

PORTRAITS

TEXAS GLADDEN

Texas Gladden

The singing of Texas Gladden is one of the high points of American folk music. This Virginia artist put her own indelible stamp on everything she sang: ballads, comic material, game songs, and early country music. This is the first album devoted exclusively to her singing, and includes priceless interviews and four rare performances on which she is accompanied by her brother Hobart Smith.

The Portrait Series

Throughout his career, Alan Lomax worked extensively with some of the greatest artists in folk music, many of whom he was the first to record. The *Portraits* series focuses in depth on those brilliant artists and heroes of traditional music.

The Alan Lomax Collection

The Alan Lomax Collection gathers together the American, European, and Caribbean field recordings, world music compilations, and ballad operas of writer, folklorist, and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax.

Recordings by Alan Lomax and Moses Asch. Notes by John Cohen. Series Editor: Matthew Barton.

Remastered to 24-bit digital from the original field recordings

1. The Devil and the Farmer's Wife (3:30)
2. One Morning in May (3:19)
3. Mental pictures (interview)* (1:06)
4. Mary Hamilton (3:49)
5. Kind Sir, I See You've Come Again (Courting Case)* (1:46)
6. The Devil's Nine Questions (2:42)
7. I'm Never To Marry (The Girl That I Hated) (2:50)
8. My mother (interview)* (1:07)
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11. Hush, Baby, Don't You Cry* (0:42)
12. The Three Babes (2:29)
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15. Lord Thomas* (2:24)
16. THE Two Brothers (interview)* (1:07)
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18. Old Kimball (1:55)
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22. Gypsy Davy* (1:52)
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24. Songs and singing (interview)* (2:55)
25. Ghost Story (spoken)* (5:02)
26. I Am a Man of Honor* (0:24)
27. Roving Cowboy* (0:47)
28. Dark Island* (0:24)
29. The Wreck of the Old 97* (2:05)
30. Always Been a Rambler* (0:33)
31. Wild and Reckless Hobo* (1:26)
32. Once I Knew a Pretty Fair Miss* (0:39)
33. Love's Worse Than Sickness* (0:50)
34. In the Shadow of the Pines* (0:59)
35. Dark Scenes of Winter* (1:50)
36. Cold Mountains* (1:19)
37. The Devil AND the Farmer's Wife* (4:19)

**Previously unreleased.*

TEXAS GLADDEN

—*John Cohen*

Texas Gladden was born in 1895 in Saltville, Virginia, of a family that had been in Virginia for seven generations. She inherited a rich tradition of music from her folks, who sat around the family hearth singing. During the course of her life she learned songs from neighbors, the radio, and phonograph records as well as from scholars and folklorists. Most notable were her songs from the vast repertoire of ballads that had migrated from the British Isles and flourished in Virginia.

One could say she was a typical representative of the Virginia ballad-singing tradition. However, there was something special about her singing: Her songs were unaccompanied and her performance style was distinctive. Her musicality brought deep-seated feeling into her ballads. While presenting the old love songs as detached narratives, she never concealed the meanings they held for her. Alan Lomax considered her one of the best American ballad singers ever recorded. "Texas Gladden sings in such fine style," he wrote. "With such fire and, at the same time, with such restrained good taste."

Since Texas Gladden's time, most of the great ballad singers have passed on and the tradition has not survived, at least not in its old form. As one old singer said, "It's hard to believe that voice is silent now." Nevertheless, these old performances have taken on a new meaning as treasured relics, and as a key to understanding a profound voice that is missing from contemporary life.

How can a modern person approach this distant tradition? Although ballad singing still reverberates in country music and in bluegrass, can these old love songs speak to the heart of someone today? Listen to these songs as stories, as a narration of old-time adventures or as the dramatization of life's critical passages, and find yourself carried along to unexpected places. Listen to the fine ways the songs are sung, to the deliberate turns, embellishments, and nuances of Appalachian singing style. These old stories, heard in their home settings and carried in the voice of a great traditional singer, can be an experience more intimate and immediate than the exotic trips that tourists take today.

Texas Gladden spoke of having an image in her mind for every part of these old stories. “I have a perfect mental picture of every song I sing. I have a perfect picture of every person I learned it from, very few people I don’t remember. When I sing a song, a person pops up, and it’s a very beautiful story. I can see Mary Hamilton, I can see where the old Queen came down to the kitchen, can see them all gathered around, and I can hear her tell Mary Hamilton to get ready. I can see the whole story, I can see them as they pass through the gate, I can see the ladies looking over their casements, I can see her as she goes up the Parliament steps, and I can see her when she goes to the gallows. I can hear her last words, and I can see all just the most beautiful picture.”

Some of the images conveyed so vividly through the ballads have been passed on in this way for more than five hundred years. Today we have Texas Gladden’s mental images, which were transmitted via the acetate discs recorded by Alan Lomax in 1942, now entering a new millennium on digital CD.

It is the persistence and longevity of these songs that attracted the attention of literature professors and folklorists more than a century ago. Francis Child, a Harvard professor, designated a selection of ballads in the English language that was published in 1898 as *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. This stimulated the creation of many local folklore societies and functioned as a benchmark for folklore scholarship in the early twentieth century. This canon of 305 songs became known as the Child ballads. Blanton Owen points out, “In his collection, he [Child] considered the actual singing of these folk-ballads in a traditional context to be a practice of the remote past no longer done. It remained for other scholars to seek these songs, not in yellowed manuscripts, but from actual singers.” In fact, such scholars as Lyman Kittridge recognized the importance of oral tradition and encouraged such collectors as Cecil Sharp, Phillips Barry, H.M. Belden, Dorothy Scarborough, John Lomax, Arthur Kyle Davis, and many others to collect versions and variants of these ballads. Along the way, they gathered wonderful documents of a much broader range of American genres.

Judging from their reports and their footnotes and headnotes, their underlying purpose was to study the diffusion of the old ballads, tracing the travels of the songs in space and time, always gathering and measuring their distance and deviation from the Child ballad standard. Although they used the word “version” a lot, they saw how each variant of the ballad could be a complete entity neither greater nor lesser than its ancient source. They presented their findings to regional folklore societies. The idea was to connect ballads preserved in the New World to old English ballads. This circumscribed agenda dominated folklore study, and led to academic disputes about whether ballad origins reflected communal or individual creation. Old literary sources from Europe and the British Isles provided fuel for the arguments. In his book *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898*, the Kentucky folklorist D. K. Wilgus referred to this as “The Ballad Wars,” and “The Morphology of Dry Bones.”

The Virginia Folk-Lore Society began in 1913, its initial purpose being to track down all the Virginia versions of the Child ballads. In 1911, Miss Alfreda Peel, a founding member of that society, rode off on horseback into hidden valleys hunting for these songs. Miss Peel’s practice was not only to document the songs but also to pass them along. In 1922 she came across a rare find, “The Devil’s Nine Questions,” which she took down from a Mrs. Rill Martin and later

taught to Texas Gladden.

These early folklorists were more interested in variants of the ballads than in the people who sang them, and hardly spoke of the singers in their published collections. In the early collections, the singers, if mentioned at all, were noted as “informants.” It was people like John Lomax and Alan Lomax who put a human face on folklore studies, and also looked at the singers in a cultural context.

Alan Lomax’s efforts to make both the singers and the songs widely known came to fruition in the folk-song revival of the 1940s. He featured traditional singers on his national radio shows *American School of the Air*, *Back Where I Come From*, and *Your Ballad Man*. An example of his inclination to popularize the songs can be found in the notes to the 1948 album *Texas Gladden Sings Blue Ridge Ballads*, where he wrote “In the present-day revival of ballad singing that is sweeping the country, ‘The Devil and the Farmer’ is number one on the ballad hit parade.” However, there was never a ballad hit parade, except metaphorically, and that existed among the urban folk revivalists.

Because of the earlier emphasis on the song texts, Texas Gladden was first recognized as a living repository of the English ballad tradition rather than as a fine traditional singer. Speaking of her early memories, she said, “All of us children would join in, and we’d sing these old love songs. Of course we didn’t know they were ballads in those days. They weren’t called ballads, we just called them love songs.”

She first came to public attention in the 1930s at the White Top Festival in southern Virginia. This festival was organized by John Powell and a locally prominent woman remembered only as Mrs. Buchanan. Its motive was to promote the idea that the mountain people of Virginia were the descendents of yeomen farmers from England who had transported their culture in unadulterated form to America and preserved it in the Appalachians. The organizers took out newspaper ads to attract eligible singers, who were then auditioned. There was a board that reviewed all the material, screening every song and text for the influence by jazz, blues, popular music, or commercial country music.

The organizers went to amazing degrees to demonstrate their point: Children from Roanoke performed English sword dances and Morris dances as taught to them by folklorist Richard Chase. Texas Gladden’s repertoire of Child ballads and her unaccompanied singing were evidence of the unadulterated purity of her cultural heritage; they fit in perfectly with the aims of the festival. To country people, it was a special honor to be invited to White Top, having met the exacting standards set by John Powell. Gladden later refers to him as “the greatest authority on musical compositions in Virginia.”

Eleanor Roosevelt attended White Top in the 1930s as a guest of honor and heard Texas Gladden and Nancy Baldwin sing “Three Little Babes” and “Pretty Saro.” Afterward, she invited Texas Gladden and her brother, Hobart Smith, to perform at the White House. In 1938 Gladden appeared at the National Folk Festival in Washington, D.C.

Charles Seeger visited the festival in 1936 and wrote a critique of the goings-on at White Top. His report parodied the position of the festival: “That banjo player uses steel picks on his fingers.

We do not even allow him to compete. The girl who won in her class learns the ballads especially for the festival. Her mother vouchsafed her daughter never sings them at home except to sing them for the festival.” Seeger concluded, “White Top was reactionary to the core. Under a smoke-screen of pseudo-scholarship, it is really sinister.”

Texas Gladden’s grandson Chris Gladden talked of her “friendship with Alfreda Peel going back to the 1930s. They remained as close friends for many years.” Alfreda Peel made collections of songs and stories for the WPA, was a neighbor to Gladden, and later published a book of ghost stories, some of which she may have taken down from her friend. Alfreda Peel taught songs she’d collected from others to Texas Gladden. She also shared her knowledge of folklore scholarship with Gladden. This could explain the introduction to the song “The Devil’s Nine Questions,” in which Gladden says, “This is a song that was composed forty years before Columbus discovered America”—just the kind of tidbit that a women’s music club might enjoy. The way in which Texas Gladden emerged to prominence at this festival from among the many singers tells us something about the relationship of collectors and singers at the time, and the role Alfreda Peel appears to have played here. As an educator, Miss Peel would have been in contact with the Music Clubs of Virginia where women gathered periodically to discuss music. According to Roddy Moore of the Blue Ridge Institute, John Powell, founder of the White Top Festival and a classically trained musician, was a darling of these clubs in the 1930s.

Recordings of Texas Gladden

Alfreda Peel and Arthur Kyle Davis collected and transcribed ballads from Texas Gladden throughout the 1930s. The Library of Congress lists a recording made by Richard Chase of Gladden singing “The Three Babes” at White Top in 1935. In 1938 Texas Gladden performed “The Devil and the Farmer’s Wife” at the National Folk Festival in Washington, D.C., to an audience who laughed in response to the unexpected commotion described in the song text.

In 1941 Alan Lomax and Elizabeth Littleton Lomax made fifteen recordings of Texas Gladden at Salem, Virginia, for the Archive of American Folk Songs at the Library of Congress. Seven of these were issued on 78s and LP records, and are included on this CD along with most of the others from those sessions.

In 1946 Alan Lomax invited Texas Gladden and Hobart Smith to New York City to perform in a concert of ballads held at McMillan Theater at Columbia University. Jean Ritchie from Viper, Kentucky, and Andrew Rowan Summers also were on the bill. Lomax interviewed Gladden and Smith extensively during their stay: Selections of these recordings are heard on this CD. Alan Lomax and Moses Asch produced an album of four 78s, *Texas Gladden Sings Blue Ridge Ballads*, for Asch’s Disc label in 1948. However, the Disc label folded soon thereafter, and apart from two tracks that were included on a little-known Folkways anthology, these recordings have been unavailable for more than fifty years. They are all included on this CD.

Texas Gladden returned to Virginia with the news that she had met Leadbelly. Alan Lomax revisited Gladden in 1959 and recorded her for the series he would publish on Atlantic and Prestige. She was not in the best voice then because of failing health, but made a number of recordings for Lomax that can be heard in the *Southern Journey* series. Two more performances from those sessions are included in this collection.

Texas Gladden's Musical Background

Texas Gladden was an articulate speaker, and her 1946 interviews with Alan Lomax vividly recall her early musical experiences and musical history. Growing up, Gladden learned music close to home, from her parents and family. When she went out to factory jobs, her horizons expanded as she learned songs from the other women she worked with. After she married at age seventeen, she spent her life at home once more, raising her children. With the exception of early festivals, fiddlers' conventions, and the Lomax recording sessions, her music was largely circumscribed by home, family, and the immediate neighborhood. It was then, especially, that radio and phonograph records became part of her music. Chris Gladden recalls his grandmother "singing old sentimental songs and popular songs around the house." He adds, "In the 1920s my grandmother would take her kids (she had nine) to sing at a fiddler convention and fair held at the Fort Lewis elementary school, and she was known for her singing around the community." Vicki Plue, one of her granddaughters, recalls that she and the other grandchildren would act out ballads as Gladden sang for them.

By contrast, Texas Gladden's brother, Hobart Smith, who was two years her junior, experienced the broader musical world that was accessible to men. Although he and his sister were raised to be close and their interest in music grew out of the same source, their musical histories went in quite different directions. Hobart Smith played in medicine shows, danced in contests, and traveled throughout the region performing with string bands at square dances. He played blues guitar and visited convict camps, and he performed for baptisms and church services. His role was as an entertainer, and he drew upon a wide range of both Negro and white sources, in commercial and noncommercial settings. Whereas in performance Smith was always reaching out toward an audience, Gladden was always reaching in to her immediate family.

It was only through Alfreda Peel and other collectors that Gladden became aware of the precious ballad-singing tradition she carried. Still, Gladden's understanding of her role in preserving the ballads is rich in insight. When Alan Lomax asked, "Was your idea to reproduce the song just like you heard it?" she said, "Oh, yes, except I felt like, that I could do something else with the song that no one else could do. And *that* I cannot explain. I just knew I could do something with that song that the person who was singing wasn't doing, see."

Her answer speaks to the old questions about ballad origins and composition, shedding light on the importance of individual aesthetic interpretation (her personal singing style) in passing on the songs from generation to generation. If the songs had to be sung precisely as they were learned, then they would dry up and disappear. When a singer can "do something with that song" as Gladden put it, the whole tradition is revitalized.

In the following dialog with Lomax, Gladden reveals the sources of her aesthetic choices and attitudes:

Lomax: *Well, who do you sing most like of your foreparents?*

Gladden: *My mother. My mother was a very beautiful singer.*

Lomax: *Did she pitch her voice the way you pitch yours?*

Gladden: *She did, and she could raise the hair on your head with anything she was in a mind to sing. She was really a good singer.*

Lomax: *Well, it always struck me how sad some of these old-timey songs were.*

Gladden: *She seemed to have a knack at making them sad, didn't she? Now, Dad, he would stick to the tune and to the words, straight through. He tried to make it sound like he had heard it all the time, like he had knew it. My mother, she had a knack of putting in little grace notes like I do sometimes, give it a little twist at the end of a note that no one else on earth can do unless they did just like I did, which is to start when they were small and pick it up like that.*

Alan Lomax continued his questions about the ornaments that Gladden applied to her melodies.

Lomax: *Well, what do they call that note there? Is there a name for it?*

Gladden: *No, they didn't have any name for it. Now, John Powell, the greatest authority on musical compositions in Virginia, he said to me, "I noticed you don't stick to the same notes every time you sing a song." "Well," I said, "If you would show me where I don't, I will try to stick to it." He said, "For God's sake, don't. Keep doing it like you always do."*

Lomax: *Mrs. Gladden, how did you get started singing old-time songs?*

Gladden: *Well, when I was just a baby, you might say, my father used to have an old banjo, and we had an old country home with a fireplace when we were children, and sometimes we would wonder how in the world we were all going to get near that fireplace when the weather was cold to keep warm. And at night after the evening meal was over, we'd gather round the fireplace oftentimes, Dad would suggest singing hymns—one hymn he liked especially was "I'm Bound for the Promised Land"—and we sang these old hymns, then he'd pick up his old banjo and start on some of these old tunes like "The Boatman Whistling," "Walking Boss," "Hawkins County Jail," "Cripple Creek," "John Henry," and all those things. He'd start on these old pieces and play the banjo for hours. Then they sang, some of the folks would start a song, all of us children would join in, and we'd sing these old love songs. Of course we didn't know they were ballads. In those days they weren't called ballads; we just called them love songs. I made it my business, when I was just a child, to try to sing those songs just as perfect as I could. I wanted to make them sound really pretty, to my own ears, don't you see. I just started out like that, and I want to tell you very frankly that all the things that you ever remember that amounts to anything in this life, you learn when you're young. And I think it behooves young people to start when they are really young and start packing things away in their minds. Because you'll never forget, and things I learned when I was just a little child is just as fresh in my memory. You can tell by the songs I memorized. When I learned these songs, I would just close the book, which is like a closed book, but I never forgot what was in the book, see. Now I can learn a song off the radio, a modern song. Well, it would take me two or three days to learn one now, one of these modern hits of the week, but I might forget it by next week. But the songs I learned when I was a little child I never forgot. And all the things I learned when I was a little child I never forgot.*

Lomax: *How long, when you were a young woman, did it take you to learn a song?*

Gladden: *Just one time. I'd get all the words and the tune. You know I never could have learned so many songs if I hadn't been able to take 'em quickly like that. I wonder at it myself now, since I'm older, how I ever, and even now since I had my last child. That's the way I learned "Mary Hamilton," just hear someone sing it one time.*

And later:

Lomax: *When you sang these songs back in the days before when the mountains began to have roads and mills, what was the response you got? Did people cry sometimes?*

Gladden: *Oh, yes, they would, You'd see a few tears well up sometimes. Most often I'd sing*

something that was jolly if I was with a bunch of young people, and they enjoyed the jolly songs more. Unless someone had been disappointed in love, they didn't care about the sad songs. But if they'd been disappointed, or had a lover's quarrel or something, then they like the sad ones.

Lomax: *What do you think this old-time love is made up of?*

Gladden: *Well, I don't know what it was made up of, but whatever it was, it was the real McCoy. Whatever this old-time love was, it was real, and these songs, you know, that was the best way they could find to express it, don't you think?*

Lomax: *I was just impressed at how sad love was in these old songs. Did you feel sad when you were in love?*

Gladden: *More or less.*

Lomax: *Didn't it make you feel happy? Or just sad?*

Gladden: *I was happy or sad. You can get mixed up in things. Few minutes be happy, few minutes be sad. I'd be happy when I'd think about my boyfriends, but when I'd think about marrying I'd straightaway feel sad fear of the unknown.*

Hobart Smith: *You fall out if you love someone?*

Gladden: *Oh, yes, that's why they [the songs] were made. Boys and girls would fall out; they'd have a quarrel, then they'd get off, set down and make up these old mournful love songs.*

Lomax: *What was your favorite old-time ballad, or some of the favorite ones?*

Gladden: *Well, "Drowsy Sleepers" was one of my favorites, and "Cold Mountains" and "Love's [unintelligible]." These were old love songs, that is why they were my favorites.*

And later:

Lomax: *You must have been in love at a mighty early age.*

Gladden: *I did that.*

Lomax: *Even when you were a tiny girl?*

Gladden: *Oh, no! At about fourteen I began having this puppy love, I believe. I married at seventeen.*

Lomax: *I mean, when you were a little tiny child.*

Gladden: *Oh, no. It was all just a beautiful story to me then. I used to love to hear my mother sing "The Two Brothers." It was such a beautiful sad story. I could see these little boys as they walked out, and one would ask the other if he could play ball or roll a marble stone. I can see him when he draws his tommyhawk and hatchet, across the breast, and I even see where he carries him and digs a hole and puts him in; everything just a perfect picture. I used to just revel in those stories when mother would sing me these songs.*

And later:

Lomax: *Let's get back to this family hearth where everything went on. You said you learned these songs so you could get closer to the fire than the other children. Is that what you were going to say?*

Gladden: *Well, no, it wasn't. But it used to seem impossible for all of us to get close to the fire, because all our cousins used to come in, see. My father's brothers lived real near us on either side; they had large families. After supper in the winter, these children would get in and we'd have the best time and they would sing. Their parents knew songs, old songs. I remember "Peggy and the Soldier"—my cousin Amy Smith used to sing that. We'd sing lots of songs sitting around the fire at night. And then the boys would get in a big scuffle and almost tear the house down*

sometimes. They'd crowd me out till finally I'd get cold and go to bed.

Hobart Smith: *The house'd get so cold you'd have to get in to warm your hands, then step back to give someone else a chance.*

Gladden: *It took place up on the mountain above Henrytown where Hobart lives—Saltville, Virginia. We have very kind feelings for the spot. There's nothing looks like it did in those days. It's all changed. The house burned down, there's a new house built there.*

Lomax: *This was a log cabin?*

Gladden: *Yes.*

Lomax: *How long had the Smiths been living in there?*

Gladden: *Well, my father built that house when I was five years old. The reason I remember this so well was that he was over working on the house and I got myself fastened in a nail keg, and my mother had to send for him to get me out. He tore the keg down and got me out. I couldn't get out. I was a monkey, did everything I saw everyone else do, I repeated everything I heard, and [was] quite mouthy. My older sisters used to say that that mouth of mine was going to ruin me.*

Lomax: *Were you given out to be the best singer of the girls in your family?*

Gladden: *The other girls do sing. My sister [unintelligible] was a very beautiful singer. But she didn't go in for learning so many different songs, she didn't know as many as I did, She didn't bother herself about it. I'm the third-oldest in the family, have two sisters older. Then Hobart is next to me. I'm two years older than Hobart.*

Lomax: *How come that family of yours got to be so musical?*

Gladden: *It's been handed down from generation to generation. The children just learn it from babies on up. I think the people back in those days were more sociable, and more inclined to get together and sing and do things. It seemed that every fellow wanted to know one more song than the other guy. After I was fourteen years old, I went to work at the soda factory, and all the girls I worked with, they knew songs. Every evening when I went home from work, I had a new song to sing, so help me I did! I'd hear it one time, and I'd go home and sing it. That's the way I picked them up from different people. If I set them all down I suspect it would be hundreds. There's so many, I don't even jot them down for ready reference. There's so many. And maybe some of them would be in demand if we just knew about them.*

In the Lomax Archive is a typed list of songs entitled *Mrs. Texas Gladden's Repertoire* that contains about 190 titles. At least a dozen of these are well known as Carter Family songs. There are a great many sentimental parlor songs and late-Victorian-era songs widely sung in the popular culture of the early twentieth century. There are others that are considered folk songs, but it is difficult to draw lines as to where the categories end or begin. In the list, "Mary Hamilton" and "The Devil's Nine Questions" sit adjacent to "Three Leaves of Shamrock" and "Baggage Coach Ahead." "John Henry" and "John Hardy" are alongside "No Telephone in Heaven" and "When You and I Were Young, Maggie." Folk classics such as "The Coo Coo Bird" and "Frog Went A-Courting" are not far from "Miss Lindy Lou from Kalamazoo."

Texas Gladden's Singing Style

Texas Gladden sang in a restrained but intense manner. Her timing was even-paced and showed great vocal control. She would sing flattened notes that were like blues, and her voice moved from note to note in a way that was ornamented beyond the simple outline of the melody. The piercing tone of her voice presents an opposition to the inherent sweetness of her singing. This combination is at the heart of her individual style, which is instantly recognizable.

Perhaps the most dramatic demonstration of her style can be heard by comparing her approach to the song “I’m Never to Marry” to the well-known Carter Family version. Gladden bends the notes, adds pronounced slides, slurs, and deliberately sings flat in the final phrase of her song, imparting a blues feeling and a minor key shading.

Although the generalization about ballad singing is that the dispassionate narrative of the story takes center stage, there are many approaches to ballad-singing style in the United States that reflect personal qualities of the singers. Jean Ritchie from Kentucky shares the sweetness of Gladden’s approach, while Almeda Riddle from Arkansas sang with more pronounced ornamentation. But nothing could be more different from Texas Gladden’s approach than the ballad singing of Dellie Norton of Sodom, North Carolina, which featured a great dynamic range, irregular rhythms, heavily ornamented melodies and yips at the end of her lines where the voice goes skyward. Aunt Mollie Jackson from Kentucky projected her voice with extended and pinched notes drawn out irregularly. This approach is also heard in the more bluegrass-determined singing of Hazel Dickens from West Virginia, especially in her unaccompanied voice. The stylizations of the ballad singers were markedly different from other female country singers: None of these women sang like Sara or Maybelle Carter of the Carter Family from nearby Big Stone Gap, Virginia, whose recordings were known across the Appalachians. And none of them resembled the country-music style used later by women on the Grand Ole Opry.

There thus appear to be many individualized approaches to ballad singing, from even and flat to emphatic and vigorous, plain or ornamented with flourishes and grace notes, or sounds flowing from note to note. Texas Gladden used a variety of stylistic approaches, depending on the type of song she sang or the particular melody. Her Child-derived ballads are sung with more evenness than songs such as “I’m Never to Marry” and “Old Kimball,” which are rich in ornaments, blues notes, and modal shifts and shadings.

In Alan Lomax’s long concern with traditional singing styles, he makes some stunning characterizations. In the notes to the 1948 Disc album *Texas Gladden Sings Blue Ridge Ballads*, he wrote “Texas sings her antique ballads in the fashion of ballad singers from time immemorial. The emotions are held in reserve: the singer does not color the story with heavy vocal underscoring; she allows the story to tell itself and the members of her audience to receive and interpret it in accordance with their own emotions.”

In the 1940s, when Alan Lomax was promoting traditional American music on the radio, in concerts, and in books, he used a writing style meant to convey his enthusiasm and to get the readers or audience involved in the music. By the late 1950s, his approach had become more analytical, and he found ways to communicate these same insights in more scientific terms. In “Folk Song Style,” his December, 1959 article for *American Anthropologist* Lomax compared American white singers to American Negro singers. He points out that despite white singers’ “swapping [of] tunes and texts with its neighboring Negro folk culture for almost two centuries, it is still possible to differentiate them.”

American White Folksinging Characteristics

- Solo voice: The group sits and listens, [singing] in poor unison on refrains, has to be taught harmony by a teacher.
- Physical stance: The body is held tensely, as the singer sits or stands stiffly erect. The head is

often thrown far back.

- Facial expression: The singing expression is masklike and withdrawn, and agonized on high notes.
- Vocal qualities: The voice is rigidly pitched, somewhat higher than the normal speaking tone, confined to a limited range of vocal color: It is often harsh, hard, nasal—the ideal being a pure violin-like tone with which the singer can make ornaments on the melody.
- Social functions: The songs serve to tell a story, point a moral, establish a mood, amuse, or instruct.
- Occasion: Much of the singing is done privately, in a mood of reverie or for close friends or relatives; public performances are the source of tension and embarrassment.
- Emotional content: Strong sexual and aggressive feelings are well masked in impersonal stories, in moralizing or melancholy songs, or in “funny” rhymes. The dominant mood in important songs is melancholic, nostalgic, factual, or comic. Strong death wish expressed.
- Learning process: Singers carefully memorize all details of the song from an authoritative source. They pride themselves on acquiring a ballad intact in one hearing. The words are learned first.
- Musical structure: Tunes are extended, ornamented, considered as units; fragmentation and excessive variation are disapproved of. Performances feature simple rhythms, which sometimes wander in conformity to the demands of the text.
- Lyrical structure: Texts normally dominate the song, employing strict stanzic structures. Memory slips are a source of embarrassment to the singer. Precise repetition is the desired trait.
- Ethnic influences: White folksingers in the United States have a style that still resembles the familiar folksinging style of Western Europe more than it does that of their Afro-American neighbors.

Texas Gladden became known outside her home because some of her family songs fitted into the ballad categories treasured by folklorists. Her eminence was already established when Lomax recorded her for the folk-song division of the Library of Congress, and his recordings and praise of her singing established her reputation on a wider stage. We now know from her grandson that she also sang a wide variety of songs from Tin Pan Alley and other songs learned from the radio.

Texas Gladden’s ballad legacy found a new audience during the 1960s, when young Joan Baez included traditional ballads such as “Mary Hamilton” on her first records. Baez’s interpretation, which was derived from Gladden’s Library of Congress recording, became an anthem of sorrow for young women during the folk revival. In recent years, as the folk revival has faded away, another group of female singers have taken up the ballads. They are all from the South, and from musical families. In their hands the ballads have a new life alongside fiddle tunes in the old-time music revival. These current singers include Hazel Dickens, Ginny Hawker, Sheila Kay Adams, Karey Fridley, and Carol Elizabeth Jones. Jean Ritchie has been singing ballads for a wide audience throughout her whole life. In contrast to Joan Baez’s approach, all these women focus on the traditional ways of singing. In their way of passing on the song, the style is as important as the text.

Chris Gladden has commented that his grandmother was a literate person, proper and always nicely dressed, with a dignified bearing—and that she did not come across as “country.” He added that his grandfather-in-law, who was English, came to live with Gladden’s family in Virginia, and that he may be the source for some of the ghost stories that Gladden told, especially

one about “raw hide and bloody bones,” which is from English lore. Texas Gladden and her husband James were Mormons, and respected matriarchs and patriarchs of the church to boot. Chris Gladden remembers that visiting Mormons would reverentially refer to his grandparents as Mom and Pop, while he knew them in local terms as Granny and Grandpa.

Chris Gladden’s father was not involved in music, and Chris did not pay much attention to his grandmother’s songs. While growing up he listened to rhythm and blues, the Kingston Trio, then Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. Finally, when he heard “Mary Hamilton,” he realized that Joan Baez was singing ballads learned from his grandmother, who died in 1967, never having been able to become an active part of the folk revival.

SONG NOTES

On all tracks the vocal is performed by Texas Gladden, unaccompanied unless noted otherwise. All songs followed by an AFS number (e.g., AFS 5230 A1) were recorded in August of 1941, in Salem, Virginia, for the Library of Congress. These disc numbers are part of a library system used by the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. The remaining tracks, unless otherwise noted, were recorded in New York City in 1946.

1. THE DEVIL AND THE FARMER’S WIFE (Child 278)

Performed by Texas Gladden (vocal), Hobart Smith (guitar). Originally issued on Disc records.

This story of the woman who is taken to Hell and then beats up the devil has been popular with traditional singers in all parts of the United States. Most versions have a chorus made up of “fi diddle i day” syllables. In the state of Texas it is “Oh, Daddy, be good,” and in the Catskills, “fa la fa lonnie go.” In East Kentucky the song was known as “The Booger Man in the Bushes.”

In Gladden’s version, the farmer “hooked a sow and a cow to the plow, they plowed the sod under and the devil knew how.” When the devil appears, he is not just a symbol of evil, but is personified and described, and his hooves go clickety-clack. “The old man was peeking through the crack” may be an archaic reference to the passageway to hell. This is not a moralistic or religious story; rather, it reflects on the ongoing struggle between women and men, on the character of independent women, and on the woman’s power to “out-do the devil and the old man too.”

The image of the woman raising hell in Hell is medieval in character, and is shown in Pieter Brueghel’s painting of Mad Meg leading her army of women into Hades, where they beat up on the devils. It is a Bosch-like depiction, with surreal imagery in today’s terms. Equally surreal is how an image from the Middle Ages remains alive outside the traditions of literature and painting, surviving within the narrative of ballad singing.

Hobart Smith’s guitar playing here serves as a second voice rather than as a simple accompaniment. Since he and Gladden grew up together, their versions are identical, and her vocal decorations are echoed in the guitar description of the same melody.

*There was an old man and he owned a large farm,
And he had no horses to plow his land.*

Refrain: *And a fye-dye, diddle-aye-day, diddle-aye, diddle-aye, day.*

*Then he hooked up the cow and the sow to the plow,
And he turned the sod, the devil knows how.*

*Then the devil came to the old man one day,
Says, "One of your family I'll sure take away."*

*Then said the old man, "Now surely I'm done,
For the devil's done come for my oldest son."*

*"It's not your oldest son I crave,
But your old scolding wife I'll sure take away."*

*"Then take her away with all your heart,
I hope from Hell she never does part."*

*Then he shouldered her up all on his back,
And off to Hell he went clickety-clack.*

*Then he set her down at the forks of the road,
And he said, "Old gal, you're a terrible load."*

*Then he set her down at old Hell's gate,
And there he made the old gal walk straight.*

*Then two little devils come a-rattlin' their chains,
An' she offed with her slipper an' she knocked out their brains.*

*Then one little devil went a-climbin' the wall,
Says, "Take her back, Daddy, she's a-murderin' us all."*

*Then he shouldered her up all on his back,
And like an old fool, he went luggin' her back.*

*The old man was a-peepin' though the crack,
And he saw the old devil come a-luggin' her back.*

*The old man was a-lying sick in the bed,
And she took the butter stick and paddled his head.*

*Then said the old man, "We're bound for a curse,
For she's been to Hell and she's ten times worse."*

*The old woman went a-whistlin' over the hill,
Saying, "The devil won't have me, I wonder who will."*

*Then surely the women are worse than the men,
For they've been to Hell and come back again.*

2. ONE MORNING IN MAY (AFS 5230 A1)

This is widely sung as the story of the dying cowboy who has been shot in the heart. Most Americans know it as "The Streets of Laredo," with the last verse, "beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly, for I'm a young cowboy and know I've done wrong." Texas Gladden is singing another version of the song, where the protagonist is dying of syphilis, not from a gunshot. In Gladden's text, "my body's salivated" is not a reference to salvation, but to the toxic effects of the mercury that was administered in times past as a treatment for venereal disease.

An earlier Irish version found in print was called "The Unfortunate Rake," and the form of the song has given birth to many parodies such as "The Dying Aviator." In other versions it is known as "St. James Hospital," or as the blues/Dixieland song "Saint James Infirmary." Gladden's version presents the story from a young woman's viewpoint. It has been suggested that the "roses" the dying person asked to be placed on the coffin were more to kill the smell of decay than to "soften the clods as they fall."

The beauty and intensity of Texas Gladden's singing has created a performance of this song that stands alone in American music. The voice of her protagonist is female; the song starts with "when I was a young girl, I used to seek pleasure." Gladden's singing transcends the moralizing that underlies other versions, transforming the song into a personal contemplation of tragedy and death.

*When I was a young girl, I used to seek pleasure;
When I was a young girl, I used to drink ale;
Out of the alehouse and into a jailhouse,
Right out of a barroom and down to my grave.*

*"Come, Papa, come, Mama, and sit you down by me,
Come sit you down by me and pity my case;
My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking,
My body's salivated and I'm bound to die.*

*"Oh, send for the preacher to come and pray for me,
And send for the doctor to heal up my wounds;
My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking,
My body's salivated and Hell is my doom.*

*"I want three young ladies to bear up my coffin,
I want four young ladies to carry me on;
And each of them carry a bunch of wild roses
To lay on my coffin as I pass along."*

*One morning, one morning, one morning in May
I spied this young lady all wrapped in white linen,*

All wrapped in white linen and cold as the clay.

3. MENTAL PICTURES (Interview)

Previously unreleased.

See the introduction for a transcription of this interview.

4. MARY HAMILTON (AFS 5323 A5) (Child 173)

This old story has the amazing power to infatuate modern listeners as a narrative of history that reads like a romance. The inevitable drama told in the song may be more comprehensible than the history of the song itself. “Mary Hamilton” is probably about four women named Mary who attended Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots) in 1561. According to A. K. Davis’s introduction to the song in *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, “The usual story of the ballad is that one of these, Mary Hamilton, is with child, hinting that the father is ‘the highest Stuart of all.’ The mother does away with the babe by wrapping it up and throwing it into the sea, but not before the queen has heard it cry and suspects the truth, followed by Mary’s trial and execution. A similar child-murder took place at the court of Czar Peter the Great in 1719 involving a Mary Hamilton, attendant upon the Empress Catherine and a Russian officer named Orlof.... This possibility was discussed long ago by such authorities as Professor Child.”

The song was collected in 1922 from Mrs. Marion Chandler of Salem, Virginia. Alfreda Peel was the collector, and says in a personal note, “It was sung to me by my grandmother when I was little. Her family came from England, and my grandmother’s family all fought with the Stuarts.”

A. K. Davis adds, “The melody is indeed very lovely, even when sung with the Virginia ‘mountain whine’ which Miss Peel can reproduce so perfectly.” In his book introduction, Davis notes, “The strange sing-song sometimes unappreciatively referred to as the ‘mountain whine’ is apt to display a lack of accuracy in pitch and accent.” This way of describing ballad-singing style reflects on the scholar/collector’s inability to accept this nuanced musical tradition. Listen to Joan Baez’s version of “Mary Hamilton” for another stylistic interpretation.

*Word has come from the kitchen,
And word has come to me,
That Mary Hamilton drowned her babe,
And threw him into the sea.*

*Down came the old Queen,
Gold tassels around her head.
“Oh, Mary Hamilton, where’s your babe,
That was sleeping in your bed?”*

*“Oh, Mary, put on your robe so black,
And yet your robe so brown,
That you might go with me this day,
To view fair Edinburgh town.”*

*She didn't put on her robe so black,
Nor yet her robe so brown,
But she put on her snow-white robe,
To view fair Edinburgh town.*

*As she passed though the Cannogate [Canongate],
The Cannogate passed she,
The ladies looked over their casements,
And they wept for this lady.*

*As she went up the Parliament steps,
A loud, loud laugh laughed she.
As she came down the Parliament steps,
She was condemned to dee [die].*

*“Oh, bring to me some red, red wine,
The reddest that can be,
That I might drink to the jolly bold sailors,
That brought me over the sea.*

*“Oh, tie a napkin o'er my eyes,
And ne'er let me see to dee,
And ne'er let on to my father and mother,
I died way over the sea.*

*“Last night I washed the old Queen's feet,
And carried her to her bed,
And all the reward I received for this,
The gallows hard to tread.*

*“Last night there were four Marys,
Tonight there'll be but three.
There was Mary Beaton and Mary Seton,
And Mary Carmichael and me.”*

5. KIND SIR, I SEE YOU'VE COME AGAIN (Courting Case) (AFS 5233 A3)

Previously unreleased.

This text contains a litany of women's complaints about men—they play cards, they are hard to please, they will sell a horse for rum—and it concludes with, “I wouldn't marry a drunkard like you.” In 1918 Cecil Sharp collected another version in Virginia, with the following female responses: “Oh, yes, you have a very fine farm / And a piece of woods to boot, / But when I get in that fine farm / I'll hang you on a root” and “Oh, yes, you have a very fine house / And it's plastered white inside, / But when I get in that fine house / I'll soon shut you outside.”

*“Kind sir, I see you've come again,
Pray tell me what it's for?”*

*I thought I told you on yonder's hill,
You need not come anymore, anymore,
You need not come anymore."*

*"Kind miss, I have a very fine house,
And also a very fine yard,
And it should be at your command,
If you would be my bride, bride,
If you would be my bride."*

*"I know you have a very fine house,
And also a very fine yard,
But who would stay with me every night,
While you was a-playing your cards, cards,
While you was a-playing your cards?"*

*"Kind miss, I have a very fine horse
That stands in yonder's barn,
And it should be at your command,
Whenever you wish to ride, ride,
Whenever you wish to ride."*

*"I know you have a very fine horse
That stands in yonder's barn.
I'm afraid his master would get drunk,
And sell his horse for rum, rum,
And sell his horse for rum."*

*"Kind miss, you are a hard old case,
And most too hard to please.
Some cold night when you're alone,
I hope to the Lord you'll freeze, freeze,
I hope to the Lord you'll freeze."*

*"I know I am a hard old case,
And most too hard for you.
I'd rather live single and die an old maid,
Than to marry a drunkard like you, you,
Than to marry a drunkard like you."*

6. THE DEVIL'S NINE QUESTIONS (AFS 5231 A1) (Child 1)

This is an extremely rare ballad, and is the first in Child's canon. Alfreda Peel collected it in 1922 and then taught it to Texas Gladden. As in other ballads, the devil is present and personified, and referred to as "meaner than womankind" (a theme also found in "The Devil and the Farmer's Wife").

*“Oh, you must answer my questions nine,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
Or you’re not God’s, you’re one of mine,
And you are the weaver’s bonny.*

*“What is whiter than milk?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And what is softer than the silk?
And you are the weaver’s bonny.”*

*“Snow is whiter than the milk,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety,
And down is softer than the silk,
And I am the weaver’s bonny.”*

*“Oh, what is higher than a tree?
And what is deeper than the sea?”*

*“Heaven’s higher than a tree,
And Hell is deeper than the sea.”*

*“What is louder than a horn?
And what is sharper than a thorn?”*

*“Thunder’s louder than a horn,
And death is sharper than a thorn.”*

*“What’s more innocent than a lamb?
And what is meaner than womankind?”*

*“A babe’s more innocent than a lamb,
And the devil is meaner than womankind.”*

*“Oh, you have answered my questions nine,
And you are God’s, you’re none of mine.”*

Gladden: [spoken] *I learned that one from Alfreda (Peel). That’s an old English ballad that dates back about forty years before Columbus, I think.*

7. I’M NEVER TO MARRY (THE GIRL THAT I HATED)

Originally issued on Disc Records.

Gladden refers to this song as “Down by the Sea Shore” and “The Girl That I Hated.” She said, “I learned that so long ago, when I was working in the soda factory” (which was before 1911). Her text and tune are related to the Carter Family song “I Never Will Marry.” Gladden’s version gives different details, especially in the ending, where “the girl that I hated is being my wife.” Her melody is more mournful and full of bluesy embellishments than the Carter Family version.

In his 1948 album notes, Alan Lomax observed that “even more important to American backwoods singers than the ballads, were exquisite lyric songs that came from England, Scotland and Ireland.... The finest American folk song products have been love songs rather than ballads.” He goes on to explain, “To a ballad collector it seems as if the great freedom the people achieved in coming to a new land and setting up their own kind of world was the freedom to love and to marry whom they pleased.” He adds, “It is pretty certain that ‘I Never Will Marry’ is an American original, possibly set to some old Anglo-American tune.... Its rendition by Mrs. Gladden is one of the most exquisite things in American folklore.” Lomax tells about not only the meaning of the song but also its significance and how he feels about it.

In *Ozark Folksongs*, where the song is called “Down by the Sea-Shore” or “The Shells in the Ocean,” Vance Randolph writes, “For British texts see Ebsworth (The Roxburghe Ballads) 1883.” He lists other versions from Iowa, from Georgia (as “The Fair Damsel”), from Tennessee, and from Searcy County, Arkansas. Mrs. Emma Dusenbury, the blind singer from Mena, Arkansas, who recorded many songs for the Library of Congress, knew a version she learned in about 1879.

Lost love and seashore themes are also heard in sentimental country songs such as “Love Letters in the Sand.” Ralph Stanley, the great bluegrass singer from southwest Virginia, recently recorded “I Never Will Marry” with Emmylou Harris as a call-and-response song, which strongly resembles the way Pete Seeger leads choruses in singing the same song. Seeger converted the Carter Family version into a sing-along. Texas Gladden sang it as a more solitary affair.

*One morning I rambled
Down by the seashore.
The wind, it did whistle,
And the waters did roar.*

*I heard some fair maiden
Give a pitiful cry,
And it sounded so lonely,
It swept off on high.*

*Said William to Molly,
“If you will agree
To give your consent, love,
To marry me.*

*“My mind is to marry,
And never to part.
For the first time I saw you,
You wounded my heart.”*

*“Go away from me, William,
And leave me alone,*

*For I am a poor girl,
And a long ways from home.*

*“I’m never to marry,
Nor be no man’s wife.
I intend to live single
All the days of my life.*

*“The shells in the ocean
Shall be my deathbed,
While the fish in the water
Swim over my head.”*

*She cast her fair body,
In the water so deep,
And she closed her pretty blue eyes,
Forever to sleep.*

*“You promised to marry,
You blighted my life.
Now the girl that I hated
Is being my wife.”*

8. MY MOTHER (Interview)

Previously unreleased.

See the introduction for a transcription of this interview.

9. ROSE CONNELLY

Performed by Texas Gladden (vocal), Hobart Smith (fiddle). Originally issued on Disc records.

Hobart Smith’s fiddle closely follows his sister’s breathing pattern and singing style, her phrasing and ornamentation. It is fascinating to hear them articulate the melody this way, with the fiddle adding a dronelike quality.

Although there are many variants of this song found in the United States, it is also mentioned in a few Irish texts, including one from 1811. The melody is always based on the old tune “Rosin the Bow.” The song shares elements with many murder ballads found in the United States such as “Pretty Polly,” “Naomi Wise,” “Tom Dooley,” and “The Banks of the Ohio,” where the young man does away with his girlfriend rather than marry her. Usually the song is presented as a confession from a jail cell, and all parties are warned about inappropriate social behavior and justice.

Alan Lomax commented about this performance by Gladden and Smith: “This record may at first prove hard listening to some of you. We are not accustomed in this day [the 1940s] to hear ballads accompanied by the fiddle, especially played in such a wailing bagpipe style. Yet this was the way ballads were accompanied on the early frontier.... In the minds of our sometimes dour

and bloody-minded ancestors, who relished a good murder tale beyond anything else in the shape of poetry, the wailing howling fiddle added savor to such tales.”

The ballad was first recorded commercially by G. B. Grayson and Henry Whitter for the Victor Recording Company on October 9, 1928. Whitter, from Fries, Virginia, was one of the earliest “hillbilly” performers to record. It was recorded again by Wade Mainer and Zeke Morris in 1937 for Bluebird, and again in 1947 by Charlie Monroe and His Kentucky Partners as “Down in the Willow Garden” for RCA Victor. It has remained popular in the bluegrass repertoire for the past fifty years.

*It was in a willow garden,
That me and my true love strayed.
It was there I sat a-courtin’,
My love dropped off to sleep.*

*I had a bottle of virgin wine,
My true love did not know.
That’s why I murdered that dear little girl
Down under the bank below.*

*I stabbed her with a dagger,
Which was a bloody knife.
I threw her in the river,
Which was an awful sight.*

*My father often told me
That money would set me free.
That’s why I murdered that dear little girl,
Whose name was Rose Connelly.*

*My father sits in his cabin door,
A-wiping his dear, dimmed eyes,
While his own dear son is hanging,
Out on the scaffold high.*

*My race is run beneath the sun,
No help awaits for me,
Because I murdered that dear little girl,
Whose name was Rose Connelly.*

10. BEEN TOO BUSY RAISING BABIES (Interview)

Previously unreleased.

Lomax: *You never have made any professional use of your singing at all, have you, Texas?*

Gladden: *Been too busy raising babies. When you bring up nine, you have your hands full. All I could sing was lullabies!*

11. HUSH, BABY, DON'T YOU CRY (AFS 5233 A4)

Previously unreleased.

There is much less written material about lullabies than about ballads, but this is possibly the most widely known song on this CD, having serviced generations of babies across America. Texas Gladden raised nine children and got a lot of mileage from such songs. Gladden's version presents some lively variations of the text. The Horseflies perform also perform this as a reggae song, and Bo Diddley recorded his own rock-and-roll version: "Bo Diddley bought baby a diamond ring. // If that diamond ring don't shine, / He gonna take it to a private eye. // If that private eye can't see, / He better not take it away from me."

In *Ozark Folksongs*, Vance Randolph quotes a verse sung by Ora Dusenbury, who explained that the final stanza refers to an old belief that mirrors "shine" only for virgins and faithful wives: "If the golden ring is brass, / Papa's going to buy me a looking glass. / If the lookin' glass don't shine, / Papa's going to shoot that beau of mine."

*Mama, mama, have you heard?
Papa's gonna buy me a mockingbird.*

*If that mockingbird don't sing,
Papa's gonna buy me a diamond ring.*

*If that diamond ring turns brass,
Papa's gonna buy me a looking glass.*

*If that looking glass gets broke,
Papa's gonna buy me a billy goat.*

*If that billy goat runs away,
Papa's gonna buy me an iron gray.*

*If that iron gray don't trot,
Papa's gonna buy me a house and lot.*

*If that house and lot don't suit,
Papa's gonna buy me a hoopty-toot.*

12. THE THREE BABES (AFS 5231 B1) (Child 79, "The Wife of Usher's Well")

This ballad of a mother mourning the death of her three babies takes on a mystical, religious turn. References to a knight, *gramerie*, a table of bread and wine, and a winding sheet evoke an ancient history. In some versions, the ghosts of the children disappear when the Savior calls them. "The tears my dear mother has shed for me / Would wet my winding sheet."

Gladden commented, "'Three Babes,' it was an English ballad, and it was one of Child's. The lady sent her kids off to school and there was some sort of epidemic. It bore on her mind; she worried of it. It was all in her mind's eye: The story bears out that they were spirits; the spirit of

the children came back. She thought it was some kind of punishment 'cause she sent them away to school. They refuse [their mother's food] because they were only there in spirit."

In *The Folksongs of North America*, Alan Lomax suggested that the pioneer women actively cultivated these old songs because they were "vehicles for fantasies, wishes, and norms of behavior which corresponded to...[their] emotional needs...[These ballads] represented the deepest emotional preoccupations of women who lived within the patriarchal family system of their close-knit society."

Andrew L. Kaye writes, "It is a delicate melody using only six tones (an authentic pentatonic mode with the octave repeated) and remains within the range of an octave (the scale is D-F-G-A-C'-D'). The interval of the minor third is emphasized in both the lower and upper tetra chords of the melody."

The song is also known as "The Lady Gay," and it was recorded commercially with banjo accompaniment in the late 1920s by Buell Kazee. Tracy Schwarz of the New Lost City Ramblers has been singing Gladden's unaccompanied version in concerts. His vocal style makes it sound like Ralph Stanley doing an old Baptist hymn. Bob Dylan selected "Lady Gay" for *Sing Out* magazine. In an interview, he said, "Folk music is the only music where it isn't simple. It's never been simple. It's weird, man, full of legend, myth, Bible and ghosts. I've never written anything hard to understand, not in my head anyway, and nothing as far out as some of the old songs."

*There was a knight and a lady bright,
And three little babes had she.
She sent them away to a far country
To learn their gramerie.*

*They hadn't been gone but a very short time,
About three months and a day,
Till the Lord called over this whole wide world,
And taken those babes away.*

*It was on a dark, cold Christmas night,
When everything was still,
She saw her three little babes come running,
Come running down the hill.*

*She spread a table of bread and wine,
That they might drink and eat.
She spread a bed of winding sheet,
That they might sleep so sweet.*

*"Take it off, take it off," said the oldest one,
"Take it off, take it off," said she.
"I can't stay here in this wide wicked world,
For there's a better one for me."*

*“Cold clods, cold clods down by my side,
Cold clods down at my feet.
The tears my dear mother has shed for me
Would wet my winding sheet.”*

13. OLD-TIME LOVE (Interview)

Previously unreleased.

See the introduction for a transcription of this interview.

14. BARBARA ALLEN (AFS 5232 A1) (Child 84)

Previously unreleased.

“Barbara Allen” is possibly the most well-known traditional ballad in the English language. Charles Seeger produced a scholarly study of thirty different recorded versions and variants of “Barbara Allen” at the Library of Congress (AAFS L54). At the time of his writing, there were more than 240 transcriptions of “Barbara Allen” in the Library of Congress archive, of which one third were field recordings. Seeger noted that there are two major tune families used for this song.

Texas Gladden adds a few new twists to the text: “In London Town, that’s where I *got my learning*,” “*Courted her for seven long years*,” “*She dressed so slow, for she hated to go*,” “*And bursted out to crying*,” “*birds a-singing . . . Hard-hearted Barbry Allen*,” “*I might have saved this young man’s life*,” “and the rose *ran down the briar*.”

The song was first made popular on 78 rpm records by Bradley Kinkcaid in the 1930s and by Bob Atcher in the 1940s. Its text is sometimes encountered in country-song folios. It has been recorded by Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, and the Lilly Brothers (in bluegrass style). On *Mountain Music of Kentucky* (Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40077), James Cornett sings an unaccompanied modal version.

Bob Dylan makes reference to “Barbara Allen” in his oft-quoted statement, “There’s nobody that’s going to kill traditional music. All these songs about *roses growing out of people’s brains* and lovers who are really geese and swans and turn into angels, they’re not going to die.”

*Away down yonder in London town,
That’s where I got my learning,
I fell in love with a nice young girl.
Her name was Barbry Allen.*

*I courted her for seven long years,
She said she would not marry.
Sweet Willie went home and taken sick,
And sent for Barbry Allen.*

*She dressed so slow, for she hated to go,
“Go tell him I am coming.”*

*As she went walking to the room,
She heard some bells a-ringing.*

*She walked up to Sweet Willie's bedside,
"Young man, I think you're dying."
He turned to face to the cold, cold wall,
And bursted out to crying.*

*"Do you remember the other day,
Down at the tavern, drinking?
You drank your health to the ladies all round,
And slighted Barbry Allen."*

*"Oh no, oh no, oh no," said he,
"I think you are mistaking.
I drank my health to the ladies all round,
My love to Barbry Allen."*

*As she went walking up the road,
She heard some birds a-singing,
And every one, it seemed to say,
"Hard-hearted Barbry Allen."*

*She looked to the east, she looked to the west,
And saw the corpse a-coming.
"Oh, bring him on and let him down,
That I might look upon him."*

*The more she looked, the more she wept,
She bursted out to crying.
"I might have saved this young man's life,
And kept him from hard dying."*

*"Oh, mother, mother, go make my bed.
Oh, make it long and narrow,
For Willie's died for the love of me.
And I shall die for sorrow."*

*They buried sweet Willie in the new churchyard,
And Barbry in the tyre.
On Willie's grave sprang a bright red rose,
On Barbry Allen's, a green briar.*

*They grew as tall as the new church tower,
They could not grow any higher.
They wrapped and tied in a true love knot,
And the rose ran down the briar.*

15. LORD THOMAS (AFS 5232 B) (Child 73)

Previously unreleased.

Here is a four-hundred-year-old story about the English aristocracy carrying out brutal intrigues, living in grand manor houses, gathering in halls with ladies-in-waiting, lords and swords. The song has been collected from Appalachian people raised in log houses, singing by the family hearth.

According to *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, there are more than 37 variants of three different ballads with intertwined plots telling this story (“Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender,” “Fair Ellender,” “The Brown Girl”). They read like plot outlines for a soap opera. The story begins with riddles, as Fair Ellender asks whether she should marry for beauty or for economic security. Further developments of jealousy and family ties resemble Elizabethan drama. Some versions end with the rose-and-briar theme found in “Barbara Allen,” but Texas Gladden’s gory tale has the brown girl sticking Fair Ellen with her penknife, Lord Thomas beheading the brown girl and kicking her head against the wall and then taking his own life. “Here is the last of three true lovers.”

Gladden’s melody for “Lord Thomas” is simpler and more regular than many of her songs. There is less of the ornamentation, flatted notes, and odd phrasing that she often uses. A possible interpretation is that in the past this melody might have accompanied a dance as well; the etymological linkage between the words *ballad* and *ballet* (both derived from the Latin *ballare*) gives support to this interpretation. Many mountain singers refer to the words of their songs as “ballets” and keep them in handwritten books.

*“Oh, mother, oh, mother, I’m going to get married,
And never more will I roam.
Fair Ellen is going to be my bride,
Please let me bring her home.”*

*“The brown girl, she has houses and land,
Fair Ellen, she has none.
So I would advise my own dear son
To bring the brown girl home.”*

*Fair Ellen, she told her waiting maids,
One and two and three,
Saying, “Lord Thomas is going to be married,
Lord Thomas’s wedding I’ll see.”*

*She walked up to Lord Thomas’s door,
And rattled and jingled the bell.
No one was there but Lord Thomas himself
Would rise and let her in.*

He took her by her lily-white hand

*And led her to the hall.
He sat her down at the head of the table
Among the ladies all.*

*The brown girl had a little thin knife—
Was awful sharp and keen.
She pierced it through Fair Ellen's heart,
Never to rise again.*

*“Oh, what's the matter with my own true love?
Oh, what's the matter with thee?”
“Oh, can't you see my own heart's blood,
A-trickling down by me?”*

*He took the brown girl by the hand,
And led her from the hall.
He took his sword and cut off her head
and kicked it against the wall.*

*He took the sword up off of the floor
And pierced it through his breast.
Saying, “Here is the last of three true lovers,
I'll send them home to rest.”*

16. THE TWO BROTHERS (Interview)

Previously unreleased.

See the introduction for a transcription of this interview.

17. THE TWO BROTHERS (AFS 5230 A2) (Child 49)

Previously unreleased.

Ballad scholars have always been impressed by the mythic qualities of the Child ballads, and how they echo both Biblical themes and ancient Greek legends. I've been impressed by the way the story of “The Two Brothers” has been passed down in Appalachian tradition, with the leading roles done by schoolboys who play ball, roll marble stones, and kill each other with tomahawks.

In his notes to *Anglo-American Ballads, Vol. 2* (Rounder CD 1516) Ben Botkin commented on Texas Gladden's recording: “For sheer pathos ‘The Twa Brothers’ is unsurpassed among ballads of domestic tragedy. Some versions show a marked resemblance to ‘Edward’ in the closing stanzas, in which the murderous brother, after protesting that the blood on his knife is that of a hawk, greyhound, or steed, confesses it to be that of his slain brother. In other versions the killing is accidental. Stripped of all semblance of the murderer's remorse, the present version compresses the harrowing story into nine graphic stanzas, preserving a nice balance between narrative and dialog elements.”

On the companion CD to this one, Hobart Smith sings “The Two Brothers” with guitar

accompaniment in three-quarter time. Rhythm is heavily stressed in comparison to Gladden's unaccompanied version, yet the siblings' singing renditions of the melody and ornamentation are almost identical.

*"Oh, brother, oh, brother, can you play ball,
Or roll a marble stone?"*

*"No, brother, no, brother, I can't play ball,
Nor roll a marble stone." [repeat last line, for each stanza]*

*He took his tommyhawk from him,
He hacked him across the breast,
Saying, "Now, brother, I reckon you can't play ball
Nor roll a marble stone."*

*"Oh, take my hunting shirt from me,
And tear it from gore to gore,
And wrap it around my bleeding breast,
That it might bleed no more."*

*He took his hunting shirt from him,
And tore it from gore to gore,
And wrapped it around his bleeding breast,
But it still bled the more.*

*"Oh, brother, when you go home tonight,
My mother will ask for me.
You must tell her I've gone with some little schoolboys
Tomorrow night I'll be at home.*

*"My little sister will ask for me.
The truth to her you must tell.
You must tell her I'm dead and in grave laid,
And buried at Chesley town.*

*"Oh, take me up all on your back,
And carry me to Chesley town,
And dig a hole and lay me in,
That I might sleep so sound."*

*He took him up all on his back,
And carried him to Chesley town,
And dug a hole and laid him in,
That he might sleep so sound.*

*He laid his bible under his head,
His tommyhawk at his feet,
His bow and arrow across his breast,*

That he might sleep so sweet.

18. OLD KIMBALL (AFS 5233 B)

Gladden's song starts with the story of a racehorse and ends with a complaint about love between young women and young men. The fragments of text, and the melody's similarity to Hobart Smith's "Cuckoo Bird," reveal a tangled history and convergence of texts that can be unraveled sufficiently to reveal further tangles.

The Kentucky folklorist D. K. Wilgus traces one origin of the song to Ireland, where a race was run between two horses named "Skew Ball" and "Miss Portly." This was celebrated in an Anglo-Irish street ballad entitled "The Nobel Skew Ball," known in print as early as 1822. In the United States it was collected in New England and the South, and by 1868 it was found in Southern Negro tradition. In Gladden's version, Skew Ball becomes Kimball, and Miss Portly becomes Nellie.

In Louisville, Kentucky, on July 4, 1878, there was a race in which the Kentucky thoroughbred Ten Broeck beat the mare Miss Mollie McCarthy, a horse from California, "on the first go-round." The song that celebrated this race borrowed from the earlier "Skew Ball," and eventually the elements of these songs commingled. Bill Monroe recorded his own version of the Kentucky race in bluegrass style as "Molly and Tenbrooks (The Race Horse Song)." Another Kentucky version was recorded earlier by the Carver Boys as "Old Tim Brooks." Their cousin, known professionally Cousin Emmy (Cynthia May Carver), recorded "Old Tim Brooks" with the New Lost City Ramblers. The black Texas musician Henry Thomas recorded the song as "Run, Mollie, Run"; Jim Byrd recorded it as "Timbrook Blues"; and Leadbelly recorded it as "Stewball."

Texas Gladden's chorus "On the fourth day of July," is from the Ten Broeck event, while her horses are from the Irish "Skew Ball" and her melody is the same as Hobart Smith's and Clarence Ashley's "Coo Coo Bird." In his text, the bird hollers "Coo Coo" on the "fourth day of July." Clarence Ashley's call-and-response form can be heard in Hobart Smith's banjo version of the song. A review of the intertwined sources of Gladden's version must also acknowledge that Smith and Gladden were brother and sister, that Smith was a friend of Clarence Ashley, and that Smith said he learned the song from John Greer—and on and on it goes.

*Old Kimball was a gray mare,
Old Nellie was a brown.
Old Kimball beat old Nellie
On the very first go-round.*

Chorus: *And I see, and I see,
On the fourth day of July*

*His bridle made of silver,
His saddle made of gold,
And the value of his harness,
It has never yet been told.*

[repeat chorus]

*I'll get up in my buggy,
With my lines in my hand.
"Good morning, young lady."
"Good morning, young man."*

*I often have wondered,
What makes women love men?
Then I look back and wonder,
What makes men love them?*

[repeat chorus]

*They'll cause you hard labor,
They'll cause you downfall,
They'll cause you hard labor,
Oh, behind the old jail wall.*

[repeat chorus]

19. THE SCOLDING WIFE (AFS 5232 A2)

Previously unreleased.

In *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, Cecil Sharp reports three versions of this song as "The Holly Twig," all collected in Virginia, including this one: "She riz in a fit and scolded me more / Than ever I was scolded before. / Saturday, boys, I slammed her well. / I kicked her and cuffed her to the lowest pits of hell. / The ruby and the booby and two little devils came, / They carried her off in a fire of flame."

There are many old songs about "the scolding wife," and none are pleasant. Perhaps in their time they were considered humorous, but from today's perspective they are evidence of domestic violence. As told from the man's point of view, they reveal a once-acceptable kind of brutality against women. Hearing such words in the voice of Gladden becomes particularly poignant.

Uncle Dave Macon once sang these words: "If I had a scolding wife, / I sure would whup her some. / Run my finger down her throat, / Gag her with my thumb." Similarly, the Carter Brothers and Son sang: "If I had a scolding wife, / Whup her sure as you're born, / Send her down to New Orleans, / Trade her off for corn."

In "The Wife Wrapt in Wether's Skin" (Child 277), the husband finds a way to beat his wife by covering her in a sheepskin: "I'll tell my brothers and sisters three / How you have been treating me. / You can tell your brothers and all your kin / How I beat my old sheepskin."

*On Monday morning I married a wife,
Hoping to make her the joy of my life.*

*On Tuesday morning I carried her home,
Instead of a wife, a scolding drone.*

*On Wednesday morning I went to the wood,
Hoping that I might do her some good.
I cut me some switches so sharp and keen,
The keenest of things that I've ever seen.*

*Thursday morning I waled her well,
The truth, young man, to you I will tell,
And if she is not better tomorrow,
I'll wail her some more to her great sorrow.*

*On Friday morning, just before day,
On her bed she scolding lay,
When in came two of the devil's train
And carried her off in a dust of wind.*

*On Saturday morning, all alone,
I had no wife nor scolding drone,
And my week's work was at an end,
And my whiskey bottle was my best friend.*

20. MY LOVIN' OLD HUSBAND (AFS 5233 A2)

Previously unreleased.

This song has surfaced under various titles, such as “Best Old Feller in the World” (collected in Vance Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs*), “Where Have You Been, My Good Old Man?” (collected in John Lomax and Alan Lomax, *Our Singing Country*), “My Good Old Man” (as sung by Jean Ritchie), “The Old Drunkard and His Wife” (“Le Vieux Souard et Sa Femme”), and “The Hot Potato” (“La Patate Chaude,” on *Folksongs of the Louisiana Cajuns*, Arhoolie 359). What distinguishes all the versions is the husband’s spoken response to the wife’s questions. Jean Ritchie recalls from her Kentucky childhood: “The song we called ‘My Good Old Man’ was still haunty enough to belong to the good ghostly feeling . . . and not fearsome enough to make the child cry.” A 1928 Columbia recording of this song in Cajun French by Cleoma Breaux and Joseph Falcon can be heard on the *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090).

In this song, what begins as a jokey exchange between a wife and her dying husband ends up with a supernatural tale about afterlife and haunted spouses. (Gladden also told ghost stories to her children.) In a version from Missouri, the wife asks, “Where shall I bury you?” The reply is “In the chimbley corner, where you always bury me.” The husband says, “Just let me die, like you always do.” Burl Ives recorded a version where the man threatens “I’ll haint you,” to which the wife replies, “A haint cain’t haint a haint.”

*“What you want for breakfast, my lovin’ old husband?
What you want for breakfast,*

*What you want for breakfast, my lovin' old husband,
The best old man, the best old man alive?"*

"Eggs."

*"How many do you want, my lovin' old husband?
How many do you want,
How many do you want, my lovin' old husband,
The best old man, the best old man alive?"*

"Half a bushel."

*"Aren't you 'fraid they'll kill you, my lovin' old husband?
Aren't you 'fraid they'll kill you,
Aren't you 'fraid they'll kill you, my lovin' old husband,
The best old man, the best old man alive?"*

"Don't care if they do."

*"Where do you want be buried, my lovin' old husband?
Where do you want to be buried,
Where do you want to be buried, my lovin' old husband,
The best old man, the best old man alive?"*

"In the corn."

*"Why do you want to be buried there, my lovin' old husband?
Why do you want to be buried there,
Why do you want to be buried there, my lovin' old husband,
The best old man, the best old man alive?"*

"Keep my bones hot."

*"Won't the devil keep 'em hot, my lovin' old husband?
Won't the devil keep 'em hot,
Won't the devil keep 'em hot, my lovin' old husband,
The best old man, the best old man alive?"*

21. THE HOUSE CARPENTER (Child 243)

Originally issued on Disc records.

"The earliest version of this ballad," wrote Alan Lomax in his 1948 Disc album notes, "appeared as a printed broadside in 1685 under the title *James Harris, The Daemon Lover*. Thirty-two stanzas long and considerably less poetic than Gladden's folk version, it bore the following introductory note: 'A warning for Married Women, being an example of a west-country woman . . . who having plighted her troth to a Seaman, was afterwards married to a carpenter, and at last carried away by a spirit.' Folk ballad singers greatly improved this story in passing it

down through the centuries.... Texas Gladden sings it here in such fine style, with such fire and, at the same time, with such restrained good taste, that we feel sure this antique tale will again become as popular among the present-day singers as it once was among the people on the American frontier.”

In April, 1930, Clarence Ashley recorded “The House Carpenter” with banjo accompaniment on a Columbia 78 (available on the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090). It is amazing to consider that the commercial record business initially issued such songs with little concern for their authenticity or “folkness.” But as Clarence Ashley told us in 1961, he duped the record company into recording the song by calling it a “lassie-making song,” which they presumed was a reference to courting. It was in fact a song mountain people sang in the kitchen when they made molasses. Ashley’s text is very close to Gladden’s. In longer versions of the song, as the ship goes down, a large cloud arises out of the wreck, carrying a vision of the devil.

This song has also been recorded by Sara Gunning (Kentucky), Doug Wallin (North Carolina), The Watson Family (North Carolina), Almeda Riddle (Arkansas); and by Joan Baez (California), Bob Dylan (Minnesota), Pentangle (Britain), Tony Rice (bluegrass), and others.

*“Well met, well met, you old true-love,
Well met, well met,” said he;
“I’ve just returned from the seashore sea,
From the land where the grass grows green.*

*“Well, I could have married a king’s daughter there,
And she would have married me;
But I refused the golden crown
All for the sake of thee.*

*“If you’ll forsake your house carpenter,
And come and go with me,
I’ll take you where the grass grows green,
To the lands on the banks of the sea.”*

*She went and picked up her sweet little babe
And kissed it one, two, three,
Saying, “Stay at home with your papa, dear,
And keep him good company.”*

*She went and dressed in her very best,
As everyone could see.
She glistened and proudly she walked
The streets on the banks of the sea.*

*They hadn’t been sailing but about three weeks,
I’m sure it was not four,
Till this young lady began to weep,*

And her weeping never ceased anymore.

*“Are you mourning for your house carpenter?
Are you mourning for your store?”
“No, I’m mourning for my sweet little babe,
That I never will see anymore.”*

*They hadn’t been sailing but about four weeks,
I’m sure it was not more,
Till the ship sprang a leak from the bottom of the sea,
And it sank to rise no more.*

22. GYPSY DAVY (AFS 5233 A1) (Child 200)
Previously unreleased.

This ballad about the wife abandoning her rich lord and newborn baby and running off with a Gypsy has been sung by Woody Guthrie, the Clancy Brothers, The Carter Family, and various Irish, English, old-time, and bluegrass groups. It remains alive in tradition as performed by a spectrum of contemporary voices, hitting a responsive chord since it deals with issues of romantic love, choice, and commitment—and tells a good story. Gladden returns it to its bare bones, its archaic roots.

Gladden said, “It’s always fascinated me. I’ve built up the most beautiful thoughts of Gypsies from that song. In the song it was a romantic thing. The Gypsy Davy was like a knight of old; in my mind he was sort of an exalted kind. I never was so disappointed in my whole life, when last summer I met up with a bunch of them.”

*One night after dark, the landlord came,
A-looking for his lady.
One of the servants then spoke up:
“She’s gone with the Gypsy Davy.”*

*“Oh, saddle for me my fine brown steed
And bring to me my money.
I’ve rode all day and I’ll ride all night,
Or overtake my honey.”*

*“Come go with me, my fair young miss,
Come go with me, my honey.
I swear by the gold that hangs by my side,
You never shall want for money.*

*“If you’ll forsake your house and land,
If you’ll forsake your baby,
If you’ll forsake your own true love,
And go with the Gypsy Davy.”*

*“I could forsake my house and land,
I could forsake my baby,
I could forsake my own true love,
And go with the Gypsy Davy.”*

*“Last night you lay in a warm featherbed,
Your arms around your baby,
Tonight you’ll lay on a cold riverside,
In the arms of the Gypsy Davy.”*

23. POOR ELLEN SMITH

Performed by Texas Gladden (vocal), Hobart Smith (banjo and harmony vocal). Originally issued on Disc records.

This American ballad was based on an event that took place in 1893 in Mt. Airy, North Carolina, where a man named Peter de Graff was convicted of murdering his sweetheart Ellen Smith, and was said to have composed this song in prison while awaiting his execution. Frank C. Brown, in his collection *North Carolina Folklore*, reports a version twelve stanzas long, dating from 1911. A. K. Davis lists six texts in *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*. Henry Whitter made a commercial record of the song in the late 1920s, and Molly O’Day recorded it with five-string banjo for Columbia in the late 1940s. The Country Gentlemen made a hot bluegrass arrangement of it in 1960; it is still a standard in the bluegrass repertoire today.

Gladden sings the song as it was before it entered the commercial recording arena. Compare Hobart Smith’s playing to his sister’s performance and you’ll hear how the banjo imitates the voice. Hobart “frails” the banjo, as does Molly O’Day, yet both performers have their own recognizable sound.

*Poor Ellen Smith, how she was found,
Shot through her heart, lying cold on the ground.*

*The smoke begin to fly, the blood begin to run.
They shot my poor sweetheart with a forty-four gun.*

*I saw her on Monday before that sad day.
They found her poor body and took it away.*

*Who had the heart, who had the face,
To murder my sweetheart in this lonesome place?*

*I laid out six months and prayed all the time,
They might find the one that committed the crime.*

*No one could go back and my character save;
The flowers had faded on poor Ellen’s grave.*

So now I’m in jail and, God knows, it’s hard,

While sweetheart sleeps down in the lonesome graveyard.

*Now I'm in jail, a prisoner am I,
But God is here with me and hears every vow.*

*I didn't love little Ellen to make her my wife,
But I loved her too dear as to take her sweet life.*

*Oh, the jury will hang me, that is, if they can,
But God knows I'll die as an innocent man.*

24. SONGS AND SINGING (Interview)

Previously unreleased.

Lomax: *How long, when you were a young woman, did it take you to learn a song?*

Gladden: *Just one time. I'd get all the words and the tune. You know I never could have learned so many songs if I hadn't been able to take 'em quickly like that. I wonder at it myself now, since I'm older, how I ever, and even now since I had my last child. That's the way I learned "Mary Hamilton," just hear someone sing it one time.*

Lomax: *Was your idea to sing the song just the way you heard it?*

Gladden: *Oh, yes, except I felt like, that I could do something with the song that no one else could do. And that I cannot explain. I just knew I could do something with that song that the person who was singing wasn't doing, see.*

Lomax: *When you sang these songs back in the days before when the mountains began to have roads and mills, what was the response you got? Did people cry sometimes?*

Gladden: *Oh, yes, they would. You'd see a few tears well up sometimes. Most often I'd sing something that was jolly if I was with a bunch of young people, and they enjoyed the jolly songs more at that time. Unless someone had been disappointed in love, they didn't care about the sad songs. But if they'd been disappointed, or had a lover's quarrel or something, then they likes the sad ones.*

Lomax: *There must have been a lot of disappointed-in-love people.*

Gladden: *I guess there were.*

Lomax: *You were telling me something the other day about how you thought these songs should be sung. The best way.*

Gladden: *Well, I think they should be sung just with an unlearned or uneducated voice. It should be an uneducated voice.*

Lomax: *Why?*

Gladden: *Because the songs were uneducated, you know, I think to get the best results from the old songs that were misspelled and had the words all twisted up in every shape and form. I think the way they sang them was really the best way that they should be sung. I don't think a person who sings operetta should toy with these kind of songs.*

25. GHOST STORY

Previously unreleased.

Gladden tells a story she heard from her grandfather about some Civil War soldiers and their adventure in a haunted house. Space limitations prevent us from offering a full transcription.

SONG FRAGMENTS

The following fragments give a wider indication of the range of music that Texas Gladden sang —from romantic, sentimental, popular, regional, and historical to comical. These short bits of song offer some tantalizing odd versions of well-known songs as well as other undocumented tunes. Although Texas Gladden offered these to Lomax only as examples, they open a window into the mind of a ballad singer, what she remembered fully and what she did not.

26. I AM A MAN OF HONOR

Previously unreleased.

*I am a man of honor,
From Virginia I did come.
I courted a pretty fair maiden,
Miss Polly was her name.
I won her affection,
Her love did plainly show.
Her self-conceited brother
Did cause our overthrow.*

27. ROVING COWBOY

Previously unreleased.

*Come all you roving cowboys,
[...]
I'll tell to you a story,
While you around me stand.
And bring this roving cowboy
Back to his native home.*

*I left my aged father,
My country and my home.
I left my old dear old mother
To weep and to mourn.
To be a roving cowboy
And with the cattle roam.*

28. DARK ISLAND

Previously unreleased.

*I'd rather be on some dark island,
Where the sun would never shine,
As for you to be some other man's darling,
And to say you'd never be mine.*

29. THE WRECK OF THE OLD '97

Performed by Texas Gladden (vocal), Hobart Smith (fiddle).
Previously unreleased.

*On a cold windy night
When the smoke came rolling
From a tall and slender smokestack,
The train pulled out for Louisville, Kentucky,
With a crew that never came back.*

Chorus: *Did he ever return?
No, he never returned.*

*For years and years, [...] switchmen been waiting
For the fast mail, never to come.*

*“Farewell, farewell,” said the young engineer,
As he kissed his weeping wife.
“I’ve stole enough money from the railroad company
To support us all our life.”*

[repeat chorus]

*He was going down the mountain,
Making ninety miles an hour,
When the whistle began to scream.
He was found in the wreck
With his hand on the throttle,
And was scalded to death by steam.*

[repeat chorus]

30. ALWAYS BEEN A RAMBLER

Previously unreleased.

*Always been a rambler;
My fortune has been hard.
I’ve always loved the women,
Drink whiskey and played cards.
My mother loved me kindly;
She had no boy but me.
My mind was set on rambling;
With her I could not be.*

31. WILD AND RECKLESS HOBO

Performed by Texas Gladden (vocal), Hobart Smith (harmony vocal).
Previously unreleased.

*Wild and reckless hobo had left his happy home,
Started on a western trip and by himself alone.
On his western trip alone, he thought he'd have some fun,
Sit down at the station, and this is what he sung.*

*"Sitting on a depot platform smoking a big cigar,
Waiting for a freight train to catch an empty car.
They put me off at Danville, boys. Got stuck on a Danville,
Bet your life, she's out sight, she wore those Danville curls.*

*"She wore her hat on the back of her neck,
A high-toned lady, too.
But if this train pulls through this town,
I'll bid that girl adieu."*

32. ONCE I KNEW A PRETTY FAIR MISS

Previously unreleased.

*Once I knew a pretty fair miss,
I loved her far more than my life.
I'd have freely given my heart and hand
To make her my wife,
Oh, to make her my wife.*

*I took her by her lily-white hand,
And led her to the door.
I rolled her in my arms and I asked her once more,
Oh, I asked her once more.*

33. LOVE'S WORSE THAN SICKNESS

Previously unreleased.

*My old true love, so fare you well,
You slighted me, but I wish you well.
You turned me away and broke my heart.
Oh, how can I from you depart?*

*This pain of love, no tongue can tell,
No mind can read, no heart can swell.
I tell you in a very few lines, love's worse than sickness,
Ten thousand times.*

34. IN THE SHADOW OF THE PINES

Previously unreleased.

*We wandered in the shadow of the pines, my love and me,
As the wind was blowing brightly from the sea.*

*When a sudden fitful darkness stole across the summer sky,
And the shadow came between my love and me.*

*Some hasty words were spoken,
Then all at once unaware,
Hasty answers to unthinking anger led.
But our heartsick bitter longing,
And our weeping and our prayers,
Ne'er can make those false cruel words unsaid.*

35. DARK SCENES OF WINTER

*Recorded August 24, 1959, in Salem, Virginia.
Previously unreleased.*

*Dark scenes of winter,
Run chains of frost and snow,
Dark clouds around me hovering,
The chilly wind doth blow.*

*I went to see my truelove;
She grew most scornfully.
I asked her to marry;
She would not answer me.*

*The night was swiftly rolling on,
'Twas almost break of day.
I'm waiting for an answer:
"My love, what do you say?"*

*"Kind Sir, if I must answer,
I choose a single life.
I never thought it suited
For me to be your wife."*

*"The birds are singing sweetly
On every bush and vine.
My joys would be doubled
If you were only mine."*

*I wrote her a letter,
I'll send it back in speed,
Saying, "Once I loved you dearly,
I loved you once indeed."*

*But since my mind has changed,
I look another way,
Upon a prettier damsel,*

Where love can have its way.

*Upon a prettier damsel,
Where love can have its fill.
If one won't say yes,
There are others that will.*

36. COLD MOUNTAINS

Recorded August 24, 1959, in Salem, Virginia.

Previously unreleased.

*Cold mountains, they are here around me,
Cold waters gliding down the stream.
Oh, in my sleep I think I find him,
But when I wake, it's all a dream.*

*True, when I wake and cannot find him,
All on my bed I weep and moan,
Just like the raindrops without numbering.
It's all because I'm left alone.*

*I hate the time when I must leave you,
I hate the time when we must part.
Although I've loved you without measuring,
I'll give my hand, you have my heart.*

37. THE DEVIL and THE FARMER'S WIFE (AFS 9833 B) (Child 278)

Recorded at the National Folk Festival in Washington, D.C., 1938.

Previously unreleased.

This song was Texas Gladden's contribution to the 1938 National Folk Festival in Washington, D.C. The hostess begins with a reference to the fiddler who preceded her onstage. A local high-school jug band followed with a version of "Careless Love." This very noisy disc was transferred with much patience and difficulty at the Library of Congress by the sound engineer Larry Appelbaum.

Announcer: *Most of us can't tell whether the old fiddler is playing just right or not. They have a standard and a style all their own. So do the ballad singers. Mrs. Texas Gladden is going to sing one of the old Child ballads, a ballad that's been handed down traditionally in the Appalachian region ever since our forefathers came over here. This ballad is called "The Farmer's Curst Wife." Mrs. Texas Gladden.*

Lyrics same as track 1.

SOURCES

Recorded interviews with Texas Gladden and Hobart Smith by Alan Lomax, New York, 1946. Correspondence among Hobart Smith, Texas Gladden, and Alan Lomax—the Lomax Archive,

New York.

Telephone interviews with Chris Gladden, Wiley J. Smith, and Jean Ritchie.

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Southern Journey, Vol. 2: Ballads and Breakdowns (Rounder Records CD 1702).

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PORTRAITS

My greatest talent is getting people to be themselves in front of a microphone.

—*Alan Lomax, on numerous occasions*

Portraits is a series devoted to the greatest folk artists that Alan Lomax recorded. Throughout his career, Lomax was as passionate about folksingers as he was about folk songs. From early on, he delved into the links among traditional artists, their music, and the cultures and circumstances that shaped them. This led him to record extensive, detailed interviews with singers about their lives and art:

I began to take down lengthy musical biographies of the most interesting people who came my way. Thus Leadbelly's life and repertoire became a book—the first folk singer biography in English, and unhappily out of print a year after it was published. Jelly Roll Morton, Woody Guthrie, Aunt Molly Jackson, Big Bill Broonzy and a dozen lesser known singers all set down their lives and philosophies for the Congressional Library microphones. In that way I learned that folk song in a context of folk talk made a lot more sense than in a concert hall.

Sometimes, as with Jelly Roll Morton, these combinations of performances and oral histories arose from the fortuitous meeting of a gifted field-worker with an extraordinary personality and raconteur, but most arose from long-standing relationships. Lomax befriended many great folk artists, and often it was only after a trust and bond had been established that they were willing

share the details of their lives with him. Many of the artists featured in the *Portraits* series were frequent houseguests of Lomax, who developed a keen sense about when his friends and informants were ready to talk. But some needed little prompting. Lomax first met Bessie Jones on St. Simon's Island, Georgia in 1959. Although they became good friends at the time, he was astonished to find her at his doorstep in New York two years later, bags in hand, declaring "I've come to tell you everything I know."

Many of the performances on these albums take the listener into that intimate circle in which traditional singers sing for their home audiences, where that musical empathy that is at the heart of the greatest folk music is strongest. For Lomax, it was the place where the professional and the personal came together in a single inspiration.

Once the field recording habit takes hold of you, it is hard to break. One remembers those times when the moment in a field recording situation is just right. There arises an intimacy close to love. The performer gives you his strongest and deepest feeling, and if he is a folk singer, this emotion can reveal the character of his whole community. A practiced folk song collector can bring about communication on this level wherever he chooses to set up his machine. Ask him how he does this, and he can no more tell you than a minister can tell you how to preach a great sermon. It takes practice and it takes a deep need on the part of the field collector—which the singer can sense and want to fulfill.

It is our hope that the folk song and folk talk on these albums will fulfill this deep need for you, and that through them these great artists can communicate with you at this highest level, with all the love, labor, and laughter with which their art was imbued.

CREDITS

Recorded in the field and studio by **Alan Lomax** and **Moses Asch**, 1941–59.

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Portrait: Texas Gladden edited and with notes by **John Cohen**

Portrait Series Editor: **Matthew Barton**

Sound Restoration / Mastering Producer: **Steve Rosenthal**

Mastered at the Master Cutting Room, NYC by **Phil Klum**

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Joe Brescio, Chris Gladden, Eliot Hoffman, Roddy Moore, Vicki Plue, Hunter College of the City University of New York.

Every effort has been made to make these historic recordings sound as good as they did when they were made. All transfers were made, whenever possible, from the original source materials

using the Prism 24-Bit A to D converters and the Prism 24-Bit Noise Shaping System.