VERNACULAR MUSIC BROKERS AND MEDIATORS IN THE SOUTH 1900–1932

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by

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Dedicated to

my father, Julius W. Allen,

and in memory of

my mother, Becky Allen

Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection of business and aesthetics, music, and overlapping networks of people, all focusing on the sounds in the South during the first third of the twentieth century. It accomplishes this examination through a focus on the people who acted as mediators of the vernacular music found in the Southern United States. There are four major groups of mediators—folklorists, both in and outside of the academy; early Artist and Repertoire men working with the record companies; radio station managers and announcers; and the musicians. All had distinct preferences of the types of music they chose to collect and methods of dissemination.

This thesis looks at the people, the choices made, and the impact those choices had on music today through the relationships and aesthetics of the people who worked actively to represent, transport, and transform vernacular music and musicians in the South from 1900 to the early 1930s. The motives of the collectors varied, but mainly they gave the music a broader exposure, frequently for patriotic reasons, sometimes for commercial goals, but other motives are present as well. Vernacular music is the music of the working class, frequently referred to as "folk music." Most of the examples of vernacular music are what we now refer to as early country and blues music, and most came out of the South. The perceptions we now have of the rural South as the musical heart and soul of the United States did not emerge overnight: they were crafted, predominantly during the first thirty years of the twentieth century by settlement school teachers, folklorists, English professors, artist and repertoire (A&R) men, radio talent

scouts, furniture store owners, and countless musicians, who felt, for differing reasons, that the ballads, spirituals, blues and "hillbilly" music epitomized rural and working class America.

Preface

The topic for this thesis developed, like a ballad narrative, by leaping and lingering. Although I had a longstanding interest in Southern vernacular music, it was not the original subject I planned to write about. A few days before the deadline for submitting my proposal, I was consulting with Neil V. Rosenberg and came to the realization the original topic just wasn't going to work. He suggested I change topics. I panicked and said, "But can I do that? The proposal is due in three days!" He replied, "I did," ending that discussion, and thus, this project was born.

My interest in the South came first from my family. My mother, Becky Blundell Allen, grew up in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and reared us on okra, grits, wonderful biscuits, and pecan pie, and she introduced me to Eudora Welty and Tennessee Williams. Despite her upbringing, however, she shunned much of Southern culture, was never exposed to blues or stringband music as far as I can tell, and rejected much of the South as the fundamentalist Methodists from her father's side had rejected her as a little "Jew girl" from her mother's side. When she spoke to our relatives from New Orleans, her drawl would return. Her family lived in an impressive house on Main Street in Yazoo City, but as soon as she graduated from Belhaven College, my mom moved to New York City and shook the dust from her shoes.

On the other hand, my husband of sixteen years, Tom Powell, revered the South, not only the food, but the culture, Civil War history, and Kentucky Derby parties complete with mint juleps served in silver goblets.

My own experience living in the South more often than not since 1978 has deepened and expanded my knowledge and appreciation for the South. For one, I learned that a greater barrier is created by geography than by race. Esoteric images of the Civil War still abound; latter-day Confederates label it the War of Northern Aggression or the late Unpleasantness. Economics and popular attitudes of the South still promote stereotypes of Southern inferiority. Popular images, the most notable being the Dukes of Hazard, Dolly Parton, and Deliverance, have only been moderated slightly by Designing Women and In the Heat of the Night.

On a more positive note, my college education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill also invoked a sense of pride in the South and a greater understanding of the vernacular music, crafts, and religious practices of the region through professors Dan Patterson, Trudier Harris, James Peacock, and Terry Zug. This greater understanding and appreciation of Southernness and Southern Vernacular music are now infused in my daily life: I work regularly with regional musicians in my job as folklorist at a small folk and cultural arts center serving six counties in western North Carolina. Working with the musicians has given me a deeper understanding, too, of the power and problematics of firmly entrenched views of fiddlers' conventions, authenticity of tunes, and similar issues that this thesis will investigate.

A doctoral thesis frequently takes longer than expected by the author, and this one is certainly no exception. Interruptions abounded, some self-inflicted, others due to moves, job changes, deaths in the family, and divorce. Nonetheless, this process was completed, with gratitude for the spiritual, intellectual, financial, emotional, and physical

support of a number of wonderful individuals. I apologize in advance for any I may inadvertently omit.

The transcripts of the interviews with artist & repertoire men quoted from and referred to in chapter three were made possible through a research grant from the Association of Recorded Sound Collections, and the hard work of transcribers and editors Carol Ponder, Andrea Hodgin, Russ Wilson, Marvin Bentley, Frances Fennell, and Nancy Brock. It is my sincere wish that these transcripts, to be housed in the same repositories as the tape-recorded counterparts, may help others in their research. Thanks to the staff at those research collections for their assistance, especially Amy Davis, Michael Taft, Steve Green, Mike Casey, and the graduate assistants and staff at the Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Ronnie Pugh and Kent Henderson at the Country Music Foundation in Nashville; Joe Hickerson, Jennifer Cutting, Stephanie Hall, and the reference staff at the Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress; Fred Hay and the staff and graduate assistants at the Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University; and Mayo Taylor and staff at the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University.

Charles K. Wolfe at Middle Tennessee State University never refused a request for advice and provided ample resource to assist me in my research and thinking. I am equally grateful for the advice and support of Daniel K. Patterson at the University of North Carolina and Thomas McGowan at Appalachian State University. Charlie Seemann, Judith McCullough, Karen Baldwin, Harry Rice, and Colin Escott helped with advice and information at various times. Thanks to Lucy Long, Ed Kahn, John Minton,

and others who provided comments on earlier versions of ideas as they were presented at AFS meetings. Many fellow graduate students provided new ideas and support throughout the process, including Don Yarman, Seana Kozar, Eileen Condon, and Tecwyn Vaughan Jones. Rachel Gholson has been especially wonderful providing academic and personal support and advice.

This process probably would not have been started had it not been for the early support of C. Thomas Powell. Thanks also to my friends and colleagues, the Reverend Nancy Brown, Posie Dauphine, Benton Lutz, Jeff Schlichter, Mason Camp, Diana Christian, Mark Daniel, Norman Young, Martha Hines, Anne Ponder, Gary Kerley, Sonny Waugh, Buster Lackey, Beth Payne, Robert Kiefer, Cleve Miller, Marion Hollings, Jane Will, Ted Buddine, Scott Fore, Tom and Gail Watts, Jack Greene, and Laine and Garry Lipson for their encouragement and support.

My colleagues at the Hiddenite Center were extremely supportive of this venture, especially my boss and the Executive Director, dwaine c.coley, also Karen Walker and Jenny Patterson, and Board Members Glenn Fox, Max Smith, and Marty Moore. I am grateful especially for their understanding and letting me work a sometimes very erratic schedule.

A number of musicians and musical groups heard about this project and encouraged me to finish it so they could read it, including Wanda Lu Greene, Russ Wilson, Mike Seeger, Clarence Greene, Lee Hunter, Arvid Smith, and Steve Duncan.

This thesis was completed with the help of the unconditional love, support, and book-buying sprees of my parents, Julius and Becky Allen, and my siblings, Kathie

Loveall and Kenny Allen. My closest friends, Carol Ponder, Aviva Adler, and Johnny Fay Olive, have provided an incredible amount of spiritual and emotional support to me, and I am more grateful to them than I will ever be able to express.

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Introduction: Mediators and Brokers

This thesis examines the intersection of business and aesthetics, music, and overlapping networks of people, all focusing on the sounds in the South during the first third of the twentieth century. It accomplishes this examination through a focus on the people who acted as mediators of the vernacular music found in the Southern United States. I examine four major groups of mediators—folklorists, both in and outside of the academy; early Artist and Repertoire men working with the record companies; radio station managers and announcers; and the musicians. All had distinctive preferences of the types of music they chose to collect and methods of dissemination. This thesis looks at the people, the choices made, and the impact those choices had on music today.

I examine the relationships and aesthetics of the people who worked actively to represent, transport, and transform vernacular music and musicians in the South from 1900 to the early 1930s. The motives of the collectors varied, but mainly they gave the music a broader exposure, frequently for patriotic reasons, sometimes for commercial goals, but other motives are present as well. Vernacular music is the music of the working class, frequently referred to as "folk music" (see pages 6-9 for discussion of this term). Most of the examples of vernacular music in this thesis are what we now refer to as early country and blues music. Most of that music came out of the South. The perceptions we now have of the rural South as the musical heart and soul of the United States did not emerge overnight: they were crafted, predominantly during the first thirty years of the twentieth century, by settlement school teachers, folklorists, English professors, artist and repertoire (A&R) men, radio talent scouts, furniture store owners,[1]

and countless musicians who felt, for differing reasons, that the ballads, spirituals, blues, and "hillbilly" music epitomized rural and working class America.

The collection and promotion of music from the South began in earnest in the early decades of the twentieth century, although there were scattered collections before 1900 focusing on slave songs and sea chanteys. In the 1920s folklorists were no longer alone in their collecting as record company scouts started gathering music from the region. Following closely on the heels of the record companies, or just preceding them, radio stations started up and provided live entertainment, using "hillbilly" and occasionally blues musicians in some of their programming. All were aided at the local level in their search for musicians by influential people such as schoolteachers, ministers, furniture store owners, other merchants, and other musicians. Each collector and helper had his or her own motivation for collecting music reflected in the choice of repertoire collected (and equally significant, by what was ignored), and how it was disseminated to a larger audience. In every case, one goal was to reach a larger audience. A second goal frequently was to make money. The media used to promote vernacular music included pageantry, minstrel shows, and other live performances; print media such as monographs, essays, newspaper articles, and multi-volume song collections; sound recordings on cylinder, acetate and shellac discs; and radio airwaves. While, generally speaking, promotion of music through print was by the academic collectors, through 78 rpm record by the A&R men, and through radio airwaves, there was considerable crossover. Although a great deal has been written about the musicians and the music from this time

period, less attention has been paid to the roles of those who collected and promoted the music and musicians.

While some argue that significant early twentieth-century collecting occurred in the United States outside of the South, such as Phillips Barry's collecting in New England, the great thrust of the collecting took place in the South, and emphasis in the selling of vernacular music was on the South. Thus, my emphasis upon the region where interest was greatest. The South can be defined in a number of different ways (culturally, geographically, or politically); I shall use the categorization of the American Institute of Public Opinion, which includes the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas (Reed 115); however, because of its musical and cultural ties, I have included the state of West Virginia.[2] One early emphasis in collecting was discovering extant versions of the 305 ballads listed in Francis James Child's The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. South Carolina Professor Reed Smith was quite proud of and emphatic about the quantitative superiority of the Child ballads found in the South. He discovered 69, in contrast to his listing of only 25 found in New England and 15 in Canada (R. Smith 171).

The Southern collectors mostly followed the Child canon in their collecting and subscribed to the communal theories of composition, ignoring the arguments for greater inclusivity (later shown to be correct) promoted by Louise Pound, Phillips Barry, and John A. Lomax. The communal theory expounded by Francis B. Gummere was a modification of the Grimms' notion of primitive culture. In summary, Gummere theorized that since primitive religions appeared to be communal, dance and poetry must

also have a communal origin (26). The academics, largely centered around Harvard Professor George Lyman Kittredge, took the communal theory and looked to the South in the hopes of preserving what they saw as one of the last bastions of British culture, which they desperately wished to endorse and preserve.[3]

One of the main motives of the record company executives was developing sales: the new music associated with country persons both white and black provided a new market and a means to reach a new naïve audience. Once the record companies were introduced to vaudeville blues singers and southern fiddling and saw that their buyers were eager for more, they went in search of new talent through recording trips to the South.

The vernacular music, both hillbilly and race, broadcast out of Atlanta, Nashville. Charlotte, and also Chicago and other northern cities, was recognized and marketed as music from the South in part to appeal to the recent emigrants from the southern states to northern industrial cities. A number of rural listeners gave immediate response to the first broadcasts of stringband music and ballads, providing the impetus for some of the radio stations to develop vernacular music as part of their regular programming.

My rationale for covering the period from the turn of the century to the early 1930s is that it is the time period when the state folklore societies—what D. K. Wilgus aptly calls the Child Ballad societies—were being formed, primarily for the purpose of collecting vernacular music (Wilgus, Anglo-American 79). In addition, technological advances were occurring at a rapid rate, and interest in recording African American vernacular music began as early as 1902 when the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet recorded

"Down on the Old Camp Ground" for Victor (Dixon & Godrich, Blues). Considerable activity recording both blues and hillbilly music occurred in the 1920s, most often cited as starting with Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" and Fiddlin' John Carson's "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" and "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Going to Crow." Although there is proof of "hillbilly" recording before Carson, his disc was the first to have significant sales and the one that started the trend for hillbilly recordings. With the beginnings of radio in the 1920s, shows such as the National Barn Dance created known personalities or stars. Prior to sound recordings and radio, the emphasis was on the music rather than the musician. With radio and radio personalities such as Bradley Kincaid, the star system was born, the musician was foregrounded, and that system has been in place ever since.

By the early 1930s and the Depression, there was a decline in the academic collecting of the "Child Ballad" societies. However, the Works Progress Administration, Federal Theater Project, and other Franklin D. Roosevelt initiatives created a new complex system of collecting. Many of the networks used by the phonograph and radio stations were already established, record sales dropped dramatically due to the Depression, a star system replaced the earlier method of scouting out talent, and many musicians sought out Hollywood, which created a new market for promotion. Hollywood took the "hillbilly" image created during the early days of radio and changed it to the cowboy image—the rugged and independent frontiersman.[4] Songwriting became a dominant force in recording and frequently replaced traditional music, even though many of the newer songs sounded traditional. Although there was a significant shift in

networks and complicating of the collecting and production process, most of the perceptions of Southern vernacular music retained today had been established by the early 1930s.

Definitions

Burt Feintuch recently wrote, "it would be encouraging to see . . . folklorists be more critical of the terms they embrace . . . it is clear that for far too long we have been content with some of the words and phrases" ("Introduction" 350-51). Feintuch was referring to words such as "tradition"; his point is applicable here. The term "folk" or "folk music" is not an accurate descriptor for this investigation. Unfortunately, "folk" still conjures up images of ballad singers sitting on the porches of their log cabins tucked in the hills of Appalachia or, for some, visions of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Pete Seeger at the Newport Folk Festivals or Sam Bush, Nancy Griffith, and Bela Fleck at the Merle Watson Festival. While I discuss some ballad singers who fit the stereotypical image, that image is inaccurate overall. The music most desired by the collectors I will study included Anglo-American ballads, African American spirituals, early country or "hillbilly" music, and early blues or "race" music. The umbrella term which best describes these is vernacular music. I recognize this definition of "folk" is the popular one, that is, "of the people," rather than the definition folklorists tend to use. But even the idea of artistic communication in small groups, as promoted by Ben-Amos in the 1970s is not as accurate, for reasons explained shortly, as "vernacular." The other term frequently used for the music described in this study is "traditional." "Tradition" is an interesting term, usually thought of as describing something static and fixed. Henry

Glassie takes the term "tradition" and places it in the context of change, indicating that tradition-bearers tend to take their text or craft and honor the spirit of the origin, while adding minor innovation so that over time, the tradition changes. Glassie defines tradition as "the means for deriving the future from the past" and as "volitional, temporal action" ("Tradition" 409). In most cases "tradition" works well, though innovation from the musicians sometimes happened more rapidly than "tradition" tends to accept.

"Vernacular" is seen most frequently in folkloristics in the study of vernacular architecture, and that usage helps inform us for its use with relation to music. Although no authoritative definition has been put forth in relation to architecture, there is strong evidence for what it is not. According to Upton and Vlach, "Vernacular architecture is non-high style building; it is those structures not designed by professionals; it is not monumental; it is un-sophisticated . . ." (xv). Archie Green noted that the term "vernacular" has long been associated with "indigenous dialect perceived as common or uncouth" ("Vernacular Music Naming" 37). It is also associated with the working class, which is accurate of the music I discuss. Green dates the use of "vernacular" as linked to music back to the thirties and ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger. Seeger, in describing folk music, said that "it was in the possession of the bulk of the people—'their musical vernacular'"(Green, "Vernacular Music: A Naming" 40). Narváez notes that the concept "'vernacular song' is more encompassing than 'folksong' and less elastic than 'popular song'"("Newfoundland" 215). He continues,

> vernacular here refers both to those traits of culture that people actually make for themselves, one of the designations of "popular," and to its more conventional meaning of indigenous culture, culture that develops in a

> given locale. Vernacular, therefore, signifies song as a sector of aesthetic development and social practice. In assessing singing activities, vernacular, as a culture of place, proves to be a more useful adjective than "folk"... (Narváez "Newfoundland" 215)

and

> From the vernacular perspective the significant question does not concern provenance so much as real repertoire, i.e., "what songs have people actually been performing and creating." (Narváez "Newfoundland" 219)

"Vernacular" music is thus preferred here over "folk" music as this music is normally created and shared by members of the working class. Debora Kodish stated this distinction well when she wrote:

> From the 17th through the 19th century, the meaning of the term "vernacular" carried a trace of its Latin root, verna: a home-born slave, a native. Thus, at the core of the vernacular is the double notion of indigenous and unfree. Possessed of its own logic, in dialogue with the other voices of its time and place, native but not free, the vernacular stresses mixture where most usages of the term "folklore" have stressed pureness. It is therefore useful to draw upon this sense of vernacular for consideration of songs that are themselves mixed, local reshapings of popular or international songs.... ("Fair" 132)

The music is clearly a mixture, not pure. Using the term "vernacular" leads away from some of the stereotypes of the "folk," such as people who live in the mountains and other remote places, or Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger. In my experience working with local musicians, their choices in repertoire are a complex combination of songs and tunes learned from family, community, radio, and sound recordings, often supplemented by print sources. But the style of music is usually attached to local musical aesthetics. So "vernacular music" is an appropriate term: it refers to the repertoire associated with the people from the region that is accepted in the community.

The collectors who attached names to the musical products they distributed used various terms for the music genres, depending on the anticipated market. Ralph Peer claims credit for attaching the terms "race" and "hillbilly" to records (Green, "Hillbilly" 207). Frank Walker, when interviewed by Mike Seeger, stated he preferred to call early country music "old familiar tunes" and "songs of the hills and plains," which were precursors to country-western.[5] Peer probably picked up the term "race" because it was common to refer to African Americans at that time as "the race." Since the A&R men were "widely conversant with and responsive to the predominant, group-sustaining address of the early decades, [they] found both comfort and support in reference to a commonality of black people" (Foreman 92). The term "race" was used to describe almost every performance by an African American from the 1920s until the 1940s, so the term includes jazz and other music besides blues. However, unlike blues and country, jazz has become less closely associated with vernacular music and thus will be excluded from this study. Gospel music has only recently been studied and will be touched upon as it is certainly a strong part of the southern vernacular music tradition. There is less data on some of the other musical trends from this period, such as the popularity of Hawaiian music, but that is really beyond the scope of this study.

One assertion that frequently appears in the reminiscences of influential figures from this era is the distinction between instrumental, or string band music, and songs. For example, in his interview by Mike Seeger, Frank Walker states, "Instrumentalists come first, because that is where the noise came from." While most ballads remained in the private, unaccompanied tradition, some commercial singers created a popular

following for ballads and lyrical songs. However, most of the researchers of country music, such as Malone, held onto the belief that early recorded country music was predominantly string band music. Promoters and managers also held this view, though disputed by Richard Peterson:

> Vito Pellettieri, long-time stage manager and music director of the Opry is quoted as saying, "The string bands were the main thing. What little singing there was began with Uncle Dave [Macon], the Delmores, and Sam and Kirk [McGee]. But there wasn't a lot of it . . . until the coming of a curly headed fiddler Roy Acuff" (Schlappi 1978:37). Bill Malone . . . lends weight to this view. (139)

Peterson goes on to assert that there were a number of strong vocals on the early Opry. If the Opry was the model for the others, and string band music was featured, this view certainly discounts the contributions of Bradley Kincaid at WLS, who received bags full of fan mail based on his singing. Kincaid benefited from vocal training while a student at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Placing the emphasis solely on string bands also discounts the popularity of singers such as Vernon Dalhart (Marion Slaughter), who moved from more popular songs to vernacular songs and created sensational sales for whatever company he recorded. Also, Ernest V. Stoneman, instrumentalist, singer, and writer, first went to New York and to Ralph Peer's studio because Stoneman knew he sang better than Henry Whitter (Tribe, Stonemans 37). It appears that much of the difference is one of perception by writers, whether they notice the music or the words, and the emphasis the observer places on each. In a concert at the Rex Theatre in Galax, Virginia (2 Feb. 2001), guitarist Steve Kilby observed that musicians tend to either pay attention to the lyrics or to the tune. He is a tune person, but appreciates the strength in

both views. The same concept can be applied to the audience, the promoter, and the music historian. Each tends to pull from part of the scene, not the whole. So Pellettieri was probably a tune person, that is what he remembered, until Acuff sparked a new level of listening.

In describing the collectors themselves and the influence they have had on vernacular music, I use native terms. By this I mean the terms each group uses to describe itself, such as folklorist, song-catcher, talent scout, or A&R man. I also use the generic term collector and the two terms which more accurately describe the intended action or motivation of the person: mediator or broker. Other possible terms included "intervenor," "promoter," "negotiator," "dealer," "representative," and "agent." A discussion of some of those terms and why they are not applicable to this study follows.

David Whisnant used "intervention" and the "politics of culture" as the key concepts in his book All That Is Native and Fine. In his study, Whisnant looked at the roles played by those who worked in the Appalachian Mountains in a few settlement schools and early folk festivals. He defined cultural intervention as when "someone (or some institution) consciously and programmatically takes action within a culture with the intent of affecting it in some specific way that the intervenor thinks desirable" (13). The movement of settlement school development fits this pattern to a certain extent, although in reading the biographies of those who attended the settlement schools or sent their children, it is clear a negotiation occurred. It was not solely the settlement school teachers forcing their will on the community or the students. In contrast, many of the academic collectors and record company men were not as purposeful or programmatic as

Whisnant's intervenors. It is not that they didn't have a plan, but in many cases they stumbled upon an opportunity to gather a certain type of music, with no specific plan as to how it might affect the culture they visited. In the case of radio, many stations started out with no sense of programming, and it developed according to the preferences of the listeners.

Whisnant defines politics of culture as "(1) the interaction of disparate cultural systems as systems, and (2) the function of a fixation upon a romantically conceived 'culture' within the broader social, political, and economic history of the mountains" (All 13). Again, in some of the cases, many collectors held a romantic notion of the culture being studied, but that attitude is not true of all of the collectors studied here. The A&R men didn't appear to have a romantic notion. In some cases they thought the musicians were ignorant, but mainly they saw the people of the mountains, Southern cities, and delta as a way to get a product out to a larger audience. In any case, the term "intervenor" does not give an opportunity to discuss the interplay between the collector and the musician.

Lucy Long felt the term "intervention" or "intervenor" overstated the case and did not recognize the role of the people being interviewed or recorded into consideration. She has proposed and is using the term "negotiator" in her work, which focuses on the perspective of one of the communities in the Appalachians that has been influenced by a number of different folklorists (Long, Personal). "Negotiate" can either be a transitive or intransitive verb, defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as follows:

> intr. To hold communications or conference (with another) for the purpose of arranging some matter by mutual agreement; to discuss a matter with a view to some settlement or compromise. 2. trans. To deal with, manage, or

> conduct (a matter, affair, etc., requiring some skill or consideration) (negotiate, v.7)

Thus, the term "negotiator" implies the conversation goes in two directions, rather than one. In other words, at least some of the people in the region, as well as those wanting the material, have a say in what happens. Although this term has some appeal since consent to be recorded implies that a negotiation occurred, it is problematical since many vernacular musicians had little or no say in what happened to the material in performances after it was recorded. "Recorded" refers here to the process of taking down the music and words, irrespective of whether they were mechanically or electronically reproduced, i.e., written or sound recording. However, some of the musicians were entrepreneurial enough to contact the record companies. They created their own opportunity to be successful on radio and sound recordings.

Paul Oliver uses the blanket term "promoter" in the index to his compilation of writings Blues Off the Record to apply to anyone who provided a contact between musicians, and a nightclub, minstrel show, record company, radio or other venue. The American College Dictionary defines "promoter" as "one who initiates or takes part in the organizing of a company, the development of a project, etc.," a definition which does not seem entirely appropriate, as it excludes promotion of an individual. Roget's Thesaurus is only slightly more helpful, suggesting related words to promote as "cultivate, forward, further, advance, elevate," and "upgrade." In this sense, it appears that "promoter" is used in much the same way that Whisnant uses "intervenor." For example, Katherine Pettit worked at one of the settlement schools to provide educational advancement for the

students (Whisnant, All 17-102). She intervened in the native culture. The promoter promotes an individual for monetary profit, while the intervenor tries to preserve part of Appalachian culture out of a sense of idealized altruism. Neither "intervenor" nor "promoter" applies in all cases, thus I chose another term, "mediator."

Mediator and mediation are words in vogue these days, especially in politics. A mediator is "one who intervenes between two parties, esp. for the purpose of effecting reconciliation" (OED v.6). In folklore and cultural studies it has taken on a more specific meaning, based on work by Raymond Williams and applied to folksong by David Harker. Harker, who wrote extensively on the modern notion of "mediation" and made it a commonplace concept within cultural studies, wrote:

> We need to be aware that the applications of electricity helped transform the music industry and the market for certain kinds of music; and we must recognize that changing patterns of use produced part of the impetus for further transforming musical institutions, even for developing further technological innovation. In other words, the ganglion of institutions that make up the popular song industry may try to control their market—us, the consumers, and our ways of using music and musical products—but our role is by no means a passive one. (One 9-10)

The last line, "our role is by no means a passive one," can be applied as well to the producer as to the consumer. In other words, the musician creates the song which in turn is taken by a person within an institution—a record company—who then transforms the song by arranging, recording and digitizing it, then creating an image for that song and/or musicians, and sending the image out to entice the consume to purchase it. There were forms of mediation before the "applications of electricity," though technology has

certainly had a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of this type of mediation across time and space.

To continue with the definition, Williams breaks down mediation into four different meanings. The one most applicable here is one grounded in the context of media communications:

> Mediation is here neither neutral nor "indirect" (in the sense of devious or misleading). It is a direct and necessary activity between different kinds of activity and consciousness. It has its own, always-specific forms. The distinction is evident in a comment by Adorno: "mediation is in the object itself, not something between the object and that to which it is brought. What is contained in communications, however, is solely the relationship between producer and consumer" (Keywords 172)

The producer mediates the product, that is, takes the raw material, the music, and transforms or manipulates it into something that is marketable. In this sense then, the music is mediated in the relationship between the musician (producer) and the consumer via the A&R man or folklorist, who works to change the relationship between producer and consumer. This mediation is an action that happens between people; therefore, all play a role. The choice of the medium used also plays a part in the process. The media I discuss are the printed, spoken, or sung words and/or music presented via popular and scholarly books and articles, live performances, radio broadcasts, and sound recordings. Each conveys its message from producer to consumer at different speeds and with varying results.

Dave Harker elaborates on Williams's theme and specifically addresses mediation in relation to song in his introduction to Fakesong. Harker credits Williams and British

labor historian E. P. Thompson with helping formulate his ideas on English folksong and folksong collecting. Harker defines mediation as follows:

> By mediation I understand not simply the fact that particular people passed on songs they had taken from other sources, in the form of manuscript or of print, but that in the very process of so doing their own assumptions, attitudes, likes and dislikes may well have significantly determined what they looked for, accepted and rejected. Not only that, but these people's access to sources of songs, the fact that they had the time, opportunity, motive and facilities for collecting, and a whole range of other material factors will have come into play. Ideological and material factors in this process did not occur separately, of course. So, while we cannot "read off" what a person did with songs from, say, their class position, it is still the case that their social origins, education, occupation (or lack of it) and so on were obviously connected with how they felt, thought and acted, in relation to songs as to everything else. These things happened, not in a mechanical or inevitable way, but they were linked all the same. (xiii)

Harker directly links motives and aesthetics to the collection and dissemination of the music. For those who collected the music and turned it into a sound recording or a songbook, this use of mediation fits. A mediator, then, refers to a person who selectively collects songs and then disseminates them to a broader audience.

The term "mediator" is useful when discussing some of the persons involved, but others, who were key links in the process of collecting music, did not play the same role. For those who served only as conduits to the musicians, a different term is needed. I will use the term "broker," which is derived from the Old French term "to broach" or "to tap" a wine cask,

> literally a tapster, who retailed wine "from the tap," and hence, by extension, any retail-dealer, one who bought to sell over again, a second-hand dealer, or who bought for another, hence a jobber, middleman, agent, etc. (OED, v.1)

In my using this definition, the broker is the contact, or middleman, between the musician and the mediator. After contact is made, the broker usually no longer is involved except for collecting his or her fee, and for many, the exchange of information did not involve a transfer of money. The broker might be a local merchant identifying vernacular musicians for a folklorist's folksong collection, a radio scout's show, or the A&R man's recordings. The roles of broker and mediator are not necessarily distinct: the same person can perform both roles, that is, scout out the performer and record and produce the repertoire in some form. Even though they overlap, it is useful to look at the roles as distinct, as a way to identify the different processes involved in the popularizing and promoting of vernacular music.

One instance of the interchangeability of these terms is seen in David Whisnant's 1991 essay reflecting on the John Edwards Memorial Collection and Southern vernacular music ("Turning"). In this essay, Whisnant uses "broker" as shorthand for "culture broker" and includes some of the roles for which I use "mediator." Whisnant writes:

> By brokers I mean those energetic, active, frequently passionate individuals—ballad collectors, articulate and entrepreneurial traditional musicians . . . academics, A&R men . . . who for a variety of personal, cultural, and sometimes political reasons involved themselves in the recording enterprise as links between the musicians and their actual or potential markets. Sometimes they merely transmitted, but much of the time they reshaped, and always they interpreted in some manner. And in the process they impacted substantially upon both performers and audience. ("Turning" 173)

Whisnant makes an interesting point about the performers and audience. In any performance, the context must be taken into account. In his brief essay Whisnant argues that more research needs to be done on these culture brokers:

> Much has been done, but a vast amount remains to do, and a great deal of reconceptualization faces us. The earliest generation of documentarians who ventured into the then almost completely unmapped territory of Southern vernacular music brought us riches undreamt of, and clarified for us some elemental facts and patterns which continue to shape our own explorations. ("Turning" 180)

In looking at the roles of the mediators and brokers I provide a different perspective on early Southern vernacular music.

Theory

In addition to looking at terminology and its meaning, it is helpful to have an overview of the work that has helped to inform this study. Typically, studies on the intellectual history of vernacular music in the twentieth century have focused on collections of songs (Cox, Brown, Sharp, Hudson, Scarborough), individual folklorist/collectors (Kodish on Gordon; Wolz on Buchanan; Porterfield on John Lomax), performers (Abrahams on Riddle; Porterfield on Rodgers), repertoire (Rosenberg in Bluegrass, Peña, Shaw), region (Malone, Southern; Tribe, Mountaineer), the audiences, or, in some cases, on combinations of the above (Ives on Joe Scott; Taft; Wilgus Anglo-American). Minimal attention has been paid to those people who put the folklorist in contact with the musician, or the record company or other media in contact with the performers. And minimal attention has been paid to the extent to which these individuals, both contact people and folklorists, A&R men, and others, may have shaped the sound, image, and direction of the music. How were our notions of not only the

music, but also ethnicity, race, gender, and regional image shaped by them? And how did they arrive at the standards they used?

Some of the theoretical groundwork for answering these questions has been laid by folklorists who have questioned the perception that the "folk" and their music were presented accurately. Or phrased slightly differently, they have investigated the assumptions of the collector and how these affected the collecting and reporting processes. Writing about antiquarian ballad scholars and collectors in eighteenth-century England, Dianne Dugaw shows how William Dicey, a chapbook and broadside printer, not only knew about the activities of the more scholarly publishers, but relied heavily on their publications for his own ("Popular" 79). The "peasants" who purchased his wares were keenly interested in the "old ballads"; thus, it was not solely an interest of the elite, intellectual audience but was also a popular interest, an interest the scholars ignored in their writings. Dugaw further proves that some of the scholars of the time had connections with Dicey and knew quite well that he was copying more scholarly materials and reissuing them for the common people. A feedback loop was created between the scholarly and popular audiences and disseminators of the ballads. Through this interchange, a romantic idealism of balladry was promulgated at different levels of society. It would be both ignorant and false to believe this kind of interchange of ideas was confined to eighteenth-century England.

Another interchange occurs between texts and objects which are considered traditional versus fakelore. Alan Dundes noted in his 1985 article "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore" that well before Dorson coined

the term "fakelore" (thereby canonizing the notion that "folklore" is information transmitted orally only, and reported as collected), folklorists were writing and combining oral materials in new forms. In particular, Dundes cites McPherson's Ossian, the Grimms' retellings of German folktales, and in Finland, Elias Lönnrot's creation of the Kalevala, all mediations of traditional material. Dundes notes the relation between nationalism and romanticism and the creation and use of "folklore." He feels there is an interesting paradox

> inherent in the development of folkloristics everywhere and related to strong, unresolved feelings of ambivalence on the part of intellectuals towards the folk and towards folklore. On the one hand, the folk are all too common, the vulgus in populos. . . . On the other hand, the folk represents the glorified, romanticized remnants of a national patrimony which is something for zealous intellectuals to celebrate. (Dundes, "Nationalistic" 12)

Dundes goes on to say that "if folklore is rooted in nationalism . . . fakelore may be said to be rooted in feelings of national or cultural inferiority" (13). But aren't those in fact part of the same thing? A country with an inferiority complex creates folklore/fakelore to boost a sense of nationalism, a sense of pride. If that is the case, and if, as Dundes asserts, fakelore becomes the folklore, then it is certainly in the interest of the scholar of vernacular music to look at commercial forms as well as those found in oral tradition.

Neil Rosenberg's article on the "Coal Creek March" builds on the notions of Dundes and Dugaw, recalling the Grimms, McPherson, and a sense of nationalism, and linking the scholarly and non-scholarly study of folklore (221). Rosenberg traces the aesthetic values of collectors in the 1930s and the 1960s, noting how the assumptions of the collectors influence the ways the collected music is presented. In the case of "Coal

Creek March," he notes the differences in the private, community context in which Pete Steele performed the tune and the historical context he would place it in, versus the commercial and public context where Pete Seeger performed and published it, with a social commentary to match. In this case, Seeger, a Harvard graduate, places the aesthetics of his class and background on a song from a different background and thereby changes the context and meaning, however well-meaning his motives may have been.

Rosenberg shows through Pete Seeger's actions how an outsider recontextualized a song and thus gave it new meaning. It is important to remember, though, that *anytime* an item is performed, there is a new context and thus potential for a new interpretation of the text. Richard Bauman made this point, moving folkloristics from text-based studies to performance-based studies in his seminal work Verbal Art as Performance. Bauman notes that "We view the act of performance as situated behavior, situated within and rendered meaningful with reference to relevant contexts. Such contexts may be identified at a variety of levels—in terms of settings, for example, the culturally defined places where performances occur" (27). Some of the contexts Bauman identifies include the text structure, the event structure, and the social structure. With reference to the last, he states,

> There is . . . a distinctive potential in performance by its very nature which has implications for the creation of social structure in performance. It is part of the essence of performance that it offers to the participants a special enhancement of experience, brings with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to performance as a mode of communication. Through his performance, the performer elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it. When this happens, the

> performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience—prestige because of the demonstrated competence he has displayed, control because the determination of the flow of the interaction is in his hands. (Bauman 43-44)

Numerous studies have elaborated on this theme with specific examples. Casey, Rosenberg, and Wareham, in discussing the repertoires of Newfoundland singers, note that

> another dimension becomes important: the relationship between the performer and his audience. A singer interacts with his audiences in the way that a politician interacts with parts or all of his constituency. The "good" singer is aware of the likes and dislikes of the groups and individuals for whom he performs. He manipulates his repertoire in response to perceived or anticipated performances, giving his constituents what he thinks they would like to hear. He is more or less sensitive to their feedback and thus quick to react in situations in which either his or their expectations are not fulfilled. (397)

Many of the vernacular performers manipulated their repertoire to match the perceived or explicitly stated expectations of the folklorists, schoolteachers, and A&R men who came to hear them, or whom they sought out to record for. This phenomenon is not unique to any given region or type of performance. Bauman referred to storytelling sessions; Casey, et. al. looked at Newfoundland singers; and Posen saw the same situation in the singing of one song, "The Chapeau Boys," a trademark song for one community in the Ottawa valley. Posen noticed the song "is renegotiated, reconstituted, recompiled every time it is sung. . . . It is an aggregation, an agreement, of persons and versions" (88-89). Posen noted many of the different interpretations and symbolic meanings of the song, both within and outside of the community. The same idea can be seen with the many versions Dorrance Weir sings of his composition "Take that Night Train to Selma"

(Glassie, "Take"). With vernacular performers, acknowledging that a recontextualization takes place is essential to understanding the dynamics of the collectors and what happens to the music.

Occasionally, the process is described and defined but important elements are omitted from the final product. Such is the case in most of the literature in discussing the role of early women collectors. David Whisnant observed,

> the great bulk of the documentary record of vernacular music in the South which we have and are continuing to assemble (whether one speaks of documentary or of commercial discs that have come to have documentary value) is a record shaped in still mostly unexamined ways by the vision and the culture of *men* [emphasis added]. In turn, that vision continues to guide (although to a somewhat lesser extent) the interpretive analysis that accompanies that exercise. ("Turning" 170-71)

In my own research I noticed the many women who collected vernacular music were either given no credit for their contributions, or their role was relegated to an introductory credit or footnote. One of my goals now is to give these women their proper place, based on a notion of equity feminism as defined by Christina Hoff Sommers. Equity feminism, or First Wave Feminism, is that

> traditional, classically liberal, humanistic feminism that was initiated more than 150 years ago. . . . It had a specific agenda, demanding for women the same rights before the law that men enjoyed. . . . A First Wave, "mainstream," or "equity" feminist wants for women what she wants for everyone: fair treatment, without discrimination. (Sommers 22)

This is the stance I take, providing details and giving credit to the work done by many women who were ignored in earlier studies and whose names were often omitted or obscured by editors of collections, particularly in the case of the academic collectors. It is *not* a use of gender feminism, the Second Wave doctrine, where women "are in thrall to

'a system of male dominance' variously referred to as 'heteropatriarchy' or the sex/gender system" (Sommers 22) to which many feminists subscribe and is the type which receives the most publicity. There is sufficient material for criticism of earlier writers' attitudes and techniques without resorting to arguments of "they did that because they are men." Therefore use of gender feminism strains credulity for this study, especially since in reviewing the actions of the artist and repertoire men, all the ones I have discovered who were recording vernacular music during this period were men. Women became involved in the artist and repertoire business later. The use of equity feminism is appropriate and will be employed.

In addition to giving women collectors a proper voice, there are two different ways of looking at the collector: those who are native to the area where they are collecting, and those who are outsiders. For each group, the collecting tends to take on a different quality and produce different short and long-term effects. From a methodological standpoint, the collectors coming from the outside are more likely to undertake extensive fieldwork, and the native collectors more likely to conduct intensive fieldwork, to use terms from Alan P. Merriam. Merriam defines these distinctions as follows:

> By extensive studies, I mean those in which the aim of the investigator is to travel widely through an area, staying in no single place for any extended period of time, and recording as quickly and as widely as he can. The result of such a field design is the rapid accumulation of large quantities of relatively superficial data from dispersed geographic areas. The utility of the method is that it achieves a broad view of a given area, expressed primarily in music structural terms. The investigator can see at a relatively swift glance the outstanding characteristics of the music and the ways in which variation is manifested within the area. This approach

> emphasizes the general survey and can, of course, lead to future research of a more detailed nature where the most interesting problems are indicated. The intensive study, on the other hand, is one in which the student selects a particular limited area and gives his entire attention to it. This is depth study in which the aim is to exhaust the materials concerning music in a restricted area, insofar as this is possible. Again, the assumption of either of these approaches leads to the formation and prosecution of very different research design, method, and technique. (42)

Thus, the results the collector obtains depends on whether the method employed is more intensive or extensive. For example, in the United States, Cecil Sharp's collecting was extensive, though he certainly collected more intensively in Somerset. He had a huge impact on the academic world, showing the value of the "native" song for his country, though his broad sweep of the Appalachians was primarily to support his theory of English folksong. Bascom Lamar Lunsford, from the Appalachians, spent most of his adult life collecting and sharing his music with people in and around Asheville, North Carolina. Most of the big record company executives worked extensively, while the brokers, such as H. C. Speir, concentrated on finding and recording those excellent musicians in their local area. I plan to show that the impact of the collecting differed based on the method used.

No discussion of the history of vernacular music collectors would be complete without mention of the work done by Bill C. Malone. Malone's Country Music U.S.A. provides an excellent overview of the beginnings of country music through the 1960s. Malone focuses on the musicians primarily, but provides important information about many of the collectors and entrepreneurs from this period. In his later work Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers, Malone furthers his discussion and details the

origins of important images, especially the creation of the cowboy for country music. A newer work which also looks at the image-making and its origins is Richard Peterson's Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity. Peterson, a sociologist well grounded in country music history, is interested in the sociology of art and culture. He shows many of the attempts at inventions of traditions, and I draw on his work especially with reference to Henry Ford's promotion of old-time fiddlers.

The materials examined for the documentation in this study include both field recordings and commercial sound recordings as well as the standard print sources of monographs, dissertations, and journal articles. Because tape-recorded interviews are available with A&R men, the amount and quality of information about the vernacular music collecting practices of these men are significantly different from that material on the early folklorists and also that on the early radio managers. From the late 1950s to the 1970s, musicians, music scholars, and record collectors such as Mike Seeger, David Evans, Archie Green, Ken Griffis, Ed Kahn, and Gayle Dean Wardlow became interested in the early recording artists, A&R men, and their practices. They conducted numerous interviews, including two sessions by Lillian Borgeson with Ralph Peer in the spring of 1958. Fortunately, most of these interviews are now held in archives and thus are available for research purposes.[6] The interviews give insights into A & R men's perceptions, which inform us as to the attitudes and actions taken in recording and promoting early vernacular musicians. Because I view their perceptions as being as important as what may have actually happened, I include the A&R men's descriptions of their collecting practices and motivations during the 1920s and early 1930s.

While there has been a long-term bias in folklife studies toward field-recorded material, commercial recordings provide valuable information about vernacular music in the first part of this century. Although most folklorists did not use recording machines in the early collecting in the South, some ethnographers did take advantage of the new technology. There is a brief note in a 1903 Journal of American Folklore referring to 1900 and 1901 recordings of 1500 Galician folk melodies, so while rejected in the United States at that time, the newer technology was accepted in other parts of the world (Chamberlain 57).

During the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s, Fred Hoeptner was an early proponent of using radio and commercial recordings for studying vernacular music. He wrote about early hillbilly music, telling how WSB in Atlanta started broadcasting early country music in 1922 and the record companies began issuing country music in 1923 ("Folk" 20). Hoeptner focused on the history of recording with its links between noncommercial and commercial vernacular music. He was one of the first to try to define "hillbilly" music, which he wrote was "that style of music native to the culture of the common folk class of white people in the southeastern United States, played by stringed instruments, and relatively little influenced by musical developments occurring after 1941" (Cohen & Cohen 51). A decade later, Hoeptner's article was picked up and expanded by Anne and Norm Cohen in their thought-provoking article "Folk and Hillbilly Music: Further Thoughts on Their Relation." In their expansion of his work they point out the parallel between what the academic/publishing sector was collecting and what the record companies found. They noted that within five years of the ballad collectors, record

company executives were in the same places, but gathering very different material. They explain this difference as the interest in music from the domestic vs. assembly traditions, or as other people have written, private vs. public performance contexts. The reason the public music was more attractive to the record companies was because "assembly music was greatly affected by then-current musical idioms that were enjoying national prominence, such as jazz, pop, blues, and ragtime" (Cohen & Cohen 52-3). As they point out and I substantiate, the music collected lies in the interest of the collectors. The Cohens analyzed "hillbilly" recordings from 1924 to 1926, a period they felt was relatively untainted by the commercial need to create a vast number of new songs to satisfy the market to see where the influences occurred. They found a few songs from the traditional Child canon (2% British origin), a number of Tin Pan Alley songs (32%), and a large number (59%) of nineteenth-century "folk" or early minstrel songs (Cohen & Cohen 53).

Alan Lomax recognized the importance of recorded music with the creation of his list in 1940 of the canon he saw emerge from the early recordings. As noted by Rosenberg:

> By the forties ideas of authenticity were changing, in response to field recordings and these new broadsides, to include hitherto ephemeral aspects of text as well as previously unnoticed aspects of performance, usually described as "style." No individual embodied so many aspects of the change better than Alan Lomax. (Transforming 12)

Rosenberg continues:

> Alan Lomax's emphasis upon new criteria of authenticity based on aural means was linked in his thinking with another shift of perspective, one initiated by his father [John Lomax]. This was what Gene Bluestein

> describes as "a forthright rejection of the ballad tradition in favor of the varied materials which he found to be characteristic of American folksong." Between 1934 and 1947 the Lomaxes published three omnibus collections of American folksong—the last, in 1947, included "Tom Dooley"--which, as Bluestein indicates, shaped a "new canon" of American folksong, a set of categories that evoked a populist and nationalistic portrait of American culture. From this perspective, the Friends of Music Album's two African-American work songs were equally important as the two white ballads—one of which was accompanied by the African-derived banjo.
>
> Lomax's pioneering work did more than shift the ground on which texts were evaluated, however; it also brought performers to the forefront. (Transforming 13)

The work of the Lomaxes shaped new perspectives about folksong that emerged in the American folk revival beginning in the 1930s: looking at performers as well as the songs they sing, and using sound recordings as well as print materials. The collectors that preceded the Lomaxes had dwelt primarily on textual matters with relatively little attention to individual performers. Harry Smith, in creating the Anthology of American Folk Music in 1952, reissued in 1997, took eleven of the selections directly from Alan Lomax's 1940 list; on others he chose the same song but used a different performance. Smith, of course, had his own criteria. As Robert Cantwell wrote in "Smith's Memory Theatre" the Anthology "drew upon a body of recorded music which owed its existence to a former generation of entrepreneurs" (364). Cantwell recognizes both the idiosyncrasy of Smith and the romance implied in the work. He writes:

> For that romance is among other things an ideology of social distinctions—particularly of the distinctions of race and class, and emphatically, in the New Deal period, of the distinction between the industrial and preindustrial ages, with which that whole romance was historically bound up. (Cantwell 366-67)

It is the early work of Lomax that interested Smith and gave him a springboard from which to create the rest of the anthology.[7] And it is Lomax's ideology and romance that are infused in the selections that come from an earlier era. In John Cohen's interview with Smith, Smith credits the Lomax list with sparking his interest in the Carter Family (4).

Jeff Todd Titon and David Evans provide similar powerful arguments for the use of commercial recordings when investigating the history of early blues musicians. Titon succinctly states, "Downhome blues is folk music, but its earliest documents are mass-culture artifacts: commercial phonograph records from the 1920s" (xiii). Titon provides ample substantiation for his claim throughout Early Downhome Blues, particularly in his chapter on recording the blues. Evans, like the Cohens, saw the recording sessions in the 1920s as representative of the music that was available at that time. He observed that Ralph Peer would advertise and audition at the first session in a given town or city, but that after the first time he often relied on local contacts and previously recorded musicians to find the musicians for him to record and promote (Evans, Personal communication). As for the musicians, he noted:

> There are hundreds of blues singers, who, like Jenkins, have come from a folk background and have composed blues that were transmitted back to their folk group through phonograph records . . . . Any extensive folkloristic discussion of such persons must take into account the influence of the popular music industry and the mass media in shaping their performances and compositions. (Evans, Big 5)

Jenkins is Andrew Jenkins, one of the first performers recorded in Atlanta, who composed songs for hillbilly records that sounded so "traditional" that many folksong

collectors collected them as such. A number of blues musicians have indicated that A&R man Art Laibley gave almost no direction in the studio, giving a musician the option to record his true repertoire rather than following record company expectations, though that attitude was rare (Fahey 25)

Folklorists were not immune to collecting commercial songs and thinking they were traditional. As early as 1957, John Greenway pointed out that a number of collectors included Jimmie Rodgers' Blue Yodels in their collections, often citing them as "Negro blues," though none was collected before Rodgers had recorded them (232). In his monograph on Ralph Stanley, John Wright points to Alan Lomax's trip of 1959 where he recorded "Big Tilda" by the Mountain Ramblers from Southwest Virginia. Lomax referred to the piece as "a stomp-down square dance tune popular in the Galax region," which it was, but he fails to mention, or is unaware, that the song was composed by Stanley and recorded on the Mercury label prior to his trip (2).[8] Although that recording trip occurred later than the period covered in this thesis, it serves as an example of how composed music can fit with that of a particular tradition, thereby making a recent composition often virtually indistinguishable from an older one. This blending is a question of authenticity that comes up frequently. Another recent work that draws on the work of John and Alan Lomax and focuses largely on blues musicians is Benjamin Filene's Romancing the Folk. Filene introduces the marketing of blues musicians, bringing in a perspective from American Studies, although most of his work covers a period later than my focus. Nonetheless it ties in with the incidences of how field recorded music often has a commercial parallel and supports the data collected by Anne

and Norm Cohen. Therefore, it is imperative to include commercial recordings and recording practices in any study of twentieth-century vernacular music.

Overview of Chapters

The process of capturing and disseminating music is complex, involving a number of different roles played by one or many people. Previous writers have largely ignored this complexity. Therefore, I present a "behind the scenes" view of vernacular music and its presentation in academic and popular culture. I look at some of the ways musicians were identified and chosen by folksong collectors, A&R men, radio managers, and other performers; the ways music that was distributed (or commodified) either was created expressly for these new means of distribution or changed because of them; and some of the effects singing and playing had on the performers. This study uses existing information but emphasizes a different aspect of the process to give a fuller picture of the folk/popular music continuum in American life. The structure of the chapters is based on groups of collectors, and is roughly chronological for chapters 2, 3, and 4 in terms of the time period when each group started its involvement with vernacular music.

The first group I examine is "academic" folksong collectors (Chapter 2), who primarily collected song texts and published their collections in book form, although some, such as Bascom Lamar Lunsford, made sound recordings and arranged live performances in addition to pursuing more scholarly activities. Because of their primary emphasis on publishing, I refer to this group as the academic/publishing industry. The term "industry" provides an identifiable link with the recording industry and the broadcast

industry, as all were creating new products. Folksong collectors (mediators) often were aided by local intelligentsia (brokers), usually teachers or ministers. Much of the collecting centers around the constellation of people connected to George Lyman Kittredge at Harvard. Through her connection with Harvard, Olive Dame Campbell invited Cecil Sharp to the southern mountains to collect ballads. While the work of Cecil Sharp through his contact with Olive Dame Campbell is well known, the work of such folksong collectors as Dorothy Scarborough is less well documented. Scarborough began collecting African American folksongs from blacks she knew and met others who heard she was collecting when she was President of the Texas Folklore Society. Later in her collecting, plantation owners and ministers helped her locate informants (Grider, "Folksong" 99). Many of the state folklore societies were founded during this time and formed networks among themselves and other collectors primarily to see how many of the ballads that were authorized and published by Francis James Child (i.e., Child ballads) could be found in the United States. Although some collecting occurred elsewhere or sought other types of vernacular music, a great amount of the work in the South centered on Child ballad collecting. The influential state folklore scholars include Frank C. Brown in North Carolina, Reed Smith in South Carolina, C. Alphonso Smith in Virginia, and John Harrington Cox in West Virginia. Other collectors, such as John Lomax and Robert W. Gordon, played a number of roles in collecting music, publishing songs, and promoting informants. John Lomax collected cowboy and African-American music, and promoted the formation of state folklore societies, beginning with his home state of Texas (Abernethy; Porterfield, Last). Gordon was also a savvy collector, though

using a different technique than Lomax. In addition to making field recordings, he popularized folk music through his column in Adventure magazine as a way of collecting more texts and locating performers (Kodish, Good).

The folklorists, in academic settings and the "local-enthusiasts" sought to collect songs for a number of reasons: 1) to promote national identity through preserving music they perceived as pure, or to show the "difference" in the music presented by other cultural groups such as African Americans; 2) to promote themselves for greater public and scholarly recognition; and 3) to further their appreciation of the music. They ended up mediating the product. While some were intervenors, not all were. The first two goals were met through scholarly and popular writings, and all these goals through public performance of the music, both by native performers and professionally trained musicians. For some of the academics, the collecting was altruistic, based on a notion of educating the poor and unlettered about their own heritage. For others, their own gain, either financial or for prestige, seemed the primary motive. The vernacular music collected was primarily spirituals and ballads, which were not marketed to be commercially viable; however, the record companies collected blues and string band music in order to sell their product. In other words, the academic collectors saw vernacular music as "popular" in the sense of being of the people; the record companies viewed "popular" in terms of what would sell the greatest number of 78s.

In Chapter 3, I discuss those involved in the record industry, mainly A&R men, who consciously looked for brokers and artists, recorded them, and released and marketed the finished product, and record brokers, who didn't work for a specific company, but

rather found artists, usually for a set fee, and made demo recordings for different record companies. The A&R men who worked for early record companies such as Victor, Gennett, OKeh, Columbia, the American Record Company (ARC), Brunswick, and Paramount included Ralph Peer, Art Satherly, William R. Calaway, Polk Brockman, Lester Melrose, Frank Walker, and Art Laibley. While working for OKeh, pioneer Ralph Peer was involved in recording both the first popular blues recording and the first popular "hillbilly" recording. Perry Bradford convinced Fred W. Hager, then director of Okeh's recording laboratory, and Peer to record Mamie Smith singing "That Thing Called Love" and "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" in 1920. Polk Brockman convinced Peer to take a chance on recording Fiddlin' John Carson during a recording trip to Atlanta in 1923, even though the original intent of the trip was to record blues (Kahn, "Carter"). The result, first an unnumbered OKeh release with "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Going to Crow" and "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane," was such a commercial success that OKeh expanded its recording into a new area. For both blues and early country, the other labels soon followed with musicians of their own. Frank Walker, the A&R man for Columbia, has been quite explicit about some of the techniques he used to find musicians and market records. Walker rehearsed the musicians, often lubricating them with alcohol before recording, and shortening the length of the piece, or writing skits for groups to perform (Walker).

To assist with locating musicians, record companies enlisted the help of local record retail outlets that were frequently located in furniture stores. Polk Brockman started out in his family furniture business. He convinced the family to open a record

section, which turned into a record store and the main source of income. Brockman then turned from the selling of records to scouting for Peer and to working directly for the company as a scout in his own right (Kahn, "Carter"). Other early brokers, such as H. C. Speir, worked to find musicians, but were not tied to a specific company. Despite the vigorous collecting of a few companies and individuals, once established the recording sessions took place in a very narrow range of the South and thus omitted many musicians and types of music (Lornell and Mealor).

The third group is the radio managers. By studying them I examine the role early radio played in shaping our views of Southern vernacular music. In Chapter 4, I examine the work of such people as George D. Hay of WSM in Nashville, who created the Grand Ole Opry based on shows such as the WLS National Barn Dance program out of Chicago. Radio began to compete with early sound recordings in the 1920s, although with important differences. Radio, at least early on, provided better sound quality than recordings. However, radio waves didn't travel far, so its influence was limited to local or regional audiences, and its transmission was live and therefore not permanent. Because of this limited distribution and impermanence, the influence of radio has often been overlooked. One of the earliest stations to offer old-time music programming was WLS in Chicago. The station started the National Barn Dance one week after going on the air in April 1924. Edgar Bill, the program director, hired George D. Hay away from a Memphis radio station to announce the show. Hay left WLS to start the Grand Ole Opry on WSM in Nashville in 1925 (Jones). Following the success of WLS and WSM, radio stations began similar shows in Atlanta (WSB, WATL, WGST), Charlotte (WBT),

Richmond (WRVA), Wheeling (WWVA), Charleston, West Virginia (WCHS), Shreveport (KWKH), Birmingham, Alabama (WBRC), Huntington, West Virginia (WSAZ), and other cities in the South. While Hay kept the Grand Ole Opry going and turned it into a huge success, Lamdin Kay of WSB in Atlanta did not view "hillbilly" programming in the same way, and allowed the format to change (Daniel). Musicians often moved from station to station, possibly following the example set by early WLS star Bradley Kincaid, so as not to be overexposed in one area. Others, such as DeFord Bailey, an early black star on the Grand Ole Opry, were less fortunate (Morton). Once musicians became known, the radio stations promoted themselves by announcing when they would have a well-known recording artist on the air. They also used live audiences and created clean, wholesome images or corny "hillbilly" images and personae for the performers once a live audience was introduced. Tie-ins, such as songbooks created by the artist, also became popular.

Another influence in radio was automobile magnate Henry Ford, who mediated the music through his promotion of fiddle contests, organizing dance classes, and sponsorship of radio programs. Like some of the folklorist collectors, Ford had a nationalist agenda and wished to use oldtime fiddle and dance music to promote the values he saw as proper and "American."

In Chapter 5, I turn to the performers themselves. Once contacted and performing on the radio, singing for a folklorist, or recording a side to be released, the performers affected other musicians, and thus created feedback loops. Musicians often acted either altruistically or for profit in providing contacts and generating income. Kincaid, in

addition to recruiting musicians for radio shows and helping train new performers such as Grandpa Jones, published songbooks. Ma Rainey "discovered" Bessie Smith singing and signed her up in "Ma & Will Rainey's Rabbit Foot Minstrels," just as Will had found Gertrude "Ma" Rainey. The canonization of music was greatly influenced by the musicians as some became collectors themselves. A. P. Carter gathered songs and then was savvy enough to copyright them, and other musicians wrote songs to fit the image of the music and perpetuate the definitions that had been created. Other musicians who acted as brokers and mediators included Charley Jordan, Will Shade, Big Bill Broonzy, and the Rev. Lonnie McIntosh (Evans). It appears that the role of broker and mediator has had a greater impact on the shaping and success of musicians and musical performances than has been shared or explored.

Once vernacular performers began moving from private or community-based settings to mediated ones, a network of brokers and mediators emerged, fostering a system of feedback and expansion based on commercial and cultural marketplaces. In Chapter 6, I consider how the different groups interacted and how the roles played by these folklorists, talent scouts, and A&R men in terms of shaping images of individual, regional, and ethnic identity have only been examined in a few specific cases, suggested in parts of D. K. Wilgus's extensive history Anglo American Folksong Scholarship since 1898, and mentioned more specifically in Porterfield's and Wolfe's consideration of Ralph Peer's marketing of Jimmie Rodgers (Jimmie Rodgers; "Lighter Shade"). Some folklorists clearly romanticized the image of "the folk," such as Jean Thomas when she changed the name and clothing of her informant John W. Day, who had recorded for

RCA, or relegated vernacular performers to anonymous status by promoting songs rather than singers. The commercial recruiters were no better. Hay often changed the names of individuals or groups to correspond to the image he wished the Grand Ole Opry to convey. Both sides, the commercial and the academic, were interested in getting out a product, but for different aims. It is now time for a systematic look at these practices. The sources indicate a rich body of information that raises issues of gender, race, class, region, and ethnicity as they pertain to vernacular music traditions and the way these traditions have been exploited by academics and sound media businessmen.

I shall explore and evaluate the selecting, collecting and disseminating of vernacular music via the roles of the different people and the predominant media they were working in. This investigation will essentially be chronological, although the time periods overlap. The individuals I am investigating will be presented in the order in which their activities first occurred with regard to vernacular music. This is not meant to be a comprehensive study, but rather an aggregate history, a broad overview of trends and a demonstration of how the different methods of collecting and disseminating often had similar results. We need to remember that, as Julia Kristeva stresses, writing is production not representation (Moi 4). To understand this notion better, one can think of writing like a map. The cartographer chooses what to include and exclude, depending in part on the purpose of the map. A street map will omit most topographic features, but may include significant buildings; a geological survey will include soil or rock types, but not population density. Yet each type of map would be one production, one bit of representation of a specific place. In writing, authors follow the conventions of their time

and interpret the data accordingly. In more recent folkloristic writing, scholars have often rejected the writings of some of the earlier popular and sentimental ethnographers from the first quarter of the century. However, the writings can be evaluated next to other sources, and may shed light on life not found elsewhere.

This thesis, then, will provide an aggregate history of the major collectors of vernacular music in the South during the first third of the twentieth-century, providing a map of major trends and decisions made in the mediation of vernacular music.

Notes

[1] Furniture stores originally sold record players and recordings, and were a good source for record companies to identify local musicians. The store owners paid attention to their clientele, and thus could later recommend musicians to the record company A&R men or local radio stations, or assume the role of A&R man themselves.

[2] For further justification of the musical and cultural ties to West Virginia, see Ivan Tribe, Mountaineer Jamboree.

[3] See Wilgus, Anglo-American, Chapters 1 and 2 for a detailed discussion of the Ballad Wars.

[4] For more on the creation of the cowboy image, see Bill C. Malone, Singing Cowboys, Chapter 3, 69-116.

[5] The interviews listed here are tape-recorded interviews, so no page numbers are available.

[6] Gayle Dean Wardlow's interviews are held at the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN. The other interviews are housed in the Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Mike Seeger's interview with Frank Walker is deposited both at the Southern Folklife Collection and at the Archive of American Folklife, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. An abridged version was published in Josh Dunson, and Ethel Raim, Anthology of American Folk Music (New York: Oak Books, 1973). All quotations in this thesis were transcribed directly from the taped copy.

[7] In comparing Lomax and Smith, the items Smith appears to have used from Lomax's list include the following with the same title and performer: "Charles Giteau," Kelly Harrell; "Country Blues," Doc Boggs; "Engine One Forty-Three," Carter Family; "I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground," Bascom Lamar Lunsford; "John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man," Carter Family; "Old Shoes and Leggins," Uncle Eck Dunford; "Rocky Road," Alabama Sacred Singers; "Single Girl," Carter Family; "The Spanish Merchant's Daughter," Stoneman Family; "Spike Driver Blues," Mississippi John Hurt; and "Sugar Baby," Dock Boggs. A number of songs from Lomax's list included in Smith but using a different performer include "The Boll Weevil Blues," "Casey Jones," "Dry Bones," "East Virginia Blues," "John the Revelator," "Lost John," and "Oh Death."

[8] On the same trip, Lomax recorded as "traditional" Estil C. Ball singing "The Cabin on the Hill" which was, at that time, a big country hit for Flatt and Scruggs (Rosenberg, Personal communication).

2. Academic Collectors

Although isolated collecting and publishing of vernacular music, primarily ballads from the Anglo-American population and slave songs and spirituals from African Americans, appeared before the turn of the century, a substantial growth in collecting and publishing of songs and tunes from the South developed in the first third of the twentieth century. This academic/publishing industry focused university teachers on a way to market their own work. The Anglo-American collecting had focused primarily on preserving the Child ballads, based in part on a romantic notion of a link between medieval culture and part of American culture scholars perceived was about to be lost. The African American collecting seems to have been inspired from the sense of "the Negro" as "other"—strange, primitive and exotic. Ballad collecting during this time was mostly focused in the Southern United States, particularly in the Appalachians. That region was deemed more simple, pure, and unselfconscious so collecting there was considered a harkening back to better times, and possibly a way to bring back a sense of pride through a sentimental reading of the lifestyles and culture of the region. A major motivation was discovering variants of songs catalogued in Child's publication of The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. Collecting was also spurred on by local-color writers such as Mary Noailles Murfree, the foundation of a number of state folklore societies, the work of settlement school teachers, scholarly and popular publications, and endorsements from the United States Bureau of Education. The local-color writers were outsiders who came into Appalachia and "whose pens poured forth with fashionable

magazine pieces bearing such titles as 'A Strange Land and a Peculiar People'" (Tribe, Stonemans 26). In most of the great published collections—Brown, Cox, Davis, Sharp, Child—it is too easy to forget that while these identified scholars were the editors and compilers for the collections, many, many others, not only informants but also local collectors, contributed significantly to these published projects. A number of overlapping networks formed to encourage and make easier the work of the collectors; these also provided a ready audience for the work. Before looking at these networks, I will set the context for the time period, first covering some of the motivations for the beginning of the settlement schools and their contribution to the vernacular music collections, and then follow with the network of college and university professors, and the state folklore societies.

No discussion of Anglo-American song collections or collectors is complete without acknowledging the force of Harvard University, and especially Francis James Child's ten volumes of the English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1882-1898). Child (1825-1896), an armchair collector inspired by Harvard colleague James Russell Lowell, sought to authenticate traditional ballads (Bell 1995). While he never fully expounded on his collecting rationale, a glimpse of his theory is found in the advertisements to the different parts of his publication. He was seeking "every valuable copy of every known ballad" by searching what he felt to be reliable sources, which he graciously acknowledged (Child vii). Child modeled his editing after Gruntvig's Old Popular Ballads of Denmark (xix). In an introduction to the first volume, George Lyman

Kittredge added that Child was influenced by his studies in Germany, especially what he saw of the Brothers Grimm, and also by his work on British poets. He was a meticulous researcher, feeling a "scientific" approach best (Child xxv, xxvii, xxix). His work created a controversy over the notion of authenticity, reviewed extensively by D. K. Wilgus in Anglo American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898 and best summed up by Thelma James, who wrote "a 'Child ballad' means little more than one collected and approved by Professor Child" (Leach 19).[1] The importance of Child's work is most keenly seen through his student and colleague George Lyman Kittredge.

Child and Kittredge were key figures in the establishment of folklore study in the United States during the late nineteenth century. Like the scholars in England and Europe from whom they drew much of their theory, they were most interested in antiquities and survivals. But their work became important to those for whom folklore's value lay in issues of nationalism. From the late eighteenth century onward, folklore studies were shaped by ideas of national identity. William A. Wilson links this rise in nationalism to "the liberal and humanitarian philosophies of the Enlightenment" with its idea that the individual will was second to the national will (22). Following the Enlightenment, the romantic movement developed. It "emphasized passion and instinct instead of reason," advocating a return to nature that privileged unlettered rural peoples (thought to be living close to nature), and gave rise to romantic nationalism, which stressed "national difference instead of common aspiration, and, above all, the building of nations on the traditions and myths of the past" (Wilson 23). The ensuing creation of national identities

was seen as addressing the sense of inferiority that inhabitants of many less powerful nations felt at this time. Dundes holds that the invention of the tradition of the Paul Bunyan stories was due to an American sense of national inferiority, but that by the end of World War I, that sense had diminished ("Nationalistic" 12). The sense of inferiority remained strong in the upland South, however, and the collecting of vernacular music in the region was often used to create a sense of regional self-worth. The work of Child and Kittredge fit well with this agenda.

The influence of Kittredge and the aura of Harvard can hardly be overestimated with respect to the collecting of vernacular music in the South. Kittredge's publication in 1904 of the one-volume edition of Child provided a convenient classroom and field guide for teachers and collectors. For example, Maude Minish Sutton was introduced to that volume as a student and carried her copy with her as she collected from others in western North Carolina (Patterson, "Women" 106). As a teacher, Kittredge inspired many of his students to collect and publish songs. As a former teacher and colleague, he was a force behind the formation of state folklore societies. Directly responsible for encouraging John Lomax to form the Texas Folklore Society, Kittredge was an important influence and a frequent guest speaker at a number of other state societies. The state folklore societies were set up primarily to act as agents in the collecting process, with the goal to preserve the "survivals" of a culture fast disappearing. As a member of the Board of Syndics at Harvard University Press, Kittredge was responsible for encouraging and editing a number of collections published either in the Journal of American Folklore, by

Harvard University Press, or through his referral to another press, thus showing how important the publishing industry is in academia. He is acknowledged in the collections compiled by Arthur Kyle Davis, John Harrington Cox, Mellinger Henry, and Dorothy Scarborough. He also corresponded with popular writer Josephine McGill and settlement worker Olive Dame Campbell. Mellinger E. Henry praised Kittredge in the introduction to Folk-Songs from the Southern Highlands:

> Genuine inspiration came from the kindly interest of my former teacher, Professor George L. Kittredge, in some of the songs that had been printed. He at once cheered on our quest for ballads. He has never ceased to encourage and to help. (Birdsall 63)

Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr., though not quite as effusive, also felt Kittredge's influence; he wrote:

> It is a pleasure here to acknowledge certain indebtedness. The first must go to Professor Kittredge, of Harvard University. Though this book was not, as have been so many ballad and folksong publications, the offspring of his inspiration, he has throughout taken an interest not stepfatherly. (Birdsall 64)

Esther Birdsall stated, "No one, it seems, will ever know the extent of his editorial assistance on several ballad books or on the manuscripts submitted to the Journal of American Folklore" (63).

Kittredge inspired others not only through his edition of the Child ballads, but also through his teaching of the ballad course at Harvard. His students, including John Lomax, R. W. Gordon, Mellinger E. Henry, and John Harrington Cox, set out collecting after their experience in his classroom. While some of this collecting resulted from the

inspiration of Kittredge, early settlement schools also played a significant part in contributing to the collecting of the ballads.

The formation of settlement schools began in the late 1800s with an effort to help those people perceived to be underprivileged in Appalachia. In addition, the schools were an effort to spread new forms of Protestantism to the South including missionary work to establish new Baptist and Methodist churches. There was a distinct feeling in the Northeast that such evangelizing and educating were sorely needed. The schools stayed close to standard elite education and/or industrial education until the Sage Foundation hired John C. Campbell to come to the South. Campbell, former president of Piedmont College in Denorest, Georgia, had married Medford, Massachusetts, native Olive Dame. After their honeymoon, he came back to the South to do what he knew well: "mountain work," social work concentrating on the underprivileged people of Appalachia. Once he joined the Russell Sage Foundation, Campbell helped popularize the notion of preserving the traditions of the mountain region. Many of the schools, such as Hindman Settlement School in Kentucky, were founded to improve the social and economic conditions by educating children in the Appalachians and began teaching crafts, singing, dulcimer playing, and other forms of culture which they perceived to be native to the area but lost to the region, such as Maypole dances and medieval pageants. The Maypole and pageants, though an invention of tradition, were a misguided notion with good intentions. However, fiddle and banjo music, ballad singing, and crafts were alive and well in the region, and the settlement schools encouraged their continuation. Many students,

including singer Jean Ritchie and Bradley Kincaid, appreciated the emphasis on their vernacular music and on keeping the music and crafts alive and marketable.

Jean Ritchie grew up in the area near Hindman, and as soon as the school was started, her family took an interest in it. The family grew up singing ballads and play party songs, and honored these traditions. Although Ritchie did not attend a settlement school, her siblings attended the two schools started by Katherine Pettit and May Stone: Hindman and Pine Mountain. In her autobiography, Ritchie talks about her perception of how she and her neighbors were viewed by outsiders before the schools came in:

> It's a pretty common notion that we in the Kentucky mountains live and do things differently from everybody else in the world, that we are old-fashioned in our ways and somehow quaint and queer, that we've not changed much since we came in from the old countries of England, Scotland and Ireland. At least that was the notion folks from the level country held about us until just a few years back, and some hold it still. (224)

Yet Ritchie and other members of her family very much appreciated the settlement schools and their attempts to retain the local songs.

Within the settlement schools, Katherine Pettit was a major influence in the collection of vernacular music. Pettit, originally from the Kentucky bluegrass, teamed up with fellow bluegrass native May Stone and formed the Hindman Settlement School in Knott County, Kentucky, in 1902. The school was based on the principle of the urban settlement houses such as Hull House in Chicago (Whisnant, All 21). Pettit was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and had a strong passion for social issues. Pettit and Stone almost immediately began purchasing woven coverlets from the

locals and selling them to a northern market, and soon thereafter also began collecting songs in the region. One of the students at Hindman in 1902 was young Josiah Combs (1886-1960), and some of his songs were included in the article Pettit published in the Journal of American Folklore in 1907.

Combs moved on, clearly inspired by the learning at Hindman and in 1905 attended Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. While there, one of his most influential teachers was Dr. Hubert G. Shearin, and they created a collaborative publication in 1911, A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Songs. After graduation, Combs continued to spread the word about vernacular song, especially Child ballads, while he taught for the next seven years, until 1918, in various high schools and colleges in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and Oklahoma. D. K. Wilgus provides some insight into Combs's teaching through providing an outline of Combs's syllabus for 1915, the first part of which is Dulcimer and Ballad Recital. The syllabus emphasizes Child ballads; it also includes a few other genres such as "Jiggs [sic], Ditties, Nonsense Rimes" (Wilgus, Anglo-American x). Wilgus notes,

> While "furriners" like Cecil Sharp and Loraine Wyman were tracking down the "lonesome tunes" in the Highlands, a young mountain boy was bringing them to the lowlands with a blend of defensiveness and self-criticism . . . And the concerts of unarranged folksongs were well ahead of their time (Anglo-American xi-xii).

During World War I, Combs dropped out of the picture as an immediate influence, because he was in England and then France. His thesis, "Folk-Songs du Midi des États-Unis," remained unrecognized in the United States until Wilgus edited the English

translation in 1957. It is impossible to determine the influence Combs had on high school and college students before that time, although he was certainly another cog in the wheel, perpetuating the glory of the Child ballad tradition. He knew John A. Lomax, Louise Pound, Jean Thomas, and John Harrington Cox, the last a strong follower of the theories of Gummere and Kittredge.

Jean Ritchie, though not a student, shares her views on the role Pettit played for the students based on the experiences related to her by siblings and her own visits to the schools:

> If it hadn't been for the settlement schools, many of the old mountain songs would have died out when the ways of the world came in on us. But the Women [sic, May Stone and Katherine Pettit] loved our music and play, so that they became a regular part of the life around the two schools. Every new girl or boy that'd come in, the Women'd soon find out what ballads he or she knew, and that song'd be written down and taught to all the other children. (231)

Ritchie complained that the public school came in just when she would have gone to Hindman, and "It nearly broke my heart" (96).

While Ritchie makes her feelings clear about the schools, she is not alone in her praise. Another product of settlement schools is Bradley Kincaid, who attended Berea. Kincaid went to the public school through the fifth grade, then dropped out after his mother died. He started the sixth grade at age nineteen at Berea, as they had no age requirement for the local students. After the eighth grade he enlisted in the military during World War I, then returned to graduate from the high school at twenty-six. While at Berea, Kincaid received voice lessons. He remembered, "Professor John Smith

collected ballads and I helped him" (L. Jones, Kentucky 17). Kincaid went on to become a star on WLS radio in Chicago, sang ballads and songs on the air, and used his skills to collect additional songs.

Back at Hindman, Katherine Pettit's influence in the promotion of vernacular song was not limited to her students. Journalist Josephine McGill used the Hindman Settlement School as a base for her collecting in 1914. While McGill's main purpose seemed to be presenting a popular version of songs that could be played in parlors, her writings are not solely popular commercialization of the music. McGill traveled to Hindman from Louisville, Kentucky, and wrote about her experiences in both romantic and scholarly terms.[2] It may have been her Kentucky connection that brought her to the school started by Pettit and Stone. She saw her ballad book as a scholarly work and submitted the manuscript to Kittredge, who rejected it for publication. In a note to Harold Murdock, the Director of Syndics, Kittredge wrote:

> Miss McGill's ballad matter from Kentucky is first rate material. It needs much editing. If I had nothing else to do, I should enjoy the work myself; but, having already edited three or four ballad books for other people, I fear I must lie back. (Birdsall 62)

Josephine McGill's effort turned into the popular book Folk Songs of the Kentucky Mountains: Twenty Traditional Ballads and Other English Folk-Songs, which was published by Boosey and Company in New York in 1917.[3]

The two articles McGill published on her amassing of vernacular music (Musical Quarterly in 1917 and 1918) were written for an academic audience. In her first article, "Following Music in a Mountain Land," McGill wrote eloquently about the mountain

men and women she encountered, although she did not provide any names of the people she talked to and wrote about so that information is now lost to scholars. She included titles and texts of the ballads and noted the range of music she found in the mountains. Unlike some other writers, McGill was open to what she saw and did not restrict her observations to ballad singers. Rather she included mention of string band music, a mouth bow, the dulcimer, and the great interest in hymns and spirituals, which provided an overview of the different expressions of vernacular music in the mountains at that time. However, she still exhibited a preference for the ballads. She noted spirituals that were "contained in books by nearly every mountain family"—hymnbooks such as The Thomas Hymnal and The Sweet Songster—giving later ethnographers valuable clues toward sacred repertoire and the lined out singing style she goes on to describe ("Following" 382). Her second article, "Old Ballad Burthens," began on a scholarly tone by citing Gummere and Child and presented a number of ballads by title and tune, with some of the text and her musical and textual impressions of each, including an occasional brief note on other versions. She did not merely romanticize or popularize the music, but followed the academic standards of the day for presentation of such materials.

Just as Pettit encouraged Combs and McGill, she also had an influence on Olive Dame Campbell and John C. Campbell, both of whom had a lasting effect on vernacular music collecting of the South. Olive Dame Campbell was responsible for seeking out Cecil Sharp and asking him to come and collect ballads in the Appalachians.

Before discussing Sharp, it is necessary to place his visit in the context of his reason for coming to the Appalachians to collect: the invitation of Olive Dame Campbell. Campbell and her husband John were two transplanted Northerners (he was originally from Wisconsin, although he had been a teacher and president of a college in Georgia; she from Massachusetts), who moved to the South as part of his work with the Russell Sage Foundation. Olive Dame Campbell became interested in collecting songs after hearing songs sung at the Hindman Settlement School by students of Katherine Pettit.[4] The Campbells first met Pettit at a conference sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation in Richmond in 1908. Olive Campbell collected songs via fieldwork for the first two years of their work. After that time (like Scarborough, C. Alphonso Smith and to a lesser extent F. C. Brown and R. W. Gordon), she relied on correspondence to gather texts and tunes. She was not competent to notate the tunes, but one of her collaborators helped with tunes. Her best correspondents included Daisy Dame, her older sister; Isabel Rawn, a teacher at the Beecher School in Georgia; and Pettit. Daisy Dame taught kindergarten in Clay County, Kentucky, in 1909 and 1910 and collected songs from local residents and students during that time.

While Campbell wished to publish her collection, Mary Glenn, a friend and the wife of the Director of the Russell Sage Foundation, suggested other uses for the collection. She recommended that Campbell not pursue a scientific study, but use the songs in pageants. Glenn wrote to Campbell:

> It may be that in connection with some of the schools there might be developed a form of pageant that would illustrate the difference between

> the various mountain communities and would draw on their traditions (your old ballads, for instance) to supply dramatic incidents. (Day, In 20)

Campbell and Rawn implemented this suggestion, although neither woman limited her use of ballads to pageants. Rawn used the materials the students collected for writing assignments and had her students create poetry from them (Day, In 32).

Campbell pursued publication without success until her collaboration with Sharp. She was encouraged by Kittredge and a former professor from Tufts, but not to the point that they would publish the materials. Campbell wrote on the ballads and used the Bureau of Education pamphlet published by C. Alphonso Smith to encourage others to collect ballads. Smith comments that "the Bureau of Education in Washington [issued] a bulletin in January, 1914, containing a list of the three hundred and five English and Scottish ballads and urged teachers of the United States to form ballad societies in each state for the purpose of finding and thus preserving these valuable folk-songs before it was too late" (C. Smith 109). He neglects to mention in this article that it was largely *his* influence that prompted the Bureau of Education to issue the bulletin, nor does he mention that he wrote most of it. It appeared in fall 1913. Campbell collected ballads in an effort to preserve the songs and to help the people (Day, In 34). However, it was Campbell's connection to pageantry that led to her introduction to Sharp. She was introduced to William Chauncy Langdon, an expert in pageantry who at that time was connected with the Recreation Department of the Russell Sage Foundation. Langdon arranged the meeting between Sharp and Campbell.

Sharp, before his meeting with Campbell, spent years working in the British Isles collecting and promoting music and dance. In his 1907 classic, English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions, his stated goal was to collect scientifically the "authentic" music of England, beginning in Somerset, and promote folk music as the national music of England and a national treasure. Sharp subscribed to the communal theory of composition, and his fieldwork was designed to substantiate that hypothesis. He predicted that "Once [we] establish the fact that the folk-song has not been made by the one but evolved by the many, [then] its national character and its fitness to serve a national purpose follow as a natural consequence" (English x). His goal, then, was to prove his theory; by doing so, he could promote his work and the songs. At the end of the introduction he continues, "Now that English folk-songs are being collected and published and brought within the reach of everyone, every effort should surely be made to popularize them once again amongst all classes of society" (xi).

Sharp not only advocated this popularization in his writing, but he also put it into practice, giving lectures on the topic and creating songbooks for use in schools. In a lecture given in Hampstead in 1903 Sharp stated,

> every year marks the death of many old peasant ballad singers, and with them the disappearance forever of countless traditional songs. But why? You may well ask—do we allow these beautiful songs, our national heritage, to be swept away before our very eyes. (Dugaw, "Song Brokers" 5)

Sharp also had clear views on the perspective of the "folk" to collect music from; basically he proposed collecting from peasants. The people educated at Oxford,

Cambridge, and other universities had been influenced too much by popular and classical music to be of help. Sharp did not place his informants in the same class as himself, seeing them as "others"; therefore, he approached the singer in a way different from someone of his own class. In the same speech, he told his audience,

> After all there is only one way of getting the yokel to sing to you, and that is to shake off as much as possible of your conventional civilization and convince him that you come as an enthusiastic lover of old songs and are come to admire not to criticize. If you appear to them as one of the gentry you will be treated to the songs which they believe the gentry like . . . and then you will feel very keenly the indignity of being classed with the "gentry" at least I did. (Dugaw, "Song Brokers" 6)

Sharp carried to the United States a typical view of the peasants as naïve, just as many of the collectors in the South perceived the people of Appalachia as "backward" or the African Americans as "primitive." Yet he also saw them as the "pure" bearers of the song tradition and the people who could help bring nationalism back to England in the way he saw most fit and proper. His views were of an ideal peasant and an ideal song canon.

Because of his yearning to bring traditional English songs back into favor and in hopes of adding to his canon, Sharp accepted Campbell's invitation. He also needed a way to make a living while his country was at war. The war had forced the end of Sharp's efforts at teaching and collecting song and dance in England, but in the United States he could give lectures. So Sharp traveled giving lectures and setting up pageantry to be incorporated into Shakespearean productions in New York (Whisnant, All 113).

Among American folklorists, Sharp is seen primarily in terms of the collecting and subsequent publication of English Folk Songs from the Southern Highlands. This influential publication omits mention of many of Campbell's contributions and does not give credit to Dame, Rawn, or Pettit at all. As with any ethnographic endeavor, Sharp's ballad collecting trip should be set in a balance with his other activities. However delighted he was to find the songs in the South, he did not come to America solely to gather songs: Sharp's original purpose was to earn money for himself and family through promoting English folksong and dance in lectures and demonstrations, and to teach dance to be incorporated in New York theatrical productions. Nor was Sharp without reservations about returning to the Southern mountains after his first trip. In his second year, he tried without success to travel to Newfoundland in August, instead of enduring another hot North Carolina summer.[5]

Despite his omission of credit to Rawn, Dame, Pettit, and Campbell's other correspondents, Sharp's publication greatly influenced later collectors in the South. Unlike many of the other song collectors, Sharp did collect tunes as well as text, a practice which has proven valuable. Henry Belden was effusive in his praise of English Folk Songs, stating it was "the most noteworthy publication dealing with folk-song in America that has yet appeared" (142).[6] Yet it should be remembered that when Sharp came to the United States, work was already underway through the efforts of the different state folklore societies, particularly in Missouri, Texas, North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, and South Carolina. These collecting efforts probably would have continued at

roughly the same pace without Sharp's visit. After Sharp returned to England, he focused his attention on promoting songs in the schools, showing he was more interested (and appropriately so) in a national movement in the British Isles than he was in pursuing his interest in the United States.

As mentioned earlier, Kittredge taught a number of people at Harvard who later became vernacular music collectors, scholars, and creators of folklore societies that were formed as one method of fostering the collecting efforts. His influence on John Lomax fostered the impetus for the creation of a number of state folklore societies. The first state folklore society, however, was started in Missouri by Henry Belden in 1906. Belden was the faculty advisor for an English Club at the University of Missouri, and at one of its meetings in 1903, a student sang a Child ballad that Belden recognized. The students assured him that other similar songs were still sung in the area, and he encouraged them to collect the ballads. The Society was established three years later with Belden as secretary and Mary Alicia Owen as another prominent member.

> The stated purpose of the new society was the study of "folk-lore in the widest sense of the term, including customs, institutions, superstitions, signs, legends, language and literature of all races, so far as they are found in the state of Missouri," a statement echoing the advice Charles Godfrey Leland had given in an 1889 letter to Owen about her work among the Mesquakie Indians. (Schroeder)

Belden created a format that was copied by a number of state folklore societies developed over the next decade or so, including the Texas Folklore Society.

John Avery Lomax (1867-1948) was interested in folklore before arriving at Harvard. He grew up on a farm in Texas and in college wrote on the songs of the

cowboys and, in letters at least, on African American singing. After his studies and work at the University of Texas and Texas A&M University, Lomax was finally admitted to Harvard where his interest was further encouraged by his professors, Kittredge and Barrett Wendell. Lomax, with support from Kittredge, published Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads in 1910. The volume showed that both Kittredge and Lomax clearly viewed vernacular music as broader than just ballads and spirituals. In a sense, after the publication of Cowboy Songs, Lomax spent the next twenty years as much as an instigator for collecting as a collector, although he never abandoned his love for gathering songs. Kittredge praised Lomax's work and encouraged him in publication and in starting the Texas Folklore Society after Lomax took a position teaching English at Texas A&M. Lomax, in turn, urged other states to establish folklore societies in his 1913 presidential address to the American Folklore Society. Within a decade, seven new state folklore societies had begun. Lomax started the Texas Folklore Society with Leonidas Payne, a friend and English Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, after the 1909 Thanksgiving football game between the University and A&M.

Lomax's concern for preserving vernacular music through the state society was not purely altruistic or even patriotic. His motives were also sentimental at times and aimed toward personal gain. On the sentimental side, Lomax's biographer Nolan Porterfield gives strong evidence that Lomax wrote an article about cowboys entitled "The Minstrelsy of the Mexican Border" while a student at the University of Texas. In it Lomax laments, "these songs and singers are dying away and that is regrettable" (Last

60). Near the end of his article he writes, "Better things, it may be, are coming in to take the place of the cowboys, but to these as the years go by, will be added a glamour that the things that have driven them into the west and down to death can never hold" (Last 60). Lomax also held both a sentimental and racist view of African Americans, an attitude that mixed "on the one hand his earnest sympathies for the individual black and asserting on the other the absolute necessity of keeping all blacks segregated while their white superiors worked to 'civilize' them" (Porterfield, Last 112). Lomax's mixed motives were seen in greater focus in the 1930s when he and his son Alan collected African American songs and began marketing and promoting Leadbelly, though restricting the artist's movements.[7]

Although Lomax had strong nationalistic feelings toward the songs he collected in Texas, he also had a strong personal interest in the music and the motivation to promote his own career. Self-promotion is a common motivation and not contradictory with encouraging others to collect songs and ballads throughout the United States. Lomax was active in the Texas Folklore Society's structure through 1917. His chief reason for involvement, stated in a letter to former professor Barrett Wendell, was to gain assistance in his collecting. In the letter, sent with a copy of the circular announcing the newly formed society, Lomax wrote, "I hope the Folklore Society is going to help me in my ballad collecting; in fact, *that is my chief interest in it* [emphasis added]. I am the originator and practically the only promulgator of the Society" (Abernethy 8).

Lomax's self-promotion emerged sometimes in other forms. At the meeting in December to approve the new society, his wife, Bess Brown Lomax, read his paper on Mexican border ballads, while Lomax went off to read the same paper at the more prestigious Modern Language Association meeting held at Cornell University. On the other hand, as will be discussed at greater length later on in this chapter, Lomax actively promoted the formation of other state folklore societies and strongly encouraged others to collect according to their interests.

Lomax's partner in the society, Leonidas Payne, although primarily interested in dialect and folk speech, became active in publishing folksong scholarship and reading papers for the Texas Folklore Society. The society wanted to collect all types of folklore. Reflecting its interest in vernacular music, in 1910 Payne wrote:

> Songs and Ballads—Many people sing songs learned from their parents or neighbors and, that have, as far as known, never been printed. A collection of all such popular songs of this state is desired . . . . We want the "Play Party" songs of both the Negro and white—such as "Hog Drovers" and "Hunt the Buffalo." We want the songs the Negroes improvise and sing, the native Spanish ballads, and the many songs that have grown up in the state celebrating local conditions or events, —such as battles with Indians or Mexicans, the career of the desperado, the deeds of the ranger, the life of the rancher, the freighter, the bummer, or the cowboy. It has been said the "life of the ballad is the tune," and when not possible to send the tune also, the Society should know from whom it could be obtained. (Abernethy 28-29)

Payne borrowed from Henry M. Belden's model for the Missouri Folklore Society, founded in 1906. For both Texas and Missouri, Payne and Belden provided early examples of multiculturalism, embracing and wishing to study the entire range of cultures found within the state borders.

The Texas Folklore Society's broad guidelines echoed Lomax's own view of collecting, a view which he reiterated in his 1913 address as President of the American Folklore Society. In that address, he felt that American ballads belong to occupational groups and African Americans. He identified seven groups of "American ballads" to be collected from miners, lumbermen, inland sailors, soldiers, railroaders, Negroes, and cowboys (Bluestein, "Lomaxes" 52). The programs and publications of the Texas Folklore Society between 1909 and 1932 presented a broad range of folklore from the state and a broad expanse of vernacular music as well. The first publication of the society was "Some Current Folk-Songs of the Negro and Their Economic Interpretation," by member Will H. Thomas, based on his presentation of the same title to the Society at its 1912 meeting. Since Thomas taught at Texas A&M, it is likely that Lomax recruited him to join the society and present his findings. According to Abernethy, "Thomas was . . . born in 1880 . . . he was educated at Austin College, Sherman, at the University, and got his master's at Columbia before teaching for about thirty years at A&M" (37). The Texas Folklore Society, while having a stated interest in collecting everything, did not have any system in place for comprehensive collecting, either intensive or extensive, probably because the Society relied on interested volunteers. This pattern is the norm for most of the societies, although in Virginia, there was an attempt at extensive systematic collecting under the leadership of C. Alphonso Smith.

At the 1915 meeting of the Texas Folklore Society, a broad range of interest was demonstrated. John Lomax presented his lecture "Cowboy Songs and Ballads," H. C.

Payne sang cowboy ballads, Irene McLendon sang Indian folk songs, and Dorothy Scarborough gave her presidential address "Negro Ballads and Reels," followed by a concert of Negro folksongs sung by students from Paul Quinn and Central Texas colleges (Abernethy 44-45).

The interest in African American lore came easily to Dorothy Scarborough. She heard African American songs sung by field hands at her home in Waco, Texas. While teaching at Baylor, she began collecting songs near her home and became involved in the Texas Folklore Society. She pursued her interest in African American materials while continuing her studies at Columbia. She interviewed W. C. Handy in New York and collected songs via correspondence and through fieldwork during her summer vacations in Texas. The resulting work, On the Trail of Negro Folksongs, was published with Kittredge's recommendation by Harvard University Press in 1925 (Grider, "Folksong" 99). Scarborough's work was groundbreaking at the time because it included not only ballads and songs, but also "dance songs, children's game songs, lullabies, songs about animals, work songs, railroad songs, and blues" (Grider 100). Although Scarborough's novels written in the years between her song collections, especially The Wind, continued to focus on Texas, she did not remain active in the Texas Folklore Society. In her second song collection, A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains, funded by a research grant from Columbia, she collected Anglo-American ballads and songs. To collect ballads after collecting African American music was a direction decidedly different from most of her colleagues. In her Song Catcher work, Scarborough was aided by use of a portable

Dictaphone for documenting and transcribing and by her contacts with other scholars working in the Appalachians.[8] Harvard University Press did not publish this second book, citing tight finances (Birdsall 63), but Columbia University Press consented. Although Scarborough and Lomax traveled in many of the same social circles and geographical areas, there seems to have been little contact between the two scholarly collectors. Like Lomax, Scarborough used her personal and business contacts with people in other folklore societies to further her research. She did not limit herself to collecting in her home state of Texas. Rather she traveled to the places where she felt the collecting ought to be done, although she never had the same range of influence as Lomax.

As mentioned earlier, despite his own collecting focus on cowboys, John Lomax did recognize the need to collect the music of other American groups. He also encouraged others to collect American folk music and was instrumental in creating a number of state folklore societies. In addition to the Texas Folklore Society, Lomax was largely responsible for the creation of the North Carolina Folklore Society, convincing Frank Clyde Brown (1870-1943) to form it in 1913. This urging was through a personal appeal in addition to Lomax's American Folklore Society address.

In some of the mid-south states, the folklore societies formed quickly following Lomax's 1913 presidential address. Frank C. Brown in North Carolina, C. Alphonso Smith in Virginia, and John Harrington Cox in West Virginia were influential in starting folklore societies, collecting and mediating collections, and encouraging others to go out

and collect ballads and other vernacular music. In 1909, at the time of the formation of the Texas Folklore Society, Frank C. Brown was teaching English at Trinity College (later Duke University) in Durham, North Carolina. He was an imposing figure; one evidence of Brown's personality is that he was nicknamed "Bull" because of "his self-confident charge toward objectives and the roar of disapproval he directed most often not at unprepared students but at those who did not care whether they were prepared or not" (King 244). Despite this claim, Brown could and did encourage and praise others. Brown was clearly influenced by Child, but much more inclusive in collecting as evidenced by the breadth of the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore. Wilgus commented on Brown's views on composition:

> The ballads themselves, Brown writes, are so changed by tradition as to be untrustworthy evidence, but preserve certain characteristic traits that connect them with modern Negro improvisations. He refuses to believe that such "crude expressions of individuals could ever have united of themselves to form a finished ballad of the most intricate sort." Therefore, talented individuals must have reworked the material between meetings of the throng. (Wilgus, Anglo-American 83).

Like Phillips Barry in New England and present-day scholars, Brown saw the songs as having individual input, although he did not completely reject communal theory.

One of the great frustrations for members of the North Carolina Folklore Society was Brown's penchant for collecting and his desire for completeness before publishing. He freely admitted that he was more interested in collecting than in publishing. While Brown did some collecting himself, fieldwork was mostly by the membership of the Society since he encouraged many others to go out and collect. Brown's aspirations were

to cover the state, and all sections of North Carolina are represented in the collection, although it was not carried out in a systematic fashion, which would have involved going to each of the state's 100 counties. Brown was forced to return funds to subscribers to the collection because its publication was delayed for so long. Brown never finished the collections, leaving that task to his successors, primarily general editor Newman Ivey White. During the early history of the Society, Brown did manage to publish Ballad Literature in North Carolina, but that appears to be his last publication on this topic. His lack of publishing does not imply a lack of impact, however. Through his work with the North Carolina Folklore Society, Brown gained the confidence of members and, as with the other state societies, collected songs and other materials.

One of Brown's students at Trinity who later had an impact on collecting was the aforementioned Newman Ivey White. In 1919, after earning his graduate degree, White began teaching in the English Department with Brown. White had skills that complemented Brown's and took the Brown Collection, organized it, and finally got it published. He was known for his meticulous work skills. White's interests in folklore were in African American songs. He was one of the first scholars to classify them and to do a fairly comprehensive study using texts collected by his students and comparing them with texts collected by others, such as Dorothy Scarborough and John W. Work. Bruce Jackson, in his introduction to the reissue of White's book, stated that White's thesis in American Negro Folk-Songs was to show "the vital interrelationship between Negro

folksong and minstrel and later commercial music. He assumes and demonstrates white influence on Negro folksong, and it is to the detriment of neither" (White v).

Frank C. Brown's colleague at the neighboring University of North Carolina, C. Alphonso Smith, surely knew about Brown's activities and took that knowledge with him to Virginia. The work of the Virginia Folklore Society was largely at the urging of its founder, native North Carolinian C. Alphonso Smith (1864-1924). Smith was responsible for a spurt in collecting, especially among school teachers. He helped in the creation of three state folklore societies: North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. Smith was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1864 and earned degrees from Davidson College, Johns Hopkins, the University of Mississippi, and the University of North Carolina. He first taught at Johns Hopkins and Louisiana State University and later at the University of North Carolina from 1896 to 1909. In 1896 he was listed as an instructor; by 1909 he was Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of the English Language and Literature. He was the Roosevelt Professor of American History and Institutions at Boston University from 1910 to 1911, at which point he moved to Germany for three years, and then to the University of Virginia. Smith's interest in ballads was first noted at the University of North Carolina, before he went to Germany or did his most important work in Virginia. Isaac G. Greer spoke of Smith's influence when Greer was a freshman:

> The community where I grew up [in Watauga County, North Carolina], perhaps was the richest field of folklore anywhere in all the country . . . . It was rather rural, and uh, nothing unusual for almost anyone to be able to sing the ballads and folksongs. And when I decided perhaps, when I got in

> high school, that maybe they were not worthwhile. When I came to the University [of North Carolina at Chapel Hill], Dr. C. Alphonso Smith was head of the English Department. I'd been here about three weeks, received a note from him, asked me to come to his office. And I wondered why a freshman would go to Dr. Smith's office, the great scholar and gentleman that he was. When I went he said, "a friend of yours tells me you sing ballads and folksongs." "Well" I said, "he's not my friend." He said, "I'm trying to lead a group of seniors to appreciate the most beautiful literature in music known to the English tongue. We're about to lose some of the finest. Wish you'd come tomorrow and sing some ballads and folksongs." So I went at ten o'clock, fellows didn't want to recite I think and I sang the whole hour of ballads and folksongs. Some are English ballads; some are folksongs, American. And then he said, "go back and collect every ballad and folksong you can find. The day is coming when in every college and university where the English tongue is known, they'll be studying the ballad and folksong." Smith lived to see his prophecy come true. Left here and went to Virginia and then to Maryland. 'Course I became interested in it. I said if a scholar like Smith could be interested surely it's worthwhile.

Greer became an active participant, teaching and collecting ballads in his native Watauga County and surrounding areas. He also popularized them, performing them for others in many different venues. Smith's interest in the ballad lay dormant while he was in Germany, but was renewed with vigor when he went to the University of Virginia in 1909 as the Edgar Allan Poe Professor of English, where he stayed until 1917.

Smith's article "Ballads Surviving in the United States," published in 1916, sheds light not only on his interest in ballad collecting, but on ballad collecting writ large in the United States. Smith established himself as "probably the outstanding purist in his generation of American collectors" (Wilgus, Anglo-American 82); his influence is a crucial point in the collecting of vernacular Southern music. Smith is a prime example of the pervasiveness of the authority of the Child ballads, even before the influence of

Sharp's publications based on his collecting in Appalachians. Smith noted that the Department of Public Education in Virginia had issued "a ballad circular which has not only guided the teachers of the state in their search for folk-songs but has already proved of great service to other states" (C. Smith 109-110). The education department pamphlet led to more widespread collecting by schoolteachers; it influenced Olive Dame Campbell and probably other settlement school teachers as well. Wilgus cited the rigor that Smith wished to have the work follow:

> To him oral tradition was absolute; ballads that could be traced even indirectly to print were to be discarded. He refused to "count" a fragment of "Chevy Chase" which was traditional in the family of a Virginia singer because the fragment was almost identical with a portion of the Percy version and, "though the singer had seen no printed copy . . . the printed page had plainly . . . been one of the relay stations in the journey of the ballad from source to singer." Ballad to C. A. Smith meant the Child Ballad, for "there are three hundred and five English and Scottish ballads, neither more nor less." (Anglo-American 82)

As scholars are now aware, many families owned "ballet books" and published collections of songs. While some learned their entire repertoire by word of mouth, many used the written word. C. Alphonso Smith, however, clung to the romantic notion of folk transmission as completely word of mouth, face to face interaction, rather than crediting the Virginians (and performers in other states) with intelligence and literacy.

Yet to Smith's credit, he managed to secure grant funding to insure collecting was done throughout Virginia, not just in the mountain counties, and found ballads in every county in the state through his extensive research method. He was dismayed by the superficial nature of the collecting in some counties, but proud that all were represented.

In this sense the Virginia collection is more representative of repertoire than other states, as the other societies do not seem to have sought systematic collecting. Smith does not seem to have done much of the collecting, but was an instigator, leaving that task to others; most of his own publications are on grammar, rhetoric, and O. Henry. Smith moved on to chair the Department of English at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, from 1917 until his death in 1924. Desiring a University of Virginia person to edit the state collection, he convinced Arthur Kyle Davis to take on the task. Davis thought at first the task would be a small one, but soon found he was mistaken. He did manage to publish first the Child ballads collected in Virginia and later some of the other songs and a checklist, making a career out of what started out as a favor.

Smith's influence carried over into his neighboring state, West Virginia, when he gave a series of lectures in 1915 at the invitation of University of West Virginia professor and former Kittredge student John Harrington Cox. The talk inspired Cox to start a state folklore society. Cox wrote of Smith's lecture, "One of these was on the survival of popular English and Scottish ballads in the South. A large audience made up mostly of school teachers from various parts of the state received it with great enthusiasm" (xv). As a result of the lecture series and a suggestion by Smith, the Society was formed in July of that summer. Cox served as first president, archivist, and general editor. He encouraged collecting through the West Virginia School Journal and Educator and included monthly articles on songs, many of which were sent in by teachers across the

state. The collecting continued, but meetings stopped after 1917. Cox prompted teachers through the journal, summer schools, and talks he gave across the state. In his introduction to Folk-Songs of the South, Cox spends a great deal of time going into detail about the collectors and informants in West Virginia and dedicates the book not to C. Alphonso Smith, but to Kittredge, "My master and friend."[9]

While Brown, Smith, and Cox were instrumental in looking at the big picture and compiling massive collections, there were other collectors and brokers of songs who played important roles. Two of the most valuable fieldworkers in North Carolina, both popularizers of vernacular song, were Maude Minish Sutton and Bascom Lamar Lunsford.

Maude Pennell Minish Sutton (1890-1936) grew up with "old songs," but it was not until she took an English class at Davenport College in Lenoir, North Carolina, that she recognized their importance as literature. Her teacher read "The Douglas Tragedy" from the one-volume edition of Child, and Sutton remembered hearing the song while growing up. She was encouraged to go out and collect songs, and she would "pack Kittredge's one-volume edition of the Child ballads in her saddle pocket when she rode about in Avery County," North Carolina (Patterson, "Woman" 106). She began a notebook of songs, a practice she continued during her short life. In 1922 she mailed three of her song notebooks to Kittredge, who encouraged her in her collecting and writing (Patterson, "Maude" 479). Sutton became a teacher and used this role to continue collecting in her spare time. Sutton published songs in three state newspapers (in

Raleigh, Charlotte, and Greensboro) and some magazines, and she donated most of her collection for inclusion in the Brown Collection.[10] Brown referred to Sutton as "the most loyal, and certainly his most highly valued co-worker" (Patterson, "Maude" 479). According to Daniel W. Patterson, Sutton's work, often obscured by the organization of the Brown Collection, is most valuable for her portraits of her informants, although some of her ethnographic work is a combination of fact and fiction (Patterson, Personal).

Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882-1973) was another important contributor to the Brown Collection. Lunsford is an interesting figure in the academic/publishing industry. He was involved in a number of different networks, some with little crossover. He was involved with both commercial and non-commercial recording, academic and popular publishing, giving lectures at colleges, and creating a folk festival to present music to the public.

Lunsford was born in Mars Hill, Madison County, North Carolina (near Asheville) in 1882. This is the area known for its rich ballad tradition, represented by Jane Hicks Gentry, Jack and Doug Wallin, and Sheila Kay Adams, who still carries on with stories and songs. The area is near Sodom Laurel, apparently named because the brothels located there during the Civil War were a convenient stopover for both Northern and Southern troops. Lunsford's father, originally from Tennessee, taught at Mars Hill College and made sure his children were all educated. As a child, Lunsford became interested in the local music, learning to play both the banjo and the fiddle. He felt a deep affinity for the music and related it, in this heavily Baptist region, with a spiritual calling.

He once stated his calling was "spreading the gospel of folk music" (L. Jones, Minstrel 9). Lunsford, whose occupations included teaching, selling fruit trees, providing legal counsel, and publishing newspapers, enthusiastically compiled, performed, and promoted music from the Appalachians. Lunsford collected on his own and assisted Robert W. Gordon and Dorothy Scarborough on their song-catching expeditions to the area. Clearly he had some notion of the work being done on song collecting, perhaps through the North Carolina Folklore Society or the Journal of American Folklore, as he was giving lectures in 1914 and 1915 at Rutherford College on "North Carolina Folklore, Poetry, and Song." In 1919, while working as a special agent for the Justice Department, Lunsford met Maud Karpeles in Washington, D. C. Karpeles introduced him "to scholarly folklorists and collectors, perhaps the first he had ever met" (L. Jones, Minstrel 23). Lunsford promoted vernacular music through high-art concert performances and through the founding of the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, one of the first folk festivals in the country. He also promoted performance through the book he wrote with North Carolina Symphony composer and conductor Lamar Stringfield, 30 and 1 Folk Songs from the Southern Mountains, published in 1929. The 30 and 1 book was a popular arrangement of tunes which purported to retain the mountain tunings (i.e., modal tunings) and dialect. Lunsford and Stringfield seemed to be following in the same vein of popular arrangements as Wyman and Brockway in Lonesome Tunes and in Wetmore and Bartholomew's Mountain Songs of North Carolina. Lunsford also applied his knowledge of vernacular music to compose new songs in the same style. His songwriting

was not unique; Carson Robison and Rev. Andrew Jenkins composed songs for the record companies to supply demand for the growing hillbilly market. Lunsford did not shirk recording opportunities, either. He cut both field recordings and commercial discs. Between 1922 and 1930, he recorded thirty-two items on cylinder for Frank C. Brown, thirty-nine cylinders for Robert W. Gordon (the first of his many recordings that would end up in the Library of Congress's Archive of Folk Culture in the American Folklife Center), and eighteen sides for General Phonograph (OKeh), Brunswick-Balke-Collender, and Columbia. The OKeh sessions were under the direction of Polk Brockman, a significant artist and repertoire man for Victor[11] (L. Jones, Minstrel 31). Lunsford was also friends with a number of the early hillbilly radio and recording artists; he purchased the rights to "Mountain Dew" from WLS star Scotty Wiseman (of Lula Belle and Scotty), and he and the Wisemans were friends for many years.

Lunsford is still remembered fondly in North Carolina. He was accepted, largely because he was from the region. His collecting role was intensive rather than extensive, and his influence was greater locally than globally. He has had a lasting legacy through his festival and collecting. Some of his nephews, gospel musicians living in Union Grove, North Carolina, fondly remember going to the festival and playing for their uncle. Recently Smithsonian/Folkways acknowledged his contributions by reissuing many of his early recordings.[12]

A relative latecomer to collecting in the South, Robert W. Gordon traveled to Asheville, North Carolina, in 1925 with financial backing from Harvard, Adventure

magazine, and The New York Times. Like Lunsford in one sense, though unlike many of his predecessors, Gordon was an avid believer in technology: "By 1900 he was actively taking pictures and even printing his own double exposures. By the time he was sixteen, in 1905, he had built several radios" (Kodish Good Friends 16). Armed with an awareness of the commercial hillbilly recordings, Gordon came loaded down with a supply of cylinders for recording his finds. On arriving in Asheville, Gordon was referred to Lunsford as a representative banjo player and singer and promptly recorded thirty-nine cylinders of his performing. According to Gordon's biographer, Debora Kodish, "Gordon was delighted at Lunsford's style and his contacts among musicians of the area" (Good 65). In addition, Gordon encouraged Lunsford to continue in his own work and "impressed upon him the need to be as thorough and systematic as he could in collecting and preserving the songs" (L. Jones, Minstrel 31). Gordon further encouraged Lunsford by naming him Adventure's official collector for Western North Carolina. Lunsford, in turn, contributed not only to Adventure, but also to the Asheville Citizen and Southern Life, indicating a widespread interest in vernacular music at that time, especially seen in light of Maude Minish Sutton publishing in similar sources. This interest may be related to the popularity of romantic and sentimental books from the region, a nostalgia for the old times such as was being perpetuated at the same time by Henry Ford with his fiddle contests (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). Unlike Gordon, a number of people, including Ford and Karpeles, were reacting against the new technology, jazz music, and the influx of immigrants bringing new sounds. They wanted to preserve American music and the

predecessors of American music that were retained here. Many of the ballad collectors rejected the recording technology but aimed to preserve the old music. Gordon sought to collect most of the older music and gladly accepted the new recording technology in doing so.

Gordon found the Asheville area a rich source not only for songs, but also fiddle tunes and spirituals. The spirituals were collected from a white male informant, who had learned them from black singers (Kodish Good 66). Kodish noted that Gordon had success in part because of his respect for the people in the mountains, a sentiment echoed by Lunsford's own view that those he collected from should be treated honorably (Kodish Good 80; L. Jones, Minstrel 29). Following his successful collecting in North Carolina, he and his family moved to Georgia, where Gordon gathered songs and material culture from African Americans on St. Simon's Island and in and around Darien. While his original intent was to collect spirituals, he became fascinated with chants, shouts, and chanteys, and his collecting, assisted by locals, reflected that new interest. Gordon remained in Georgia for two years before starting the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress (Kodish Good 154).

Around the time Gordon was collecting in North Carolina, Ethel Park Richardson was working as headmistress of Prosso Preparatory School in Houston. According to Richardson's grandson, Jon G. Smith, she had grown up in Tennessee singing songs, but it was not until 1926 that she began collecting. Smith writes:

> Well-known musicologist Sigmund Spaeth was traveling around the country on a lecture tour, under the auspices of the Knabe Piano Company

> and . . . he was invited to speak at the Prosso Preparatory School. The evening of his appearance at the school, Dr. Spaeth dined at my grandmother's home and was surprised to find that she had a vast repertoire of old songs, some of which he felt might fit into . . . Read 'em and Weep. (J. Smith 105)

Spaeth was acting as a mediator and instigator. He also secured a research and publishing contract for Richardson from publisher J. W. Greenberg. Richardson received $100 to "wander throughout the Appalachians" collecting songs. In the letter from the publisher, she was given careful instructions on what not to collect:

> We must be careful not to duplicate the other books on the market. The most famous collection of mountain songs is, of course, Cecil Sharp's which has thousands of songs, but only those of English origin. There are two other good small collections, both by Howard Brockway. (J. Smith 108)

Clearly the influences of the early publishers had moved into a feedback loop. There was still an interest in the marketplace for "mountain songs" but also a need to get new material. The publishers were not concerned with the Child canon, but rather desired new material from the same region. This preference reflects an understanding by the publishers of their markets, rather than the academician's need for preservation of all versions and variants. In this sense Richardson's collecting was more like that of the record companies that were constantly seeking new materials. She did not limit her activities to written collections; she also shared her material through broadcasting on radio and later moved to television.

Some of the activities in the collecting of vernacular music were outside of the Harvard network. Two very important collectors of vernacular song were located at the

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The University appointed a new president in 1925 who wanted to build up the university with new departments. Toward that end, he hired Howard W. Odum to start a department of sociology. Odum had done research in African American song for his doctoral dissertation at Clark University. He saw the songs as reflections of personality and culture. Unlike Newman Ivey White, Odum's rationale for studying African Americans was to understand what he believed was a biologically inferior race, and he wanted to find ways to "better" them, an attitude that was common at that time, though hardly commendable. In a sense, this view was parallel to the view of the anthropologists who wanted to collect spirituals and chants because they saw African Americans and Native Americans as "primitive." Nonetheless, his work was groundbreaking in using vernacular song for this purpose. His views were moderated after he began working with his student and colleague Guy B. Johnson.

Johnson made a good team with Odum as he had a strong musical background. Johnson's musical training was a great boon to Odum, as was his ability to take Odum's notes and transform them into developed writing. In The Negro Folksong, basically a revision of the Odum's Clark University dissertation on his fieldwork in Mississippi and Georgia, Johnson's work is not as evident. However, Negro Workaday Songs shows a less-biased perspective of African Americans and was a true collaboration between the two researchers. Most of the songs in the latter publication were collected from construction workers from around the South who had moved to Chapel Hill during an expansion of the campus. The surprise of seeing these two influential publications within

a year of one another is explained by local circumstances. Odum had just started the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University and was under pressure to provide some publications under the imprimatur of the Institute and in collaboration with the relatively new University of North Carolina Press (started in 1922). Odum felt the folksong material, in addition to being readily available, might be less controversial than some other sociological writings of that time and wanted to start the Institute on a positive note.

Johnson, inspired by the work with Odum, continued to work on song material, though part of his work came about through serendipity. Odum had just hired a new research associate for the Institute, T. J. Woofer, Jr., who was subsequently arrested for drunk driving before his job began. Wanting to avoid a controversy that would greet the arrival of their new colleague because of his recent arrest, Johnson and Odum worked out a scheme where Johnson would shuttle his new colleague, Woofer, off to conduct research on St. Helena Island, giving time for the incident to die down. This trip resulted in a number of publications for the Institute: one on Folk Culture on St. Helena Island, S.C, by Guy Johnson which included songs, another on Social History of the Sea Islands by Johnson's wife, Guion. Since their emphasis was on African American song and centered in the sociology rather than anthropology or literature departments, there was little reason for Odum and the Johnsons to be connected to the other networks. They were in contact with Mellinger Henry, who was inspired by C. Alphonso Smith in 1923 to systematically collect songs in the Southern Appalachians. Henry's fieldwork and

association with Odum and the Johnsons resulted in Folksongs from the Southern Highlands (1933). In this book, Henry credits Guy Johnson with assistance with some of the "John Henry" work. The Johnsons' work is influential and relevant, and has helped to shape some of the subsequent research on Southern African American song.

A few years after Odum's arrival, Arthur Palmer Hudson (1892-1978) came to the University of North Carolina's English department from Mississippi. Hudson had organized the Mississippi Folklore Society in 1927, with its chief aim presumably to aid his collecting, and the organization died upon his departure from that state (Lawless 536). Hudson developed his interest in ballads from Eber C. Perrow, who had been his freshman English teacher. Like Pettit's influence on Combs, this relationship is an instance of the network's trickle-down effect: students of students collected and the folklore societies influenced later teachers and collectors. On his arrival in North Carolina, Hudson completed his Mississippi collection, published Folksongs of Mississippi and Their Background, became a leader in the North Carolina Folklore Society, and provided inspiration to his students to become song gatherers. Folksongs of Mississippi and Their Background was arranged according to the "Child and Other" classification that was popular at that time.

At least two master's theses written in the 1930s under Palmer Hudson's direction were related to current trends in collecting. Geneva Anderson issued "A Collection of Ballads and Songs from East Tennessee," which she compiled from correspondence, assistance from a neighbor who encouraged friends to send songs, and fieldwork during

the Christmas break, again with the assistance of her neighbor. Anderson began her 313-page thesis with Child ballads; in fact, she even used his titles in the first section of her work, which she called "English and Scottish Popular Ballads in East Tennessee," followed by "Other Imported Ballads and Songs." For the last ten chapters she adopted a topical approach to categories of songs—love songs, war songs, ballads of wrecks and disasters, etc., which is a scheme similar to Hudson's book. She included introductory notes about the songs at the beginnings of each chapter. The thesis is useful in that she did not restrict her collection to ballads, nor did she restrict her informants to native-born, but also collected from people who had recently moved to East Tennessee and had brought songs from elsewhere, and she recognized influences from a number of sources.

George Wallace Chandler used a bibliographic approach to develop "The History and Present Status of Folk-Song Scholarship in the South" for his thesis, although his focus was mostly on ballads. Chandler organized his writing to begin with an overview of scholarship before 1920, including mention of all the articles on folk song The Journal of American Folklore published to that point. He noted a reason for the large number in the South:

> Even today this region contains the richest store of ballads, in both numbers and purity, to be found in America, because it still sleeps in the naïve and simple light of centuries past, a condition ideal for the preservation of our folk-literature. (Chandler 2-3)

The remainder of his thesis covered book-length publications, periodical articles, and work in progress.

A. P. Hudson, with his long tenure at the University of North Carolina and with his work with the North Carolina Folklore Society provided leadership in folklore and vernacular music scholarship in the upper South for decades. Arthur Kyle Davis, his northern colleague at the University of Virginia and an officer of the Virginia Folklore Society, played a similar role in the Old Dominion.

Most of the collecting during this time was geared toward publishing the songs later, whether in massive compilations, such as the Brown and Sharp collections; through popular songbooks such as Wyman and Brockaway, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford; or in local and regional newspapers, such as the articles written by Sutton and Gordon. Some music was mediated via festivals, pageants, concerts, and other public performances. Many of the public performances were created to fit a mold that was not indigenous: pageants were not found in the mountains until the settlement school teachers brought them in, thinking that must have been part of the distant past that needed reviving. (Whisnant, All 50-51). Concerts were presented either through professors bringing musicians into genteel surroundings or by presenting the music themselves, sometimes as part of a lecture. The descriptions of the concerts give a sense that the music was presented in a style that was typical of popular music at that time. For example, Wetmore and Bartholomew wrote:

> The "Lonesome Tunes" from the Kentucky Mountains, collected by Loraine Wyman and Howard Brockway and arranged with pianoforte accompaniment by the latter, were welcome additions to the service of the collection and preservation of mountain music. In this case, the unusual ability of Miss Wyman in singing these songs in concert and recital has done much to introduce them to the American public. (iii)

Most of the folklorists, teachers, and enthusiasts were attempting to raise the music to a "respectable" level within their own cultural background. In part, these practices were an attempt to create a sense of nationalism by discovering a national folk music that could be traced back to the settlers from the British Isles. This was based in part on the writings of Herder and the practices of romantic nationalism that had spread throughout Europe in the nineteenth century (Wilson 21-37 passim). Reed Smith, John A. Lomax, C. Alphonso Smith, and many of the Harvard-trained scholars followed the German model of nationalism when they advocated using the music they collected to foster a new sense of pride based on the old and trying to save part of the culture they felt would otherwise be lost.

The writers followed the conventions of their time and interpreted the data accordingly. In more recent folkloristic writing, scholars have often rejected the writings of some of the earlier popular and sentimental ethnographers from the first quarter of the century. The writings can be evaluated next to other sources and may shed light on folklife, not described in other sources.

Although emphasis was on the Child ballads and spirituals, other genres crept in. Not all of the material was published for the scholarly press. There was some popularization; some collectors associated with A&R men or used the same marketing skills and sought out new materials. The folklorists formed a complicated network branching out from Harvard and interweaving through the South, sharing among university networks, folklore societies, and settlement schools. Sociology, anthropology

and literature all held similar views on culture at that time which contributed to what was collected, especially regarding the primitiveness or unselfconsciousness of African American and Appalachian materials. Some changes began to take place because of technological advances in the 1920s, with the addition of radio and recordings. For the most part, however, these early collectors focused on the materials and saving them, but not on the people. The settlement school teachers and university professors wished to preserve the culture through the songs, with the songs receiving the emphasis. The singers did not start becoming the focus until the advent of radio. The songs, rather than the people, also received the emphasis for the record companies, beginning in the 1920s.

Notes

[1] This notion of authenticity is still being debated among folklorists, although the nature of the argument and what authenticity means have changed since Child's time.

[2] Both Charles K. Wolfe in Kentucky Country and Henry Shapiro mention she came from Louisville. David Whisnant refers to her as a New Yorker.

[3] Whether because they were from Kentucky, that they were women, or for some other reason, both McGill and Mary Newcomb were unsuccessful in publishing their collections through Harvard University Press. In Newcomb's case, Kittredge's response was ". . . I am too busy at this moment with pressing engagements to examine it. As to editing it, of course that I could hardly undertake anyhow. In view of what the Macmillan people say, it would be a pity apparently, if your material does not see the light. Why don't you get Mr. Robert Gordon to give it the editorial touch?" (8 November 1928) (Birdsall 62)

[4] For more information on Pettit and Campbell, see Whisnant, All that is Native and Fine, Chapters 1 and 2.

[5] Having spent different Augusts in Newfoundland and North Carolina, I understand Sharp's view. It probably would have been a more pleasant summer had he gone to Newfoundland.

[6] For another example, Malone stated, "Largely inspired by Sharp's scholarship, a host of folk-song enthusiasts descended upon the Appalachians" (Southern Music 32).

[7] For more on the Lomaxes and Leadbelly, see Wolfe and Lornell; Filene, Romancing; and Porterfield, Last.

[8] One of the early uses of mechanical recording of music in the Appalachians.

[9] Kittredge was his dissertation advisor at Harvard.

[10] Unfortunately some of her work, in particular the photographs she took of her informants, only remain in newspaper accounts. After Sutton died, her husband remarried. There is speculation by her daughters that their stepmother disposed of many of the belongings. (Patterson, Personal)

[11] Brockman will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

[12] Bascom Lamar Lunsford: Ballads, Banjo Tunes, and Sacred Songs of Western North Carolina. Smithsonian/Folkways SF CD 40082, 1996.

3. Record Companies and Artist & Repertoire Men

At the time the settlement schools and state folklore societies were beginning to be interested in preserving the Child canon, the recording industry had almost no interest in vernacular music. From its beginnings in the early 1890s, recordings were seen as a way to document voice or used like a dictaphone to take the place of the secretarial help or at least change its function. As was noted in the previous chapter, most ballad collectors did not use recording machines. However, a number of anthropologists used them for ethnographic research on Native Americans.[1] Recording music was, however, quickly introduced as Columbia, one of the first phonograph companies, saw a way to make the phonograph an entertainment medium. The first recorded music was predominantly classical and popular; it also included a few black vaudeville quartets; some African American spirituals, secular songs, and shouts; a few foreign language folksong recordings, and some folksongs performed in a concert setting (Cohen, Minstrels 2). In addition to vaudeville and minstrel tunes, during the teens there was a national craze for ballroom dancing, and the ballroom tunes became top sellers in the phonograph industry. The first black vaudeville recording was by the Standard Quartette, who recorded for Columbia in 1896; the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet from Virginia traveled to New York to record for Victor in 1902 (Lornell, Virginia's 59).[2] Most of the African American gospel music was presented "in a style dictated by European Classical harmony" or sung by white performers, thus not reflecting the vernacular at all (Cohen, Minstrels 5).

The purchasers of recordings were, up until the 1920s, affluent whites and blacks living in urban areas. Jeff Todd Titon states, "the 1891 Columbia catalog . . . included a 'Negro novelty' section" with mostly spoken selections, and they appeared to be sold primarily to a white audience (196). The urban black audience leaned toward purchasing opera performed by black concert artists (Titon 198). It was not until the 1920s, when record sales dropped and the companies started looking for new music and new markets, such as selling in rural areas to a rural audience, that vernacular music became a significant part of the recorded sound market. Before that time, except for some gospel or spiritual groups, the few entrepreneurs who approached the companies and wanted to play blues or hillbilly music were usually turned away.

The early record company executives never had collecting or preserving music as an objective. Unlike the academic collectors, who wanted to preserve the ballads and the spirituals, they "collected" in order to have a new product to sell, so the ethnographic data they collected was incidental rather than intentional. The folklorists, primarily following the canon of Child, went for private, home-based ballads and the public sacred music of the spirituals. The artist and repertoire (A&R) men wanted a public, performance-based music. They first came to the new market because of entrepreneurial musicians who contacted them and later through innovative and intuitive talent scouts.

In the late teens, record sales in the popular music of the day were starting to diminish, in part due to a lull in the economy following the First World War. The early equipment was only affordable to the affluent, though some innovations were beginning to come in to make record players more affordable. The companies needed to find new

types of music that the public was willing to buy. The music chosen by these A&R men had an impact on our present perceptions of Southern vernacular music. The actions and thoughts of the early artist and repertoire men provide the origins of some of today's views and musical preferences.

The first indication of the direction for the recording companies to move in came from the musicians, not from the A&R men. Entrepreneurial musicians were responsible for bringing some Southern vernacular music to the attention of the record companies. The earliest known examples were Perry Bradford with early blues and Eck Robertson and Fiddlin' John Carson with hillbilly. Perry Bradford, born in Montgomery, Alabama, and reared in Atlanta, learned about the blues and other songs through listening to the prisoners at the Fulton Street jail next to his home. He had an appreciation for the music and tried unsuccessfully for a number of years to record blues and jazz (Bradford 10). By 1920, Bradford had moved north and was working in music in Chicago. He talked OKeh records into taking a chance. A number of companies had turned Bradford down, fearing a white boycott if they were to issue a recording of a black musician. Once the recording date was set, Bradford was forced to make a last-minute change in singers, from Sophie Tucker to Mamie Smith when Tucker became ill. Smith recorded two sides, "That Thing Called Love" and "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down," backed by a white band (Titon 202-3; Placksin 21). Sales were good enough that Bradford brought Mamie Smith back six months later to record "Crazy Blues" and "It's Right Here for You," backed this time by a black band. "Crazy Blues" was an instant success, selling over 100,000 copies in the first month (Placksin 9). Given that level of success, it is hardly surprising that within

four years Paramount, Victor, Ajax, and Vocalion had all joined OKeh in seeking artists for the vaudeville-type blues singers (Titon 204). The A&R men realized Bradford knew the buying preferences of a new audience and capitalized on his initiative. Ralph Peer, the OKeh talent scout and recording director, discussed Bradford's influence in a 1958 interview. Fred Hagar, his recording engineer, doubled as an A&R man and was the one who convinced Peer to use Bradford. Peer recalled:

> We had an artist and repertoire man and he was looking for a repertoire and this fella [Bradford] was, had started a little music publishing firm. In other words, he was posing as a music publisher. One of these one-room publishing deals . . . And this man I had, Fred was impressed by a couple of songs and that's the way we got started.

Peer obviously disdained Bradford, but trusted the judgment of Hagar and other employees at OKeh and later at Victor.

Ralph Peer was one of the most powerful and influential A&R men working with vernacular musicians in the 1920s and 1930s. Peer was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on May 22, 1892. His father ran a record store there that gave Peer access to and knowledge of the business. As a teenager Peer worked for his father distributing records, taking them to the city. Leaving his father's business, "young Ralph went to work for the Columbia Phonograph Company in 1911. Nine years later he joined OKeh Records, as a talent scout and recording director" ("Peer" 49). Peer has taken credit for the first recordings of blues (Mamie Smith) and hillbilly (Fiddlin' John Carson), although he was not directly responsible for bringing either to the studio. He gave executive approval based on the recommendation of others. Today, Peer is probably best remembered for his 1927 Victor recording session in Bristol, Tennessee, where he recorded the Carter Family

and Jimmie Rodgers (Wolfe, "Legend" 24-32 passim). Peer also takes credit for naming "race" and "hillbilly" music as such.

Following the success of Mamie Smith, Peer asked broker Polk Brockman to find some blues talent in Atlanta. Brockman set up some African American talent and used this contact with Peer to introduce oldtime music. In an interview with Archie Green and Ed Kahn, Brockman recalls his version of how hillbilly music got started in 1923:

> Brockman: . . . gave me the job of recruiting some local talent. While I was in New York discussing this thing, I was in the old Palace Theatre in Times Square watching a movie and they showed a newsreel of the Fiddler's Convention in Virginia . . . I happened to think of Fiddlin' John Carson, who was quite a character around these parts in those days . . . I remember . . . Ralph Peer said, "Let him play, but don't let him sing," and I said, "Singing is the important part of it." Having been to this part of the country and having been born around a lot of those affairs, I knew how important the raw, and it was rather raw in those days.
>
> Green: Did you actually like the music yourself, or did you just see commercial possibilities?
>
> Brockman: I didn't particularly care for it. I have always had the knack for seeing things through the other person's eyes and ears rather than my own . . . I don't look at anything with what I like, I try to get to what the people out there are going to buy.

Brockman and Peer clearly reveal that they were looking for sales rather than having an appreciation for the music. Although Brockman was in this business for the money, he was also a good ethnographer in that he quickly learned the local community when he went on scouting trips and knew both the musicians and what the audience was likely to purchase. He was open to accepting music he didn't personally care for and, thus, in many ways had a more open sense of selection than the ballad collectors, who already had their categories worked out. He also had a sense of the aesthetics of the music, so he was successful in picking out the artists.

Polk Brockman is, in a very real way, the father of commercial country music, for he was the one who saw the potential in Fiddlin' John Carson for a new market of music. Brockman's family ran a furniture store in Atlanta. In 1920, after working three years as a salesman for Simmons Bedding Company, Brockman returned to the family business, based on the promise he could sell phonograph players in the store (Peterson 17). Brockman moved from selling phonograph players to working as broker, finding talent and bringing it to Peer for OKeh and Victor, and later became an A&R man in his own right. He had a short-lived music and recording company in Atlanta, though according to Peterson, never had the business sense to gain the reputation of Peer or some of the others (31-32).

Selected by Brockman, Fiddlin' John Carson recorded two fiddle tunes, "Little Log Cabin in the Lane" backed by "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Gonna Crow," and the recording was an instant success. Carson, who was already well known in Atlanta from the Georgia Fiddler's Convention, appearances on WSB radio, and probably numerous local appearances as well, used the Convention as a marketing tool. He played the new recording from the stage of the Georgia Fiddler's Convention and quickly sold all 500 copies that Peer had reluctantly agreed to press.

While Carson was the first sales success, he was not the first oldtime fiddler recorded. That honor belongs to Eck Robertson and Henry Gilliland. Unlike Carson, whom Brockman invited to record, Robertson and Gilliland showed up at the Victor office in New York on their own. According to Bill C. Malone,

> Eck Robertson, champion oldtime fiddler from Amarillo Texas, and Henry Gilliland, oldtime fiddler from Virginia . . . decided to go to New York to

> make some records. The Victor recording people must have been taken aback when Gilliland and Robertson, dressed in Confederate uniform and cowboy suit respectively, marched into the Victor offices and asked for auditions. . . . . Although Victor released a publicity blurb describing their recordings, and although sales were reasonably good, the company did not immediately follow through in its exploitation of the untapped folk reservoir. (Country 39)[3]

From the success of OKeh in both blues and hillbilly and some other forms of vernacular music such as gospel, other companies quickly followed its lead in seeking talent for these new markets.

As noted earlier, there were a few early sacred recordings, but gospel music did not have much of a following until around 1925. OKeh started recording gospel in 1924 using Reverend Andrew Jenkins; Columbia started a year or two later with another Georgia musician, J. Frank Smith. Polk Brockman arranged for Jenkins and his daughter to record following the success of Fiddlin' John Carson. Jenkins was also performing on WSB radio at the time. He recorded six original songs and two by other authors. His recording of "If I Could Hear my Mother Pray" created strong sales and helped open up the early gospel market (Wolfe, "Early Commercial" 52). Peer felt most of the success in the gospel market was not in the South, but in the Chicago area.

The record companies looking for new markets were not the only reason for an increase in sales. According to Peer, race and hillbilly markets got started because, during World War I with people moving north for some jobs and the opening of factories in the South, rural people had more money to buy phonographs and records. For the African American market, he theorized:

> One thing leads to another, and it was because of that, this accidental Negro recording by Mamie Smith got its tremendous start . . . The porters

> on the Pullman trains would make a fortune just by carrying the records out. They'd pay a dollar a piece for them, sell them for two dollars because the Negroes in the South had the money. . . . So that led to the Negro record business and eventually it led to the hillbilly record business. (Peer)

Peer saw the success of Smith as a fluke, despite the efforts of the black press and Bradford's own concerted efforts to record African Americans.

Early recorded blues followed the pattern established by Perry Bradford and Mamie Smith. OKeh found similar vaudeville blues artists, followed closely by Black Swan, a relatively short-lived independent company started by Harry Pace, dedicated to recording black musicians and mostly blues. Pace began recording after leaving the Pace & Handy Music Company in New York City in the early twenties. Paramount entered vernacular recording soon thereafter, and Columbia joined in when A&R man Frank Walker was put in charge of the race and hillbilly series (Dixon & Godrich Recording 18-22).

Frank Walker grew up on a farm near Fly Summit, New York, and played in a string band. He disliked farm work so, as quickly as possible, he left farming and learned to be an entrepreneur. He started out in banking and then served in the First World War. In 1919 Columbia hired him. His first job was pressing records. He vowed to learn everything he could about the music and recording industry so he left Columbia for a short while, purchasing and running a concert agency in Detroit, where he booked and handled popular and classical artists including Enrico Caruso. He sold that business for a profit in 1921 and returned to Columbia, recording his first "country" music in 1922. He later became a leader in promoting blues.

Paramount recognized the growing black market and took a different tack in 1924: it placed its black A&R man, J. Mayo Williams, on the cover of its catalog, noting he was the "manager of the Race Artists Series." According to Dixon and Godrich, "Williams lost no time in signing well-known but previously unrecorded artists," presumably through the artists contacting him after seeing the catalog advertisement (Recording 23). Williams signed Ma Rainey, who recorded for the company for seven years. Columbia, now under the leadership of Walker, booked Bessie Smith, probably the best-selling singer of that era in the vaudeville blues genre. The two types of blues, vaudeville and downhome, are succinctly distinguished by Titon in this way: "women sang vaudeville blues, accompanied by a pianist or a small group of jazz musicians, whereas men sang downhome blues, accompanying themselves on guitar" (xv).

By 1925 record companies had begun to broaden their coverage of the African American market. Downhome blues, beginning with the voice and guitar of Blind Lemon Jefferson, began to appear on recordings. Sammy Price, a black pianist running a music store in Dallas, contacted Paramount about Blind Lemon Jefferson and possibly sent a sample of his music. There is some disagreement as to what happened next: either Price made the record and then Art Laibley sent for Jefferson to come up and record in Chicago, or, as Laibley claims, he found Jefferson "on the streets of Dallas" and brought him to Chicago (Titon 207; Minton 512). Either way, Jefferson, a seasoned minstrel show performer, marked a shift in the repertoire towards the inclusion of a new style of blues.

It was this "new" style of blues that H. C. Speir knew and found for the record companies. One of the best-documented brokers, Speir was born in 1895. He started in the phonograph business by assembling machines at a plant in New Orleans in 1919. While there, he concluded that recording the black music he grew up hearing was a good idea, but he did nothing to implement it at first because the humidity in the South ruined the early recordings. When advances in the recording equipment made humidity less of a factor, he moved from New Orleans and opened a furniture and music store in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1926. From there, he found both blues and hillbilly musicians, made some demo recordings, and set contracts for musicians for various record companies, mostly Paramount, for almost fifty years. He always worked for a set fee and paid the musicians a set fee, rather than working for royalties. Among the vernacular musicians he found were Charlie Patton, Mississippi Sheiks, Son House, William Harris, Tommy Johnson, Skip James, Ishmon Bracey, Blind Joe Reynolds, Bo Carter, the Leake County Revelers, Freeny's Barn Dance Orchestra, Blind Roosevelt Grover, Josh Byrd, Washboard Walter, Geeshie Wiley, and Elvie Thomas. Speir died in 1972, and in the latter part of his life was involved in organic gardening (Evans, "Interview" 118; Speir, Interview 1968; and Wardlow, "Talent")

At least one of the musicians who worked with Speir, Charlie Patton, was influential as a sub-broker, helping Speir find other musicians. Patton, born in the late 1880s near Bolton, Mississippi, grew up in a large extended family, with a number of siblings and half-siblings. By the time he was in his teens, he was playing music in roadhouses (Fahey 20). He is one of the few blues musicians to record the range of his

repertoire, including Tin Pan Alley songs as well as original blues, and many were released.[4] For a while, Patton lived at Dockery Plantation, which placed him in contact with many other musicians. However, Patton preferred music to farming and made his living as an entertainer, often clowning, playing the guitar behind his back, and performing other musician tricks. His antics sometimes led to criticism by fellow musicians, who felt he wasn't serious enough about his music, so they discounted him as a musician, though respected for his entertaining abilities. While working with Speir, he brought in Son House and others for Speir to record.

In a 1970 interview with record collector and blues enthusiast Gayle Dean Wardlow, Speir indicated that he had heard what he refers to as "meat barrel blues" long before any were recorded. This subgenre is the same as Titon's downhome blues and is sometimes called "country blues." Speir stated:

> See, the regular old blues that even my day uh, there's very little in the blues songs that would detract you from what we might say, there would be anything uh, that wouldn't be morally. They built it in later, they began to put certain things into songs and words that we hear today, you understand. But back then, in the oldtime, going back really before the blues days, they still had blues but it was just sentimental and it was something to please people and maybe a little together, maybe once a week on Saturday they'd get together and have you know those things, and that would make 'um feel good. And it did, you know that helped 'um. (Interview 1970)

Speir referred to this music as meat barrel because "I've gone to many a house and I couldn't hardly stand it, but I enjoyed it. See all I smell was old fried meat or something. That's why I call it meat barrel" (Speir, Interview 1970). He was aware of the difference between the downhome or meat barrel blues and the "high toned" blues of Bessie Smith. However, he did not feel the A&R men understood the difference:

> Wardlow: Did the record official know the difference between these two type blues, meat barreled blues and high toned?
> Speir: No, any of those people didn't know anything except from sales. They didn't sell, they knew that. They made money, they knew that too. (Speir, Interview 1970)

The A&R men quickly decided what would sell and what wouldn't. What the A&R man first wanted to find for the blues market were vaudeville and ragtime blues, later the downhome or "meatbarrel" blues. In the hillbilly market they wanted string band music, both songs and instrumentals. The songs had to be either traditional or original to avoid copyright disputes and make more money for the companies. Musicians who played popular Tin Pan Alley songs, even if popular in the hometown, were frequently rejected by the A&R men. Peer, the master of copyright and performance rights, wished to avoid any copyright disputes. Others, whether picking up this practice from Peer and OKeh's example or finding out on their own, also created their own hillbilly music, or made sure it was in the public domain before recording and marketing it. Peer was particularly emphatic about finding new music because he knew original music and its resulting royalties enabled him to make more money. When Peer left OKeh and went to Victor in 1926/27, his "salary" was based on copyright and the performance rights of the recording. In an interview, he described his business practices:

> This is the basis for the whole business. It runs right up to today's music business. I take credit for all of it. This point that I never recorded an established selection, I always insisted on getting artists who could write their own music. Now that comes right up to the business today. . . . They would come in to me, people that could play a guitar very well and sing very well and I'd test them, "what other music have you got?" Well, they'd sing some song that was popular on record, some pop song. "Do you have any music of your own?" Well, that was the test. "Well, no, but I can get some." So I never bothered with them. They never got the chance. Maybe I threw out some of the best recording artists, but I

> certainly threw them out . . . . He's either got to write his own music or you've got to get it for him and then you take him to a record company. (Peer)

This practice of original composition that sounded traditional was the prevailing custom for hillbilly music and blues. There was a parallel in the printed world, too. By the mid-1920s the publishers of the songs collected in the Appalachians and elsewhere, as discussed in the previous chapter, and those involved in the academic/publishing industry were looking for previously unpublished material as well. In the academic/publishing industry, they were not looking for original compositions, but the need for the "new" was there in both media.

The A&R men were looking for new materials and avoided the popular songs. While much of that decision was based on copyright and performance rights, they were also expanding from an urban audience to a rural one. It is highly plausible that part of the consideration for this preference was aesthetic as well. The A&R men wanted the songs to sound rural, not like part of the standard pop repertoire of the day. That is not to say they didn't want a best-seller. A new style had been recognized and the songs needed to fit into that style. Songwriters were chosen based on their ability 1) to compose a song quickly, to capture an immediate need for a certain type of song, and 2) to write it in a style that blended with the traditional songs.

There were other considerations in choosing repertoire. Walker was very articulate about the types of music he looked for in the early days. He felt the music was primary and a good singer was secondary, as that combination helped generate sales. He commented:

> The instrument comes first as far as melody is concerned, you see. That, it's a, it's a natural thing for them to be able to take a banjo or a guitar and pick out things, but they got to have a reason for doing it. They just don't sit and do it. That's where the rhyme comes in. They'll take this rhyme and then sit down. Like a Hank Williams. That's the way he wrote all of his things . . . . Instrumentalists came first, because that is where the noise came from. And when they went out and they got little jobs playing schoolhouses; playing for square dances and things of that sort it was the noise; it was the music, the calling for square dances entered into it (which was a sing-song in its own way, of course). But the singer didn't count so much, you see, because after all there was nobody there that was particularly interested in listening to him. They wanted to dance and whoop it up and have a good time. They were there for a good time not to listen to a singer. Therefore, the singer was secondary . . . (Walker)

Because the music was originally dance music, good instrumentation was the first concern. When the companies found the importance of singers, they would either use a popular singer, such as Vernon Dalhart, or use a singer such as Riley Puckett, the blind singer and guitarist from Atlanta, and create a group (Skillet Lickers). The aesthetics of Walker and other A&R men drew them to seek out public-based performances rather than the ballads, as they felt those were the ones that were marketable.

Even though Walker stated that instrumentation was the most important characteristic, certain song genres and skits quickly became what sold. Walker classified the songs into four categories:

> One is your, your gospel songs, your religious songs. Your others are sort of your jigs and reels, like we spoke of a while ago at fiddlers' conventions, things of that sort. And your third were your heart songs, the sentimental things the heart, that come from the heart, and the fourth, which has passed out to a degree today and was terrific in those days, were the event songs. (Walker)

Walker does not indicate under "gospel" which type of gospel he is referring to, but considering the context, he probably meant the white male gospel quartet tradition, which was based on books (such as those published by Stamps-Baxter) and sacred country songs. The event songs included the "Death of Floyd Collins" and the numerous songs about the Titanic. Because of the early success of the "event songs," the A&R men hired songwriters such as the Rev. Andrew Jenkins and Carson J. Robison to write new ones every time there was a disaster.[5] As discussed earlier, the songwriters were chosen in part based on their ability to write songs that blended with the music that was already from the region. About Jenkins, Peer said, "the Jenkins thing went on for a good many years, because he could write these disaster songs very well and that got to be a big business." According to Wolfe, the event song genre started in 1923 with Henry Whitter's recording of "The Wreck on the Southern Old 97," followed in 1924 by Ernest "Pop" Stoneman's recording of "The Sinking of the Titanic" ("Event Songs" 219-20). With the significant sales of these two songs, especially Vernon Dalhart's cover of the first song, the record companies decided to exploit this genre's popularity. The peak year for event songs was 1925, when five of the top seven sellers were event songs, including "The Death of Floyd Collins," another Dalhart recording, which sold 306,000 copies overall, "making it Columbia's biggest hit for many years to come" (Wolfe, "Event Songs" 221).

"The Death of Floyd Collins" was inspired by the extensive newspaper and radio coverage of Collins's plight; he was trapped and eventually entombed in a Kentucky cave. Like the sinking of the Titanic, this tragedy created national attention,. According

to D. K. Wilgus, Polk Brockman asked the Rev. Andrew Jenkins, a blind evangelist and singer-songwriter in Atlanta, to write the song (Laws 51). Reverend Jenkins claims to have written it in forty-five minutes, and his stepdaughter, Irene Futrelle Spain, transcribed the song; then they sent it off to New York.[6] Jenkins began writing songs around age fifteen and, by the time he died, had written over 700 songs, mostly gospel or sacred songs. Peer noted that he first brought Jenkins in "and made some hymns, but then it developed he was a writer himself, and we finally got to the point where he would write the new songs for us."

Ernest V. Stoneman had an unexpected hit with "The Sinking of the Titanic." Stoneman, born in 1893 in southwestern Virginia, was reared primarily by his father in the small community of Iron Ridge after his mother died. His father, a minister, played the fiddle, banjo, guitar, and mandolin. This practice was atypical because of the local religious interdictions at the time; many in the community still associated the banjo and fiddle as instruments of the devil. Ernest became fascinated with the autoharp after his father bought one from the Montgomery Ward catalog, and first learned that instrument, followed by banjo, harmonica, and guitar. He also loved to sing. When Stoneman heard fellow musician Henry Whitter on a record, he set off to New York to record, feeling he could do a better job. Stoneman found a welcome reception at Ralph Peer's office and recorded the "Titanic" as a response to the "Wreck on the Southern Old '97." While Stoneman recorded a number of event songs, written both by him and others, it is not clear whether that choice was a personal preference for those songs or an entrepreneurial

decision (Tribe, Stonemans 38-40). Stoneman was recorded extensively, though not used regularly as a writer.

Peer and Brockman used Jenkins extensively, and Walker used Dan Hornsby and Robison. Dan Hornsby worked at WSB in Atlanta and helped write the skits for the Skillet Lickers. Walker explained the writing process to Mike Seeger in their interview.

> Walker: Well, the "Fiddlers' Convention," those sort of things. We got an idea. We thought that if they did that in actuality in their appearances to a degree, they used to throw out as entertainment whatever came to their mind and if we could call it "Fiddler's Convention" and I had a young man who was with a radio station in Atlanta. He is now dead. His name was Dan Hornsby. Afterwards became quite popular, one of my very best friends. And Dan worked for me for years and years and years. And Dan and I would sit down when we were doing nothing else. We would gather together material for these skits. And then we would rehearse as best we could the boys and much of it was done naturally, with only just a outline for them to do.
>
> Seeger: Did they, what was the musicians' part in making up those skits would you say?
>
> Walker: Not to any great extent. The skits were made up from things that they let drop. Then we would sit, Dan and I, and read this over to them, and if we got a laugh here or a tear there, we knew that it was pretty good. And from that we worked on it and they got the general feeling of it, because, of course, in Riley's case, he couldn't see, so he couldn't read. He only learned through the hearing and hearing of our voices . . . So that it became a sort of a going over and over until they became familiar with it, and they got into the feeling of the thing, then it became almost like a party for them without an audience, of course, because we didn't have a, we didn't allow any audiences.
>
> Seeger: Did those records sell fairly well, those uh, talking ones?
>
> Walker: Tremendously. Tremendously.
>
> Seeger: Did they outsell the musical records?
>
> Walker: Yes, yes, because they looked for them. They were just waiting until you would bring out another one of those and we didn't bring them out too often, because those would continue selling in big quantities. Hundreds, hundreds of thousands of them we sold. Hundreds of thousands. (Walker)

Many songs and skits were being fed to the musicians. The formats were based on traditional song structure and oral jokes, so they were familiar to the audience while allowing the record companies to command the profit. The routines also resembled comedy skits that were popular on the radio at that time. The friendship between Hornsby and Walker also helped develop a relationship between the record company and the radio station, which helped promote the radio, the recordings, and the vernacular musician.[7]

Unlike Hornsby, Carson Robison was a popular songwriter in Kansas who worked from a formula. Walker was deeply indebted to Robison for the songs he created. He told Seeger:

> Carson was a natural writer, and if I were down South and I found some tale of a local nature down there, I'd sit down and I'd write Carson and I'd tell him the story of it, what the story was. I'd come back to New York. Then twenty-four hours afterwards, Carson would be in, and say here is the story of whatever it happened to be. It would be done. We might make a few changes to make it a little more authentic and then we would record it. Now he did a quite a number of those himself. And, wonderful solace, wonderful solace. (Walker)

Many of these songs were picked up by the musicians in local communities and sounded traditional enough that Kirkland collected them as such.

Walker was careful to work with Robison to invent the "authentic." Robison described his formula for creating these "traditional" event songs:

> First I read all the newspaper stories of, say, a disaster. Then I get to work on the old typewriter. There's a formula, of course. You start by painting everything in gay colors. . . . Then you ring in the tragedy—make it as morbid and gruesome as you can. Then you wind up with a moral. (Wolfe, " Event" 222)

Jenkins also preferred to write in a moral, using the same formula that was popular in nineteenth-century broadside ballad writing. Despite the A&R man's belief that these songs were all best sellers, their popularity quickly slacked off. By the late 1920s, very few event songs were being written or recorded. Robison, seeking new markets, moved on to writing and recording sentimental and novelty songs.

The repertoire was only one part of the puzzle. The other necessary ingredient for a successful recording was to find musicians, preferably ones with large repertoires or who were adept at learning songs and tunes quickly. One method of finding musicians was to locate the promoters who were already working. Although the idea that vernacular musicians *had* promoters for live shows has not been widely documented, Polk Brockman stated some of the musicians had people hired to recruit them for shows, radio programs, or recordings. This evidence implies that many of the vernacular musicians had greater business savvy than they are often given credit for. Even before 1922, promoters were used and had methods for recruiting crowds for live shows, Brockman describes such promoters:

> It was probably three or four or five of them that'd run one of these shows. They'd go from town to town on Saturday night. You have the same thing now; these boys would perform on these radio stations and tell the world about it in one breath. In those days they'd have to go with handbills and they'd play on the streets and tell the people to come up Saturday night; going to play up at the courthouse. Of course, nobody had anywhere to go, so they'd go to the courthouse . . . Naturally have promoters back of that, you know. The boys didn't get out and drum up on their own.

Thus, one way to find talent was to use the promoters already in place. The A&R men heard about the courthouse performances from promoters and would sometimes attend for scouting purposes. Brockman mentioned attending such an event.

In addition to the talent promoters, the record companies contacted the record dealers to find talent before they would come into an area. In looking back at a recording session in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Brockman describes how they lined up the talent:

> I'd get it through the dealers as I used to write letters ahead to the dealers of records and tell them. I knew who they were because we were supplying them with records and they were always writing in. I got letters every day in those days. My gosh, you'd come into Atlanta to make records and there'd be two hundred of those guys hanging around your front door. They all thought they were the best in the world and be hanging around your front door.

The dealers were frequently happy to help find talent. In the cases of some of the better known dealers, such as Speir and Charles, one incentive was to make extra money through providing the contacts.

Speir indicates he didn't make much money, but he feels he treated the artist fairly, even when the A&R man didn't. He told Wardlow that W. R. Calaway, Satherly, and Laibly all neglected their payments to him and to performers numerous times. Speir tried to give artists $50 per side, the same amount Peer gave once he started working for Victor (Speir, Interview 1970; Peer). In terms of personal profit, Speir felt he could have done better if he had become a manager for the artists:

> I know in dealing with talent and people like that I was honest with all of 'um. I never tried to do anything that would be, that I'd want one of them to do to me. All I was doing was just making enough money to get by. I was selling these; I didn't take it on royalty. Course, now I, I have to admit I made a mistake. That was the worst mistake I ever made in my days by not tying up my talent to let me be the, uh, the manager, you understand . . . . But if I carry, suppose I went to Memphis or Atlanta, Georgia which I have carried up ten people and maybe I'd come out there about $100 apiece. Well if I got back home with a $1,000 and all my

> expenses paid, I was, whew, I could jump through the ceiling. I was happy, you see. (Interview 1970)

Another broker, Harry Charles, worked near H. C. Speir, but used a different method and had a different aesthetic. Charles was born around the turn of the century and worked most of his life running a piano store in Birmingham, Alabama, although he also spent time in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia. He started in the music business through song writing. He sent a song to Paramount, and manager Art Laibly contacted him to find talent for Paramount. He worked on a percentage basis rather than for a set fee. Later he worked for Columbia and some other companies, but "never Victor" (Charles). Charles began by writing pop music songs, and after he sold some of those, "then I started writing blues" (Charles). He found most of his talent for Paramount, including blues singer Lucille Bogan, starting with that company sometime between 1922 and 1925. He had a talent office in Birmingham with a piano, where the musicians would audition. Like Brockman, when asked about how well his choices were accepted, he replied, "they just took my word for it" (Charles). Because Charles was a songwriter as well as a talent scout, he could book the musicians and teach them his songs. His songs were probably what made him the most money, rather than the recording sessions.

One broker crossing categories as collector and performer, was Bascom Lamar Lunsford. Lunsford had been in contact with Polk Brockman and in 1925 was asked by Brockman to compose two "event songs" for a recording session in Asheville. Lunsford wrote and recorded "Bryan's Last Battle" and "The Fate of Santa Barbara," the latter of which was released. He also recorded songs he had collected near his home, though most

were unreleased due to equipment problems at the session, which resulted in poor masters. He was not a popular writer or performer for OKeh, but he continued his contact with Brockman and Peer. According to Loyal Jones, he recommended singers to them for other recording sessions and wrote a letter of introduction to Ralph Peer, then at Victor, for Jimmie Rodgers before Rodgers went to record at Bristol (Minstrel 34).

The A&R men moved from making direct trips toward brokering and using other methods to obtain talent. Peer includes mention of vaudeville theatres (probably part of the Theatre Owners' Booking Association or TOBA) for obtaining African-American artists and mentions artists who consciously promoted themselves. Peer, in his interview by Borgeson, notes that while he started out scouting, artists quickly contacted him for recording sessions:

> Peer: Well, I made trips down South. That was of course where I made the originals so I naturally went back there fairly often. But as soon as these records went on the market I began to get a tremendous amount of correspondence.
> Borgeson: Is this the hillbilly or the race records we're talking about?
> Peer: Well, both. I'm thinking that it's the hillbilly that it applies mostly because of course niggers can't write—some niggers . . . on one of my trips to, a recording trip to Atlanta. See, all through the South there were . . . Negro theatres only for Negroes so in those days they didn't have any films that would fit in very well so they were just vaudeville theatres. I remember on one trip to Atlanta a couple came in to see me named "Butterbeans and Susie" . . . The production of these records, both in the race and the hillbilly, led to the discovery of new artists. One sort of led to the other. Because a lot of mail, especially on hillbilly . . . from actual artists.

In addition to finding artists through correspondence, promoters, and furniture men, the A&R men held auditions on the recording trips. Frank Walker described why selecting the right talent was absolutely crucial, at least in the early days:

> We made periodical trips to the South and at least two trips a year and we felt that we had a rather a bad time of it if we recorded less than two hundred masters on each trip. Now, not all of those found a market. Because we did them out after we got back rather carefully. It's not like today, with the taping and so forth. In those days, the recording was done on a solid wax and you had to bring hunks of these waxes that you used. So you were very careful and very choosy.

The recording materials were fragile, heavy, and cumbersome. Since only a limited number would be taken each time, the recording staff didn't want to waste any of the precious wax. The technology thus imposed limitations on selection that are not a concern with today's abundant, portable, and relatively inexpensive recording equipment. Another new technology, radio, came into play in helping to identify musicians.

While auditions were very important, there were ways to get vernacular musicians other than via face-to-face contact. While Peer mentioned the radio station as a place to announce his recording sessions, it was also a place for the A&R men to find performers. Many of the early hillbilly musicians, such as Fiddlin' John Carson and Eck Robertson, performed on the radio and then would promote their recordings. Some of the record catalogs mentioned radio performances, too, so it was a good blend. Peer, in discussing his now-famous 1927 trip to Bristol, Tennessee—the recording session that began the highly successful careers of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family—gave an anecdote that reveals his way of doing business. He built a network through word of mouth, schmoozing, and then getting the best coverage for his product via the newspaper.

> I made two trips . . . the preliminary trip is to stir up local interest and find out if there actually is anything. I can't tell you why I picked Bristol, Tennessee; it just seemed to be a likely spot . . . . There was a radio station. I went in, stopped in the hotel and began to get acquainted with the people . . . . I also went to the Victor dealer in the town, told him what I was up to and he, in turn, took me to the editor of the local paper. This fellow was, seemed to me to be quite an intelligent man, so we got talking

> and just then there was news on the financial pages that RCA was going to buy the Victor Talking Machine Company. So it seems that this fellow dabbled in the stock market a little bit, and he began questioning me and just by accident I knew what was going on, there really wasn't any secret about it, just that the news hadn't gotten around. So I said to him, "There's gonna be something happening in the next few days and it wouldn't be a bad idea if you had a little of this." So based on what I told him, he went out and bought some Victor Talking Machine Company stock. It was traded then on the New York Stock Exchange, and sure enough, before Saturday came around there was, oh, a big jump and he made quite a bit of money out of it. (Peer)

Peer capitalized on Victor's popularity because technology stocks, then as in the recent past, were trendy stocks to buy. In a recent article comparing RCA stock in the 1920s and 1930s to America Online, John Cassidy notes, "the music boxes, which hit the market in 1921, turned into a craze even more urgent than today's fascination with Internet connections" (29). He continues the comparison by quoting from Robert Sobel's history of RCA: "No other new product in the nation's history . . . has ever experienced the kind of demand there was for radio receivers and broadcasting in 1922-23, a phenomenon that established RCA as the most glamorous and fastest growing corporation of the decade" (Cassidy 29). For years, the stock rose exponentially, including moving from 85 to 420 in 1928, then, like everything else, it dropped in 1929. For Peer, sharing this information proved a valuable connection with his brokers. He was able to use his knowledge of corporate America to help his own business. What a striking contrast to the practices of the academic collectors, providing their own music at lecture halls, and struggling (then as now) to obtain grant money to fund research trips.

Peer's information helped the man in Bristol in his own finances. In turn, he helped Peer to identify new talent. Peer continues:

> I can't say that that was the reason for it, but when I asked him if he would print something in the paper about what I was trying to do, he takes the left-hand column on the front page, some heading like, "Victor Talking Machine Company Will Establish Branch Recording Studio in Bristol," or something like that. He really gave it the works. After you read this, if you could, if you knew how to play C on the piano you were going to become a millionaire. So this worked very well and I got a tremendous lot of, oh, he told them I was staying at such-and-such a hotel, and I got all kinds of mail as a result of that, and amongst the lot was Jimmie Rodgers.

One aspect not mentioned was that Peer also used the Bristol sessions to record some talent already selected, such as Ernest Stoneman. Stoneman had talked with Peer about the Bristol session, and in May, Peer traveled to Galax and auditioned a number of local musicians for the recording. Of those, Peer chose Iver Edwards and Eck Dunford to record in addition to Stoneman. Peer used Stoneman's name and others in the local newspaper coverage. The coverage worked well, and was very favorable. The story appeared in the Bristol Herald Courier on July 24, 1927:

> Mountain singers and entertainers will be the talent used for record making in Bristol. Several well-known native record makers will come to Bristol this week to record. Mr. Peer has spent some time selecting the best native talent. The mountain of "hill billy" records of this type have become more popular and are in great demand all over the country at this time. They are practically all made in the south. (Tribe, Stonemans 58)

Getting publicity and obtaining talent via newspaper and radio were not techniques unique to Peer, though clearly he had mastered them and such skills helped with the success of obtaining talent for these early sessions. Peer's ability to publicize the Bristol Session established not only Rodgers and the Carter Family, but also many lesser-known artists.

In choosing people to record, a combination of known talent and auditions was used to select the artists. Walker again describes early practices:

> So we would decide that we would record, for instance, in Johnson City, Tennessee, and you would write down to various people that you had heard about and you would let that be known. And it would be mentioned in the paper and the word would get around in churches and schoolhouses that somebody was going to come down there for a recording. Not session, but for a recording to do. And we would be very glad to listen to people and they came in from all over. . . . We'd sit up all night long and listen to them and we would weed out the things that we wanted and those that we didn't want and picked out the types of songs and the things that they did because they only had a few things that they were able to do and do well . . . . It was a sort of a twenty-four hour deal. You sat and you listened to them and you talked with them and decided on this and you timed it and you said we'll use this and we won't use that. And you rehearsed them the next morning, and you recorded them in the afternoon and the evening. It was a twenty-four hour deal, seven days a week.

Walker brings up another interesting point here, that the musicians not only had their repertoire chosen, but they also had to rehearse to meet time limitations before going into the session. In part this preparation was because the length of the recording was only three minutes, and many of the stringband tunes have a longer typical duration, especially when played for a dance. The other reason, then as today, was to cut down on how much time the musicians would have to spend in the studio. The materials were still fragile, plus the record company didn't want to waste the engineer's time. The producers wanted to obtain as many recordings in as short a period of time as possible.

Brockman also indicated that he had to be careful about the selections. He felt he was good at picking out the material that would sell, saying, "They never gave me any fight on it" (Brockman). Nonetheless, he recognized there was both risk and serendipity in the recording process:

> You'd hope that you were picking out the best stuff. Funny thing, the things that turned out to be the biggest things, were the things that turned out to be more or less accidental rather than the things you'd planned. Like . . . Jimmie Rodgers . . . it wasn't planned. It was an accident. He

> just happened to be stranded there in [Bristol,] Virginia and wound up making a record by himself. Mississippi Sheiks, over there in Mississippi, was purely an accident. It wasn't planned to happen. (Brockman)

As we have seen, there is evidence that Rodgers's appearance in Bristol was not accidental or serendipitous, but a result of Lunsford contacting Peer (L. Jones, Minstrel 34). Nonetheless, while aesthetics played an important role, serendipity was a significant factor, too.

Once the rehearsal process was over, it was time to make the recording. Walker continues by describing the way they set up the studio. The idea was to make it as much like "home" as possible, so the musicians would be relaxed. If the homey atmosphere wasn't enough, a bit of liquor was added to create the relaxation. Prohibition was in full effect during this time; the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volsted Act enforcing it were enacted in 1920. It was erroneously assumed that when the Volsted Act was passed, that because prohibition was now "the law" and "by and large the American people were law-abiding," liquor would no longer be a problem (Asbury 34-35). This assumption led Congress to appropriate only enough money for 1500 agents throughout the entire country to enforce the law. The notion that liquor could be so easily contained quickly proved false. Presumably the A&R men had enough capital at their disposal that finding bootleg liquor to help relax their performers was not a problem.[8] For some people, such as Jimmie Rodgers who suffered from tuberculosis, alcohol was still obtained legally for medicinal uses. Legal or not, obtaining it was not difficult.

Alcohol was not the only component in setting up a field studio. The setting was also furnished to feel more like home. Walker's comments reveal his attitude that he felt

the people he was recording were not intelligent enough to know the difference: they would be more comfortable in a rundown hotel than in some fancy place. He was probably also trying to keep down the overhead cost of making the recordings, thus increasing the profitability of the trip. He describes the "atmosphere":

> You had to give them an atmosphere of uh, it was home, so you didn't pick out any fancy spot to record in. You usually took the upstairs of some old building where it looked pretty terrible, and you didn't try to fix it up in any way at all. You hung some drapes or curtains around and you also made it look and act a bit like home. And you brought in a little of the mountain dew to take care of the colds and any hoarseness that might happen, and also to remove a little of their fears of strangers doing this sort of work. You try to make them feel at home, and we felt the only way we could ever get that was in their own native habitat . . . and these people would show up sometimes from eight and nine hundred miles away. How they got there I'll never know, and how they got back I'll never know. They never asked you for money. They didn't question anything at all. They just were happy to sing and play, and we were happy to have them and mostly we saw that they had something to go back with. (Walker)

Speir also mentions the use of liquor to calm down the singers:

> Most of the people I handle is, uh, really they didn't mind takin' a little drink before they, you know kinda half way . . . They was feeling pretty happy, I understand and then they'd do a lot better. It seemed to remove any fear, if fear at all. . . They couldn't even sing it if they didn't have an emotional feeling. So, in other words, uh, there's one thing about most people, I don't care what anybody says, they either gonna to drink a little whiskey or take dope, one or the other. It's gonna be one or something that's gonna stimulate . . . . To lift them. All lifting is what it did. (Interview 1970)

Speir underscores encouraging use of liquor or drugs as a means of helping the musician relax. The idea that all the liquor did was lift the spirits is also erroneous. Many musicians including Charlie Poole and Bix Biederbeck in jazz developed a dependence on alcohol. The record companies weren't solely responsible for creating this addiction, but they rarely accepted responsibility or attempted to alleviate problems when they came

up. The relationship between the music industry and substance abuse is complex and only touched upon here to indicate its existence and its integral part in the recording process.

None of the recording was possible without the equipment, though, and the early equipment was not the easiest to use, nor was the resulting quality the best. Speir indicated the equipment was tricky, and the acoustics were frequently poor. In poor conditions, he made suggestions for improving the sound. Sometimes he suggested putting paper on the walls or other things to improve the room; other times he made suggestions to the performers. He described working with a group of blues musicians:

> There's not too much except that sometimes they might be huddled too close together and you might have one instrument that wasn't coming in, you know, that should be appreciated, you see. See, a lot of times they'd use two guitars and all, something like that, well if you get that, in other words suppose that the way they were sitting and the guitars was just turned away from the mike, why maybe the other one be, would be predominant. They'd be coming in a little over the other one, you see. Well, you wanted to harmonize it as much as you can. (Speir, Interview 1970)

Choosing the performers, rehearsing them, then creating an atmosphere conducive to recording were all important. Other factors came into play, including repertoire. While vernacular musicians were frequently given a flat fee or occasionally a percentage for their recordings, the creation of new songs, even more than record sales, was the key to success for the companies.

Songwriting and copyrighting the music were where the greatest amount of money could be made. Peer was, without question, the premier moneymaker in this area when he moved from OKeh to Victor. In his interview, Peer perceives himself most of

the time to be on the side of the musician: he was generous and paid them fairly. He first started the royalty and artist-payment system with OKeh, then perfected it for himself with Victor. In 1927, the year Peer went to Bristol and recorded Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, he left his job at General with a salary of $16,000 per year and collected $250,000 in one quarter for his percentage of mechanical royalties with Victor (Peer; Sanjek 22-23). Mechanical royalties are the right to record a particular song in a mechanically reproducible format. This arrangement, of course, accounts for almost all the money the song will earn unless it also is published in another format, such as a book, or, in later years, given compensation for airplay. The mechanical license is also required in current recordings to go back to the original holder in order to reissue a recording, thus giving the profit to the holder of that copyright.

By 1928, "more than one-third of all non-classical music recorded by Victor . . . was controlled by Ralph Peer" (Sanjek 23). Peer described how he left OKeh: he argued with the president whom he described as "a Jewish fellow named [Otto] Heineman" and at the end of the argument walked out. At OKeh he was paying artists $25 per side. When he went to Victor, he worked for no salary, but did control the performance rights and began paying $50 per side at Victor, which was the lowest the company would permit. He said:

> That's all I ever paid them. I had set that figure, and I was going to stick to it. And they were glad to get it . . . . I was trying to think of the name of the first artist I brought in to Victor . . . Ernest Stoneman and His Family, I think we called them. It's one of these vocal groups with a fiddle background. Nothing terribly exciting but of course as soon as they put the record out it was Victor so we sold 60,000. (Peer, Interview)

Stoneman was one of the artists who went to New York and looked for work recording, Peer was the first person to offer Stoneman a fee he felt was fair (Tribe, Stonemans, 38). Peer felt it was not because of the music, but because of the label that the music sold so well, revealing his conceit. While many Victor recordings did sell well, so did many recordings on other labels. When Peer realized he needed to travel to where the musicians were, he requested a portable recording machine. When questioned about the quality of the recording relative to what could be made in a studio, he replied:

> I had to put over the thought that the hillbilly recording didn't need to have the same quality as Caruso. And they appropriated $60,000 for a trip that went to Bristol, Tennessee, Savannah, Georgia, I think Atlanta, Georgia, and they thought that was peanuts . . . . I could have done it for half. But at that early age I had the sense to conform to whatever the company wanted. So I never threw any money but as I say I did put a low point of $50 a selection which was absolutely unnecessary. Most of them evidently expected to record for nothing. And when on top of this $50 I gave them royalty on this selection, they thought it was manna from heaven. (Peer)

The "manna from heaven" Peer describes was in the contract as 25% of the mechanical royalties. He continues later in the interview as to why he wanted this arrangement:

> All these people worked for me under when I was at OKeh Records. They were all employed exclusively by OKeh records. In other words I had them under control enough so that they would sign the contracts. 'Cause we did have this competition from Columbia or Paramount Records, whatever it was. And eventually Victor Records . . . I had contracts, copyright contracts, of this type so that the General Phonograph Corp took over the copyrights. I thought of that one . . . . In other words, the record company owned the copyright, which isn't quite a square deal because the uh, you can't give them any publisher service and if you need cheap music you can't print it very well . . . but I had to find that all out by experience. So it was the custom that the fellow who came in with his own composition, we'd take them over. Not to make the publisher profit but to get a reduced royalty rate. So then when I got to the Victor thing, it was always me. I couldn't bother Victor with a thing like putting a hillbilly artist under contract. They wouldn't have signed such a contract, anything

> less than $5000 they wouldn't be bothered with. So I had them all sign artist-management contracts with me personally. That's the way Jimmie Rodgers was handled, the way the Carter Family was handled. And it worked out all right . . . I was always trying to get away from hillbilly and into the legitimate music publishing field because the big profit until recently in music publishing has come from selling sheet music, not the records. (Peer)

Peer learned how to make his money using songwriting and copyright. Walker, with his arrangement with writers, presumably made quite a bit of money that way, too. The songs and publishing were only worthwhile if the records could be sold. Peer makes another interesting case here. He took over the booking and promotion of the vernacular musicians. Even though it wasn't his greatest interest, Peer thought it important, and the hillbilly market wasn't significant enough in the greater arena of Victor for them to find booking worthwhile.

After the records had been made, they needed to be marketed. The record companies again used a variety of methods to get the word out. Newspaper and magazine advertising was popular, as was placing information about recordings on the paper sleeves for the records. As mentioned early, some musicians, such as Fiddlin' John Carson, promoted their own recordings either through live performances or radio broadcasts. The radio announcer would identify a song as played by "famous recording artist" so and so. In addition to these standard methods, Walker and probably others engaged in an informal type of consumer marketing survey, including promotion of their own wares. This method seems to have been an innovative technique for the time, and while records are no longer sold this way, it's almost identical to the way new kitchen gadgets are sold in stores and at county fairs. Walker described his selling tactics:

Well to give you an example, would you like a little bit of a story as to how you sold hillbilly records to hillbillies? Well this was in the very early days; this was back in the middle twenties. And, I've forgotten the name of the thing but anyhow I had a couple of new artists and I happened to be traveling down through there and I landed in a little town called Corbin, Kentucky. It was a sort of a railroad town, as I recall it, because this was an awful lot of years ago.

And I got hold of an idea. I went over to a store, there was a sort of a general store . . . and he had a machine in there, an old-type machine and he used to sell some phonograph records. So I went in and talked to him about it, and I said, "You know, let's try out something. You don't get enough people coming into your store. And then if they come in then one fellow wants to buy a record he may buy something else in the store. Or if he wants to buy something else in the store like sugar he may buy a phonograph record, but you gotta let him know about it."

"Well, how do you go about doing that?"

"Well, let's put up a little, uh, some seats here in the back. It won't take much. We take some plank and so forth, and we make a little rising seats like they do at a ball game. And we put the phonograph up in the front and then we'll make some signs and we'll put on the window and we invite the folks to come in on Saturday afternoon to listen to the new phonograph records."

He said, "I like the idea." We made the signs in our handwriting. We put them on the window and we put the seats up there and we had room for about sixty people. I think we had a hundred and sixty that showed up. We filled the seats and they all stood around and we had the appropriate little box with the sawdust in it, so that we wouldn't get too much tobacco juice on the floor.

And I started and played two or three records that I am sure that they knew about already. Then I put on this new record and played it all the way through . . . It was coming out but I just wanted to try it out. So I played it and then I said, "How many of you people would like to own this record, have it for yourselves?" Everybody held their hands up. Now I said, "How many of you would like to buy this record, seventy-five cents you know, how many of you would like to buy it?" And I would say out of maybe the hundred and twenty-five or thirty people there that maybe twenty or twenty-five held their hand up. And I said, "So what's the matter with the rest of you people, don't you like it?" They said, "Yes, we ain't got no money." Which was the story. They all wanted it, they all liked it you see, they all wanted it but they didn't have the money . . . . You played over and over and over and over again these different country records and it got late in the afternoon, and the proprietor was getting annoyed and he wanted to clear out the place so he could go home. And how were you going to get rid of these people? They had been so nice.

> And they had sat right there and were ready to be entertained for the next week.
>
> So I had a brand new idea, sometimes I did get at that time. And I went inside and I had with me a Red Seal record of Caruso. So I brought it out and I put it on the machine, and this was no reflection on Caruso or against the aria that he sang, but before it was a quarter of the way through the store was empty, [Mike Seeger laughs] showing that they didn't care particularly for operatic arias. (Walker)

Walker used this technique not only to sell music, but also to judge the audience reaction to the different types of music. This tactic helped him to distribute the right types of records to the dealers in different markets.

In summary, the A&R men used a variety of techniques to obtain the vernacular musicians for recording sessions and to get them to the sessions. Some artists, acting as their own agents, took trips to the major studios in New York, Chicago, and other northern locations; others showed up at the field studios located for brief periods of time in cities throughout the South. The methods used to find the vernacular musicians included contacting record store owners, local talent scouts and music promoters, vaudeville theatres, radio stations, newspapers, and musicians and songwriters, thus creating a huge network. While in interviews the A&R men try to present themselves as treating the musicians grandly and paying them huge amounts, many times that was not the case.

Through the careful process of selecting musicians and repertoire via auditions and word-of-mouth, and encouraging the creation of a vast new repertoire of songs which sounded traditional, the early A&R men had a tremendous impact on the music. Because the music was mass marketed, selling thousands and tens of thousands of copies, the music collected and distributed had an immediate and profound impact on the repertoire

found in the South. The technology allowed the musicians to hear the music, unlike broadsheets or music books where they would have to make up the tune (or appropriate one) or know how to read music. Many of the songs and tunes recorded during this time quickly moved into tradition and are still heard today. The vernacular musicians were drawn to the record companies through hearing their colleagues or people they thought could be their neighbor, having a desire for additional income, and seeking public recognition of their talent.

While much of the South was covered by the record companies, like the folklore societies, the efforts were neither systematic nor comprehensive. While the A&R men let the musicians come to them or be brought to them, they concentrated mainly on larger cities for their artists. As Kip Lornell and Ted Mealor have shown for Piedmont style blues, the location of the studios had an effect on the artists recorded because most performers did not have the resources to travel long distances (13-14). The A&R men did succeed in changing the face of music in America, however, by promoting hillbilly, blues, gospel, and later western music, aided by radio. Radio was developing at the same time, and in many cases the radio stations and record companies worked together for talent scouts and promotion. The roles of radio will be covered in depth in the next chapter, but it should be remembered that these events were not separate, but formed a concurrent network and combination of influences.

Notes

[1] For more information on early use of cylinder recorders in ethnographic research, see Erika Brady, The Spiral Way.

[2] The six recordings issued by Victor Talking Machine Records of the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet were 1714–"Down on the Old Camp Ground," 1715–"Poor Mourner," 1716–"Steal Away," 1724–"My Way is Cloudy," 1725–"Gabriel's Trumpet," and 1726–"We'll Anchor Bye and Bye" (Dixon and Godrich, Recording 8).

[3] The two selections recorded by Robertson were "Sally Goodin" and "Arkansas Traveler" (Malone, Country 40).

[4] Tin Pan Alley was the section of New York City for commercial music writers and publishers.

[5] Although many writers have listed this Kansan songwriter as "Robinson," there is no "n" in the middle of his name. For correct examples, see Malone, Country Music, and Wolfe, "Event Songs."

[6] With the tremendous popularity of the song, it is no surprise it entered into tradition. Malcolm G. Laws cites a number of references under G22 in Native American Ballads and also gives information collected from D. K. Wilgus on the origins of the song.

[7] The link with radio will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

[8] Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers used Prohibition and its unpopularity in their Corn Likker Still series, created by Frank Walker and Dan Hornsby.

4. Early Radio

The record companies capitalized on a symbiotic relationship with radio stations, using the station to promote recordings, to identify musicians, and sometimes to use radio personnel to help write material for the recordings. But what impact did the radio have outside of assisting the record companies? In this chapter I investigate the role that radio station managers, owners, and announcers played in the development and mediation of vernacular music in the South. I begin with an overview of the development of radio stations, including the people and organizations inspired to create stations. Following the development of stations, I examine and discuss a number of aspects of the development of programming on radio stations. One aspect looked at here from a different perspective from the previous chapter is the use of sound recordings on radio. Sound recordings were played on early radio, both covertly and overtly, with significant interplay between radio stations and record companies.[1] This period was before performing rights organizations (such as ASCAP, BMI, and SESAC) collected royalties for radio broadcasts. A second aspect is live programming, which developed from the use of amateur musicians to paying professional musicians. Another aspect of live programming involved stations beginning through incorporating a wide variety of genres of entertainment, then later they were more focused on their program content. In vernacular music programming, the stations predominantly favored white musicians and discriminated against black performers. Another aspect of the mediation of radio programming involved the role played by Henry Ford in the promotion of old-time fiddling. While it seems unusual to single out one individual, this industrial giant's role was significant enough during the

mid-1920s to warrant attention. Finally, the creation of radio networks had a dramatic effect on the rapid diffusion and commodification of vernacular music.

While commercial radio began around the same time that the first vaudeville blues recordings were coming on the market, music on the radio had its beginnings a decade and a half earlier, mostly via "radio enthusiasts," a term used by William Randle in his history of radio broadcasting 1920-1930. Randle states, "Music was broadcast without lines as early as 1906 by New England experimenter R. A. Fessenden and by 1908 his programs covered a 600-mile area. Lee De Forest, an early radio inventor, broadcast music in 1907" (3). The music chosen was typically classical music, usually opera. These small stations around the country steadily increased in number over the next decade, providing music and news to a growing number of listeners, most often other radio enthusiasts. Radio transmissions were interrupted and mostly banned except for military use during the First World War.

After the First World War, veterans returned to all parts of the United States with knowledge of radio broadcasting. These veterans became hobby enthusiasts, eager to share their knowledge of this new technology with anyone willing to listen. Most radios at this time were kits assembled from component parts. By 1921 Westinghouse produced a few radio receivers for retail sale, though most people preferred the more economical kits. One year later, 1922, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) manufactured affordable receivers in great quantity. Sales grew rapidly, with approximately 15 million retail sets sold between 1922 and 1929 and an untold number of component parts (Randle 26-28).

Not surprisingly, along with the increase in sales, radio stations began to spring up, first sporadically, then fairly quickly after the technology improved and people became intrigued with the new media. As has been documented by Randle, Charles Wolfe, and other radio historians, the first major commercial radio station was KDKA out of Pittsburgh, which began broadcasting in 1919. A number of other stations started in the 1920s. WSB in Atlanta was the first station in the South and went on the air in March 1922, backed by the Atlanta Journal (Daniel, Pickin' 47). Other large stations included WBAP in Forth Worth, Texas, WLS in Chicago, and WBT in Charlotte, North Carolina. Many smaller stations came into being during this time, too.

WLS, though located outside of the South, deserves special consideration due to its influence on Southern stations and programming. Owned originally by Sears (thus the call letters, standing for World's Largest Store), it was the first station to focus primarily on a rural audience, emphasizing news and entertainment geared toward the farmer. Prior to its inception, most of the music found on Chicago radio stations was classical, with a strong preference for opera. The farmers appreciated the crop and weather news, and also the first regular Barn Dance Program. WLS also claims to be the first station to build an auditorium for its live audience broadcasts. The Barn Dance program also provided employment opportunities for Southerners travelling north for work. Bradley Kincaid, a Kentucky-born graduate of Berea, started his successful radio career at WLS and was able to market his songs through the station. Kincaid, originally from Garrard County in eastern Kentucky, learned most of his songs from his parents. Born in 1895, he was sent to Berea by his parents where he finished his standard education and then

went on to college. After Berea he and his wife moved to Chicago where he worked for the YMCA. Through the YMCA quartet, he appeared on WLS radio, sang "Barbara Allen" and, based on the fan mail, was offered a regular job at the station. He began singing and announcing in 1924 and received over 100,000 fan letters per year while there. When he moved to WLW in Cincinnati, he recommended other musicians to take his place (L. Jones, Kentucky 9-11).

Although WLS was started by Sears, once advertising and sponsorships became popular on radio, Sears sold it to Prairie Farmer magazine owner Butler Burridge in the late 1920s. Burridge had a strong emphasis on family values (no profanity, no drinking, keeping a cheerful countenance on the air), which, in turn, helped him keep his rural audience.

Ivan Tribe documented the development of radio in West Virginia, during this time. His chronicling of this development is typical of radio station growth throughout the South (Mountaineer 73-109). What follows is a brief overview, in order to provide a model of radio development. This same pattern repeated across the country. One need only change the call letters, towns, and owners' names. The first two stations in West Virginia started in 1926. WSAZ in Huntington, West Virginia, had actually started a few years earlier in Pomeroy, Ohio, but moved to Huntington in 1926 under the ownership of the local electric company, owned by William McKeller.[2] The most famous West Virginia station, WWVA in Wheeling, began broadcasting in December 1926 and became well known for its Jamboree. WCHS in Charleston began its broadcast in October 1927 as WOBU, started by a local realtor, Walter Fredericks (Tribe,

Mountaineer 78). In Fairmont, WMMN began in December 1928, named after Fairmont local and U.S. Senator Matthew M. Neeley, and included as one of its program directors a young Scotty Wiseman. Wiseman had first been influenced by Bascom Lamar Lunsford's newspaper column, which included songs, and later by Bradley Kincaid. Scotty Wiseman's brother had been Kincaid's roommate at Berea, and Kincaid later collected songs from Wiseman. Bluefield got into the act in June 1929 when the local newspaper owner, Hugh Ike Shott, started WHIS, incorporating his initials. Thus, over a four-year period, five major West Virginia cities added radio stations to their mode of communication with the people across the state and in neighboring regions.

The background of early radio station owners varied greatly. For example, WOPI in Bristol, Virginia, was started in 1927 by Mr. W. A. Wilson, who had been a telegraph operator and owner of a radio retail outlet before he started his own station (Blaustein, "WOPI" 124). In an interview, one of the members of the Tenneva Ramblers, Claude Grant, described the beginnings of the station:

> I remember when Mr. Wilson was sort of experimenting with little crystal sets, radio. He was doing this at home. We used to go out to his home and fool around out there with him and he finally got to where he could transmit, you know, send it out. I remember the old Sterchi and Stutts Furniture Company here, he was going to do broadcasting down there and have a band contest and so we went down and that's the first contact we had with him. And when he opened his radio station, why, our band was the very first to broadcast on that station WOPI. And then he was out on West State Street, had his own building out there and everything, hadn't been in business very long, and we opened up the station there every morning with a program at six o'clock for about a year. (Blaustein, "WOPI" 124)

Other stations received their start in grander fashion: WLS was started by Sears Roebuck and WSM by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company in Nashville. Like

today, the cost of keeping a station going was relatively high, so by 1924, most stations were owned by electrical radio manufacturers and distributors, department stores and major merchants, and newspaper publishers (Randle 35).

The high cost, inexperience of managers, and developing technology of radio affected the programs that were broadcast in the early days. The first stations broadcast sound recordings—with mixed results. According to Susan Smulyan, this early move to recordings marked a trend in preference and later in regulations favoring live performances (95). Stations used recordings as "filler" in early broadcasts, and the technology of both radio and recording was primitive enough that the sound quality was poor at best. Still, listeners generally could not tell whether the radio was playing a recording or a live show when it was strictly music.

> O. B. Hanson, recalling the first broadcasts, said: "the combination of the acoustical recording, mechanical pickup, mica diaphragm, tin horns, and carbon microphones produces a form of complex distortion that one can barely think of today." At the time of performance, however, few people were able to distinguish between live and recorded programs, and public response to broadcast records was enthusiastic. (Randle 67)

By 1922, three years after the first broadcasts from KDKA, the technology of radios improved enough that there was widespread belief both by radio professionals and by government officials that if the stations continued broadcasting recordings, people wouldn't buy radios. That rationale was the opposite of today. The assumption was that if people heard recordings on the radio, they wouldn't need the radio because they could just listen to the recording at home (Randle 68). In addition, the business of collecting royalties for broadcast as "performance" hadn't been worked out; it's an ongoing issue in the recording industry today, focusing more now on music over the Internet than radio.

Of course, the opposite is true: by playing records over the radio (and other forms of technology), people are exposed to a broader range of music, and in turn, they go out and spend money on the recordings.[3] Nonetheless, in the early 1920s, that rationale was not apparent, and, depending on the size of the station, restrictions were placed on stations limiting or prohibiting the playing of records on the station. As a result, at the First National Radio Conference in February 1922, federal regulations on the use of sound recordings were established. The regulations were set up mainly based on the power of the station. The larger the station the more restrictive the rules. Thus, high power stations were only to use recorded music in emergency situations.

> Class B Stations . . . were absolutely barred from using records or player pianos...no rule was made restricting the low power transmitters. Records and some amateur talent continued to be the major programming source materials for such stations. (Randle 68-69)

Randle points out that as technology improved, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether a station was using live programming or recordings, and by 1927 the Department of Commerce regulations were eliminated. Use of live and recorded music continued, though the FCC regulated its use through the 1940s (Randle 70-74). In the South, the first stations used recordings; WSB is reputed to have used them in its first broadcasts in 1922, after the regulations had been passed, though it also used live local talent, such as Fiddlin' John Carson and the Reverend Andrew Jenkins.

The local performers and travelling vaudeville acts were both curious about the new technology and saw it as a way to increase their income. However, in some locales, theatre owners, like the record companies, were less than keen on their new competition. Many theatre owners and managers instituted a "no broadcast" clause in the contracts

(Randle 82). In other locales there were a quick acceptance and even broadcasting from remote locations, such as theaters, as a way to fill the time. For example, even before the Barn Dances began, discussed later in this chapter, WSB was airing the Atlanta Fiddling Contests held at a local auditorium. It was at one of these contests that Fiddlin' John Carson sold his first record. Thus, it was left to each station and the local theatres to determine policy whether established artists were encouraged or prohibited from appearing on the radio in the early 1920s.

In the early days, then, with the ban on vaudeville performers on the radio, the unfamiliarity of the new technology and the lack of funds by radio stations to actually pay performers, most professional musicians in any genre stayed away from radio. Location of stations was yet another factor:

> While the novelty of being on the air appealed to many, the inconvenience of getting to and from the radio studios, the primitive conditions of most early broadcasting operations, and the inalterable fact that radio stations did not pay for performing kept many acts from appearing. . . . In spite of theatre opposition and performer antipathy, radio stations were able to produce live programs and extend the variety of entertainment constantly. (Randle 82-3)

The needs and variety of entertainment came largely from the local community providing an overview of many of the local community musical tastes of the time.

Programming on early radio shows changed over the years as stations moved from an amateur to professional status. Charles K. Wolfe developed a model of these changes as they occurred on WSM and the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, but this model was followed to a large degree by many of the Southern radio stations that developed

barn dance programs. Station programming and the creation of a star system went through four stages:

> The first was the informal stage, when just about any picker could come down and get on the air for a few minutes, and when nobody got any money. The second was the addition of the live studio audience to the show; early audiences simply stood in the studio and watched, but as demand grew, the show moved to a theater, where it was broadcast remote and took on the trappings of a stage show. The third (which, in the case of most barn dances, followed on the heels of stage two) was the conscious attempt to fix an image for the show, with the development of on-air personalities—colorful announcers, comedians, ad-libbing musicians, and entertainers with funny names . . . . The fourth stage of barn dance program development was professionalization; the creation of a system whereby artists could earn enough by radio work to give up their day jobs. (Wolfe, "Triumph of Hills" 50)

The informal stage has been discussed by a number of writers in discussing their experiences on the radio. For all the reasons mentioned earlier—restrictions, lack of pay, and difficulty in getting to the stations, many stations took anyone early on. With the emphasis on live programming and early management being unclear as to what their audience wanted, they turned to community events, including

> [r]eligious services, political speeches, sporting events, and dance bands at hotel dances. Controversies over programming seldom emerged, for it was difficult to determine what listeners wanted to hear, management was unsure what it wanted to broadcast, and performers were so scarce that stations put anyone willing on the air immediately. (Smulyan 95)

Station managers usually doubled in their duties as announcers. Many were the radio enthusiasts who were trained as radio operators in the war, and they usually knew more about radio than they did about music. According to one Kentucky station manager, "It was necessary to have a long string of volunteers on call and for them to be dependable enough to cross our threshold promptly thirty minutes before starting time" (Smulyan 95-

96). WSB had a similar experience, even in the metropolitan location of Atlanta. Although sometimes attributed to manager Lambdin Kay, it was early announcer and entertainer Ernest Rogers who said that in the early days,

> anybody who could sing, whistle, recite, play any kind of instrument, or merely breathe heavily was pushed in front of the WSB microphone. In a short time almost everybody in Atlanta who could ride, walk, or crawl to WSB had participated in a program. . . . None of the talent was paid for services rendered, but that made no difference. They trouped to WSB to perform, and Aunt Minnie stayed home to listen. (Daniel, Pickin' 48)

Rogers was a reporter on the Journal, and filled in on some early shows

> singing and playing guitar on his own compositions, "Mythological Blues" and a radio song, "Tune In With Your Heart." Telephone and telegraph responses were positive enough to bring Rogers back to the WSB microphones. He was also scheduled for a series of appearances at a time when the Journal station was expanding its audience throughout the country which made him a regional "big name." (Randle 96)

His radio success led to a recording contract and some sold out performances at the Grand Theatre, but no long-term success (Randle 97). One can see here, however, the first stages of star making.

Richard Blaustein found a similar variety when researching the first broadcasts over WOPI in Bristol, Virginia/Tennessee. W. A. Wilson, Sr., the originator of WOPI, remembered:

> We broadcast our first program from the Hotel Bristol. Paul English was the master of ceremonies, he was the head of a well-known stock company bearing his name. We had the Kingsport Concert Band providing entertainment. In addition we had a variety of talent and many speakers. If we had had twenty-four hours we could not have accommodated all of those desiring to get on this, our inaugural program. (Blaustein, "WOPI" 124)

Unfortunately, while this move was true for white performers, most blacks were excluded from live performance. This exclusion extended to both amateur and professional performers. There are a number of theories as to why they were excluded. There was almost no early programming on radio geared toward an African American audience, and few black performers appeared on early radio programs. One exception was DeFord Bailey at what eventually became the Grand Ole Opry, though Bailey played old-time music on his harmonica as well as blues (Wolfe, Tennessee 63).[4] Bailey, born in 1899, began playing harmonica as a child. He first performed on WDAD radio in Nashville and moved to WSM at the invitation of early star Dr. Humphrey Bate. By 1926 he performed on the radio every week. He moved to a Knoxville radio station for three years, but spent most of his radio career on the Grand Ole Opry (Morton 44-47). Smulyan speculates, "Programmers worked hard to keep any trace of African American music off the airwaves during the early 1920s, allowing only a little whitened-up jazz, because they thought white Americans would reject such music coming in their living rooms" (25). Though she recognizes few blacks had radios at that time, Smulyan rejects the rationale that they did not buy them because they could not afford them. Rather, she observes, "black people regularly bought phonographs and race records, probably avoiding radio simply because they heard few broadcasts of equal interest" (25).

Jeff Todd Titon mentions the radio as having superior sound quality and, while not mentioning the exclusion of blacks on the radio, he emphasizes the rise in record production of African American music as a way for companies to pick up the slack where radio had taken away other record-buying markets. Titon states:

> The introduction and quick acceptance of a new medium, radio, which gave listeners fidelity superior to that of acoustic records and which provided constantly changing live programming, was responsible for the sudden decline in record sales at the beginning of the 1920s . . . . Pecuniary motives, rather than altruism or product approval, were responsible for the enthusiasm with which the companies embraced black music. (200)

The growth in record releases by African Americans was phenomenal, with only fifty in 1921 but over 500 by 1927 (Titon 200).

That is not to say there was no black programming on the air. By the late 1920s some of the better-known blues artists managed to be given some airtime. Titon notes:

> Lonnie Johnson and Putney Dandridge sang blues over Chicago radio station WATM for four months . . . in 1929. Robert Wilkins told Dick Spottswood . . . that he played once for an hour on a Memphis radio program late in 1928 or early 1929. Bessie Smith sang over the radio in some of the towns she visited on tour. (300)

Nonetheless, radio was relatively insignificant for the marketing and mediation of African American vernacular music during this period.

The second stage of development in radio programming of white vernacular music was the introduction of a live audience to the programs. Both WLS and WSM started having small studio audiences, and with the positive response, they moved to larger and larger halls to accommodate the crowds. WLS began by constructing a studio theatre shortly after the barn dance program was inaugurated. Crowds quickly grew and, by 1931, with audiences making reservations up to seven months in advance, the station moved to Chicago's Eighth Street Theatre. It also changed the format to two shows with paid admissions (Malone, Country 71). While most people associate WSM's Grand Ole Opry with the Ryman Auditorium (and today with Opryland), the Ryman was not used

until 1941. WSM started in a small studio and then constructed "Studio B" to hold its growing cast and a small audience. With the growing popularity of the shows, it moved to a series of different locations,

> first building an auditorium studio with a seating capacity of five hundred, and later renting the Hillsboro Theatre, which proved to be too small for the program's fans. The show moved next to a large tabernacle in East Nashville and then to the War Memorial Auditorium before finding a suitable location. In 1941 the show moved to . . . a converted tabernacle replete with church pews and a balcony dedicated as a Confederate Memorial, the historic Ryman Auditorium. (Malone, Country 78)

This practice was turned into a fine art with the creation of Opryland in 1974, which now seats thousands, includes a major hotel complex, and began with an amusement park. While the amusement park didn't last, it seemed a natural expansion on the theme. Today the spot where the amusement park had been is a giant shopping mall called Opry Mills. Some stations, such as WSB in Atlanta, never had a live barn dance program, though they did remote broadcasts of live events. At those stations, professionalization was realized through affiliation with networks.

The third stage was the development of the barn dance. The first barn dance program, that is, "a variety format music program featuring early country music" (Wolfe, "Triumph" 43), was not in Chicago but at WBAP, Fort Worth, Texas, in 1923, though it was not a regular feature there at that time. It is unknown how well it was received in Fort Worth, or whether the managers in Chicago knew about it to be influenced by the Forth Worth model. WLS was the first station to have the barn dance format on a regular basis and was instrumental in promoting a number of musicians. The barn dances moved radio into the realm of live theatre and also moved the stations from having a lot of

amateur musicians to a professional paid staff. The early barn dance stories all have the same narrative structure: a lone fiddler plays on the air, and the response from listeners through telephone calls and letters is so overwhelmingly positive that the program directors put together a regular show (Wolfe, "Triumph" 45). While this pattern does have a folk legend quality, it also seems plausible, given that the managers did seem to need guidance in the early days in order to figure out their program niches. The WLS Barn Dance was the brainchild of George Biggar and Edgar Bill following the airing of Tommy Dandurand, a fiddler from Illinois, who played "Leather Breeches" on the air. The Barn Dance attracted a number of people from Kentucky, indicating there was a broker involved in the selection process, possibly Bradley Kincaid. He was one of the first stars and hailed from Kentucky. When Kincaid left to work at other stations, he recommended to WLS, among others, North Carolinian Scotty Wiseman, from whom he had collected some songs. Wiseman met his wife, Lula Belle, at WLS, and together they became one of the most popular duos on early country radio. The WLS barn dance also quickly claimed the greatest market share as it was one of the first to become a network show, broadcast over a number of stations as a four-hour weekly show, beginning in 1931 at the Eighth Street Theatre in Chicago (Montana 33).

The Grand Ole Opry would not have been born except for WSM hiring George Hay from WLS. Hay had direct knowledge of the Barn Dance because he worked with it as an announcer. He moved on to WSM as a way to go from being announcer to being the station manager. George Hay was an interesting character. He started out as a journalist in Chicago and moved to Memphis to work at the Commercial Appeal. There

he created a humor column about court cases and was nicknamed "Judge" (Wolfe, Good 7). When the Appeal started station WMC, Hay was recruited to announce and be the radio editor for the paper. It was also in Memphis that he began using his whistle (as a Mississippi steamboat whistle) and then took that innovation to Chicago (as a train whistle) and back to Tennessee and Nashville for the WSM Grand Ole Opry.

> Hay sensed that radio, like any other mass medium, developed its heroes through audience identification. Hay understood that his radio popularity required auditory gimmicks. He thus devised a highly styled form of announcing that was characterized by a deep baritone "Chant" introduced by the sound of a steamboat whistle. His toy steamboat whistle . . . was used to announce the start of WMC's "entertaining trip down the Mississippi." (Wolfe, Good 8)

After creating the Grand Ole Opry, Hay decided the characters on the show needed to look as well as sound like "hillbillies." In other words, the performers were required to look the image of the music being promoted. Before Hay, most of the musicians, many of whom were from Nashville, not from the country at all, came in their business or Sunday clothes when they performed. The clothing changed to gingham dresses and overalls. With Hay, many of the names were changed, adding Uncle or Cousin or changing the group name to something like the Gully Jumpers to fit a stereotypical hillbilly image. The changes of the names and attire mainly took place when the show moved from the studio to being performed in front of a live audience. Hay took some of the attributes of the vaudeville and medicine shows and applied them to the radio. The style worked because of the live audience, and with sponsorships this country pose became professional.

At the opening of WSM in Nashville, a number of important radio people were in attendance including Lamdin Kay from WSB and George Hay from WLS. While there was no hillbilly or old-time music at that first broadcast, it was included in the programming within the first month by

> the mainstay of the station . . . Jack Keefe, a popular Nashville attorney who announced, sang, and played the piano. Keefe was responsible for broadcasting Dr. Humphrey Bate and his band, Uncle Dave Macon and Sid Harkreader, though he did so in a rather random schedule. (Wolfe, Early Opry 13)

Another show, the WWVA Barn Dance–Mountain Jamboree, starting up in 1933, was one of the myriad of barn dance programs to blossom in the thirties. The Mountain Jamboree became important in promoting many musicians and provided another market for those who could not pick up WLS or WSM. The barn dance became one of the main formats for "hillbilly" performers, though by no means the only one. Many performers appeared in other time slots for other types of shows.

At WLS, George C. Biggar was one of the influences on the National Barn Dance. Although many wish to credit George Hay as the program organizer, when he came on board hired away from Memphis, the Barn Dance had already been instituted. It started as a bit of a fluke, filling in a time slot during the local farm show, then grew over time, and by 1926 was a regular feature. The National Barn Dance was a great help to a number of managers and musicians. Not only did George Hay get his start there and inspiration to start the Grand Ole Opry, but also John Lair, who later started and ran the Renfro Valley Barn Dance. Bradley Kincaid, the Coon Creek Girls, Patsy Montana, Lulu Belle and Scotty, and many others became stars through the WLS barn dance.

Most of the barn dances died out by the '40s and '50s, with few exceptions. However, the live theatre concept is still thriving with Dollywood, the Grand Ole Opry and the theatres in Branson and Myrtle Beach. In addition, the barn dance programs spawned a wealth of "hometown oprys": small, local venues in converted barns, stores, or barn-like buildings created specifically for showcasing local talent. Friday and Saturday nights are still filled with lots of little places for local musicians and audiences throughout the South.[5]

The fourth stage of development was professionalization; that is, having entertainers who made their living from radio and performances. The local acts started as a combination of semiprofessional musicians and local artists who wanted to try radio as a lark. As the first decade of broadcasting wore on, networks and sponsors emerged, and the novelty of appearing solely for the purpose of your friends and family hearing you quickly faded (Daniel, Pickin' 51). With network feeds and a growing list of available semiprofessional and professional musicians playing vernacular music, there was less need for the radio station to take whatever came along. With the proliferation of barn dances, opportunities for a regular slot in the schedule at a growing number of radio stations became available. Also, WSB, WSM, and others worked with musicians to find bookings and to advertise personal appearances. At WSB the Atlanta Journal helped artists find venues and later created artist bureaus and booking offices (Randle 111). The Grand Ole Opry created the Artist Service Bureau in 1933 which "helped book group tours of Opry Stars" (Wolfe, "Triumph" 50). In fact, most of the professionalization and

the creation of "stars" occurred in the 1930s, though the groundwork was clearly laid during the 1920s.

One of the most popular forms of vernacular music programming in the 1920s came from old-time fiddle players. This popularity stemmed from two related events: first, numerous fiddle contests were being held around the country, and second, automobile magnate Henry Ford took a great interest in old-time fiddlers, so he sponsored both contests and radio programs which helped spur an even greater interest for a few years in the mid-20s. Fiddlers' conventions had been held since the late 1700s, although the first ones were not necessarily contests, but gatherings of fiddlers. In 1903 there was an Old Fiddler's Convention in Alabama specifically for the purpose of gathering together old fiddlers. With the contests, the name was changed to old-time fiddling, and most of those contests began in the early 1920s. Fiddlers' conventions were often used as fundraisers for schools and civic organizations. Most of the time the fiddlers were given a cash prize, though sometimes they were given merchandise, which was often not popular with the contestants. Later in the 1920s contests for other instruments (banjo, guitar, harmonica, and vocals) were added, though the prizes for those competitions were always less than for the top fiddlers (Cauthen 164-76).

Henry Ford's influence on the vernacular music scene began around 1924. Sometime in the early 1920s, Ford met Benjamin Lovett, a dancing instructor, and that meeting set off a chain of events by Ford that continued in one form or another until 1945 (Daniel, "Mechanics" 24). Ford's influence started with promoting "traditional" dance

and developed to his sponsoring fiddle contests and then a radio program that continued until 1945 (Daniel, "Mechanics" 19-24).

Ford's main motivation for his music involvement was his dismay at what he perceived as the evil influences of jazz music, communism, and Jewish immigrants. He did not see his introduction of mass-produced automobiles as contributing to society's ills. Richard Peterson describes Ford's views:

> Henry Ford saw the modern city as a "pestiferous growth" and contrasted the "unnatural," "twisted," "and cooped up" lives of city people with the "wholesome" life of "independence" and "sterling honesty" that the agrarian life offered. Summing up the point, he editorialized in his Dearborn Independent newspaper: "The real United States lies outside the cities." As [Roderick] Nash puts it, "the nostalgic, backward-looking Henry Ford repeatedly deplored the very conditions that Ford the revolutionary industrialist did so much to bring about." (59-60).

Ford's nostalgia was similar to the attitude held by many of the folklorists. He was looking for a way to promote a sense of nationalism that he saw coming from dance and old-time music, much like the settlement school teachers saw in the ballads and pageants, and the academics saw in the Child ballads. All were attempts to at least slow change and promote the older culture as better. Ford's role in radio was really tangential, significant for a short period of time but right before a number of things peaked.

> Rather than see the auto and mass production as having any part in the changes, he saw the problems as stemming from alcohol, tobacco use, and sexual license—all three fostered in the atmosphere created by jazz dancing. . . . Ford saw the culprit in "foreigners," African Americans, recent immigrants, and particularly what Ford often termed the "international Jew." (Peterson 60)

Ford felt that by bringing back the schottische, minuet, Virginia Reel, and good, virtuous old-time fiddling, Americans might have their values brought back. Ford's innovations

were to start dance classes, first in the Northeast and Midwest, then in colleges and universities across the country, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Georgia in Athens (Daniel, "Mechanics" 20). His automobile played a role, too: "At the end of March [1926], the Johnson String Band drove two hundred miles in their Model T Ford to represent Marshall County on the radio, their travel expenses contributed by the businessmen of Guntersville and Albertville" (Cauthen 24). Ford created a fiddle band to travel around the country and named them the Ford's Fiddling Five, with an average age of seventy (Daniel, "Mechanics" 19).

Ford's radio show featured musicians in his Early American Orchestra with instruments that were popular at the time but would hardly be considered in an old-time ensemble today—fiddle, cymbalum, sousaphone, and hammered dulcimer. The hammered dulcimer was in its heyday in the United States between the Wars, only recently gaining support again in the folk revival with performers such as Malcolm Dalglish. The cymbalum, or cimbalom, was "a large concert dulcimer . . . with legs, an integral rectangular case and dampers operated by a pedal, but with greater range—four chromatic octaves" (Grove Dict. of Music 5: 706).[6] The main support Ford gave which had a tremendous, though short-lived, impact on Southern vernacular music and mediating its public perception was his sponsorship of old-time fiddlers and fiddle contests. On WLS Chicago, the vernacular music variety show changed its name from the Aladdin Playparty (after its sponsor, the Aladdin Kerosene Lamp Company) to The Old Fiddler's Hour in direct response to the popularity of Ford's contests, even before he began his own programs (Wolfe, "Triumph" 45). That name change occurred sometime

between the station's inception in 1924 and 1926. In 1926 the station changed the show's name to The National Barn Dance, which it kept for the rest of its duration.

At WSM in Nashville, Ford's influence was felt when Jimmy Thompson challenged Ford's current fiddling champion to a contest on the air. While that contest never occurred, the response from the audience was powerful enough for the station to institute a regular Saturday night program featuring old-time fiddlers such as Thompson plus other vernacular music performers. The regular Saturday night program began in December 1926, approximately eighteen months before Hay started the Grand Ole Opry. And while George Hay created the name and image for the show, it may well not have existed, certainly in the same form, had it not been for Ford's fiddle contests. While the fiddle contests and Ford's Fiddling Five were a popular form of entertainment, they did not create the resurgence in old-fashioned lifestyle and values that Ford meant to promote. According to Peterson, the contests did have a downside for Ford:

> Through his nationwide auto dealerships, he ran a series of local and state championships that culminated in a February 1926 national competition in which John (Uncle Bunt) Stevens of Lewisburg, Tennessee, won out over 1,875 other contestants. But to his consternation, Ford found that many of the old-time fiddlers were far from paragons of Elizabethan virtue and a number of the local and state winners were rather unsavory old characters . . . . A number of the winners used the prize as a basis for greatly increasing their performance fees . . . and several landed vaudeville contracts based on their newfound celebrity. Finally, the contests caused loud cries of fraud from many of the losers, cries that sometimes received local press coverage. (Peterson 61)

Peterson points out that the old-time fiddle craze did not result in record sales for even the most popular of fiddlers:

> While the Fords continued to have monthly old-time dances with guests dressing in formal attire for another fifteen years, the fiddle contest and

> old-time dance craze was over by 1927. The numerous old-time fiddlers who earned vaudeville show contracts at the height of the craze were off the hard boards in months, and none of the fiddlers who recorded exclusively old-time dance and fiddle contest tunes enjoyed huge record sales. (61-62)

They did, however, have a greater exposure, and the fiddle contests helped generate a larger audience for the radio broadcasts. Radio, in turn, helped keep the fiddle contests alive.

Radio stations acted as brokers for the record companies at times, while performers used connections as "recording artists" to obtain paying jobs at radio stations. Often there was no explicit link, though sometimes there was. Certainly people like Dan Hornsby, an announcer and writer for WSB, had a direct link with Columbia when hired by Frank Walker to write skits for the Skillet Lickers. Polk Brockman was aware of Fiddlin' John Carson, either from his fiddling on radio broadcasts in Atlanta, since Carson was on the air before he recorded for Victor, or from newspaper reports of his activities at fiddling conventions and other performances.

Once the musicians were either on the radio and then got a record contract or had a record contract and then got on the radio, they quickly learned to announce themselves or to get the radio announcer to announce them as a "Victor" (or Paramount or OKeh) "recording artist," giving them greater cachet with the audience. The hope was that the announcement would increase the record sales and crowds at live performances, especially in the early days when performers weren't making any money on radio. It did not take long for radio to start paying, especially with sponsorships for shows. The interest in vernacular music on the early radio stations has been presumed to be due to at

least three different factors: 1) genuine audience interest, both in rural areas and in cities; 2) better sound fidelity with fiddles, guitars, and other instruments used in old-time music; and 3) promotional strategies for this music used by Ford and adapted and enhanced by radio managers and announcers such as George Hay. All three factors contributed to the popularity of white vernacular music on the radio during this time. Since lacks were largely excluded from radio programming and performing, they unfortunately did not have a significant impact on early radio. For the musicians,

> [r]adio gave them a showcase .... Musicians would work an area within a radius of a hundred miles around their station, doing weeknight concerts in schoolhouses, lodge halls, and movie theaters. With luck, they would make two or three dollars a night and could put together a living wage. And in a larger sense, the music itself benefited: by working at their music full-time, these performers became technically more proficient and they were forced to find new and original material. (Wolfe, "Triumph" 51)

The folklorists, record companies, and radio stations would not have been able to mediate and present the vernacular music of the South without the talents provided by the musicians. The next chapter will look at the roles the musicians played and their responses to the different collectors.

Notes

[1] Covertly, as after 1922 it was illegal to play recordings on some radio stations at certain times of the day, see pp. 125-27. Many 78 labels of the day carried warnings "not licensed for broadcast" (Randle 68-9).

[2] Many stations used initials which stood for something, such as WLS, already mentioned. WSM, started by an insurance company, stood for "We Shield Millions." In WSAZ developed the parodic nickname "Worst Station A to Z" (Tribe, Mountaineer 77).

[3] In a related way, Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead told American Folklife Center director Peggy Bulger that they allowed live recordings of all of their shows, as long as it was not off the board, and the fans did not sell it. He said that resulted not only in greater sales of their releases, but it also created a fan-based, very detailed archive of all of their work (Bulger).

[4] Many black performers at this time were still playing stringband, or "hillbilly" music, frequently as fiddle-banjo duos. Unfortunately, it is a stereotyped image many still hold that stringband music is "white" and blues is "black." For more information on this aspect of the music, see Cecelia Conway, African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia.

[5] For more information on hometown oprys, see Amy Noël Davis, "When you coming back?: the local country-music opry community."

[6] There are two other instruments that are also called "cymbalum," a type of cymbals used in ancient Rome, and a medieval instrument consisting of a set of small bells hung on a frame and struck with a hammer. Neither were in popular use in the United States during Ford's heyday.

5. Vernacular Musicians' Reactions and Roles as Mediators and Brokers

The vernacular performers involved with the various collectors in the academic/publishing industry, the recording industry, and the radio stations have been presented thus far mostly from the point of view of being promoted. However, without the performers, the mediators could not have done their job. In some cases, the musicians brokered the music. We have already seen this in previous chapters with the examples of Jimmie Rodgers, Perry Bradford, Eck Robertson, Ernest Stoneman, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Bradley Kincaid, and Fiddlin' John Carson. They were active participants, already performers or music publishers with a local or regional audience, who were comfortable accepting, rejecting, or modifying the requirements of the product the collector sought. Some of the vernacular musicians were professional or semi-professional musicians, and all were clearly established in their communities for, if not, they would not have had their services brokered. In this chapter I look at the actions by vernacular musicians in their negotiations with collectors. Like everyone else we have seen so far, the musicians did not always act or perform from a sense of altruism. Most were trying to better themselves financially, though sometimes the vernacular musician did not always understand the rules for the best financial gain.

In "The Negotiation of Tradition," Lucy Long looks at the vernacular musician's response to collectors through her investigation of the dulcimer tradition in Beech Mountain (located in the northwestern corner of North Carolina, near the Tennessee and Virginia borders). Long sees the dulcimer makers and players as active participants in the collecting process, which she describes as a negotiation. Part of the negotiation

depended upon how the collector presented him or herself to the musician. This statement seems to be a truism, as we all respond to people depending on our first and later impressions of them. I reiterate her point here as this interaction is a crucial, yet frequently overlooked, aspect of the process.

All too often, there is no record of the responses of the musicians in the ballad singing tradition. For example, I. G. Greer, a teacher at Appalachian State University, was from that part of the mountains and collected songs for himself and for the North Carolina Folklore Society. Unfortunately, his collection leaves no clue as to the interviewees or any field notes reflecting the responses of the singers and musicians. That is the case for most of the early academic collectors since they were interested in the text and not the context or performance. The ballad singers, participating in a predominantly private performance context, probably saw little reason to promote themselves or give interviews.

One exception to this pattern is with Jane Hicks Gentry. Jane Gentry was part of the Hicks family in Watauga County, known for their ballads, dulcimers, and Jack Tales. Jane married and moved to Hot Springs in Madison County, North Carolina, a county also known for its ballad singers, such as Berzilla Wallin. While Gentry did contribute to Sharp's collection, she was already a seasoned informant by the time Sharp arrived. Irving Bacheller, a journalist for New York World and author of novels and short stories, met Gentry when he was in Hot Springs for a vacation in 1914. He wrote about her in The Tower of a Hundred Bells, and also paid for her to take a trip to New York to visit him and his wife (B. Smith 50-52). Sharp heard about Gentry through Frances Louisa

Goodrich, the founder of Allanstand Industries, which was part of the settlement school and missionary work that the Campbells were involved in. Olive Dame Campbell put Sharp in touch with Goodrich, who referred him to Gentry. Betty Smith reports:

> Jane told the Asheville Normal School students about Cecil Sharp's first visit. He must have taken her to be very shy for he suggested that if it would embarrass her to sing for him he might sit in one room while she sat in the other . . . She replied, "If you can stand to look at me, I can surely stand to look at you." (68)

Sharp ended up collecting thirty ballads and over seventy songs from Gentry. She also shared her music in Asheville with the Normal School students and at a meeting of the North Carolina Ballad Society. C. Alphonso Smith was present at the Society meeting and complimented her on her songs and style (B. Smith 73). Betty Smith commented on the collecting:

> It does seem clear that Mrs. Gentry freely gave the songs to Sharp and, indeed, enjoyed his company and that of Maud Karpeles. Berzilla Wallin of Sodom Laurel (Revere) remembered Sharp coming to her community. She said that after they found out that he did not want to buy land and that all he wanted was ballads, they got along fine. (72)

This is one of the rare accounts of ballad informants talking about the collectors.

In other cases, the reports are highly romanticized views of the people and lifestyle, still giving today's reader no accurate assessment of the response of the vernacular musician. For example, Josephine McGill's recalls her field collecting experiences:

> . . . the balladist of the family, the mother, came out to us. On learning our errand, she began to sing almost immediately. In the softly falling rain she leaned upon the fence and intoned in a high nasal voice "The Sorrowful Fate of Fair Margaret and Sweet William" . . . . About the mother who also exemplified one of the finer mountain types there was a delicacy, a

> touch of romance which linked her with the subjects of the old songs she sang. ("Following" 369)

While it is clear that the mother was willing to share her ballads, there is no follow-up and little sense of what the ballad singer was really like. McGill shares some information about the nasal tonal quality of the singing and the name of the ballad, but little else is revealed about her informant. Fortunately, occasional correspondence between collectors and musicians gives some insight. Mellinger Henry and his wife visited Nathan Hicks, a dulcimer maker and player, and the correspondence between the families still exists.

The Henrys visited the Hicks family in the Beech Mountain community in the early 1930s. Since they had many of the same academic connections as Greer, including having heard lectures by C. Alphonso Smith, Greer may have been the broker to make the connection for them. Following the collecting visit, the Hicks family kept in touch with the Henrys via letters, mostly from Mrs. Hicks, with some from Nathan. The Hicks family requested contacts to help them sell rugs, chairs, and other items, and Mrs. Hicks also asked that used clothes be sent for her and the nine children. Nathan Hicks worked on marketing his dulcimers, asking the Henrys for $7 per dulcimer, when the local asking price was $3. While there is no evidence the Henrys helped find buyers for anything but a few dulcimers, they did compensate the Henrys by paying them for sending ballads (one dollar per collection of ballads sent) and also sent clothes at Christmas for a couple of years. Long surmises that the Hickses saw the relationship with the Henrys as one in which the Henrys might become benefactors or at least open the network to a greater number of buyers for their goods. So, while some of the folklorists were trying to preserve a dying culture, their informants were seeking financial gain and general

betterment of their surroundings. Clearly, at least in this case and presumably others, the goal of the collector and the goal of the musician were not one and the same.

While there is little documentation of ballad singers, a number of early recording artists and radio personalities have been interviewed and had biographies written. One amalgam of ballad singer and radio personality is Bradley Kincaid, discussed earlier, who has been documented by Loyal Jones. Kincaid, through his early life in eastern Kentucky and his vocal training at Berea, combined a number of skills previously discussed. Biographies and interviews show some of their views of the collecting (e.g., B. Smith, L. Jones, Fahey). Unlike the ballad singers, who were sought out, many of the vernacular musicians performing old familiar tunes, gospel, and blues were more entrepreneurial in their approach. Time and time again there are stories of vernacular musicians who had been playing at house parties, schoolhouses, minstrel shows, fiddlers' conventions, tobacco warehouses, and numerous other venues. When they heard about recording opportunities, they often saved up and took a trip to New York or auditioned when the recording companies set up their temporary studios in Southern cities. Many A&R men gave little direction to the musicians once they were in the studio, giving them a lot of freedom within a given genre on what they performed. The speculation behind this freedom is that the A&R men and recording engineers did not understand the music, but they knew it would sell, so they accepted what they got and "hoped, on the basis of past sales on non-directed recordings, for more sales of records" (Fahey 13-14).[1] For both the blues and hillbilly musicians, their style of music is a public performance-based

vernacular music. Most musicians who set out to record and to perform on radio were already playing music for local, and in some cases, for regional audiences.

Ernest Stoneman, who recorded extensively in the 1920s and later incorporated most of his family in a band, is one example. Stoneman, from Galax, Virginia, was working in Bluefield, West Virginia, in the summer of 1924 when he passed a furniture store and heard a recording of Henry Whitter, "a man he had known from his cotton mill days in Fries," Virginia (Tribe, Stonemans 36). Stoneman's response was one of surprise, for, as Tribe writes,

> The market for such music must have been considerable indeed for, as Bill Malone wrote, "Whitter was a good harmonica player . . . a passable guitarist, but a mediocre singer at best." This latter characteristic led the generally modest Ernest Stoneman to declare to Hattie when he went home for the Fourth of July, "I know that I can outsing Henry Whitter any time—if I couldn't, I'd quit." Hattie replied, "Why don't you go and make one?" (Stonemans 37)

Stoneman followed up on his claim and wrote to Columbia and General Phonograph Corporation (OKeh). Columbia responded with an audition on September 1, and General told him to come whenever it was convenient. After going to both places, he turned down Columbia, which only offered $100 for eighteen to twenty songs, and accepted Ralph Peer's offer of fifty dollars for two songs, plus sixty dollars for train fare and hotel expenses (Tribe, Stonemans 38).

Henry Whitter, the inspiration for Ernest Stoneman's trek to New York, had gone on his own initiative to the city in 1923 and recorded the "Wreck of the Old Southern '97" and "Lonesome Road Blues" for General Phonograph Company. Whitter received twenty-five dollars a side, like Stoneman, and also received "considerable royalties" for

the first song (Cohen, "Early Pioneers" 14). By 1927 recording sessions in Southern cities were commonplace, making trips to New York less necessary. Old-time musicians Gwen Foster of Gastonia, North Carolina, and Doc Walsh of North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, (approximately 80 miles apart) traveled with a couple of other mill hands to audition for Peer in Atlanta that year. They recorded as the Carolina Tar Heels, and record sales were successful enough that they recorded later that year in Charlotte and the next year again in Atlanta (Coulter 9).

Charley Patton, with his downhome blues music, began recording in 1929. Patton was related, through his father, to blues musicians Sam Chatmon and Bo (Chatmon) Carter. He spent much of his youth at Dockery Plantation, which was a community that encouraged music. He left in his late teens to play music in roadhouses and anywhere else he could be paid to play. "He is reported to have played practically everywhere in the Yazoo basin and to have traveled with medicine shows. During many performances . . . Patton did tricks with his guitar, such as dancing around it, banging on it while he played, and playing it behind his head" (Fahey 26). Tommy and LeDell Johnson, Roebuck Staple, Chester Burnett (Howling Wolf), all claim to have learned their vocal styles from Patton, and Patton's influence can be heard on Johnson's recording of "Pony Blues" (D. Evans, Tommy 9). Willie Brown and Son House learned some guitar from him (Fahey 26).

Patton began recording via the brokering of H. C. Speir. "He sent Patton to the Gennett studies in Richmond, Indiana, where on 14 June Patton had his first session for the Paramount Company" (Fahey 25).[2] Patton recorded for Paramount until his last

session in 1934. Once Patton got to the Paramount studio, he was under the direction of Art Laibley. According to Fahey, Laibley gave almost no direction in the recording session; he just took what was offered.

The vernacular musicians gave a considerable amount back to their audiences, too. As was popular in the first part of the century, live shows usually involved some comedy, as seen with Patton's clowning and the showmanship of Grand Ole Opry star Uncle Dave Macon. These vernacular musicians were craftsmen in their respective genres of music. This comedy was imitated on the radio shows and through skits on recordings, such as Gid Tanner and The Skillet Lickers' "The Arkansas Traveler."

More importantly, as the impact has been longer lasting, these vernacular musicians contributed an enormous amount to the known repertoire of music. As we have already seen in the case of hillbilly music, the companies claimed they wanted traditional or original materials. Although they contributed an enormous amount, the musicians were often restricted by what the collectors wanted to hear. The ballad collectors, for the most part, only wanted ballads; the record companies were no better. Josephine McGill mentioned on one collecting trip that "after hearing a little 'pickin' on the banjo, the collector passed on to another goal where richer melodious booty was promised" ("Following Music" 369). Betty Smith concurs in writing about Jane Hicks Gentry:

> Singers of traditional songs sing what they want to sing. They may not be inclined to explain why they sing a song. They may sing a ballad, a hymn, a playparty song, in no particular order. Jane would not analyze the song or try to put it in a category . . . For collectors, singers often sing what they think the collector wants to hear. (75)

Titon gives a similar story for the blues musicians working with A&R men:

> downhome musicians, even in the days before commercial recordings, were playing whatever their audiences wanted to hear . . . . They did not record their whole repertoires, as a rule, because company officials did not want them to. As late as the early 1940s, when Brownie McGhee asked to record some hillbilly songs he regularly performed, he was told that it was not "[his] kind of music." In the 1920s black musicians rarely were recorded playing the hillbilly music they provided for white dances. Record companies wanted blues, for blues sold. If they needed hillbilly music, they might as well turn to hillbillies. Most older black musicians were nonetheless proud of their ability to entertain whites and stressed that their repertoires were complete enough to do so. Many had toured with small medicine or minstrel shows, where they picked up humorous songs they were able to use later. . . . A few singers, such as Charley Patton, managed to record a wide repertoire; many others gave some recorded indication of their ability as songsters. (51-52)

The same is true for musicians today. The repertoire is chosen based on the aesthetics and preferences of the music, but typically not based on the source of the music. However, musicians, vernacular and otherwise, do select the repertoire based on what they feel the audience will respond to in a positive way. Whether for money or for the joy of sharing the music, pleasing the audience is usually a goal of the performer.

One of the pressures placed on musicians who wanted to stay in the recording business was to find new materials. In the hillbilly music, A. P. Carter, the patriarch of the Carter Family who recorded at the famous 1927 Bristol Sessions for Ralph Peer, and the family became significant recording artists for Victor, complied with the demand for more material by going out and collecting songs from both black and white musicians and then copyrighted them under his name. Recently, I mentioned A. P. Carter as a collector to a bluegrass/country musician in the southwest Virginia region, and he replied, "Song stealer, you mean," indicating that Carter's actions are still remembered locally

with strong disapproval. With the popularity and "stardom" of the Carter family following their 1927 Bristol recording session with Ralph Peer and the subsequent Victor releases, A. P. Carter set out to find new songs to add to the group's repertoire. Carter (likely guided by Peer's mastery of copyrighting material), collected and arranged music, then claimed it as his own even though many songs and tunes were obtained from family, friends, and acquaintances. One of the musicians who helped Carter in building his repertoire and added to his instrumental style was an African American guitarist named Lesley Riddle. Carter invited Riddle back to play and record with them after hearing him at the home of John Henry Lyons in Kingsport, Tennessee, a mutual friend (O'Connell 5). Riddle provided a crossover in the black traditional music of both the string band and blues styles. He also had a better ear for remembering tunes than Carter and helped teach the tune to the others when they returned from collecting trips. Riddle explained the system to Mike Seeger:

> About every week, or every other week, [A. P.] would come over and get me. I stayed over at his house once for two weeks. He was learning, but I didn't know it. They was learning. They'd have me play a song you know, and they'd listen to it. And then when I wasn't around they'd practice on it, then when everybody'd turn their head, they'd go and make a record. . . . I know then if a record company knew they were getting songs from me, I'd probably get some kind of bonus or something out of it. But I didn't get nary a penny out of it. (O'Connell 9)

According to Nolan Porterfield, A. P. Carter was a walking contradiction ("Hey" 23). He was the main collector and arranger of materials, but he was very moody. Sarah and Maybelle provided strength to the group with their singing and instrumental abilities, and without them, it is doubtful A. P. would have gone as far as he did with the music (nor would the others—clearly a symbiotic relationship, although Sarah and Maybelle did

have successful careers without A. P. later). As a collector, A. P. made it possible for the family to be prolific with its recordings, and through his copyright, provide family members with better income. However, he could have both collected the songs and given credit to the source. When Bradley Kincaid sought out new songs, he gave credit to the sources in his songbooks, and his reputation remained positive.

Ernest Stoneman had a vast repertoire and was adept at learning new songs quickly. At a recording session in 1925 set in Asheville, North Carolina, he recorded "The Wreck on the C&O."

> Ernest reported that he had learned this song from a newly released scholarly folksong collection. After years of research, West Virginia University English Professor John Harrington Cox had just had his book Folk-Songs of the South published. A Stoneman fan from Louisville, Kentucky had sent him a copy of the newly released work, along with some large yellow tomatoes. (Tribe, Stonemans 44)

The feedback loop, though indirect, connecting the folklorists, the vernacular musicians, and the recording industry had clearly come into play by 1925. Stoneman also learned from new recordings, and frequently would rerecord a new song by Carson Robison or Uncle Dave Macon, a tune by Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers, or any other source that he felt would be popular.

In addition to contributing repertoire, vernacular musicians helped out the mediators, that is, the folklorists, artist and repertoire men, and radio station managers, through acting as brokers in identifying other musicians. In the settlement schools, the schoolchildren and teachers shared with collectors both the ballads they knew and the people who taught the ballads to them. In a number of the settlement schools, Hindman, Pine Mountain, Berea, and others, teachers actively encouraged students to sing the songs

they had learned and then taught those songs to the other students, creating an instant feedback loop. Their encouragement and then sharing with the collectors, such as McGill, Sharp, and others who came to the mountains, made those jobs easier. Ernest Stoneman was asked to provide musicians for Peer at the 1927 Bristol Sessions. Peer visited the Stonemans in Galax that July. Tribe writes:

> Although not quite six at the time, Grace Stoneman remembered that when Ralph Peer came to visit, he brought his secretary-wife with him. She especially recalled that "Dad and everyone would get real excited and busy when he was coming." Ernest rented a room in a Galax hotel and they listened to several mountain performers. However, Peer chose only two to go to Bristol: Iver Edwards and Alex Dunford. (Stonemans 57)

After Galax, Jimmie Rodgers became the "star performer" for Victor, and Stoneman shopped around other studios for his songs. At first, Peer had no objection, but soon Stoneman had to record under pseudonyms in order to honor his contract with Peer and Victor (Tribe, Stonemans 67).

For African Americans, blues musicians shared their resources as well. Ma Rainey, cited as the earliest professional blues singer, was already working with the Rabbit Foot Minstrels touring the country when joined by a young Bessie Smith in 1912. Rainey is credited with teaching Smith and helping develop her performance skills before either went into the studio. Charley Patton worked with Speir to find additional musicians for blues recordings. He introduced Speir to Son House and Willie Brown, plus sat in on recordings of some musicians he helped out:

> In May 1930 he went to Grafton with House, Willie Brown, Louise Johnson . . . and Wheeler Ford of the famous "Delta Big Four" gospel quartet. . . . According to Son House, Paramount used two microphones, one for voice and one for instrument. Skip James said the same thing except that when he played the piano, the recording engineer also put a

> microphone on his feet. The artists were well "lickered up" before recordings were made. (Fahey 25)

The practice was common for musicians to refer other musicians for jobs in recording, though not universal. For example, A. P. Carter does not seem to have been a broker for other musicians.

Musicians also acted as brokers in finding musicians for radio programs. Dr. Humphrey Bate was responsible for DeFord Bailey coming on WSM radio.

> Bate . . . played on both WDAD and WSM, and one night he and his daughter, Alcyone, met DeFord as they left WDAD to walk up the hill to WSM to perform. Dr. Bate persuaded DeFord to go with them. DeFord was hesitant. "I was ashamed with my little cheap harp and them with all those fine, expensive guitars, fiddles and banjos up there, but I went anyway." When they arrived, Dr. Bate persuaded Hay to let DeFord perform on the air without an audition and reportedly said, "Judge, I will stake my reputation on the ability of this boy." (Wolfe, Good 121)

Hay was so impressed with the performance that he hired Bailey as a regular on the show.

Bradley Kincaid both shared his collected repertoire through publication of songbooks and helped some of the musicians he collected from. Scotty Wiseman, in the next generation of radio stars, gave Kincaid a number of songs for his folio, and Kincaid, in turn, gave Wiseman credit for the songs and recommended him for a slot on the WLS radio National Barn Dance program. Scotty Wiseman met Kincaid through Wiseman's brother, who was a student and Kincaid's roommate at Berea. Wiseman, from Avery County in the North Carolina mountains, knew songs from home and learned many of them from a newspaper column of songs collected by Bascom Lamar Lunsford. After Wiseman heard Kincaid sing, he was convinced he wanted to be on the radio, too, and

worked at a station in West Virginia prior to his work at WLS. At WLS he met Mrytle Cooper, better known as Lulu Belle, and their romance and marriage made them one of the most popular couples on radio in the years from 1932 to 1957. At least one song Kincaid collected from Wiseman was recorded by both, and the arrangements are almost identical (Lightfoot 6). Kincaid also helped starting musicians, such as Grandpa Jones, to become more familiar with live shows and learn how to entertain in addition to the musical skills.

Bradley Kincaid is mostly remembered as a radio star, arguably with his greatest appeal when he was working at WLS in Chicago. His background is that of a young man growing up on a farm near Berea, Kentucky, and grateful for the opportunity to finish high school and then go on to college. Though he became a big "hillbilly" star, he at first wished to disown his rural heritage. He had been taking voice lessons and first appeared at WLS as part of a church quartet. He wanted to emphasize the elite sound though, in fact, it was the smoothness of his voice (like Vernon Dalhart) that made him acceptable to such a wide audience. That combined with his personality helped his popularity on WLS, even though he began as a reluctant transmitter of his knowledge.

After Kincaid found he could make a living as a radio star, he became savvier about sharing his music. According to Kincaid's biographer, Loyal Jones, he became convinced after being shown over 300 letters of support that were sent to the station shortly after one of his first appearances (L. Jones, Kentucky 20). He tried to keep a Kentucky image, often dressing in jodhpurs and riding boots, and involved his family. In later years, following the trend started in Hollywood, he sported Western gear. Kincaid

never fit the "hillbilly" image; he always dressed in nice clothes, even when in a costume. Kincaid would share stories about his wife and children on the air, and when he started producing song folios, a family portrait frequently adorned the cover.

Following the success of his radio performances and songbooks, Kincaid actively sought more material. He also appears to have been one of the first performers to use a strategy of moving on to a new station to avoid saturating a market. Whether he thought of this strategy himself or was advised by Edgar Bill and George Biggar is unknown. He did command a larger following by moving around to different stations, but in retrospect, it may have been unwise, as he never achieved the same level of success and popularity as he had at WLS. He also promoted himself through recordings, though these were never big sellers either. His popularity came through the radio and the song folios.

The goal of many of the musicians was to move away from mill or factory work, mining, or farming and be able to play music full-time. Some, such as DeFord Bailey, succeeded, though his pay was cut in half when the Depression came along. Ernest Stoneman lived well enough during the 1920s to buy a house and land and hire domestic help, but in the 1930s had it all repossessed and lived in slum housing in the Washington, D.C., area. Charlie Poole was able to make his living for a while as a musician, but opportunities lessened in the late 1920s. Through his early recording sessions and early affluence, Poole became an alcoholic. When it looked like his circumstances were going to change for the better by getting a contract to perform in a movie in Hollywood, he went out to celebrate and died not long after of a heart attack (Rorrer 54-55). Della

Coulter describes musicians' jobs in the North Carolina piedmont, but that situation was applicable for blues and hillbilly musicians throughout the South:

> The opportunities for steady pay through radio and recording were few, if any, from the late 1920s to the early 1930s. Artists' recording fees were often only one-time payments; the concept of royalty payments was understood but much abused, invariably to the artists' disadvantage . . . Earning a living from music was a risky business, particularly in the years of the Depression. Many of the earliest piedmont musicians to gain wider commercial exposure left their jobs at the mills and factories only sporadically to perform on local radio stations or record for a national company.
>
> Those young enough or eager enough to set out on musical careers knew well the risks involved in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Before fiddler J. E. Mainer left his doffing job at Cannon Mill Plant Number Six in Concord for a twice-daily program on WBT in 1934, he checked with the superintendent of the mill to be sure his job would still be waiting for him if he didn't make a go of it as an entertainer. (9)

Most of the musicians performed for free or for one-time payments and kept a steady job—a situation which is still true today.

The vernacular musicians who had their music collected and placed in books, distributed on records, or transmitted over the airwaves were fairly prescribed in what they could perform for each collector. The collectors only looked for part of the repertoire in order to preserve or sell it. What is interesting here is that the collectors created their own definitions of authenticity: if the collector went to Harvard, then the ballad, if authorized by Child, was authentic; if working for a record company, blues were authentic if the performers were black and hillbilly music, if they were white, but not if black. The source of the music was not important to the vernacular musician, but it was very important to the collector. Musicians, wanting to please their audience, accepted the filters the mediators and brokers placed on them for each situation. If

ballads were asked for, they sang ballads. If the mediator wanted old favorites or dance tunes, then they played old favorites and dance tunes. Some of the performers were adaptable enough to quickly learn or compose new songs when the demand for the new materials grew.

The musicians assisted some in finding other musicians for collectors, thereby acting as brokers. While it is clear that musicians used their networks to recommend other musicians, there is no evidence I have found that they were paid finder's fees. Musicians' repertoires benefited from the books, folios, recordings, and radio programs. Though they didn't always benefit financially and certainly were often exploited, they did benefit from new "rich sources of tunes and as means to a wider audience" (Cauthen 31). The focus here has been on the better-known musicians, for they have been documented. It should be remembered, though, that not all musicians were at the same level of proficiency or had the same interest in marketing. Neil V. Rosenberg in "Big Fish, Small Pond" created an excellent model of these differences. Rosenberg notes that musicians can be classified in status as amateurs, journeymen, craftsmen, and celebrities, and that each of these levels also occurs within different markets—the local, regional, national, and international markets. As musicians rise in market level, they usually drop one level in status (155-60). Jane Gentry was known and loved as a celebrity ballad singer in Hot Springs, but never sought a regional or national market. Ernest Stoneman saw his market share move from a local to a national level and then fade again as the economy weakened. Many local musicians were involved in single projects, and some, at least temporarily, raised their market status and options for performance venues through the

collecting process, winning a fiddler's contest, recording for Columbia, etc. What should be evident, though, is that the musicians were not static or passive bystanders in this process. In many cases they worked closely with the collector both to better themselves and to help fellow musicians. They played an active role. In some cases, certainly, there was exploitation of the artist; more often, it was of mutual benefit.

Notes

[1] Fahey also asserts that almost anyone could walk into Paramount, Vocalion, or Victor and record whatever they wanted. I seriously question that assertion based on the Walker interview where he talked about the audition process and stated that if he took everyone who came in, he would still be recording in a temporary location for years.

[2] Paramount frequently used Gennett Studios.

6. Conclusion and Recent Developments

In one sense this is an historical overview of the mediation of vernacular music that occurred in the first third of the twentieth century. However, what happened then is not merely history. The same trends and choices are occurring today, but the types of music and the names of the mediators have changed. In this study I have shown how folklorists, artist and repertoire men, radio station managers and announcers, and musicians selectively collected and disseminated the vernacular music of the South. In other words, they acted as mediators during the first third of the twentieth century. This mediation was effected through media of print, sound recordings, and radio waves and established the criteria for what is now Americana music or Roots music in the United States (predominately based on country and blues). The mediators moved the consciousness of the vernacular music audience away from just thinking of the music and the lyrics, and toward thinking about vernacular music in terms of the people. Rather than the former focus on lyrics, the recording companies and radio station announcers focused their attention on the names of the vernacular music performers beginning in the 1920s. Thus name recognition began to be important. In the 1930s and 40s this name recognition emerged into a star system, as mentioned in Chapter 4 (see p. 137). People remember stars. Stars include star collectors, such as Alan Lomax, and prolific recording artists, including the Carter family, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson. Some early ballad singers and radio stars did not have lasting legacies (except to true scholars and

fans), such as Florence McKinney, Fiddlin' John Carson, and Bradley Kincaid. Thus, the foundation for the star system was created in the late 1920s.

Another creation that came about from the collectors, related to their notions of authenticity, was a greater differentiation of musical genres, one clearly delineated along racial lines. The mediators of the vernacular music did not initiate the division in ethnicity, class, and music, but it was a reflection of the cultural and social structure already in place. This system of placing music by black musicians in the race section and by rural whites in the hillbilly section fit in nicely with Jim Crow politics. Although in real life, African American and white musicians swapped repertoires, the marketing of the music was segregated in the academic/publishing industry, the recording industry, and the radio business. The record companies at first avoided black performers for fear of a boycott by white buyers, and then, after finding they had a new market without sales repercussions, kept the markets distinct through separate numbering systems and separate sections where the records were sold. The radio stations managed to keep the markets segregated, with very few exceptions, by excluding African Americans from the radio. The academic/publishing industry focused on the African American repertoire as primitive, and the Anglo American ballad tradition as historic and admirable. Fortunately, many of these distinctions have now been eliminated, although most old-time and bluegrass music is still performed by whites. There is greater crossover in blues music.

While it is nice to think about music in terms of aesthetics, economics is an integral part of the equation. The academic/publishing network tried, with varying

success, to gain funding for its collecting ventures and to find publishers for its works, either by academic presses, presumably for prestige and tenure/promotion decisions, or by popular presses and record companies to help increase income. The record companies, as I have shown earlier in the comments of the A&R men, were collecting to capture a new source of income, a new market share.

During the 1920s vernacular music did not become the largest segment of the recording industry or of the radio programming format. However, it was a significant enough segment to promote and expand the efforts to mediate both race and hillbilly music and to give the musicians a greater number of venues for their performances and promotion. The musicians wanted an economic benefit for sharing their talent. Whether wanting to expand their ability to market rugs and dulcimers, collect $50 per side on a record, or increase exposure on radio, they sought better opportunities. With opportunities, vernacular musicians became better-informed participants in the music business.

Interestingly, songwriters are virtually invisible. Except for the serious scholar, the names of Andy Jenkins and Carson Robison do not come tripping off the tongue, yet their music was heard consistently. In some cases, the repertoire has been significantly affected. For example, some of the songs written by Rev. Andrew Jenkins for the record companies and radio were later collected by folklorists and listed as "traditional." The songbooks, records, and radio programs helped to canonize the accepted repertoire. Part of the invisibility of songwriters in vernacular music was due to the constraints of joining a performing rights organization. During the 1920s, the organization to join was ASCAP,

but ASCAP did not recognize songwriters who were not part of the popular music songwriters situated on Tin Pan Alley in New York. Thus, songs of the Reverend Andrew Jenkins and the creations of Carson Robison remained invisible. It was not until the 1940s and the creation of BMI that other options became available (see Smulyan). During the nineteenth century, there was less concern with the musician, or even with the categorization of music. Although talking about Kentucky, Charles Wolfe's insights are equally applicable across the country and across time and appropriate to the period under study here:

> Nobody in nineteenth century Kentucky ever referred to "Pearl Bryan" as a folk song, as a country song, or even as a popular song. It was, in truth, a little of all three, but in the 1800s was much less a victim of categories and genres than it is today. Certainly there were "old" songs and "new" songs, but if people liked the sentiment or the melody of a song they didn't worry too much about its source. (Kentucky 4)

Wolfe gives a reminder of the blending of musical styles and repertoires. This blending is the reason the term "vernacular" has been used as the descriptor for the music investigated.

By the early 1930s the technological changes and societal changes in the United States were tremendous and had made their mark on the national cultural scene. But slowing the "progress" was the Great Depression of the 1930s, beginning of course with the stock market crash of 1929. For vernacular music in the South, the changes from the twenties were already in place and a lasting impression of Southern music was already in the minds of the people—both the rural people who were the first audiences and who helped to give it the acceptance and popularity, and the broader acceptance that began in the thirties. Kodish summed up this acceptance in her discussion of R. W. Gordon:

> Although the world of the schools and universities was and still largely is distinct from the real world, the academic collectors did have an impact on the culture via their collecting and their interactions with the commercial world. In the twenties amateur collectors, Library of Congress administrators, Victor Record Company executives, pulp magazine editors, and many readers of an "Old Songs" column had reason to collaborate with Gordon. They had practices and values in common: all wanted to gather, preserve, and protect songs and memories. The methods they used differed: some gathered song in scrapbooks, shoeboxes, and letters; others, on cylinders and discs; still others, in collections and archives. Enthusiasts all, they believed in slightly different points of origin for the songs they found admirable or useful. (Good 231)

The main objectives of the collectors/mediators were to preserve the culture through the publication of books and articles and releasing sound recordings. For the collectors of Anglo vernacular music, one motivation was linking present to past and trying to preserve the past. For the collectors of African American music, there was more frequently a sense of paternalism and/or racism involved. In addition, although the collectors were not subject to the "publish or perish" pressure felt in academia today, the publications did help to promote their careers. Their main objectives were to preserve the forms of white culture or show the differences in black culture through the publication of books and articles. Most of the academic collectors had a love for their subject and a sense of preservation, often based on a naïve or patriotic notion about the cultures being preserved.

The academic scholars of vernacular music publishing after 1930 were clearly influenced by the musical ferment of the earlier period. Some of their collections inadvertently included songs written by vernacular recording and radio musicians. Greenway noted a number of Southern folksong collections containing songs written and recorded by Jimmie Rodgers. No one considered Rodgers a "folksinger," indeed few

were aware of him, yet his compositions appears in collections of Brown, Henry, Leach and Beck, Hudson, and Randolph (Greenway 231). As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, Alan Lomax also collected original tunes thinking they were traditional. Since the 1940s, Lomax and others have been creating lists of the most influential or important vernacular recordings and reissuing them, including Lomax's Smoky Mountain Ballads and the iconoclastic Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music, first released in 1952 based on Alan Lomax's 1940 list of recordings and reissued in 1997. Lists and recordings of the "best of" or "most important" mediate and canonize the music.

In the case of the record men, they were acting in the best interest of the company, though some also had a sense of aesthetics for the music. Many, clearly Ralph Peer, didn't care so much for the music but rather believed they knew what would sell or had trustworthy brokers. Consistent reports from musicians reveal most A&R men did not see the musicians as people to be respected. There are a few exceptions, such as Art Satherly and H. C. Speir, who appear to have respected and been respected by the artists. Many A&R men held the unfortunate attitude that paying a pittance to a hillbilly or blues musician was doing that musician a great favor. Many musicians accepted the money as a straight sum gratefully at the time, but later found out about the profits generated by sales and publishing rights, which fostered deep bitterness.

Nonetheless, this process created a lasting link between vernacular music and popular music that is sustained to this day. For example, pop artist Moby took some of the field recordings of Alan Lomax, and used them to create modern versions which now help sell ads on network television. And songwriters such as Gillian Welch and Carol

Elizabeth Jones are writing songs that pay tribute, at least in style, to the "hillbilly" music of the twenties and thirties. Gillian Welch grew up in Los Angeles and was influenced by the folk revival. She creates songs in a style of the music of the 1930s and dresses in outfits that look like they come from the 30s or 40s. She is now based in Nashville, writing and recording with David Rawlings and recently performed in and helped produce the soundtrack for O Brother, Where Art Thou, a retelling of Homer's Odyssey set in the South. The film and soundtrack have helped revitalize the alternative country movement, of which Welch is a part. Alternative country, sometimes called Americana, No Depression music, or alt.country, is an eclectic blend of music that is an alternative to the slick commercial country music, the "big-beat positive-pop of Shania Twain and Tim McGraw" (Ahrens C3). The move back to a sound from the Southern vernacular music of the twenties and thirties is part of that trend. In their website-based paper, Peterson and Beal note that alt.country is "down home, unblinking, heart-felt and a personal authentic expression" and its artists are "self-reflective and consciously link themselves to tradition." Thus, Welch's vision of what the music should sound like is clearly influenced by the mediation of the early collectors.

Carol Elizabeth Jones also writes songs to sound as though they belong to an earlier era; her way of paying tribute to hillbilly music. Her father, Loyal Jones, was a strong influence at Berea College and the author of the studies on Bascom Lamar Lunsford and Bradley Kincaid. Jones is not the only child of a member of the academic/publishing industry. Mike Seeger, son of musicologist Charles Seeger, "whose academic work brought the sounds of Library of Congress field recordings into the

family household," also drew from the earlier materials (Feintuch, "Musical" 187). Seeger was one of the founding members of the highly successful New Lost City Ramblers, who drew their repertoire from the music of 1925 to 1935, but then went on to imitate those styles and present them as authentically as possible. Influenced by the Smith Anthology, the Ramblers listened to a lot of early 78s, and they also went out and found many of the earlier musicians and collectors and interviewed them to give a greater feeling of authenticity to their music (Gura 28-32). The New Lost City Ramblers were responsible for helping to revive an interest in old-time music as imitators (see Stekert), and a number of young musicians became interested in that music and imitated them in turn. Seeger's interview with Frank Walker gave much of the crucial information about early days of recording for Columbia.

It was rare that any lasting contact was created between the collector and the musician. In the case of the Henrys and the Hickses there was continuity but even that was relatively short-lived—only a few years, during which time there was still an exchange of ballads or dulcimers for cash or clothing or both. Collectors such as Bascom Lamar Lunsford did intensive work, and one could argue that Frank Walker's recordings of Bessie Smith or the Skillet Lickers were intensive, as was Peer's working relationship with Ernest Stoneman and the Carter Family. Most of the collecting was extensive, though, collecting a broad spectrum and spreading it to a great number of people.

When radio came along, it both threatened and helped the recording industry. The radio was the most democratic medium providing the greatest representation of music found in any given area until the time the market niches and then

professionalization occurred. The performers weren't paid at first, but it seems almost everyone was given a fair opportunity and the listening audience drove the market. When the radio managers became more experienced and creative and started dictating the shows, either based on their own vision or that provided by the commercial sponsors, opportunities for inexperienced vernacular musicians became limited. However, those that remained enabled the enterprising few to make livings as performers. While radio station managers and owners certainly wanted to make money, the greed factor is not as apparent in their written history.

Radio continues to play an important role in the creation and dissemination of Southern vernacular music. While the Grand Ole Opry is nominally the only "Barn Dance" program of the originals left, even the images Hay created have mostly disappeared. The vestiges remain in "hometown oprys"—small local venues on Friday and Saturday nights—and radio programs with similar formats (see Davis). Modern spin-offs such as "Mountain Stage" on Public Radio International (PRI) networks or the live Saturday morning "Merry Go Round" program, featuring local bands on Mt. Airy's am station WPAQ, keep the image going. There is also the enormously popular contemporary variety show modeled on the barn dance programs, "Prairie Home Companion," named after the Prairie Home cemetery in Moorhead, Minnesota, set in the fictitious Minnesota town of Lake Wobegon and broadcast nationally on National Public Radio. Commentator Garrison Keillor, who started the show in 1974, stated, "I'd been to Nashville and seen the Opry and thought I'd like to start one like it" (xi). Keillor invented Lake Wobegon, a small Lutheran community, and made up stories of the

exploits of the people who live there. Complementing the routines are commercials for imaginary products. Revival musicians, such as Jon and Marcia Pankake and Robin and Linda Williams, and special guests provide musical grounding. Keillor writes:

> Folk music was the ground that "a Prairie Home Companion" sprang from, the music that was in the air around the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1960 . . . Almeda Riddle, Dock Boggs, Mahalia Jackson, Pete Seeger, Mississippi John Hurt . . . . Folk Music was the real thing. It was the true spirit of America, an invisible circle that united everyone in the country. It was generous, democratic, contemplative, moral, mysterious, not exploitive, and ambitious. (xi-xii)

Keillor plays on nationalistic and romantic notions, yet also gently pokes fun at them with his fictitious town. Crossing the scholar/popular continuum are shows such as Nick Spitzer's "American Routes," which frequently highlights the music of the early South. Spitzer, one of the leaders in public folklore, worked at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife and ran the Louisiana Folk Festival for a number of years. His radio shows, broadcast over PRI, focus on one artist or one theme. In addition to the music, Spitzer educates his audience about the music, its roots, and its current place in the American music scene.

The musicians of the turn of the twentieth century to the thirties wanted to share their music and find a better and easier way to make a living. This is evident at all levels from the Hickses selling dulcimers, chairs, and quilts; to Charley Patton booking friends and playing at parties for blacks and whites; to Ernest Stoneman's trek to New York City to record; to Bradley Kincaid selling songbooks; to A. P. Carter "stealing" songs and copyrighting them in his own name.

The hillbilly-western image, largely created by George Hay, took over and has persisted to this day, although the western image came to the fore after World War II. The western image mostly took the place of the hillbilly, at least during the heyday of Hollywood westerns that fostered that image, because it epitomized strength and independence, instead of backwoods ignorance. According to Malone:

> The first anticipation of the powerful role that the cowboy mystique would play in country music came during the career of Jimmie Rodgers, the Mississippi railroad brakeman who became country music's first star, recorded a diverse repertory of songs that included at least seven cowboy numbers. Prior to the date of his first Victor recordings in August 1927, Rodgers had spent much time in the Appalachian spa of Asheville, North Carolina, where he sought relief from the tuberculosis that ravaged most of his adult life. But if Rodgers absorbed any of the mountain mystique that had so captivated Cecil Sharp and others, one finds no evidence in his music nor in his stage persona. Like most of the country performers who came after him, Rodgers turned his gaze westward, and was drawn irresistibly toward the image of the man on horseback. . . . In Rodgers's mind and songs, the cowboy may have meshed easily with the rambler, a figure traditionally venerated by the folk because of his bold assertion of freedom. But to a degree much stronger than the rootless rambler, the cowboy, unrestrained by the confining regimens of city life, but bound by a code of proper behavior and loyalty to friends, symbolized freedom and independence. The mountaineer had once been identified with such qualities, but by the end of the 1920s comic depictions of hillbillies or accounts of snake handling and other forms of eccentric behavior tarnished much of the romance associated with the mountains. (Singing 89-90)

Still, some country music thrives on the modern hillbilly image, i.e. the redneck, replete with pickup trucks, bandanas, and tight blue jeans, accounting for the popularity of songs such as "The Watermelon Crawl" and "The Cheap Seats." Nowadays, instead of the station manager creating and defining the personae, the roles in music have been subdivided, and "image consultants" are hired to do exactly the type of thing that George Hay created back in the late twenties. All of the image making came about from the

move from a focus on the music to a focus on the musician and helps perpetuate the process.

Furthermore, the thirties brought about a change in emphasis by the record companies to the non-commercial side of vernacular music or a shift in targeted audience. Although there was robust activity in collecting in the teens and twenties, in the thirties it became chic to listen to gentrified country. As early as 1928 the Brunswick catalog had an article that bragged that the "Original American Folk Songs" were being collected and housed at Harvard University (A. Green, "Commercial 41" 75). By the late 1930s Victor, using the same southern vernacular musicians that recorded on the discount Bluebird label, issued the music under their "P" series. As Archie Green notes, "Victor skillfully packaged discs . . . for a very different group of consumers—non-Bluebird fans who might be readers of the New York Times, New Deal liberals, or patrons of high art" ("Commercial 21" 77). Many of the Victor and other ads showed the well-heeled crowd listening to and appreciating the "old familiar tunes." Part of this same trend was evident in the collecting of John and Alan Lomax: they brought Leadbelly back to New York City but controlled his performance schedule, wanting him to perform to educated white audiences. A problem came about when Leadbelly wanted to sing in clubs and for other blacks. He was treated more as an object than as a person (see Filene, Romancing 47-75). Another aspect was creating pageantry out of folk songs. One exemplar of this was Jean Thomas, and the National Folk Festival, trying to have "medieval pageants" as a way of promoting folk song. Annabel Morris Buchanan did a similar thing with the White Top festival in Virginia, backed by women's clubs (see Wolz).

Another example of the mediation of Southern vernacular music in the thirties came with government involvement in the collecting, preservation, and dissemination of music through the WPA, which collected all kinds of songs, even from hobo informants, the federal theatre project with the Halpert and Hurston collections, and many others. Halpert followed in the trail of Mellinger Henry and Dorothy Scarborough. Halpert worked with Herzog in New York City and from there went on in the 1930s to become the supervisor of the National Service Bureau's Folksong and Folklore Department under the Federal Theatre Project, Works Progress Administration. For his fieldwork, Halpert drew on the works of B. A. Botkin, Mellinger Henry collections published in 1934 and '38 on his work in Tennessee and North Carolina, R. W. Gordon's articles and connections in South Carolina, George Pullen Jackson's work in Alabama, Arthur Palmer Hudson in Mississippi, and Zora Neale Hurston in Florida ("Coming" 447-52). The WPA provided wonderful collecting opportunities that drew directly on the earlier works and were largely mediated by them.

> The southern people did not "forget to remember" the music, comedy, and dance that flowed from these varied forums of popular entertainment. Simultaneously "folk" and "popular," the musical heritage bequeathed by this tradition constituted one of the great bedrocks of the early country music business. Remembered and revered, this music continues to enrich the repertories of many of the musicians in our own time. (Malone, Singing 66-68)

The complex relationships and feedback loops examined in this broad history are those which created patterns still in evidence today in vernacular music and popular music in the South. It was through these early mediators and brokers that we came to listen to and appreciate as much Southern vernacular music as we do. It is also inevitable

that the choices they made have affected the music that has faded from our landscape. This study has shown how those changes occurred and complements works covering later periods, such as Peterson's Creating Country Music and Filene's Romancing the Folk. Peterson focusing on country music from a sociological perspective and Filene viewing the folk music revival through the lens of American Studies, both bring a later perspective to the marketing of musicians and look at later mediators and trends in Southern vernacular music history.

Today, many of the patterns within the academic/publishing industry are still evident, although performance and context have been foregrounded. In other words, the folklorists are now paying attention to the stars. Technological innovations are accepted by folklorists instead of rejected, with frequent use of the newest in digital technology to assist with fieldwork and later processing and dissemination of the information. Issues of fair compensation for musicians as well as record companies and the role of the performing rights organizations are currently at the forefront of the music industry news, with technological innovations such as MP3 files.

While aesthetics of the collectors and musicians certainly played a role in the process, the musicians, brokers, and mediators all set aside personal preferences of what they felt was beautiful, meaningful, or pleasing at times in order to document that which was academically significant, such as the Child ballads; regionally appropriate, such as the work at the settlement schools; or commercially viable, in the case of the radio stations and the record companies. The Southern vernacular music that was collected in the 1920s during a time of technological innovations created what is now seen as

American roots music. Moreover, the perceived economic and nationalistic factors that influenced the musical choices during this period were sustained and continue in the choices of music we hear today.

Notes

[1] McKinney was one of Sharp's informants from Georgia.

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