guitarist Len Elliott, and Gene Daniel on the bass. They released several albums on regional labels in the 1980s and appeared in Lomax’s 1991 film “Appalachian Journey,” as part of the PBS series *American Patchwork*.

16. Go To Sleepy Little Baby

Bessie Jones

Recorded in St. Simons, Georgia. October 12, 1959.

A song-bearer and singer of monumental proportions, Bessie Jones was raised in Smithville, Georgia, in a large, musical family before moving to the Sea Island of St. Simons in the late '20s. She soon made her name as a singer with the island's Spiritual Singers (see track 11), introducing to their repertoire some of the hundreds of songs she brought with her from South Georgia. Lomax met Jones in 1959, on his second trip to record the group, and found them greatly enriched by her influence. Renaming them the Georgia Sea Island Singers, Alan and Bessie collaborated to make the ensemble a nationally touring act in the 1960s and 1970s. By the time Bessie Jones died in 1984, she had become acknowledged as one of America's foremost singers and teachers of traditional folk song.



Bessie Jones
Williamsburg, Virginia
April 1960

In 2004 the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress acquired the original recordings and photographs, media collections, library, manuscripts, and research materials that had been assembled by Alan Lomax in New York over the course of six decades, uniting them with the recordings made by Alan and his father, John A. Lomax, for the Library's Archive of Folk Song from 1933 to 1942.

The Alan Lomax Collection from the American Folklife Center was compiled and produced by Don Fleming.

Original field recordings produced and recorded by Alan Lomax.

Released on January 31, 2012, which would have been Alan Lomax's 97th birthday.

Notes: Nathan Salsburg

Audio preservation and restoration: Steve Rosenthal, Matthew Barton, Marcos Sueiro Bal

Art and design: Kiki Smith-Archiapatti

Photos: Cover by Antoinette Marchand. All others by Alan Lomax.

Thanks to: Anna Lomax Wood, Edmund Wood, Jeff Greenberg, Adelaide de Menil, Geoffrey Clarfield, Sophie Abramowitz.

Special thanks to our colleagues at the AFC: Todd Harvey (Folklife Specialist and Curator of the Center's Alan Lomax Collection); Bert Lyons (Folklife Specialist and Digital Asset Manager); Guha Shankar (Folklife Specialist, Research & Programs); Michael Taft (Head of the Archive of Folk Culture); Peggy Bulger (Director, 1999–2011); and Elizabeth Peterson (Director, 2011–present).

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