



**ALAN LOMAX**  
**BLUES**  
**SONGBOOK**

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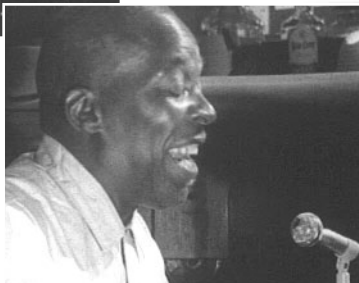
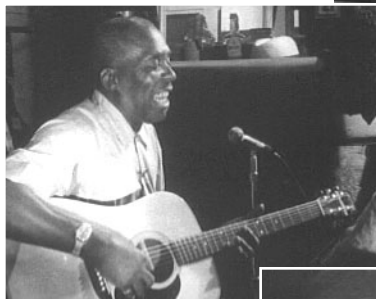




HOWLIN' WOLF



SKIP JAMES



## ALAN LOMAX AND THE BLUES

Alan Lomax was a lifelong fan of blues music, and his efforts to document and promote it have made a profound impact on popular culture. From his earliest audio documentation in 1933 of blues and pre-blues with his father, John A. Lomax, for the Library of Congress through his 1985 documentary film, *The Land Where the Blues Began*, Lomax gathered some of the finest evidence of blues, work songs, hollers, fife and drum music, and other African-American song forms that survived the nineteenth century and prospered in the twentieth. His efforts went far beyond those of the typical musicologist. Lomax not only collected the music for research, but through his radio programs, album releases, books, and concert promotions he presented it to a popular audience. While living in England in the early 1950s, he introduced many blues songs to the performers of the skiffle movement, who in quick turn ignited the British rock scene. Lead Belly and other blues artists, interpreted by Lonnie Donegan and Van Morrison, preceded the rock & roll tradition of covering and rewriting blues songs. The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, the Animals, Cream, Jimi Hendrix—all found inspiration from the blues.

And this is how I came to the blues, as many people have: by way of rock & roll. In the very structure of rock music—and, in fact, much of popular music—the source is undeniable. My personal journey of exploring the history of blues music is connected by the work of Alan Lomax. I vividly remember the first time I heard Lead Belly's voice on the radio in 1958—I immediately ran up to Sam Goody's to buy the 10" Folkways LP featuring his "C. C. Rider." When I filmed Muddy Waters in 1976 performing "Mannish Boy" for *The Last Waltz*, I witnessed the success and power of a man who had first been recorded in Stovall, Mississippi, in 1941 by Lomax and John W. Work, III. And when I saw Otha Turner leading his fife and drum band in *The Land Where the Blues Began*, I was so struck by its hypnotic force that it became one of the primary musical inspirations for *Gangs of New York*.

*Alan Lomax: Blues Songbook* is the first collection of Lomax blues recordings to encompass his career. I'm sure that his work will continue to inspire and illuminate the minds of future generations. The deep well from which he drew these essential voices of human culture is a treasure for all.

— Martin Scorsese, New York, NY, July 2003

## INTRODUCTION —John Cowley, Ph.D.

**Alan Lomax, who was born in Austin, Texas, in 1915**, grew up with folk melodies reverberating in his consciousness. Long before his birth, his father, John A. Lomax, had been garnering folk songs reflecting the spectrum of vernacular traditions in the United States. While Lomax senior's earliest endeavors were in preserving the traditions of cowboys (his seminal book, *Cowboy Songs*, was published in 1910), he was also fascinated by the music of African-Americans and devoted time to the folklore of their communities. As early as 1904, on his first folk song collecting expedition for Harvard University, he had encountered a black woman named Dink who sang him two songs that were to resound through the Lomax household. He described the event in 1917: "It was in a levee camp in Texas, a reclamation project for which experienced hands from Mississippi (along with their women) had been imported to the Brazos River bottom. The woman called herself Dink. She was a lithe chocolate-colored woman with a reckless glint in her eye. 'You're just lucky I happened to want to sing this mornin'. Maybe to-morrow I wouldn't 'a' sung you nothin'. Anyhow, maybe tomorrow I won't be here. I'm likely to get tired, or mad and go. Say, if I got mad, I'd about dump that tub o' wet clothes there in that bed, and I wouldn't be here by night."

Dink sang two pieces into the Lomax cylinder machine, a blues and a barrelhouse lament—a variant of the "Fare Thee Well" theme. Her version, which has become famous as "Dink's Song," begins with the lines:

*If I had wings like Norab's dove,  
I'd fly up the river to the man I love—*

Followed by the refrain:

*Fare thee well, O honey, fare thee well.*

As John A. Lomax recalled in 1947: "The original Edison record of 'Dink's Song' was broken long ago, but not until all the Lomax family had learned the tune. The one-line refrain, as Dink sang it in her soft lovely voice, gave the effect of a sobbing woman, deserted by her man."

The study of folk songs was not an avenue for employment and for many years Lomax senior was engaged in teaching English and later as a bond salesman. In the early 1930s he was beset by illness and two great tragedies, the death of his wife and the national economic collapse following the stock market crash of 1929. Work opportunities were few but in mid-1932 chance allowed him to suggest an anthology of American folk songs to the New York publisher Macmillan, who accepted the idea. This was a turning point for the family, as the Library of Congress subsequently promised a recording machine to aid in the collection of the songs, providing the originals were deposited at the institution. With an advance for the book (and a dollar-a-year honorarium from the Library), John A. Lomax started work, and by mid-1933 arrangements came to fruition

for the field trip. The promised disc-recording apparatus was not available immediately and a Dictaphone cylinder machine was obtained for use pending delivery of the former. Needing an assistant, Lomax senior asked his second son to accompany him on the field trip and so the die was cast for Alan's career as a researcher into the distribution and origins of folk music throughout the world.

Documenting the neglected music of African-Americans was one of the team's primary objectives when they set out together in June 1933 on this, their first major folk song collecting expedition. Alan was eighteen years old; nevertheless, he was confident enough to describe his experiences on this field trip in the January 1934 edition of the *Southwest Review*. This includes his first writing on the blues, involving an encounter with the singer-guitarist "Burn-Down" in the Brazos bottom, twenty miles from Hempstead, Texas, early in July 1933.

*Burn-Down sat flat in the cool dust beneath the gnarled 'simmon tree, his legs sprawled out on the ground before him. He was picking his guitar and singing, half to himself, while about him, in various utterly comfortable and relaxed attitudes, were four or five other Negro boys. When we approached, lugging our little recording Dictaphone, he did not get up, but sent for a fruit box and a battered tub and in such a quiet and courteous fashion made us welcome to sit that we forgot the usual awkwardness which besets the ballad-hunter...*

*When he heard that we had driven twenty miles across the bottom to hear him sing, he was visibly pleased, and began to tune his guitar. He was, as are most "music physicaners," a dreadful time in tuning it and twanging it and testing it out. "Know the Slim Riggins Blues? Well, then, I plays it for you." Very softly he sang at first; then, as the excitement of the music grew in him, he began to shout out the verses and his crazy old "box" began to jump and shake under the pounding rhythm; his muddied brown eyes took light and flashed in his sallow face as if there were rising up in him some fierce and consuming passion:*

*Oh—, you don' do me no good.  
I don' blame you, do the same thing, if I could.*

The Lomaxes continued their journey through Texas to New Orleans, Louisiana, and then traveled north. On July 15, a disc-recording machine was delivered to the team at Baton Rouge, and it was put to good use when the party visited the State Penitentiary at Angola between July 16 and 20, seeking songs from African-American convicts. They were disappointed to find that the prison authorities had suppressed group work songs, but the Lomaxes' were delighted by their landmark meeting with the extraordinary songster Huddie Ledbetter, about whom Alan enthused, "Lead Belly, however, was some consolation: 'T's the king of the

twelve-string guitar players of the world!”

The first smattering of ballads and blues in this most influential of black folk singers' extensive repertoire was committed to aluminum discs at this time. The new equipment was used throughout the rest of the expedition—in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia in August and September and in Texas in December. Utilizing their 1933 material, the Lomaxes' book, *American Ballads & Folk Songs*, was published by Macmillan in 1934.

In the same year the pair resumed their folk song collecting on behalf of the Library of Congress, using the disc equipment in Texas and Louisiana between April and August. They returned to Angola in July where they recorded Lead Belly for a second time, including his performance of “Blind Lemon Blues” that appears in this anthology. Early and important recordings by African-Americans singing “La La,” blues, and ring shouts in French Creole, incorporating repertoire anticipating contemporary Zydeco, were made in Louisiana. John A. Lomax toured and recorded in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and again in Louisiana in September and October, with the newly-released Lead Belly as his assistant. He performed for the prisoners, demonstrating the kinds of songs that were being collected. Lomax returned to Texas in November, where he again made recordings, and then traveled with Alan and Lead Belly through Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. They reached Washington, D.C. on Christmas Eve, where Lead Belly entertained a party of distinguished guests invited in Lomax senior's capacity as Honorary Curator of the Library of Congress' Archive of American Folk Song. From this point on, Lead Belly's singing illustrated John A. Lomax's lectures on folk music—greatly enhancing the performer's reputation.

There were many signally important aspects of both sacred and secular black folk music for the Lomaxes to document, from children's game songs to those of the prison and levee-camp work gangs, as well as religious material such as hymns, spirituals, and sermons. These neglected types comprise the greatest proportion of the repertoire assembled on these 1933-34 discs. At the same time, they were paying equal attention to garnering recordings of regional folk music performed by white people.

While collecting blues was not a principal aim, the Lomaxes made significant recordings of the genre from this time. The repertoire performed by Lead Belly at Angola in 1933 and 1934 is significant in the pattern of their song collection from black musicians. In a total of fifteen songs obtained from the singer-guitarist, six are classified as blues; two of these, including “Blind Lemon Blues,” are accompanied by the performer's slide-guitar playing. While this is a very subjective measurement, it suggests that no more than thirty-three percent of the black music recorded by the Lomaxes during their careers at the Library of Congress (1933-1942) can be categorized as blues; indeed the proportion may be considerably less. Notwithstanding, such ratios are a highly misleading form of measurement, for qualitatively the Lomaxes recorded many fine blues

performances during this period, witnessed by the high proportion of titles drawn from the Library's Archive of Folk Culture that are reproduced in this anthology.

Following the Library's acquisition of a new and improved recording machine, Alan's first folk-song collecting expedition under his own direction took place during the summer of 1935. The folklorist, anthropologist, and writer Zora Neale Hurston, together with the ballad professor Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, joined Alan at Brunswick, Georgia on June 15th. Under Hurston's expert guidance, they began immediately to gather folk songs in an isolated community on St. Simon's Island, where, Alan wrote, they “rented a . . . shanty and sent out the call for folk singers. The first evening our front yard was crowded.” This description was published in the 1935 *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. As before, the recordings represented a variety of genres:

1. Children's game songs, both traditional and indigenous.
2. The shrill, strange cries that these children use to signal to each other across the fields.
3. Chanties of the sort that the Negroes sing in loading the ships in Charleston, Savannah, and Brunswick, songs like those that the white sailors heard in the days of clipper ships and turned to their own use—probably the earliest type of Negro work song.
4. Ring shouts, probably the earliest form of the Negro spiritual, widely current in the days of slavery, but now all but forgotten except in a few isolated communities. These songs are for dancing.
5. Records of what is called “jooking” on the guitar. The “jook” is the saloon and dance hall of this part of the South, and “jook” music furnishes the rhythm for the onestep, the slow drag, and the other dances of whisky-filled Saturday nights. At St. Simon's Island we were lucky enough to find still current and popular an early and primitive type of guitar playing, in which the drum rhythm is predominant, that was [a] forerunner of the more highly developed and sophisticated “blues” accompaniments so popular over the South today.
6. A miscellaneous set of spirituals, ragtime songs, ballads, and a few stories completed this group of records.

These were followed by recordings of contemporary blues guitarists in Hurston's hometown of Eatonville, Florida, which was the trio's next field location. Gabriel Brown's slide-guitar-accompanied version of “John Henry” is one of the recordings made during their stay in this distinctive community, where again a diverse sacred and secular repertoire was committed to disc. Belle Glade, on Lake Okeechobee in the Everglades, provided the party with another, equally fruitful recording locale. Shortly thereafter, Lomax and Barnicle traveled to the Bahamas where they made important recordings of local traditional music. The details of this expedition provide a case study for the approach followed independently by Alan and his father during the next few years as they each crisscrossed the United States in their quests for folk songs—in

particular, those of the African-American communities.

While Alan was completing his BA at the University of Texas in 1936, his father made several field-recording trips in the southern states, concentrating on black music in the penitentiaries. These included Texas in February, Mississippi and Louisiana in April; in May he traveled with furloughed Texas convict James 'Iron Head' Baker as driver to Florida, South Carolina, Virginia, and then to Washington D.C., where he recorded Iron Head. The next month, Lomax visited Virginia for further recordings and was joined by Harold Spivacke, who was just appointed Acting Chief of the Library of Congress Music Division. Then in July, Lomax senior traveled to North Carolina and returned to South Carolina in August. Two recordings here come from these trips: Elinor Boyer's "You're Gonna Need My Help," recorded at Parchman Farm, the Mississippi State Penitentiary (a location rich in songs, and to which the elder Lomax paid regular visits), and Ozella Jones' "I Been A Bad, Bad Girl," obtained at the State Prison Farm in Raiford, Florida. Again, blues was but one aspect of the African-American music that was documented, but these trips demonstrate the geographical range that the Lomaxes covered in their quest for regional folk music.

In 1937, John A. Lomax made the first of several visits to Livingston, Alabama, where, in collaboration with local pathfinder Ruby Pickens Tartt, he took pains to record the repertoire of a number of inhabitants, including Dock Reed and Vera Ward Hall, who are also represented in this collection. In the same year, Alan became Assistant In Charge of the Library's Archive of American Folk Song, thereby earning his living from the work he was undertaking with his father (who remained Honorary Curator).

Interested in the relationship between the black music that was being collected in the field and the commercial releases of blues and jazz that were being marketed to African-Americans, Alan began to investigate these links. Pioneering a technique of interviewing key black performers as they played compositions on their favored musical instruments, Alan made significant recordings in 1938 using this approach. "W. C. Handy, the composer of 'The St. Louis Blues' and others, told his story of the origin of the blues before the mike," he noted in the 1938 *Report of the Librarian of Congress*. Alan also detailed a series of long interviews with the jazz and blues pioneer Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton. Morton played dozens of piano pieces from his extensive repertoire, interspersing them with descriptions of the roots of jazz in New Orleans; Alan categorized these recordings as "a sort of folk preface to modern popular music on records." Morton's "I Hate a Man Like You" is taken from these sessions. In an endeavor to comprehend the material he was obtaining from his interviews with Morton, Alan corresponded with and met the journalist and jazz and blues aficionado John Hammond. During the course of this interchange, Hammond mentioned the "From Spirituals to Swing" concert he was organizing in New York, which Lomax asked to record with the hope of depositing the results at the Archive. A group of performers were selected and recorded separately from the concert, the sessions duly announced in the 1939 *Report of the Librarian of Congress* under the heading: "New York

City, December 25, 26, 1938: 15 Twelve-Inch Acetate Records." With an acknowledgement to Hammond "and the Allied Recording Company, who lent their machine for two days," Lomax noted that he "was able to make for the Library recordings of five of the most remarkable Negroes in American music: Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Jimmie [sic] Johnson, the boogie woogie pianists; Jimmie [James P.] Johnson, the blues [sic] pianist and composer; and Saunders Terry, the blind harmonica player from North Carolina." The group of discs considerably bolstered the Library's holdings of recordings by significant blues musicians. Performances from these sessions by Ammons and Pete Johnson appear in this selection.

Alan's father continued to tour the South collecting folk songs for the Library of Congress, accompanied by his second wife, Ruby Terrill Lomax, whom he had married in 1934. Starting from their home in Texas in 1939, their trip took them through Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina. They recorded a number of singers held at the institutions of the Texas Department of Corrections. Two blues performers appear in this anthology—the talented singer-guitarist Smith Casey (an inmate of the Clemens State Farm), and the popular Hattie Ellis. Despite her incarceration in Goree State Farm (for women), Ellis had a local following inspired by her appearance on a radio broadcast from the State Penitentiary in Huntsville!

During these years, Alan was becoming increasingly interested in both the origins and popularity of the blues and other forms black dance music and began to encourage his father to make recordings of these styles. When John A. and Ruby T. Lomax took to the road again in 1940, touring Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, they sought out and recorded a number of bluesmen—Lucious Curtis and Willie Ford at Natchez, Mississippi, and the famous east-coast bluesman Blind Willie McTell in Atlanta, Georgia, are examples in this anthology.

In the spring of 1941, Alan visited Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he acted as master of ceremonies at a concert celebrating the 75th anniversary of this African-American university. While there, he and several members of the Fisk faculty (under the leadership of Charles S. Johnson) realized they had a shared interest in conducting a survey of local black folk culture. Approval and financing was obtained from the Library of Congress, and special training organized for field workers using commercial releases and previous Library of Congress field recordings. Arrangements were made for the University "to furnish the field workers to supervise the editing at Fisk," while the Library "furnished the recording equipment, records, and... [Lomax's] services as field worker and co-editor of the study." Coahoma County, Mississippi, was selected as the area for the project, chosen because, at the time, the density of its black population was the highest in the United States. Just 100 miles south of Memphis, Coahoma County is the center of a region commonly known as the "Delta"—the low, flat, northwestern portion of Mississippi bounded by the Mississippi River on the west, the Yazoo and Tallahatchie Rivers on the east, and the Choctaw Ridge to the northeast. It was well chosen for blues singers! Alan's first exploratory trip to the area took place in August 1941, when a success-

ful week of field work “resulted in twenty-five sixteen-inch records, approximately twelve hours of recording of all types of music in Coahoma County.” For some of the time he was joined by the eminent Fisk musicologist, John W. Work, III, who was present when McKinley Morganfield (Muddy Waters) was recorded for the first time—Muddy’s “I Be’s Troubled” comes from this session.

Back in Washington D.C., Alan was engaged in numerous projects, including a concert hosted by Paul Robeson in which Lead Belly, Sonny Terry, and Brownie McGhee participated. Following the event, all three recorded for the Library of Congress; this session included Sonny’s performance of “Worried Blues” and the threesome’s interpretation of “How Long Blues” contained in this anthology.

After the success of the 1941 field trip, Alan Lomax returned to Mississippi in July of 1942 to make more recordings in Coahoma County for the joint Library of Congress-Fisk University study. Three blues recordings from this expedition are featured here. “The Pony Blues” is played by one of the most influential Mississippi singer/slide-guitarists of the 1930s, Son House. The two from the younger David “Honeyboy” Edwards, a fluent guitarist, are “Worried Life Blues” and the equally impressive “The Army Blues,” on which he doubles on harmonica. This 1942 trip, however, became the final occasion on which Lomax was to collect black music for the Library of Congress. He moved to pastures new—after great controversy—when Congress withdrew funding for the Archive of Folk Song.

By 1946 Alan Lomax was working for Decca Records in New York, programming a series of 78-rpm folk music albums. At the same time he promoted a series of midnight concerts at New York Town Hall, beginning with “Blues at Midnight” on November 9, 1946. This first presentation featured, among others, the Chicago-based singer-guitarist Big Bill Broonzy. Big Bill was to make a return visit the following March to a second blues oriented event, “Honky Tonk Blues at Midnight,” at which he was joined by two other Chicago bluesmen—the pianist Memphis Slim, and harmonica player John Lee “Sonny Boy” Williamson. All three were established blues recording artists and Chicago club performers, but their roots were in the South, and it was this that particularly interested Lomax. The day after the concert he arranged to interview them in the fashion of his earlier biographical conversations with musicians recorded for the Library of Congress. In addition to the number of participants, this interview was different in other respects. It had a social agenda, based on the performers’ experiences in the Delta and its levee camps. Dotted along both the Arkansas and Mississippi banks of the Mississippi River, these camps operated a segregated system of peonage, which sustained the labor force needed for continual maintenance to minimize flooding in the fertile alluvial plain. Alongside musical performances, the three musicians swapped candid stories and told yarns about the camps and the cabal of contractors who maintained the levees. Two songs from this session are featured here—Memphis Slim’s “Life Is Like That” and Williamson’s “I Could Hear My Name Ringin’.” Parts of these interviews were included in Lomax’s classic documentary LP *Blues In The Mississippi Night* (originally

released in 1957; reissued as Rounder CD 1860 in 2003), but he used more complete versions for his article in the Summer 1948 issue of *Common Ground*, entitled “I Got The Blues.” In both instances, to guard against possible Southern recrimination against them or their families, he used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the performers.

In November 1947 and February 1948 Alan was in Mississippi with a new apparatus, the Magnacord tape recorder. He arranged to return to Parchman Farm for the first time since going there with his father in 1933. The 1948 visit was tinged with great sadness for on January 28 his father died at Greenville during a special ceremony in his honor, with Alan in attendance. Lomax’s evocative post-war Parchman recordings have become justly famous since they were released on the LP *Murderers’ Home* in the mid-1950s (reissued as Rounder CD 1714 in 1997) and the solo vocal “Tangle Eye Blues” by Walter “Tangle Eye” Jackson is a representative sampling from these significant performances.

Alan Lomax set sail for England in 1950, the year in which he published his oral history/biography of Jelly Roll Morton—*Mr. Jelly Roll*—based on his 1938 recordings. In Europe, he worked on initiatives associated with the British Broadcasting Corporation, including field-recording trips in the British Isles, Spain (1952–3) and Italy (1954–5). He continued to work on other projects, maintaining his studies of black American music, and took the opportunity to record Big Bill Broonzy when both were in Paris, France, in May 1952—Broonzy’s “Joe Turner” comes from this session. Likewise, he paid special attention to his 1947 recordings with Broonzy, Memphis Slim, and Sonny Boy Williamson and those that he made at Parchman early in 1948. Indeed, the sleeve-notes to the two Nixa LPs of these recordings, programmed with the British record producer Denis Preston, evince the special significance Lomax attached to them in his understanding of both the African-American blues and work song traditions. During the New York recording session of *Blues in the Mississippi Night*, the participants described in their own words the repression and forced labor exemplified by the levee camp system and that had given rise to the blues, confirming Alan’s opinions of how the genre had evolved: “The blues are songs which stand for the whole system of prejudice, exploitation, terror and rejection, which shaped the lives of Southern Negroes in the period between 1890 and 1940.” For the Parchman record he noted how it was “made in the heart of the Mississippi Delta where the blues took shape at the turn of the century, [and] provides the background for America’s most important song-form.” These were highly considered judgments, based as they were on his years of field work for the Library of Congress and, in particular, the joint study of the local black folk culture of Coahoma County, Mississippi, that he had undertaken with his colleagues at Fisk University.

Returning to the United States in 1958, Lomax was keen to make another sweep of the South. His quest was to document new performers of vernacular music and to maintain his relationship with those still alive and from whom he or his father had collected during their period with the Library of Congress. There were other

reasons as well; the advent of the long-playing record made possible communication with a highly diverse audience with fidelity enhanced by stereophonic reproduction and high-quality portable tape machines that could record extended performances without interruption. Arranging financing for this enterprise took time, especially as he intended to maintain editorial control over the recordings, but eventually all obstacles were overcome—Atlantic Records paid for the trip. Alan was also on a mission, as he wrote in his “Introduction to the *Southern Folk Heritage Series*,” printed on each of the seven LPs Atlantic released of these recordings:

*People were saying that Southern folk song was dead, that the land that had produced American jazz, the blues, the spirituals, the mountain ballads and the work songs had gone sterile.*

*In a two-month tour which took me from Virginia through the middle South, to the Ozarks and back to the Georgia Sea Islands, I found proof enough that the South still holds a rich heritage of musical tradition and continues to produce new folk music. Many new songs were found. Three instruments previously unknown to American folk song were discovered—the mouth-bow, the cane fife and the primitive panpipe.*

*Out of eighty hours of recordings, the material for these seven Atlantic LPs was chosen. Some of the songs date back to European and African origins. Others were created in the pioneer period. Still others were born yesterday. The whole collection is a testament to the folk tradition of the Southern states where the country folk—Negro and white—continue to sing the deep songs of our country.*

Shirley Collins, who had aided him in some of his British projects, crossed the Atlantic to become Alan’s assistant; they made their first recordings in Salem, Virginia, on August 24, 1959. These were of the remarkable white folk musicians Hobart and Preston Smith and their sister, Texas Gladden, whom (in the case of Hobart and Texas) Lomax had first recorded in 1942. Black music such as blues had permeated the music of the Appalachians and entered the repertoires of singers such as Hobart Smith, a phenomenon of which Alan was well aware from his many years of experience collecting folk songs from black and white informants across the United States. On August 25, while running through his repertoire, Smith performed a version of “See That My Grave Is Kept Clean,” a song made famous in the late 1920s via a commercially distributed record by the famous Texas bluesman, Blind Lemon Jefferson. Smith’s version serves as a reminder of Lomax’s broad-based commitment to document the folk music of all types of vernacular musicians, as well as his particular interest in the evolution of music originating in the African-American communities of the South.

Following a journey through Kentucky and Alabama, the party revisited the Mississippi State Penitentiary where Alan again recorded the music of its black prisoners. By September 22, Lomax and Collins had reached Como, in the hill country of northeastern Mississippi. Shirley Collins remembers that after a day

recording fife and drum music from the Young family and string band music by the Pratcher Brothers—whose “Joe Turner” is featured here—they were advised to record a neighbor of the Youngs. Clad in denim overalls, a slight figure walked out of the woods carrying a guitar, and Collins recalls viewing him with trepidation after the exhilarating music they had recorded earlier that day. Her apprehension was unfounded, however, as the guitarist was Fred McDowell, perhaps one of the most significant bluesmen to be located by Lomax; “Going Down the River” is taken from the recording sessions he made at this time. Lomax had come to this region in search of the aged Sid Hemphill, a fiddle, fife, and panpipe player (among other instruments) whom he had located in 1942. Remarkably, Hemphill was still alive and recorded anew; Lomax was also introduced to his daughter Rosalie, whose vocal and guitar rendition of “Rolled and Tumbled” is another contribution to this anthology. The party moved on to Memphis, where the obscure Cecil Augusta and famous Memphis Jug Band recorded performances (also represented here individually). As in Mississippi, black religious music formed a component of the repertoire obtained at this Tennessee location.

In their “Blues in the Mississippi Night” session, Big Bill Broonzy, Memphis Slim, and Sonny Boy Williamson had told about Charley Houlin, a white “mercy man”—a friend to African-Americans in the hostile climate of the South—“the Texan, who shot down the sheriff to protect his renters.” Lomax wrote, in *The Land Where the Blues Began*:

*It was a dreamlike experience to drive through the Arkansas River bottoms, seeking the hero of my friends’ legend of the good white man, and even more like a dream to drive into Hughes, Arkansas, the scene of the gunfight, and to discover, from the first person I met there, that Charley Houlin was still alive.*

Gambling tout, whiskey merchant, and sometime bootlegger, Houlin migrated to Hughes from eastern Texas. He became a U.S. Marshall, demonstrating his reputation as a sharpshooter, and set up shop running a whiskey store/juke joint where many blues musicians (such as B.B. King) played. It was Houlin who directed Lomax to the settlements’ two high-powered juke bands that entertained his black patrons—the groups run by Forrest City Joe and Boy Blue.

Singer-harmonica player Boy Blue (Roland Hayes) and his half-brother Joe Lee (Willie Jones), a singer-guitarist, ran a trio with drummer Darnel Walker. Their respective exuberant renditions of “Boogie Children” and “Dimples in Your Jaws” are in this anthology. Forrest City Joe, Boy Blue, Fred McDowell, and others had been featured in the two blues LPs Atlantic released from the field trip, *Roots of the Blues* (SD 1348) and *The Blues Roll On* (SD 1352); records that had a considerable impact upon aficionados and new enthusiasts when they were released in the early 1960s. This, of course, was Lomax’s intention—educating the uninformed to the aesthetics of vernacular music (in particular, black music) by means of mass dissemination

had been one of his objectives since early in his career as a folk song collector. The mission was continued when Atlantic reissued the seven *Southern Folk Heritage* LPs in a four CD box set in 1993 (*Sounds of the South*, Atlantic 82496-2).

In 1959 Lomax visited St. Simon's Island, Georgia, for the first time since 1935. The following year he returned seeking musicians for a film to recreate music that might have been heard in colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. As he recounted in his notes to the first of two LPs devoted to the Georgia Sea Island Singers (Prestige International, 1961):

*After the picture had been shot, members of the cast stayed on for an extra day at Williamsburg and then the Sea Island people had a chance to sing with the kind of accompaniment that perhaps their slave ancestors were accustomed to, with Nat Rahmings, a Babaman, playing a drum of the type once used on St. Simon's, Hobart Smith picking a replica of the four-string, fretless banjo and Ed Young from Mississippi blowing thrilling litany phrases on his cane pipe.*

Ed Young's version of "Joe Turner," included here with accompaniment by Hobart Smith, is taken from this session. The recording was first issued in 1997 on *Southern Journey, Vol. 8: Velvet Voices* (Rounder CD 1708), one of thirteen CDs drawn from the 1959–1960 Lomax-Collins field trip (Rounder CDs 1701-1714), which reissue and expand upon the 12 original Prestige International LPs.

A primary singer with the Georgia Sea Island Singers was Bessie Jones, who visited Lomax in New York in 1961. There she began recording her biography, including the version of "Beggin' the Blues" represented here.

Following an extended field trip to the Caribbean in 1962, Lomax began concentrating on exploring ways to use his recordings to define geographical and communal traits in the distribution of vernacular music. He was no longer primarily engaged in field work, though he did still take part in the documentation of folk music. He participated in the Newport Folk Festival at Rhode Island in August 1966, filming and recording participants, including Howlin' Wolf, Dock Boggs, Skip James, and the duo of Canray Fontenot and Bois Sec Ardoin; performances by each of whom form part of this collection. In this instance, the performers came to Lomax (or rather to the festival), and he took the opportunity to represent their varied music in his burgeoning archive of vernacular and traditional recordings.

Lomax did take to the field once more to investigate Mississippi's black musical heritage, when he shot his television series for Mississippi ETV in August and September 1978 with ethnographic filmmaker John Bishop and folklorist Worth Long. The video footage was reformatted in 1990 under the title "The Land Where the Blues Began." The planning for this series reflected all the elements incorporated in the earlier

explorations of Mississippi music that Lomax and his father undertook for the Library of Congress between 1933 and 1942, together with his field work in the late 1940s and in 1959. As always, the sacred and the secular in the musical traditions of the region were examined, with the latter broken into components of work and recreation. After all, as Lomax had established time and again in his fieldwork, these are interrelated factors in the evolution of the blues.

The four performances from these videos selected for this anthology offer insights into the chronological development of the blues. There is a titillating barrelhouse piece, "The Last Time," by the then 79-year-old songster Sam Chatmon, representing the earliest generation of blues performers who mixed an emerging musical form with nineteenth-century traditions. There are two pieces performed by the singer-guitarist Jack Owens—"Cherry Ball Blues" and "Catfish Blues"—that exemplify the music as it developed in the first half of the twentieth century (Owens was born in 1904, and his harmonica accompanist Bud Spires in 1931). Finally, there is the "Boogie Instrumental" by guitarist R. L. Burnside (born 1926), whose music demonstrates the way in which blues changed in the period after the Second World War.

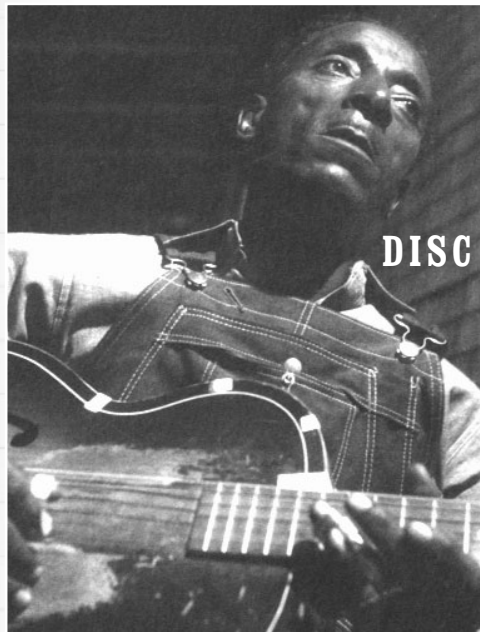
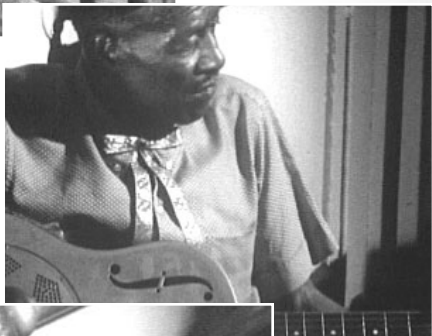
Here, then, is a comprehensive survey of the variety of the blues from 1934 to 1978 documented by the field work of Alan Lomax and his father over nearly five decades. The earliest performers were born between 1889 and 1899—Lead Belly, Jelly Roll Morton, the Pratcher Brothers, Big Bill Broonzy, Smith Casey, Hobart Smith, Dock Reed, Will Shade, Dewey Corley and Sam Chatmon—with virtually all the other musicians whose birthdates are known being born before 1925. This is a statement, however, not of the past but of the enduring spirit of a music born out of repression and misery that has overcome such obstacles in its evolution and stands as an affirmation of both its vital character and its great champion, Alan Lomax.

— *Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, England, July 2003*





*Son House*  
SON HOUSE



DISC ONE

*Fred McDowell*  
FRED MCDOWELL

## 1. GOING DOWN THE RIVER

Performed by Fred McDowell, vocal and guitar;  
Fanny Davis, comb; Miles Pratcher, guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax at the home of Fred McDowell,  
Como, Mississippi, September 21, 1959.

In a list that includes Lead Belly, Gabriel Brown, Muddy Waters, and Honeyboy Edwards, Fred McDowell (1904–1972) was arguably the greatest blues performer located by Alan Lomax. One can only imagine his impact on the blues tradition had he been able to make commercial recordings in the 1920s. Even so, his impact from the 1960s onward was substantial, including influences ranging from R. L. Burnside to Bonnie Raitt. The tune that he performs here is loosely derived from Sleepy John Estes' 1929 recording of "The Girl I Love, She Got Long Curly Hair." After two stanzas, McDowell departs from Estes' lyrics, adding traditional verses from his own vast storehouse and guitar riffs in the bottleneck style typical of northern Mississippi and western Tennessee. His sister Fanny Davis plays the kazoo (comb and tissue paper) heterophonically with his singing, adding a buzzing quality, while Miles Pratcher, a string band musician, reinforces the rhythm. This is blues stripped of almost all of its western musical traits and brought back to its African roots.

— David Evans, *Ph.D.*

## 2. ROLLED AND TUMBLED

Performed by Rosalie Hill, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax at the home of Fred McDowell,  
Como, Mississippi, September 23, 1959.

Rosalie Hill (1910–1968) was the daughter of blind fiddler and fife player Sid Hemphill (ca.

1876–1963) and the aunt of blues singer-guitarist Jessie Mae Hemphill (b. 1933). She is said to have learned this type of music from her father, although Sid Hemphill never recorded blues material in this style. This tune exists in both piano and guitar traditions of northern Mississippi and western Tennessee and is similar to the first line of Fred McDowell's blues on the preceding selection. Opportunities for women to perform this sort of blues were rare, as the typical environment at "country suppers" was rather rough, with the music largely the domain of young males. A woman blues singer usually had to have a male accompanist or sponsor in order to survive for very long in these settings. Rosalie Hill makes no compromises, and her string bending is as deep as the blues ever gets in the hands of male performers. *DE*

## 3. CHERRY BALL BLUES

Jack Owens, vocal and guitar;  
Benjamin "Bud" Spires, harmonica.

Recorded on 3/4" videotape by Alan Lomax, John Bishop, and Worth Long at the home of Jack Owens, Bentonia, Mississippi, August 14, 1978. *Previously unreleased.*

Jack Owens (1904–1997) represented a localized style of guitar blues found in and around the town of Bentonia, Mississippi, between Jackson and Yazoo City. Jack's old buddy Skip James (1902–1969) first recorded the style in 1931. Its most distinguishing feature is the use of a D-minor guitar tuning. The local musicians shared a number of repertoire items, including this song. Skip James traveled on the folk revival circuit following his "rediscovery" in 1964, while Jack Owens, remained in Bentonia, as the bulwark of the local style. Bud

Spires found himself going blind as the result of exposure to chemical pesticides in the 1960s and took up harmonica to preserve some meaning to his life. Jack took him under his wing and encouraged him to develop a sound entirely geared to his own blues. The two musicians would sit with their knees interlocked, sounding as one on pieces like this, playing for other lonely visitors who would come to Jack's house on weekend nights to hear them wail the blues. *DE*

## 4. DUST MY BROOM

Howlin' Wolf (Chester Burnett), vocal and harmonica;  
Hubert Sumlin, guitar; Eddie Shaw, tenor saxophone;  
unknown, bass; unknown, drums.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Newport, Rhode Island, August 1966.  
*Previously unreleased.*

Howlin' Wolf (1910–1976) was one of the great stalwarts of the Chicago blues scene, from the early 1950s up to the time of his death a quarter-century later. His band, along with that of Muddy Waters, served as one of the breeding grounds of talent that would populate the Chicago scene to the present day. The careers of the two artists followed similar paths. Muddy Waters grew up and learned music in Mississippi, influenced by Robert Johnson and particularly by Johnson's mentor Son House. Howlin' Wolf, also from Mississippi, was influenced by House to some degree and even more so by House's mentor Charley Patton. House himself was present as a sort of presiding spirit at the Newport session where this track was recorded. "Dust My Broom" is also central to the Mississippi-to-Chicago phase of blues history. It was first recorded in 1936 by Robert Johnson but became best known through

recordings in the early 1950s by Elmore James, another Mississippian and disciple of Johnson who became one of the stars of the Chicago blues scene in the 1950s. Saxophonist Eddie Shaw and guitarist Hubert Sumlin were among the many other musicians who made the trek from rural Mississippi to Chicago in the 1940s and 1950s. *DE*

## 5. BOOGIE CHILDREN

Boy Blue (Roland Hayes), vocal; Joe Lee (Willie Jones), guitar;  
Darnel Walker, drums.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Hughes, Arkansas, October 1, 1959.  
*First take, Previously unreleased.*

Although blues undoubtedly existed in eastern Arkansas as early as it did across the Mississippi River in western Tennessee and the Mississippi Delta, an Arkansas blues scene did not really come into its own until the "electric" era following World War Two. West Memphis, Helena, Hughes, Forrest City, Blytheville, and a host of other towns and plantation outposts became blues hot spots in the 1940s and 1950s, with many of the artists moving on to fame in Memphis or Chicago. Roland Hayes (1922–1978), also known as Roland Jones and "Boy Blue," was one of the keepers of the flame who stayed behind in Arkansas to keep the scene going in the juke joints. Small combos like this could be found up into the 1960s in little country places that could barely hold a hundred people on a Saturday night. The guitarist, the singer's half-brother, is forced to play both lead and rhythm, while the drummer fills out the sound with a lot of work on a clattering snare drum and a single cymbal. The tune heard here is actually a version of "Feelin' Good," a song originally recorded in 1953 by Little Junior

Parker, another blues artist to emerge from Arkansas in the post-war years. Parker's tune was inspired by John Lee Hooker's 1949 hit "Boogie Chillen," which supplied the title for this selection. All these songs incorporate elements from "I Feel So Good," recorded by Big Bill Broonzy in 1941, and popular during the Second World War. *DE*

## 6. STAGOLEE (AFS 4003-B2)

Lucious Curtis, vocal and guitar; Willie Ford, guitar.

Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax in Natchez, Mississippi, October 19, 1940.

Alan Lomax and his father did their field recording separately after their joint expeditions in 1934. This recording comes from John A. Lomax's last major field trip, made when he was 72 years old. Lucious Curtis may not have been from Natchez but he was making a living there as a musician in 1940, while his partner Willie Ford worked at a sawmill. Originating in a murder in the "bloody Third District"—predominantly African-American quar-ter-æduring political conflict in St. Louis, Missouri in 1895, "Stagolee" became one of the most popular ballads in the black tradition. Stagolee is the ultimate "badman" who feels no remorse for his misdeeds. Indeed he revels in them, as have countless singers vicariously. The two-line form of the ballad heard here was especially popular with singers from New Orleans and has become its best known form thanks to a hit version recorded by Lloyd Price in 1958. *DE*

## 7. STOP ALL THE BUSES

Cecil Augusta, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Memphis, Tennessee, September 30, 1959. *Previously unreleased.*

Cecil Augusta is the perfect example of an artist who shows up at a field recording session, records one or two nice selections and leaves before anyone realizes how good he was. That's evidently what happened at the beginning of Alan Lomax's session with the Memphis Jug Band. Lomax did manage to note that the artist was 39 years old and obtain a mailing address for him in Williston, Tennessee, a little town about forty miles east of Memphis. Lomax noted that Augusta's song was derived from John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson, evidently from a recording by that popular artist, although it's possible that Augusta knew him in person. Williamson's hometown of Jackson was not far from Williston. Williamson's closest tune to this piece was his 1937 recording of "Black Gal Blues." Augusta's guitar playing incorporates some elements of electric lead guitar with its string bending. A number of solo blues guitarists in the 1940s and 1950s adopted a similar style in an attempt to keep up with the larger bands. *DE*

## 8. WORRIED LIFE BLUES

(Archive of American Folk Song Catalog Number 6612-A1)

David "Honeyboy" Edwards, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax at the Coahoma County Agricultural School, Clarksdale, Mississippi, July 20, 1942.

When Alan Lomax first encountered Honeyboy Edwards (b. 1915) in 1942, he was performing under the name of his mentor Big Joe Williams.

Today, more than sixty years later, Edwards is still going strong, one of the last vital representatives of Mississippi Delta country blues. He is also the subject of a superb autobiography, *The World Don't Owe Me Nothin'*. Although his song is simply a cover of the blues pianist Big Maceo's hit recording of the previous year, Edwards makes it his own with his stellar guitar playing in a style influenced by Robert Johnson but anticipating modern lead guitar. The tension between Edwards' desire to play lead and the necessity to keep the beat results in a distinctive sound, much as it did on the previous track. *DE*

## 9. THE PONY BLUES (AFS 6608-A1A)

Eddie "Son" House, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax and Lewis Jones in Robinsonville, Mississippi, July 17, 1942.

Son House (1902–1988) made a handful of commercial recordings in 1930, but they had almost no sales or influence. Nevertheless, House had enormous personal prestige in the Mississippi Delta and can be considered to be the main inspiration of both Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. A former preacher and somewhat of a latecomer to blues, he injected a gospel quality into his singing and might therefore be considered to be the first "soul blues" singer. Recordings of him made by Alan Lomax in 1941 and 1942 eventually led to his "rediscovery" by blues historians in 1964 and a substantial second career that lasted some ten years. His song here is based on Charley Patton's 1929 record of "Pony Blues," but House has converted it into a slide guitar masterpiece and extended the "pony" theme to create a more coherent lyric than Patton's text. *DE*

## 10. TANGLE EYE BLUES

Tangle Eye (Walter Jackson), vocal.

Recorded by Alan Lomax at Mississippi State Penitentiary, Parchman, Mississippi, probably February, 1948.

John A. and Alan Lomax did much of their greatest recording of African-American folksong in southern prisons in 1933 and 1934. While John A. continued to mine the rich vein of prison song, Alan, working independently, recorded in the free world until he returned to Mississippi's notorious Parchman Penitentiary in 1948. He brought with him a tape recorder, a brand new technology at the time. He felt that the prison work song tradition was in decline but was pleased to find some singers like Tangle Eye who still carried it on. The song heard here is a "holler" on the theme of prison life and longing for freedom. Songs like this were used to accompany solitary agricultural labor, such as plowing, and could also be heard outside the prisons. With the addition of an instrument, such as a guitar, they formed the bulk of the vocal raw material of the blues. Similar hollers were sung in Africa and other African-American societies for other solitary tasks such as herding cattle. *DE*

## 11. TROUBLE SO HARD (AFS 1317-A1)

Dock Reed and Vera Ward Hall, vocals.

Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax in Livingston, Alabama, July 22, 1937.

Although this is a religious performance, the sentiment of its message and the tone of its delivery are very close to those of the blues, exemplifying the performance similarities between these sacred and secular genres. The recording is one of several

made of Dock Reed (1898–1979) and Vera Ward Hall (ca. 1906–1964) by John A. Lomax when, in 1937, he first visited Livingston, Alabama, in search of folk songs. Vera Hall sang both sacred and secular pieces; Reed confined himself to spirituals. The theme of “Trouble So Hard,” that trouble is always behind your back, is resolved by an understanding that only God understands the wretchedness of the human heart, where there is no recourse, no help, no solace, in the harsh realities of the world. This understanding is for the believer, of course—performing the blues does not allow such redemption. Vera Hall is a subject of Alan Lomax’s 1959 biographical study *The Rainbow Sign*, in which she appears under the pseudonym “Nora Reed.”

—*John Cowley, Ph.D.*

## 12. WORRIED BLUES (AFS 6502-B2)

Sonny Terry, vocal and harmonica.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Washington D.C., May 11, 1942.

Alan Lomax first met Sonny Terry (born Sanders Terrell; 1911–1986) at the “From Spirituals to Swing” concert held at Carnegie Hall in 1938 and organized by the journalist, promoter, and record producer John Hammond. At this time Terry was working with a group of street performers based in Durham, North Carolina, and made the journey to New York City with one of these compatriots, Bull City Red. In Durham and on record, Sonny and Bull City Red played regularly with the popular singer-guitarist Blind Boy Fuller, who died in 1941. Terry first appeared in concert with the man who would become his longtime partner, Brownie McGhee, at a production hosted by Paul Robeson in Washington D.C. in 1942. Following this opportunity, he,

McGhee, and Lead Belly (whom they met at the same event) recorded for Alan Lomax at the Library of Congress. It was through the encouragement of Lomax that Sonny eventually moved north to New York City where he became a highly popular blues artist. “Worried Blues” features the distinctive falsetto vocals and superlative harmonica playing that were the hallmarks of his individual performances in this period. *JC*

## 13. BEGGIN’ THE BLUES

Bessie Jones, vocal.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in New York City, September 24, 1961.

Bessie Jones (1902–1984) was born in Smithville, near Dawson, Georgia, a region rich in folk culture. She married into a St. Simons Island family and moved with her husband to the Georgia Sea Islands in the 1920s. Through her engaging personality, she was accepted in this somewhat closed community and became a principal in the special form of religious singing—the ring shout—practiced in the island, often performing the role of the lead singer. Lomax met Bessie Jones in 1959, when he visited the region for the first time since 1935, and she became a primary contributor to the new recordings he made of the local traditions. He recorded all aspects of her repertoire, including this blues, which “she made up when she was young and still ‘out in the world’ [not a church member and thus free to sing secular songs].” “Beggin’ The Blues” is her personal lament and stands alongside the repertoire she learned from her four grandparents, who had been born into slavery. Mrs. Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers performed regularly at folk festivals and other functions into the 1970s. *JC*

## 14. JOHN HENRY (AFS 355-A)

Gabriel Brown, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle in Eatonville, Florida, June 20 (?), 1935.

Eatonville, Florida, was the hometown of Zora Neale Hurston (1903–1960), the eminent African-American folklorist, anthropologist and writer. Hurston was the guiding light for Alan Lomax’s first field expedition undertaken without his father, and she introduced him to the music of the Georgia Sea Islands, Eatonville, and the Florida Everglades in 1935. It was Eatonville where they met Gabriel Brown (1910–ca. 1972), whom Lomax considered to be one of the “finest” blues guitarists that he had encountered in his field work to that time. The origins of “John Henry” have long fascinated folk song scholars, and Alan and his father, John A. Lomax, collected many versions of this song. In the eastern seaboard of the United States (and elsewhere), “John Henry” became one of the pieces first associated with the playing of slide guitar, as is demonstrated here. Gabriel Brown moved to New York City in the 1940s and performed regularly in the African-American neighborhoods of the conurbation, becoming a singer-guitarist rival to Brownie McGhee and active in the same territory during this period. Brown made a string of commercial recordings in New York between 1943 and 1953 after which, despite the high quality of his performances, he faded into undeserved obscurity. *JC*

## 15. COUNTRY BLUES

Dock Boggs, vocal and banjo.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Newport, Rhode Island, August 1966. *Previously unreleased.*

A series of remarkable 78-rpm records made in the late 1920s that achieved legendary status among aficionados of old-time music led to the “rediscovery” of Moran Lee Boggs (1898–1971) in the early 1960s. Better known as Dock Boggs, he was a coal miner all his working life and, in his early years, spent his spare time entertaining the mining communities of the southwestern Virginia and eastern Kentucky border where he lived. His emotional banjo playing and stark vocals made haunting music that reflected the economic circumstances of both the black and white miners whose musical traditions he encountered and absorbed. It is the melancholy engendered by listening to his music that proved his greatest appeal, a mood that is infused with the blues of his black mining neighbors. Based on the “Darling Corey” theme, “Country Blues” comes from the tradition of white blues ballads that developed alongside their black counterparts during the final years of the nineteenth century. The music of Boggs and his ilk became familiar to Alan Lomax during the late 1930s when he began studying the catalogues of commercial phonograph companies, looking for parallels to the music that he and his father were collecting in the field. *JC*

## 16. CHERRY BALL BLUES

Skip James, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Newport, Rhode Island, August 1966.

Previously unreleased.

The recordings for Paramount Records by Nehemiah “Skip” James (1902–1969), made in Grafton, Wisconsin in 1931, are a testament to an extraordinary performer and in character parallel the sides Dock Boggs cut for Brunswick in 1927 and Lonesome Ace in 1929. James’ guitar style and vocals were in the tradition of his hometown of Benton, Mississippi (compare Jack Owens’ version of “Cherry Ball Blues” in this collection); he also recorded outstanding piano blues. The eerie high-pitched vocals accompanied by distinctive guitar or piano patterns in his early recordings create a lasting impression of musical originality and reflective sadness that mark him as a prominent musician. In the excitement of “discovery” that infused a coterie of United States folk music enthusiasts in the early 1960s, James was “found” in 1964 and began a second career as a blues performer. “Cherry Ball Blues” is a title James first recorded in 1931; Alan Lomax obtained this version at the Newport Folk Festival in 1966. *JC*

## 17. I HATE A MAN LIKE YOU (AFS 1686-A)

Jelly Roll Morton, piano and vocal.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Washington, D. C., May or June 1938.

In the 1938 “Report of the Librarian of Congress,” Alan Lomax noted that “Jelly Roll” Morton, one of the early jazz composers, filled fifty-one disks with the social and cultural backgrounds of New Orleans jazz—a sort of folk preface to modern popular

music, on records...” Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941) was born in the “Crescent City” and assimilated its vibrant and varied musical disciplines into his career as a performer. By his mid-teens, it appears, he became a pianist in barrelhouses on Rampart Street and in similar locations where he was exposed to the traditional repertoire of the city’s tenderloin district. The lyrics for “I Hate a Man Like You” were written from the point of view of a woman. The New Orleans singer Lizzie Miles was first to record this Morton piece for Victor in 1929, with the composer accompanying on the piano. Blues and barrelhouse piano music was but one aspect of Morton’s extensive repertoire, exemplified by his career as a significant jazz bandleader. *JC*

## 18. ROLL 'EM (AFS 2499-B)

Pete Johnson, piano.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in New York City, December 24, 1938.

A representative of the piano blues and boogie style that developed in Kansas City, Missouri, Pete Johnson (1904–1967) began his career as a drummer. By 1926 he had switched to the piano as his primary instrument and gained employment with local bands as well as solo work in clubs. During this period he formed a partnership with the blues shouter Big Joe Turner (a part-time bartender, bouncer, and cook, as well as a vocalist). By the mid-1930s Johnson and Turner had attracted the attention of the jazz and blues aficionado John Hammond, who included them in his “From Spirituals to Swing” concert at Carnegie Hall in December 1938. Turner’s featured blues shout was “Roll ‘Em Pete,” which showcased his swinging vocals and Johnson’s rolling piano accompaniment. Here Johnson

demonstrates his boogie piano playing technique in an instrumental version of the same piece. *JC*

## 19. KOKOMO

The Memphis Jug Band: Charlie Burse, vocal and guitar; Robert Carter, electric guitar; Dewey Corley, bass, jug, and kazoo; Will Shade, vocal, bass, and washboard; “Whiskey – Eugene Smith.”

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Memphis, Tennessee, September 30, 1959. *Previously unreleased.*

The Memphis Jug Band first recorded for the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1927 and from then until 1934 made a series of popular releases. Their lineup featured string instruments, both traditional and unorthodox percussion, and various wind instruments, such as harmonica, kazoo, and jug. The jug was used as a resonator with air blown across its open top to produce a buzzing note, pitched by the timbre of the player’s vocal cords. The membership of such groups was as fluid as their instrumental compliment. Two long-standing participants—Charlie Burse (1901–1965) and Will Shade (also known as Son Brimmer; 1898–1966)—took part in the session Alan Lomax recorded on his field trip in 1959. Shade, the leader of the band, was responsible for bringing the musicians together for their performances and recording dates. Dewey Corley (1898–1974) was another long-time member, although, unlike Burse and Shade, he did not record under his own name before the Second World War. Here, with the modern addition of an electric guitar, the band performs a version of the traditional “Kokomo” motif that first appeared on record in the 1920s and became a theme song for a number of influential blues performers in the 1930s. *JC*

## 20. LIFE IS LIKE THAT

Memphis Slim, piano and vocal; John Lee “Sonny Boy”

Williamson, harmonica; Big Bill Broonzy, bass.

Recorded by Alan Lomax using his own portable equipment at Decca Studios in New York City, March 2, 1947.

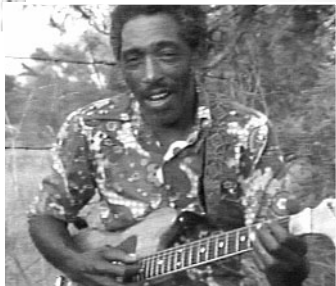
Born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1915, Peter (christened John Lee) Chatman grew up in a musical environment and absorbed the piano blues traditions of his neighborhood. A tall man, he took the sobriquet Memphis Slim and began a career as a barrelhouse pianist in the early 1930s. After hobbing through the south, working in juke joints, dance halls, and work camps, he arrived in Chicago, Illinois, in 1937 and began a recording career there in the early 1940s as an accompanist, solo performer, and a bandleader. He played with the principal blues artists of the period, including John Lee “Sonny Boy” Williamson and Big Bill Broonzy, whom he accompanied to New York for Alan Lomax’s “Midnight Special: Honky Tonk Blues at Midnight” concert at Town Hall on March 1, 1947. Elated by the success of the performance, Lomax took the threesome the following day to the Decca recording studio, where he had arranged to record an extended interview with them. “I put my little one-celled Presto disc recorder on the floor,” Lomax recalled, “and I sat at their feet, flipping the discs. There was only one microphone. We had a couple of drinks.” The first performance recorded was Slim’s philosophical “Life Is Like That” and then the interview commenced, resulting in the celebrated documentary presentation, *Blues in the Mississippi Night*. Memphis Slim died in Paris, France, in 1988. *JC*



SAM CHATMON



R. L. BURNSIDE



*Canray Fontenot*

NAME

*alphonse ardin*

NAME

CANRAY FONTENOT & BOISE SEC ARDOIN



FORREST CITY JOE, DARNEL WALKER, BOY BLUE

DISC TWO

### 1. I COULD HEAR MY NAME RINGIN'

John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson, vocal and harmonica; Memphis Slim, piano; Big Bill Broonzy, bass.

Recorded by Alan Lomax using his own portable equipment at Decca Studios in New York City, March 2, 1947.

Alan Lomax obtained this levee camp-inspired performance from John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson (1914-1948) during the course of his notable interviews with Williamson, Big Bill Broonzy, and Memphis Slim for the *Blues in the Mississippi Night* documentary. Williamson explained that he had composed this song while working in a levee camp, and, although the first verse certainly has work-camp origins, it is probably derived from "Black Name Moan," a very authentic levee camp song Bessie Tucker recorded for the Victor Company in 1928. The "line" referred to is the work line, or the line of the levee itself. In Sonny Boy's version (which he first recorded for Bluebird in 1941) his theme is unrequited love, supplemented by a spoken interjection expressing nostalgia for the South; in the instance of this 1947 recording, his native Tennessee. One of the most influential and popular blues harmonica players to have recorded, Williamson was based in Chicago, Illinois, from the early 1940s until he was brutally murdered there in 1948. *JC*

### 2. DIMPLES IN YOUR JAWS

Joe Lee (Willie Jones), vocal and guitar; Boy Blue (Roland Hayes), harmonica; Darnel Walker, drums.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Hughes, Arkansas, October 1, 1959.

When, in the summer of 1959, Alan Lomax and Shirley Collins visited Hughes, Arkansas, they were approximately at the third-quarter point of their broad sweep of the South, recording the region's musical folk culture. The African-American community of semi-rural Hughes was large enough to support two small juke bands that performed scintillating versions of old-time and more recent blues hits coupled with the occasional original composition. "Dimples In Your Jaws," played here by a group led by the singer-guitarist Joe Lee (real name Willie Jones, b. 1929), is a version of a John Lee Hooker hit that the Detroit-based Mississippian recorded for Vee-Jay in 1956. Sometimes one of the hazards of fieldwork is the fast pace of events that takes place during a recording session. It was under these circumstances that Alan credited "Forrest City" Joe (Joe B. Pugh, 1926-1960; leader of Hughes' other juke band) as the harmonica player and "Boy Blue" (Roland Hayes) as the drummer in this performance. The recording log, however, is not clear on this subject and a recent interview with Willie Jones confirms that he is accompanied by Boy Blue (his half-brother) on harmonica and Darnel Walker on drums. *JC*

### 3. CATFISH BLUES

Jack Owens, vocal and guitar; Benjamin "Bud" Spires, vocal and harmonica.

Recorded on 3/4" videotape by Alan Lomax, John Bishop, and Worth Long at the home of Jack Owens, Bentonla, Mississippi, August 14, 1978. *Previously unreleased.*

"Catfish Blues" has become a Mississippi blues standard, first recorded in its recognizable verse and musical pattern by the regional singer-guitarist Robert Petway for Bluebird in March 1941, and followed by his compatriot Tommy McClennan for the same company in September of the same year ("Deep Blue Sea Blues"). In this performance, Jack Owens shares the vocal with harmonica accompanist Benjamin "Bud" Spires (b. 1931). The son of a Chicago bluesman, Arthur "Big Boy" Spires, Bud has remained in Mississippi all his life. His empathy with Owens' vocal and guitar style is very evident in this performance, in which they encourage each other as they swap verses and accompaniment while extending the song to suit their mood. Although true to the original theme, these improvised verses are bawdy in character and suggest that this may be an underlying tendency in the song, censored for commercial considerations in its initial recordings. For Alan Lomax, in the television production "Land Where the Blues Began," in which this piece is featured, the performance represents the continuing vitality of a vocal-guitar-harmonica blues tradition in a world where such creative expression is fast diminishing. *JC*

### 4. KILL-IT-KID RAG (AFS 4073-A1)

Blind Willie McTell, vocal and 12-string guitar.

Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax in Atlanta, Georgia, November 5, 1940.

"While we were driving down the tortuous streets of Atlanta, Georgia, one night in October [sic], 1940 just as we passed a 'Little Pig' [barbecue] stand, my wife said, 'There is a Negro man with a guitar.' Back we swung into the Pig Stand yard. The guitarist proved to be Blind Willie McTell whom a friend had already told us about not more than two hours before." So begins John A. Lomax's résumé of the recording session he held the subsequent day in a hotel room with one of the most distinctive and outstanding 12-string blues singer-guitarists to have performed in the southeastern United States. For two hours, McTell (ca. 1898-1959) performed impeccably—blues, spirituals, ballads, monologues on his life and on the blues, a popular song, and this ragtime piece, "Kill-It-Kid Rag." He was an inveterate rambler and wherever he could find work entertained both black and white audiences with a varied repertoire, including this novelty number (a piece that he recorded twice subsequently). "He sang some interesting blues," wrote Lomax. "His guitar picking was excellent. Declining to let me order a taxi to take him home ('I'll have that much more money,' he said), he shuffled away from me across a busy street in the down town district. I watched him until he was out of sight. The face of a blind person always tightens my heartstrings." *JC*

## 5. YOU'RE GONNA NEED MY HELP

(AFS 737-A1)

Elinor Boyer, vocal.

Recorded by John A. Lomax at Mississippi State Penitentiary, Parchman, Mississippi, April 13, 1936.

When John A. Lomax visited the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman in 1936, it was the second time that he had collected vernacular music from the African-American inmates. Theirs was a mix of sacred and secular music, with a preponderance of the work gang songs that were a special preserve of such isolated institutions. Approximately ninety performances were obtained in the five days that Lomax worked there, with eighteen recorded on the first day, April 13, and, for the first time at Parchman, he collected material from women prisoners—a total of four blues and one barrelhouse song recorded on this initial day of his proceedings. “You’re Gonna Need My Help,” Elinor Boyer’s impassioned, lovelorn lament, comprises a sequence of traditional verses improvised by the singer. *JC*

## 6. THE ARMY BLUES (AFS 6612-B1)

David “Honeyboy” Edwards, vocal, harmonica, guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax at the Coahoma County Agricultural School, Clarksdale, Mississippi, July 20, 1942.

“The Army Blues” was recorded as part of a comprehensive survey of African-American music in Coahoma County, Mississippi, run jointly between the Library of Congress and Fisk University and conducted in the summers of 1941 and 1942. During the recording session, Alan Lomax carefully interviewed David Edwards and ascertained that he came from a musical family; Henry Edwards,

David’s fiddle- and guitar-playing father, bought David his first guitar and taught him to play it. Henry performed “old time and blues” and learned his style in “south Mississippi.” He apparently gave up playing when David was of age to become a professional musician. “The Army Blues,” on which Edwards expertly plays both guitar and harmonica, expresses David’s concern that he might be drafted into the armed forces fighting World War II. He had made up the song three weeks or so prior to the recording session and although, naturally, not anxious “to go,” he expresses his preparedness if called upon to do so. Edwards especially impressed Lomax: “He’s a man who’s been all over the country, he’s a very experienced musician, same age as I am, twenty-seven years old, and he’s studied under the best guitar players in the country and he really knows how...” *JC*

## 7. BLUES DE LA PRISON

Canray Fontenot, vocal and fiddle;

Alphonse “Bois Sec” Ardoin, accordion.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Newport, Rhode Island, August 1966. *Previously unreleased.*

Canray Fontenot (1922-1995) remembered that when he and “Bois Sec” Ardoin (b. 1916)\* were invited to attend the Newport Folk Festival in 1966, he had not performed in eight years and no longer had a fiddle of his own. He had to rescue and repair a discarded instrument to take to the event. Fontenot learned his fiddle playing from his father, Adam, and Douglas Bellar(d), a cousin. Douglas Bellar [sic] and Kirby Riley (accordion) have the distinction of being the first rural black French Creole performers from Louisiana to make com-

mercial recordings (for Vocalion in October 1929). “Blues De La Prison” (known sometimes as “Barres De La Prison”) is derived from Bellar(d)’s “La Valse La Prison,” recorded at the 1929 session. Alphonse “Bois Sec” Ardoin is the cousin of Amédé Ardoin (ca. 1896–1941), the celebrated accordion player whose first records were made for Columbia in December 1929. Bois Sec accompanied Amédé on triangle before he could afford an accordion for himself and absorbed his cousin’s technique. For Alan Lomax in 1966, recording the old-time African-American dance music from Louisiana was a welcome return to a tradition he had first documented with his father in 1934. *JC*

*\*birth year sometimes given as 1914.*

## 8. I BEEN DRINKIN’ (AFS 1323-B3)

Vera Ward Hall, vocal.

Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax

in Livingston, Alabama, July 23, 1937.

A consummate singer of spirituals, Vera Ward Hall also performed the occasional secular song, including blues. For those who adhered strictly to the separation of sacred from secular, this “sinful” activity was almost cause for excommunication, and Vera Hall experienced the opprobrium of some members of her church for singing “devil’s music.” The “demon drink” is encompassed in the title “I Been Drinking.” The song opens with a couplet that can be traced to Ma Rainey’s “Moonshine Blues” (recorded for Paramount in 1923) and the principal verses mirror “Jim Jackson’s Kansas City Blues, Part 2” (which Jackson recorded for Vocalion in 1927). Sometimes the “cocaine” verse is found in versions of the drug-oriented “Honey Take A Whiff On Me”

(see the text printed by the Lomaxes in *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, 1934). All these stanzas come from a pool of floating verses that were used by black secular singers in their recreational performances. *JC*

## 9. I BEEN A BAD, BAD GIRL (PRISONER BLUES) (AFS 692-A1)

Ozella Jones, vocal.

Recorded John A. Lomax at State Farm,

Raiford, Florida, May 4, 1936.

In 1941, describing this recording by Ozella Jones, John A. and Alan Lomax wrote: “If Bessie Smith enthusiasts could hear Ozella Jones or some other clear-voiced Southern Negro girl sing the blues, they might, we feel, soon forget their idol with her brass-bound, music-hall throat. The blues sung by an unspoiled singer in the South, sung without the binding restrictions of conventional piano accompaniment or orchestral arrangement, grow up like a wild flowering vine in the woods. Their unpredictable, incalculably tender melody bends and then swings and shivers with the lines like a reed moving in the wind. The blues then show clearly their country origin, their family connection with the ‘holler.’” (*Our Singing Country: A Second Volume of American Ballads and Folk Songs*.) The evocative clear-voiced singing of Jones is akin indeed to the holler but, paradoxically, this performance is an example of the complicated relationship between songs learnt by direct word-of-mouth and via recordings. Personalized by her poignant performance, the singer has copied virtually word-for-word the lyrics to “Bad Boy,” a 1930 Columbia release by the Alabama bluesman Barefoot Bill (singer-guitarist Ed Bell). *JC*



#### 10. I BE'S TROUBLED (AFS 4470-A2A)

Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield), vocal and guitar.  
Recorded by Alan Lomax and John W. Work, III in Stovall,  
Mississippi, ca. August 28-31, 1941.

"I Be's Troubled" was Muddy Waters' personal holler, sung in the fields as he worked at Stovall's Plantation in Mississippi. As part of the survey of music in Coahoma County, John W. Work, III of Fisk University, who questioned Waters (1915-1983) following this performance, ascertained the circumstances of its composition: "How did you come to make it up? Tell us the story." "Well, the reason I come to make the record up—once I was just walking along the road and I heard a church song kinda in mind of that and I deal off a little song from that, and I started singing it." "Well, do you make up verses and things often like that, just sitting around?" "Yes, I make up verses pretty often." . . . "And then how do you get the music—get the tunes for it after you get the verses?" "After I get my verses made up then I get my guitar and try two or three different tunes, see which one takes best—eh, be better to play it in—then I got it." Alan Lomax included this performance in the series of folk music 78s released by the Library of Congress in 1942. Waters was to record the song again in 1948, early in his career as a professional bluesman in Chicago. *JC*

#### 11. BOOGIE INSTRUMENTAL

R. L. Burnside, guitar; prob. Calvin Jackson (son-in-law), drums.  
Recorded on 3/4" videotape by Alan Lomax, John Bishop, and Worth Long at the home of R. L. Burnside, probably Coldwater, Mississippi, September 2, 1978. *Previously unreleased.*

R. L. Burnside (b. 1926) is a performer whose popular career began as a result of an extended field trip to Mississippi by George Mitchell in 1967. The compelling pieces Burnside recorded for Mitchell established his reputation when Arhoolie Records released them in the 1970s, and he has been performing for local and international audiences since. His self-taught, percussive style guitar playing—he makes few chord changes, preferring to set up a drone—is apparent in this driving instrumental recorded by Alan Lomax for his TV documentary, "Land Where the Blues Began." A former chemical plant worker who lived in Chicago before returning to Mississippi, Burnside married locally and took up farming. His family settlement of Coldwater is in the northern section of the state, not far from Como, the home of Fred McDowell. *JC*

#### 12. BLIND LEMON BLUES (AFS 123-A)

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar.  
Recorded by John A. and Alan Lomax at  
Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, Louisiana, July 1, 1934.

Writing in 1936 (in *Negro Folk Songs As Sung By Lead Belly*), Alan Lomax and his father described this piece: "Lead Belly named this knife-blues after Blind Lemon Jefferson, a famous and very popular Negro blues singer with whom he used to play on the street corners, in the saloons and red-light houses of Dallas and Forth Worth. At one time Blind

Lemon's records were best sellers, and he made a great deal of money, but he lost all he had and died in poverty, somewhere in Ohio." Still a popular recording artist, Jefferson, in fact, died of heart failure in Chicago during the bitterly cold winter of 1929. Notwithstanding, his influence was profound on the repertoire of the celebrated songster Lead Belly (Huddie Ledbetter, 1889-1949), whom the Lomaxes found incarcerated in Angola, the Louisiana State Penitentiary, in 1933. Lead Belly's exceptional slide-guitar playing in this evocative ballad-like blues is in the tradition of greater Texas and northern Louisiana, with a guitar positioned flat in his lap and the slider stroking the strings as he picks them with his other hand. *JC*

#### 13. SWEET PATOOTIE BLUES (AFS 2500-A)

Albert Ammons, piano.  
Recorded by Alan Lomax in New York City, December 24, 1938.

When announcing this recording, Alan Lomax observed that "This is the 'Sweet Patootie Blues,' played by Albert Ammons, New York City, November—December the 24th, 1938. He learned it from Doug Suggs, a sharp\* on the piano from Saint Louis, about five years ago?" which was affirmed by Ammons. Demonstrating one of his techniques in encouraging high-quality performances, Lomax continued, "He says that he can't bat it out like Doug, but I believe Albert can." Albert Ammons (1907-1949) was an exemplary Chicago-school blues and boogie pianist whose greatest influence was the Texas-born prodigy Hersel Thomas. The origins of both Suggs and Thomas indicate some of the diverse influences absorbed by blues pianists in the Windy City. Ammons was another of the pianists

whom John Hammond featured in his 1938 "From Spirituals to Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall. Alan Lomax was especially proud to have secured these recordings, noting in the 1939 "Report of the Librarian of Congress" that they "represent the very finest performances of these Negro folk-artists." *JC*  
\*or "shark"—the word is indistinct

#### 14. THE LAST TIME

Sam Chatmon, speech, vocal and guitar.  
Recorded on 3/4" videotape by Alan Lomax, John Bishop, and Worth Long in Hollandale, Mississippi, August 23, 1978.  
*Previously unreleased.*

The seventh son of a slave-era fiddle player, Sam Chatmon (1899-1983)\* was a member of a notable family string band that recorded as the Mississippi Sheiks. In their heyday of the 1920s and 1930s, this group of multi-instrumentalists entertained both black and white audiences and participated in a succession of recording dates. After a 1936 Bluebird session with his brother Lonnie, Sam worked outside music and did not return to active performance until the 1960s, when he reinstated himself as a solo performer. With his repertoire of old-time entertainment and dance pieces, he enlivened and titillated a new-found audience at folk festivals and similar events. These pieces fit the pattern of the songster generation, of which he was a representative. "The Last Time," with its spoken introduction, is Sam's typically provocative reworking of traditional themes for a modern audience. It includes elements of the well-known "Hang It On The Wall," while a variant of the title line is in "Fare Thee Well Blues" by another old-time songster, Joe Callicott (ca. 1901-1969), who recorded his song

for Brunswick in 1930. With such a varied experience as a vernacular entertainer, Sam Chatmon was a natural choice for Alan Lomax's 1978 television exploration of the origins of the blues. *JC*

*\*birth year sometimes given as 1897*

### 15. SHORTY GEORGE (AFS 2598-A1)

Smith Casey, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax in a dormitory at Clemens State Farm, Brazoria, Texas, April 16, 1939.

"Shorty George" is said to have originated as a convict nickname for the train that passed the Central State Farm in Sugarland, Texas, daily at sundown and which, on Sundays, regularly transported women visitors to and from the prison. Smith Casey was a consummate singer-guitarist, as is demonstrated by this performance of "(New) Shorty George." This is the field note title for the recording and is an apt description; though it shares some lyrical similarities with other versions of "Shorty George," it is certainly a new rendition. Smith Casey was born in 1895, probably at Riverside, Walker County, Texas. It is not known why or when he entered prison, but he was paroled conditionally on July 18, 1945. His Medical History Blank of 1950 (the year that he died) shows that he was a farmer with an address in Huntsville and that his religion was Baptist. He told the Lomaxes that he had learned his "songs on the streets in Jackson and San Jacinto counties." *JC*

### 16. DESERT BLUES (AFS 2650-A1)

Hattie Ellis, vocal; Cowboy Jack Ramsey, guitar.

Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax at Goree State Farm, near Huntsville, Texas, May 14, 1939.

The field notes for this recording provide very useful biographical information: "Hattie Ellis is a blues singer who is very popular on the radio program from the Texas State Penitentiary ["Thirty Minutes Behind the Walls"]. She claims to have composed 'Desert Blues.' The Captain (Heath) told us that in one week Hattie received 3,000 'fan' letters. She is in for thirty years for killing a man. Another Dallas, Texas Negro girl who 'come visitin' in Arkansas and got took up for somethin' I didn't do' told us that Hattie wouldn't have got such a long time if she hadn't sassed the judge when he brought her bootlegging activities into the murder case." A skillful performance, "Desert Blues" is accompanied by a white guitarist from "The Walls" (the nickname for the penitentiary at Huntsville), "Cowboy" Jack Ramsey. Hattie's prison record shows she was discharged in March 1956. She was born on February 3, 1913 at Rockdale, Texas. *JC*

### 17. JOE TURNER

Ed Young, vocal and cane fife; Hobart Smith, six-string banjo.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Williamsburg, Virginia, April 28, 1960.

"Joe Turner Blues" originated in the early 1890s when Captain Joe Turney (or Tuner), brother of Pete Turney (the then governor of Tennessee; in office 1892–96), was the transfer agent who transported groups of prisoners from court to penal institutions and sites where the convict lease system operated. His terrain extended to the Mississippi

River and the earliest reports of the song were collected in Mississippi, between 1905 and 1909. These versions express the widespread fear of Turner as the "long chain man;" this recording, from the Mississippi fife player Ed Young (1908-1974), represents one of these forms of the song. The performance is a product of one of Lomax's experiments to create the sound of pre-Revolutionary African-American music, with the white Virginian Hobart Smith accompanying Young on a handmade, wooden fretless four-string banjo. Turner's reputation as a "bad man" had extended to the Appalachians, as witnessed by Smith's interjection to this effect. *JC*

### 18. JOE TURNER

Miles Pratcher, vocal and guitar; Bob Pratcher, fiddle.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Como, Mississippi, September 21, 1959. *Previously unreleased.*

W. C. Handy, the composer who is regarded as the "Father of the Blues," heard the "long chain man" version of "Joe Turner Blues" in the 1890s. He adapted the piece for sheet music publication in 1915, telling the folklorist Dorothy Scarborough several years later that he "did away with the prison theme and played up a love element, so that Joe Turner became, not the dreaded sheriff, but the absent lover" (1923). While the rendering of "Joe Turner" that Alan Lomax obtained from the Pratcher brothers' string band in 1959 does not use Handy's lyrics, their version nevertheless is about a departed lover—in this instance, a woman rather than the missing male of the Handy verses. This transfer of meaning and motivation serves as a good example of the complex mix of oral/non-oral processes

involved in the dissemination of folk music. The change of emphasis does not appear to be related to the performers' generation (Bob Pratcher, 1892–1964; Miles Pratcher, 1895–1964) and probably reflects a functional development for dancing. The Pratchers' engaging style, once a mainstay of black country dances, was almost extinct by the time Lomax recorded them. Only a few examples of this variety were documented subsequently. *JC*

### 19. JOE TURNER

Big Bill Broonzy, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Paris, France, May 13, 1952.

William Lee Conley "Big Bill" Broonzy (1893–1958) was the most popular Chicago bluesman of the 1930s, with a recording career that began in the 1920s and continued after the Second World War. Alan Lomax almost certainly met Broonzy at the 1938 "From Spirituals to Swing" concert in New York City, and they remained in contact from that point. Partly through the encouragement of Lomax, Broonzy's post-war career blossomed on the "folk circuit," which included European as well as American engagements. These coincided with the period that Lomax was working in Europe, and he took the opportunity of recording a session with Big Bill in France in May 1952. Broonzy adapted his repertoire to mirror his new audience's interest in the origins of his style. This is reflected in his adaptation of "Joe Turner Blues," in which the feared prison transfer man is replaced by a "mercy man" who rescues black people in a time of adversity. He sets the events of the song three years before his birth in his 1951 version for Vogue Records in Paris, entitled "Blues in 1890." The full

story is featured in his autobiography, *Big Bill Blues*. JC

## 20. SEE THAT MY GRAVE IS KEPT CLEAN

Hobart Smith, vocal and guitar.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Bluefield, Virginia, August 25, 1959.

Perhaps because of his untimely death, "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" has become the most symbolic representation of the music of the famous Texas bluesman Blind Lemon Jefferson. The form of this influential piece seems to have been established by Jefferson's two recordings of it, made for Paramount Records in 1927 and 1928. The song entered the traditional repertoire of black and white folk performers, sometimes under such variant titles as "Two White Horses Standin' in Line" or "Sad and Lonesome Day" (the latter being used by the Carter Family, the famous Virginian old-time music trio). Hobart Smith (1897–1965), the exceptional white folk musician from Saltville, Virginia, whom Alan Lomax first recorded in 1942, absorbed and adapted Jefferson's original. Smith played guitar, banjo, and fiddle fluently, and exhibited a unique technique on the piano. JC

## 21. HOW LONG BLUES (AFS 6502-A3)

Lead Belly, vocal and 12-string guitar; Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar; Sonny Terry, vocal and harmonica.

Recorded by Alan Lomax in Washington, D. C., May 11, 1942.

For three musicians who had met only a few days earlier at a Washington D.C. concert hosted by Paul Robeson, the empathy between Lead Belly, Brownie McGhee, and Sonny Terry in their 1942 recording

session for Alan Lomax suggests a professional relationship of much longer duration. This is especially apparent in their interpretation of the ever-popular "How Long Blues," in which the singers alternate verses with Lead Belly leading the sequence and establishing the instrumental breaks with spoken encouragement. The pattern occurs four times in the performance, with McGhee and then Terry following on each occasion. There are earlier examples of the "How Long" theme—the Indianapolis-based blues pianist Leroy Carr recorded the seminal version in 1928, from which point it became standard repertoire for professional and non-professional musicians alike. Lead Belly learned his version from the cover record by Blind Lemon Jefferson, while McGhee and Terry based their renditions on that of Leroy Carr. At the insistence of Alan Lomax, Walter "Brownie" McGhee (1915-1996) accompanied the sightless Sonny Terry to the Washington D.C. concert. Following the event, Lomax wrote enthusiastically to Terry and McGhee's North Carolina manager, J.B. Long, of how the team "did a marvelous job while they were here," adding, "besides the concert with Paul Robeson, they recorded extensively for the Folk Song Archive. The whole affair was a terrific success." JC

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Every effort has been made to ensure that these historic recordings sound as good as they did when they were made in the field. All transfers were made from the original source materials using the Sony Sonoma Direct Stream Digital (DSD) workstation and Sony Super Bit Mapping (SBM).

Muddy Waters - 29. (Head of the house) Farms 16 acres.

Been knowing Son House since '29. Learned how to play <sup>with</sup> bottle & necks from him by watching him for about a year - followed after where he playing at -

He can tune his guitar in three ways -

Ma chul - Spanish - E minor.

Four in the family -

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