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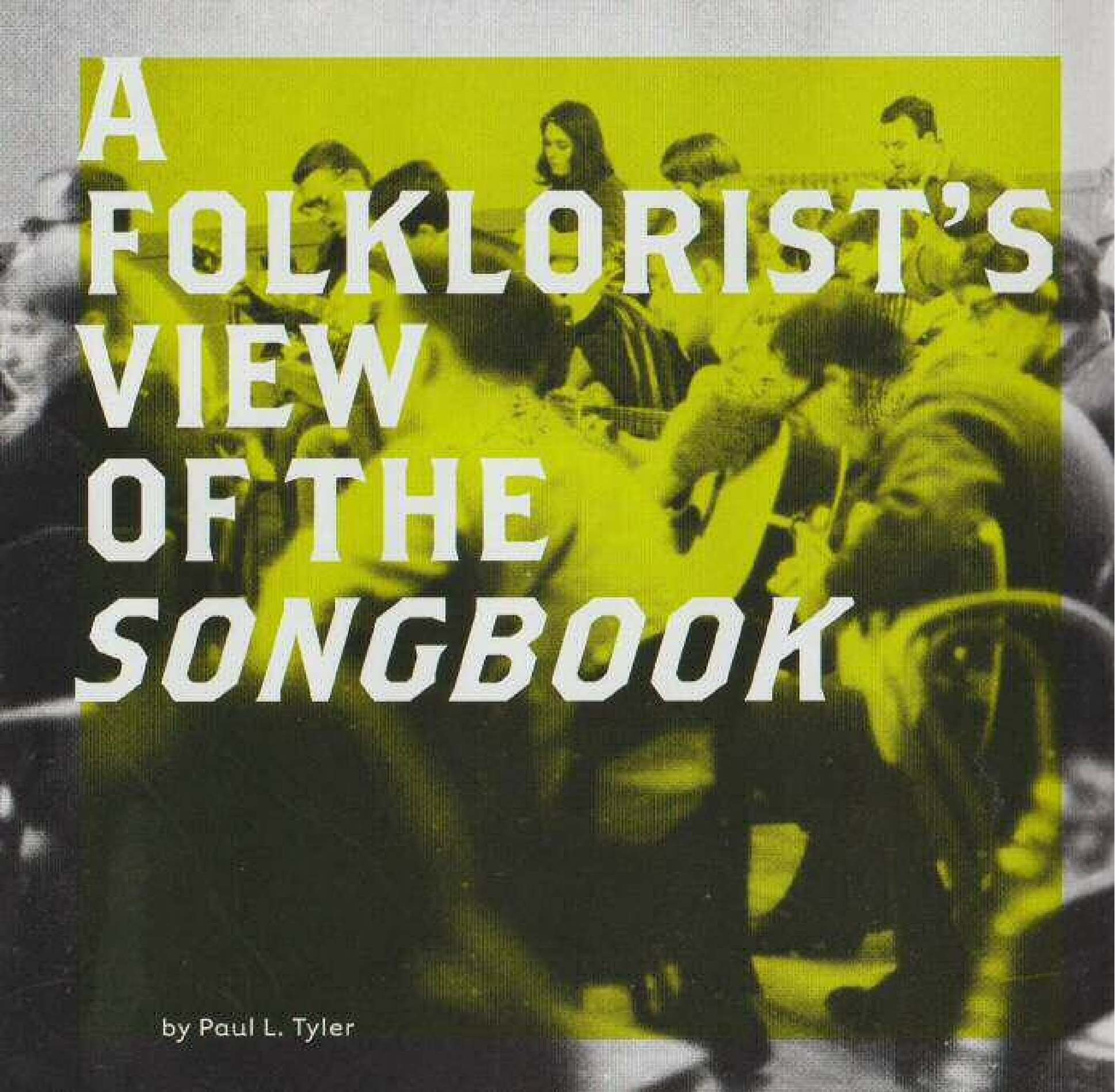


A FOLKLORIST'S VIEW OF THE *SONGBOOK*

by Paul L. Tyler

The Old Town School of Folk Music® *Songbook* provides a fine overview of the kinds of songs that have thrived in the oral traditions of English-language American folk cultures. All the major types of folksong genres identified and analyzed by folklorists throughout the 20th century are represented: ballads or narrative songs, lyrical folksongs, blues and blues ballads, work songs, sacred songs, topical songs (often called protest songs), and folk-processed versions of Tin Pan Alley compositions. Such songs are characteristically tough and long lasting at the same time that they are malleable and easily adapted. Nearly all exist in many versions and variations. Even when we can identify an older version, that variant is no more an authoritative original that a later and quite different manifestation of the same basic song. The nature of folksong is of weathering and of change. Here are some stories of songs that have persevered.

01 **Shady Grove** is first mentioned in print in 1915 in E.C. Perrow's long report on "Songs and Rhymes from the South" in the *Journal of American Folklore*. It appears in two 1930s college student folksong collections from Tennessee. It was recorded commercially only twice before World War II – both times in Chicago – by the Kentucky Thorobreds (featuring the great fiddler, Doc Roberts) for Paramount in 1927, and by the Prairie Ramblers for Bluebird in 1933. It was one of the first records made by the Ramblers about the time they came to Chicago from their native Kentucky to begin a two-decade long tenure on the WLS National Barn Dance.

02 The earliest known example of any version of **Take This Hammer** was collected in 1915 by Newman Ivey White, author of *American Negro Folksongs*. An interesting variant was included in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag*, published in 1926. In the 1930s, Jimmie Strothers and several prisoners recorded versions for collectors from the Library of Congress's Archive of American Folk Song. The earliest commercial recording by an African American artist was Hudie Ledbetter's (Leadbelly's) 1940 disc for Victor. Big Bill Broonzy also recorded it late in his life, when he began to play more frequently for the folk revival than in blues clubs.

03 **I Know You Rider** comes from the first of the influential John and Alan Lomax printed collections: *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, published in 1934. The Lomaxes claim that the melody and first stanza was sung to them by an 18-year-old African American woman who was in prison for murder. They don't provide an identity for the singer, nor do they disclose where they got any of the other nine verses they include under the title "Woman Blue." The *Songbook*'s version includes three of the Lomax stanzas, including the first. The final verse, "Sun's gonna shine on my back door some day," is a floating lyric that appears in other blues compositions and folksongs, such as Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee's version of "Trouble in Mind."

04 **Brown's Ferry Blues** was composed by the Alton Delmore and recorded by the Delmore Brothers in Chicago for Bluebird in 1933. According to Alton's autobiography, *Truth Is Stranger Than Publicity*, the brothers started performing at fiddler's conventions held in school houses near

their home in Limestone County, Alabama when they were just teenagers in the late 1920s. After coming in second to a musically inferior band that performed songs that got a laugh, they decided they needed a comedy song to give them an edge in the competition for prize money. Alton strung together some original twists on traditional lyrics using the hook of a local landmark, the Brown's Ferry Road. It worked, they won, and within a short time Alton and Rabon made several trips to recording studios in Atlanta and Chicago.

05 Though many musicians think that **Trouble In Mind** is traditional and by an unknown author, the *Songbook* credits Richard Jones. But according to the liner notes of a recent Big Bill Broonzy CD on Smithsonian Folkways – the album is also called *Trouble In Mind* – the words were composed by Charlie Segar, a Chicago piano player, while Big Bill himself made up the tune. Trouble in Mind was first recorded by blues guitarist Sam Collins (aka Salty Dog Sam) in 1931. That performance was never issued, but the following year Big Bill waxed it under the title "Worried in Mind Blues."

06 **Aragon Mill** is one of the newer songs in the *Songbook*, and was composed by a city-bred, college-educated rabbi's son. Si Kahn, the composer, was a union organizer who went south to Aragon, Georgia in 1972 after a textile-mill closed and put over 700 people out of work. During a casual conversation at the scene, one of the locals said, "After the mill closed down, it was so quiet I couldn't sleep anymore." That lyrical and haunting image became a verse in the song that Kahn pieced together to tell the hardships faced by the folks who lived in Aragon.

07 **Worried Man Blues** was first recorded in 1930 by the most influential family in early country music, the Carter Family. Following the practices of Ralph Peer, the Victor Company A&R man who discovered them, the song was copyrighted by A.P. Carter, the group's leader. According to one report, the Carters' source for the song was from hearing a prison work gang. Though the sequence of verses and arrangement were more than likely original with the Carters, some of the lyrical images were probably picked up by A.P. in his song-collecting jaunts with Leslie Riddle, an African American neighbor and friend.

08 The *Songbook*'s **Salty Dog Blues** is a relatively new bluegrass standard formed through the merging of several streams of tradition. The earliest recording was "Salty Dog Blues" waxed by Chicago bluesman Papa Charlie Jackson in 1924, accompanying himself on his unique six-string banjo. Two years later he recorded "Salty Dog" in a jazz setting with Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals including the great Chicago clarinetist, Johnny Dodds. The strongest tie between that performance and the present number is the so-called 'circle of fifths' chord progression. A number of other artists recorded a "Salty Dog" during the same decade, including Alexander Robinson's 1929 performance with the Paramount Pickers, again featuring Johnny Dodds. The first recording of the song by country artists was by the Booker Orchestra, an African American family band from Kentucky.

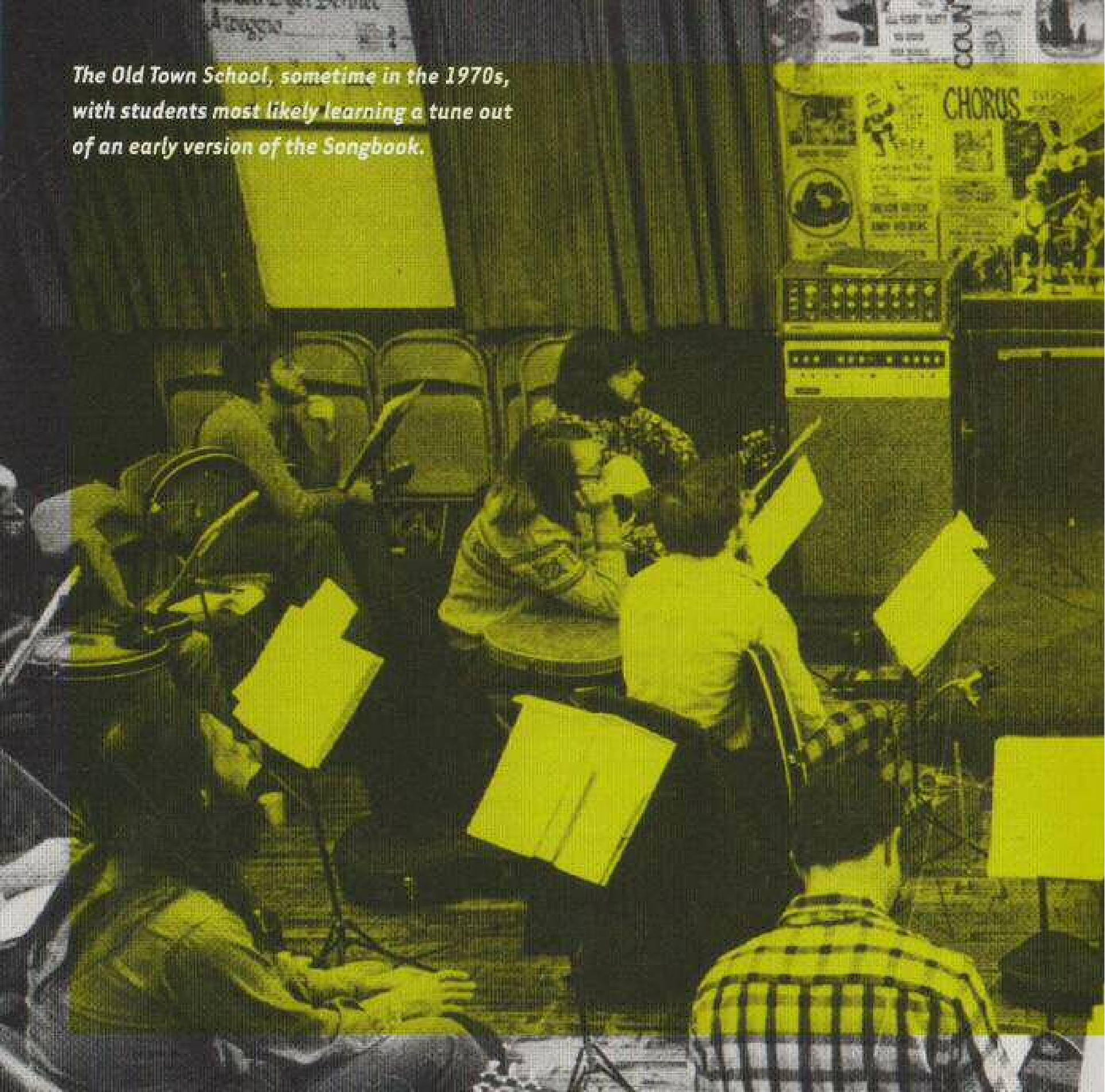
09 Since it's such a good banjo tune, it's easy to assume that **Cripple Creek** is a frolic tune dating back to ante-bellum corn huskings on southern plantations. But the earliest identifiable version of the song is printed in the same 1915 article in the *Journal of American Folklore* as mentioned in the notes for Shady Grove (see above). The first issued recording of the song was made in 1924 by Sam Jones, a singer who was known as "Stovepipe No. 1." One day earlier, the piece was also waxed by Fiddlin' (Cowan) Powers & Family of Virginia, but their version was not issued. The song was frequently recorded by white rural string bands throughout the 1920s. A noteworthy recording was made in Richmond, Indiana in 1927 at one of the first integrated sessions in any style of music: Fiddler Doc Roberts of Richmond, Kentucky was accompanied on guitar by John Booker of the Booker Orchestra.

10 **Deep River Blues** is a song made famous by the great instrumentalist Arthel "Doc" Watson of Deep Gap, North Carolina. Doc was playing electric guitar in a rockabilly band in the early 1960s when he was included in a historic recording session at the home of Clarence "Tom" Ashley just across the line in Tennessee. Folklorist Ralph Rinzler, representing the Newport Folk Festival Foundation, had located Ashley, an early country music recording artist who hadn't made a record since 1933. Rinzler was deeply impressed with Doc's incredible knowledge of traditional and old time songs and soon had him on the path to

becoming America's foremost folk song artist. One memorable night on North Avenue (The Old Town School's original location), Doc dropped by as special guest at the Second Half, a sing-along that capped an evening of guitar and banjo classes at the School. He sang the song "I've Got the Big River Blues," another composition by Alton Delmore. The Delmore Brothers first recorded it at a session in Chicago for Bluebird Records in 1933. Doc's and the *Songbook*'s versions essentially differ from the original only in the title and the identifying "I got them Deep River blues" line.

11 **Amazing Grace** is verifiably the oldest song included in this collection. It was composed by John Newton, a minister in the Church of England some time between 1760 and 1770. As perhaps the best-known hymn in the English language, its words of anguish and hope, repentance and redemption resonate more clearly upon knowing the personal story of the composer. John Newton was forcibly impressed into the royal navy in 1744. Abhorring the abusive conditions, he deserted and within a few years found his place on a slave ship. He eventually rose to captain his own ship and prospered by continuing in the slave trade. An encounter at sea with a violent storm brought him to a religious conversion, and he left the sailor's life in order to enter the ministry. According to legend, Newton's conversion led him to become an active abolitionist. Alas, the historical record suggests only that he urged the humane treatment of his own slaves. Once we were blind.

12 **St. James Infirmary** belongs to an expansive family of songs with roots deep in British folksong traditions. Originally a broadside ballad – that is, a lyric sheet sold on street corners by a singer known as ballad hawker – in the British Isles the song is known variously as "The Unfortunate Rake" or "The Young Girl [or Young Man] Cut Down in Her [His] Prime" or even as "The Sailor Cut Down in His Prime." On this side of the Atlantic, the basic narrative has taken shape in songs like "The Bad Girl's Lament," "Tom Sherman's Barroom" and "The Streets of Laredo." In all these cases, a young life is shortened as the result of careless living or bad habits. The dying youth leaves a warning behind for others to beware of the dangers of – take your pick – gambling, drinking, unprotected sex or gun fighting.



The Old Town School, sometime in the 1970s, with students most likely learning a tune out of an early version of the Songbook.

13 **Don't This Road** comes from bluegrass greats Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. Before their influential 1954 recording, the song itself traveled its own rough and rocky road. Flatt & Scruggs may have adapted the song from a 1936 recording of "Can't You Hear That Night Bird Crying" by the Blue Sky Boys (Bill and Earl Bolick). The Bolick Brothers song, in turn, is a variant belonging to a family of songs that includes "Little Bunch of Roses," "Down Among the Budded Roses," and a Carter Family song titled "Farewell Nellie." The first two titles were recorded by a number of pre-World War II string bands, such as Frank Blevins & the Tar Heel Travelers and Charlie Poole & the North Carolina Ramblers.

14 **Down In The Valley**, a song of unrequited love, was first published in H.M. Belden's *Ballads and Folk Songs of Missouri* in 1909. Two other versions that Belden includes are titled "Bird in a Cage," and are clearly the same song, lacking only the first stanza of The *Songbook*'s version. Perhaps the first recording of the song, judging only by the title "Down in the Valley Blues," was made in St. Louis in 1925 by blues singer Evelyn Brickey. Other early recordings were made by early country musicians Tom Darby & Jimmie Tarlton, in 1927, and Riley Puckett, guitarist and singer with Gid Tanner & the Skillet Lickers of Atlanta. Both discs bore the title "Birmingham Jail." Early friends of the Old Town School, Pete Seeger and Frank Proffitt, made later recordings of the song as "Down in the Valley."

15 **Old Dog Tray** is a Stephen Foster composition and dates back to 1852. Like so many of Foster's songs, it has been continuously sung by Americans from all walks of life. In the composer's day, "Old Dog Tray" marked a turning point for his career. With this popular hit, Foster was able to distance himself from the popular theater of blackface minstrelsy that had been the venue for earlier hits like "Susanna" and "Ring De Banjo." He sought, instead, to stake a new claim with home songs, those that dealt with more sentimental themes, such as mother, longing, loneliness and death.

16 **Drunken Sailor**, sometimes known as "Early in the Morning," was traditionally a sea shanty, sung by a leader or "shantyman" to help a gang of workers time their exertions together. The common tune for the song is supposedly derived from an Irish dance tune or march. The

lyrics, which allegedly date back to at least 1841, were printed retrospectively in Frank Shay's *American Sea Songs & Chanteys* (1948) and William Doerflinter's *Shantymen and Shantyboys* (1951). A version sung in 1936 by Richard Maitland, one of the last surviving veterans from the days of the tall ships, was included on the LP *American Sailor Songs and Shanties* issued by the Archive of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress.

17 The *Songbook*'s **Erie Canal** belongs to a group of songs that, perhaps with tongue-in-cheek, tried to transfer the romance and risk of the deep sea sailor's life to the drudgery of working on a slow-moving vessel towed by a team of mules. The first two stanzas and the last in the *Songbook*'s version are found in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag* (1927). Sandburg calls his song "The E-Ri-E," and claims to have gotten it from two Chicagoans, Robert Wolfe and Oliver R. Barrett. Two additional stanzas in the *Songbook* can be found in "The Ballad of the Erie Canal" pieced together from multiple sources by John and Alan Lomax in *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934). Probably the most influential recording of the tune was by The Weavers, made after their big reunion concert at Carnegie Hall in 1955.

18 Folksinger Bruce "Utah" Phillips claims that the classic hobo song, **Wabash Cannonball**, can be traced to a patriotic 1862 song, "Uncle Sam's Farm," that sang the praises of the Homestead Act. A more direct ancestor is "Great Rock Island Route!" – with words and music by J.A. Roff – an 1882 paean to a real railroad line that ran from Chicago to Council Bluffs, Iowa. The song was rewritten in 1904 by William Kindt to tell of the exploits of fanciful runs of the Wabash Cannonball, a legendary train that was not limited to any actual set of rails. The most influential version of the song was Roy Acuff's, which he recorded in 1936 and again in 1947. Acuff's stanzas easily line up with the verses in the *Songbook*, though he includes one additional stanza that begins "She pulled in to the station one cold December day."

19 The hymn **Just A Closer Walk With Thee** comes from the African American tradition of sacred song. The earliest recording was by the Selah Jubilee Quartet in 1941. The hymn's popularity

has never been limited by any categorical boundaries. An important early recording in the country music field was by Kentuckian Clyde "Red" Foley, who got his professional start on the National Barn Dance on WLS-Chicago. The song is also a popular instrumental in jazz circles.

20 In the middle of the 20th-century **Wayfaring Stranger** was very closely associated with Burl Ives, a native of Jasper County, Illinois. After dropping out of college to hobo around the country in search of work and an education, Ives ended up in New York in 1937. Three years later he had his own radio show on CBS. Titled "The Wayfarin' Stranger," the show was one of the most popular in the years before World War II. After a hitch in the army, Ives returned stateside to resume his career as a folk singer and Broadway actor. In 1948 he completed his autobiography, *The Wayfarin' Stranger*.

Apart from Ives's activities, the song appeared in the historical record only a few times over the span of three quarters of a century. According to Guthrie Meade's *Country Music Sources*, the song was included in an 1882 songbook that remains unidentified. Forty years later it appeared in Howard Odum and Guy Johnson's *The Negro and His Songs*. In 1929 it made perhaps it's first appearance on a disc with Vaughan's Texas Quartet's rendition of "Wayfaring Pilgrim." And thirty years later it was recorded again by the great Ozark balladeer, Almeda Riddle, and by the father of bluegrass, Bill Monroe. Both recordings had a great influence on the song's perseverance in the urban folksong revival.

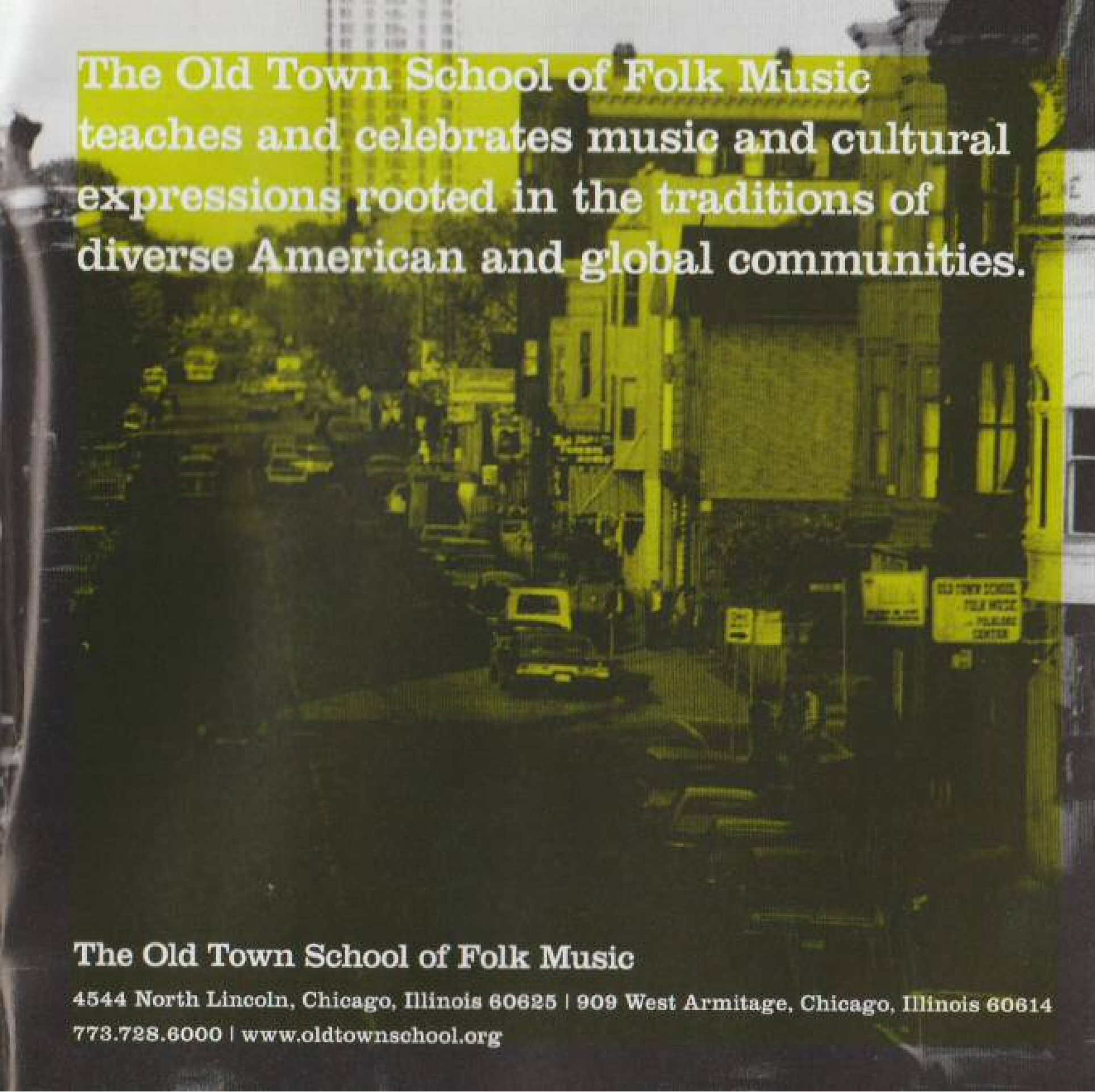
21 Libba Cotton was a young girl living near Chestnut Street in Carrboro, North Carolina when she composed **Freight Train**, perhaps as early as 1902. She longed to play the banjo and guitar owned by her older brothers, but they hid them from her. So when she snuck the instruments out during their absence, she played them upside down, favoring her stronger left hand. As an adult, Elizabeth Cotton eventually moved to Washington, D.C. where she found work as a domestic in the home of Charles and Ruth Seeger. With the encouragement of the highly musical Seegers – especially Mike and Peggy – Libba Cotton revived her long dormant music career. In 1957, she recorded "Freight Train" on her album of *Folksongs and Instrumentals* for Folkways Records in New York.

22 **Midnight Special** is a song indelibly associated with the great bluesman and songster, Leadbelly. The *Songbook*'s version closely follows Leadbelly's adaptation of a song he learned while in prison in Texas during the 1920s. Most people sing it today with the legend in mind that if the headlight of the train, the Midnight Special, falls upon the walls of your prison cell, you will be set free. Carl Sandburg, who included of the song in his *American Songbag* in 1927, had a different take on the message of the lyrics: *i.e.*, he interpreted it as a wish for death in the face of a seemingly endless stay in prison.

23 Most folks think that **Goodnight Irene** was Leadbelly's creation, and the song was copyrighted in his name in 1936. Perhaps Leadbelly did take some old lyrics and reshape them into a new song, but that is the natural process by which many folk songs came into being. What is unusual is to know so much about the creative personality behind one of the best-known American folk songs. Leadbelly reported that he learned the chorus from his uncle, and that the real Irene was a teen he knew who took up with a rambler. Her story inspired Leadbelly's song of courtship, loss and remorse. And after the Lomaxes brought Leadbelly to New York to promote him as the quintessential American folk song artist, "Goodnight Irene" became a popular anthem in the folk revival. A Decca recording by the Weavers made it to the top of the pop charts in 1950.

Paul Tyler, a native Hoosier, has lived in Chicago since 1986, and has taught fiddle and early country music at the Old Town School for nearly that long. With a PhD in Folklore and American Studies from Indiana University, he also teaches in the Social Science and Music Departments at National-Louis University. He is currently working on a book on Traditional Fiddling in the Old Northwest, from the Pioneer Period Through the Folk Revival.

Credits **Shady Grove** *(Traditional)* Colby Maddox *Lead Vocal, Guitar & Mandolin*, Steve Rosen *Backing Vocal & Fiddle*, Chris Winters *2nd Guitar*. **Take This Hammer** *(Traditional)* Jon Langord *Vocal & Guitar*, Rick Sherry *Jug & Percussion*. **I Know You Rider** *(Traditional)* Linda Smith *Vocal & Guitar*, Steve Levitt *Banjo & Backing Vocal*, Chris Winters *2nd Guitar*, Harlan Terson *Bass*, Tom Sorich *Percussion*, Steve Doyle *Dobro*. **Brown's Ferry Blues** *(Alton Delmore, Red River Songs, Inc.)* Robbie Fulks *Vocal & Guitar*. **Trouble In Mind** *(Traditional)* Alice Peacock *Vocal*, Jon Spiegel *Guitar*, John Abbey *Bass*, Buzz Kilman *Harmonica*. **Aragon Mill** *(Si Khan, Joe Hill Music)* Rita Ruby *Lead Vocal*, Michael Schenkenberg *Guitar & Backing Vocal*, Kerry Sheehan *Accordion*. **Worried Man Blues** *(Traditional)* Chris Walz *Lead Vocal & Guitar*, Scott Besaw *Backing Vocal*, Steve Rosen *Backing Vocal & Fiddle*, John Abbey *Bass*. **Salty Dog** *(Traditional)* Rick Sherry *Lead Vocal, Harmonica & Percussion*, Ted Parrish *Guitar*. **Cripple Creek** *(Traditional)* Steve Rosen *Vocal & Banjo*. **Deep River Blues** *(Traditional)* Janet Bean *Vocal*, Jon Spiegel *Guitar & Dobro*, John Abbey *Percussion*. **Amazing Grace** *(Traditional)* Erin Flynn *Vocal*, Tom Cullen *Bass*, Rob Anderlik *Dobro*. **St. James Infirmary** *(Traditional)* Pete Special *Lead Vocal & Guitar*, John Abbey *Bass*, Rick Sherry *Harmonica*. **Don't This Road** *(Traditional)* Andrea Bunch *Lead Vocal & Guitar*, Aerin Tedesco *Lead Vocal*, Chris Winters *2nd Guitar*, John Abbey *Bass*, Chris Walz *Piano*. **Down In The Valley** *(Traditional)* Bill Brickey *Lead Vocal & Guitar*, Rita Ruby *Backing Vocal*, John Abbey *2nd Guitar, Bass & Percussion*, Ari Frede *Harmonica*, Rick Sherry *Fiddle*. **Old Dog Tray** *(Traditional)* Kathy Cowan *Vocal*, Al Erich *Cello*, Michael Miles *Banjo*. **Drunken Sailor** *(Traditional)* Dan Zanes *Lead Vocal/Mandolin*, Colin Brooks *Percussion*, Barbara Brousal *Vocal, Percussion*, Cynthia Hopkins *Accordion, Vocal, Saw*, Rankin' Don a.k.a. Father Goose *Vocal*, Yoshi Waki *Percussion*. **Erie Canal** *(Traditional)* Marcia Johnson *Vocal & Guitar*, Ted Johnson *Vocal*. **Wabash Cannonball** *(Traditional)* Danny Barnes *Vocal & Banjo*, John Abbey *Bass*, Ari Frede *Harmonica*. **Just A Closer Walk With Thee** *(Traditional)* Elaine Moore *Vocal & Guitar*, Jim Dewan *Backing Vocal & 2nd Guitar*, John Abbey *Bass*, Tom Sorich *Percussion*, Chris Walz *Piano*. **Wayfaring Stranger** *(Traditional)* John Stirratt *Lead Vocal & Guitar*, Scott Besaw *Backing Vocal*, Chris Walz *Piano*, Steve Doyle *Dobro*. **Freight Train** *(Traditional)* Mark Dvorak *Lead Vocal & Guitar*, Sue Strom *Backing Vocal*. **Midnight Special** *(Traditional)* Steve Levitt *Vocal & Guitar*, Skip Landt *Harmonica*, Steve Doyle *Dobro*. **Goodnight Irene** *(Traditional)* Weavermania, Barbara Barrow *Vocal & Guitar*, Mark Dvorak *Vocal & Banjo*, Chris Walz *Vocal & Guitar*, Michael Smith *Vocal & Guitar*, John Abbey *Bass*.



The Old Town School of Folk Music teaches and celebrates music and cultural expressions rooted in the traditions of diverse American and global communities.

The Old Town School of Folk Music

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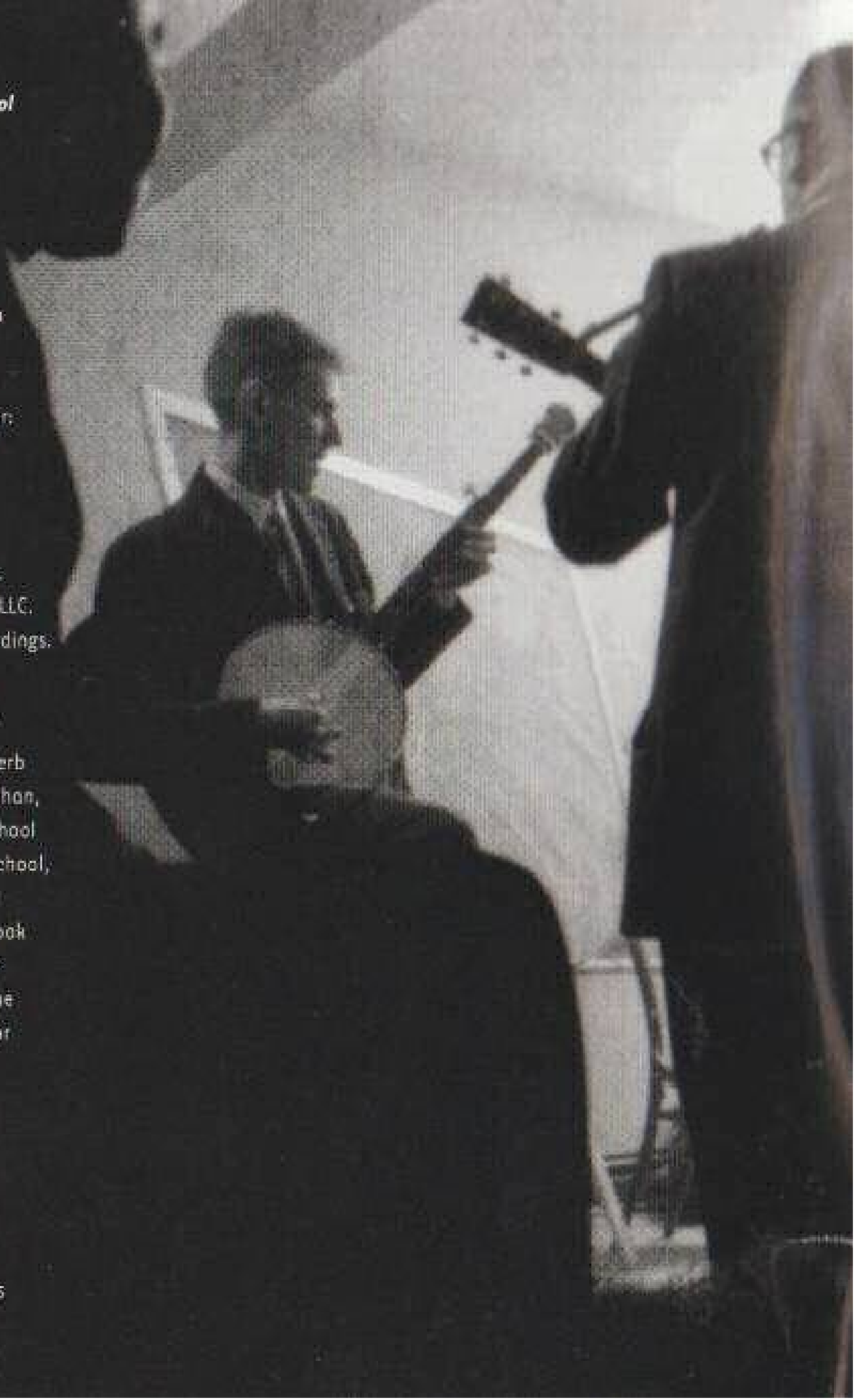

Pictured left to right: ***Big Bill Broonzy, Old Town School Co-Founders Frank Hamilton and Win Stracke, first night of classes, 1957.***

Old Town School of Folk Music *Songbook Volume One*

Produced by John Abbey. Recorded and mixed by John Abbey at the Old Town School's Soccer Club Studios. Executive Producer/Old Town School Recordings: Bob Medich. Liner Notes: Paul Tyler. Liner Notes Editor: Krista Ortgiesen. Mastered by Dan Stout at Colossal Mastering. Design: www.faustltd.com

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Janet Bean appears courtesy of Thrill Jockey Records.
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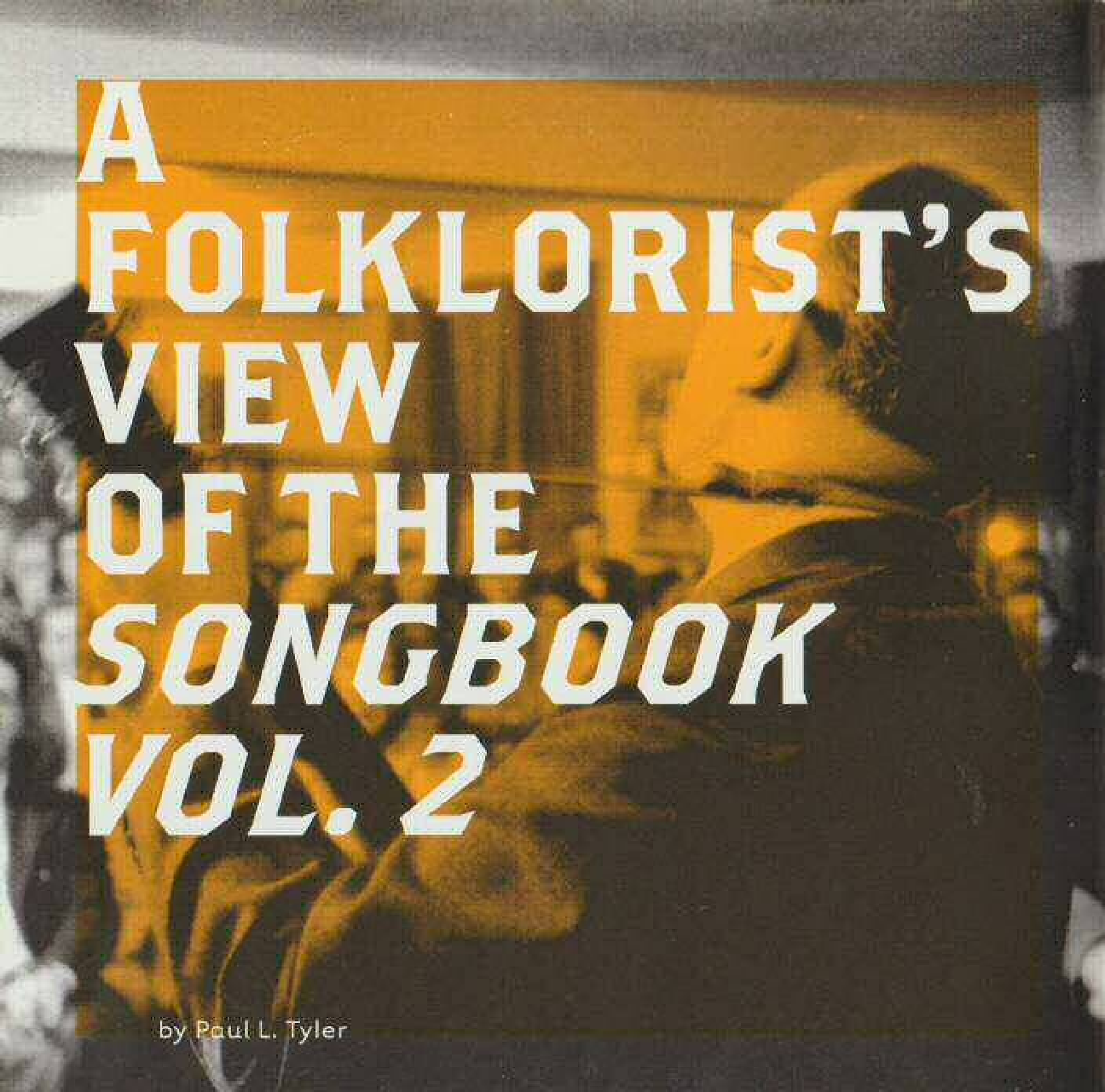


A FOLKLORIST'S VIEW OF THE *SONGBOOK VOL. 2*

by Paul L. Tyler

1 **South Australia.** This farewell song served as a work shanty on deep-water, square-rigged ships in the late 1800s. A "capstan" shanty, it was sung at a moderate tempo to accompany the several dozen sailors who heaved together to raise the ship's anchor.

One scholar believes "South Australia" originated on British ships that carried emigrants to Melbourne and Sydney. Another notes the song's textual similarities with the "Cape Cod Girls" included in Alan Lomax's *Folksong's of North America*. The latter song was first collected by a folklorist in Nova Scotia and published in 1932. "South Australia" first appeared in print in 1927, though retired sailors attested to its earlier use in oral tradition.

2 **Last Thing On My Mind.** Written by Tom Paxton, and sung by him often in concerts at the Old Town School, "The Last Thing on My Mind" is one of the most-covered songs created during the 1960s folk music revival. Many Americans heard it for the first time on Peter, Paul & Mary's 1965 album, *See What Tomorrow Brings*.

3 **(When Things Go Wrong) It Hurt's Me Too.** Often performed by Chicago bluesmen, "It Hurts Me Too" was composed by one of the earliest stars on the scene, Hudson Whittaker who came to Chicago in the 1920s. Better known as Tampa Red, Whittaker recorded solo as well as with Thomas A. Dorsey (aka Georgia Tom) before the latter devoted himself to gospel music. The Songbook's version is drawn from the singing of Big Bill Broonzy, who became one of Chicago's most prominent blues artists in the 1930s and '40s. More than likely, Broonzy based his setting on Tampa Red's original, though the verses differ. A later and variant version was recorded by Elmore James and has been covered by Eric Clapton and others.

4 **Goin' Down To Cairo.** As the southern Illinois city in the title attests, this song belongs to Illinois and was widely known as a play party or singing game in downstate districts. In the decades surrounding World War II folklorists, David S. and Eva McIntosh of Southern Illinois University collected 15 versions of the song, all but one with the melody heard here.

A story related to them in 1947 told how nearly a century before an early frost had ruined the crops, and, echoing the Biblical story of Joseph, farmers had to go to Cairo to buy provisions. After a rare trip to the big city, many men came back with their boots blacked and their clothes a little finer, so on future visits to the city they were accompanied by their wives.

5 **Red River Valley.** One of America's favorite folksongs, it started out as "A Lady in Love," circa 1889, or as "The Bright Mohawk Valley," as published by James J. Kerrigan in 1896. The first recording, by cowboy singer Carl T. Sprague, was issued in 1925 with the title "Cowboy's Love Song." Many southern old time singers recorded it as "Bright Sherman Valley," until a 1927 disc by Hugh Cross and Riley Puckett popularized the title "Red River Valley." That same year, "Red River Valley" appeared in Carl Sandburg's *The American Songbag*. More than 30 commercial "Hillbilly" recordings of the song were issued before 1940. A half-century later, Garrison Keilor's *Prairie Home Companion* used the song as emblematic of the "good old days" of live country radio.

6 **Simple Gifts.** "Simple Gifts" was composed in Maine in 1848 by Shaker Elder Joseph Brackett. The Shakers were a small Protestant sect, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, who moved to New York in 1774, just two years after their founding in England. Their worship services were perfuse with both song and dance. "Simple Gifts" was sung for a "quick dance" of elaborately patterned movements. First the tune, and then the lyrics became more widely known through Aaron Copeland's inclusion of them in his score for the ballet *Appalachian Spring* in 1944, and then for his set of *Old American Songs* in 1950.

7 **Gypsy Davy.** This song's impressive literary lineage traces back to "The Gypsy Laddie," number 200 (out of 305) in Harvard professor Francis James Child's monumental, five-volume collection *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, published between 1884 and 1898. The oldest known text of the ballad was published in Scotland in 1740 in Ramsey's *Tea Table Miscellany*. Its long and rich life in oral tradition stretched all over the English-

speaking world down to the present. The common theme in all versions of the song is that the Lady forsakes her noble husband and her baby, and runs off with the Gypsy and his company. The Songbook's "Gypsy Davy" is derived from the version Woody Guthrie sang in 1940 for the Archives of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress.

8 **Wild Rover.** Another old British song, "The Wild Rover" emerged in the early years of the 19th century as a broadside ballad: that is, a song hawker performed it on the street and sold a printed page with the lyrics only, a broadside, to interested passers-by. Many people claim the song is Irish, and surely it is, but it has also been traditionally sung in Australia and the Canadian Maritimes, while the same story was told with different lyrics in an Ozark folk song. A longer version with eight stanzas and no refrain was published in an Irish newspaper in 1938 under the title "The Sailor in the Alehouse." More widely known are the Songbook's four stanzas and refrain, essentially identical to renditions by groups as diverse as the Dubliners and the Dropkick Murphys.

9 **John Henry.** A recent scholarly tome asserted that this song "is the most recorded folk song in American history," and that the hero of the ballad is a "towering figure in our culture." The phenomenal "steel-drivin' man" of legend–the real John Henry who was probably born a slave, was perhaps a prototype, or at least a precursor, for Superman and other comic book heroes. Efforts to find the real story date back to a University of North Carolina professor's 1929 book-length study, *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*. The oldest known text of the song dates only to 1909, though the story usually refers to the digging of the Big Bend tunnel that the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad built in the 1870s.

The song encapsulates the history of African-Americans but has been equally popular in both black and white folk tradition. Band leader and composer W.C. Handy published his version of the "John Henry Blues" in 1922. But the earliest recordings of the song appeared in 1924 by white country artists Fiddlin' John Carson and Ernest Thompson. Another version by the street singer, Stovepipe No. 1 (Sam Jones) was issued that same year. The first

recordings of "John Henry" by black artists came in 1927, on disc by bluesmen William Francis and Richard Sowell and by Henry "Ragtime Texas" Thomas.

10 **Tell Old Bill.** The Songbook's version of the song about Old Bill's demise omits the cause of Bill's death. The longer "Dis Mornin', Dis Evenin', So Soon" included in Sandburg's *The American Songbag*, had his widow lament "Dey shoot my husband in the firs' degree." The core lyrics of the song were reported by folklorist Howard Odum in his 1911 article on "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry As Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes." Sandburg's text, which he credits to St. Louis artist, Nancy Barnhart, presents the song in an affected ethnic dialect, which is carried through in the version included in John and Alan Lomax's 1934 *American Ballads and Folk Songs* under the title "Old Bill." The highly repetitive melody of the Song Book's "Tell Old Bill" is probably derived from the rendition published in *The American Songbag*.

11 **Colours.** This song was written by Donovan Leitch, a British singer from the 1960s. Donovan's return to the U.S. concert circuit included an appearance at the Old Town School in 1989.

12 **Dink's Song.** According to a note in Pete Seeger's *American Favorite Ballads*, "In 1908 John Lomax listened to a woman sing as she washed clothes for her man working in a levee camp. Next year he tried to look her up again. The townspeople motioned up to the end of the street where the graveyard was. "That's where Dink's living now." The Lomax family remembered her song and passed it on to us, a great flower of beauty." (P. 88)

13 **East Virginia.** These are floating lyrics, which tell of failed courtships and broken hearts. Many of these stanzas can be found in other well known folk, bluegrass and country songs, such as "Dark Holler," "Greenback Dollar," and even "Molly Dear" or the "Drowsy Sleeper." WLS National Barn Dance artists, Karl & Harty recorded the song in 1936 as "Darling Think of What You've Done," while Grand Ol' Opry star Roy Acuff called it "New Greenback Dollar."

The essential words and melody found in the Songbook were first put on record in 1927, by Buell Kazee, a banjo-playing minister and classically trained vocalist from the mountains of eastern Kentucky. An influential version was recorded as "East Virginia Blues" by the original Carter Family of Maces Springs, Virginia. The song was carried to folksong audiences in the 1950s and later by the lanky banjoist and troubadour, Pete Seeger, a close friend of the Old Town School of Folk Music.

14 **Sportin' Life Blues.** The Songbook's version of this blues classic comes from the singing of Walter "Brownie" McGhee, though the order of the verses varies. A native of Tennessee, McGhee and his frequent partner, Sonny Terry, were mainstays in the 1940s and '50s folk scene in New York City and appeared in concert at the Old Town School in its early days. The song has been frequently recorded by rock artists ranging from the Lovin' Spoonful to Eric Clapton.

15 **Oh Mary Don't You Weep.** Also known as "Pharaoh's Army Got Drownded," this popular spiritual was first recorded on disc in 1915 by the Fisk University Male Quartet. In the artistic segregation practiced by the music industry of the 1920s, the song was issued again on record by such "race" or black artists as the Biddleville Quintette and the Birmingham Jubilee Singers, as well as by the "old time" or rural white string band, the Georgia Yellow Hammers. A variant from an unknown source is found in Sandburg's *American Songbag*. More recently, it was included on Bruce Springsteen's CD tribute to Pete Seeger *The Seeger Sessions*.

16 **Don't You Hear Jerusalem Moan.** This song delineates the foibles of preachers from the Christian denominations associated with the camp meeting revivals of America's frontier period. The parody in the Songbook might derive from an older spiritual, "Jerusalem Mourning." The song in question was recorded three times in the 1920s by southern string bands. The earliest was Bill Chitwood and Bud Landress's 1925 waxing for the Brunswick label. The most influential recording was made a year later by fellow Georgians, Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers. Soon after, the song largely disappeared, only to be resurrected six decades later by urban folksong

revivalists. The Volo Bogtrotters, an influential string band from Chicago, recorded a version based on verses learned from traditional singer Delmar Tapley of Olney, Illinois.

17 **I Am A Pilgrim.** Country singer, Merle Travis, a native Kentuckian, is most closely associated with this song and is often credited as the composer. The Songbook's version is clearly derived from Travis, as are the many versions recorded by bluegrass artists. However, the song first circulated among black gospel quartets and was recorded in 1928 by the Silver Leaf Quartet. The earliest recording was by the Imperial Quartet in 1917.

18 **Git Along Little Doggie.** John A. Lomax included "Whoopee, Ti Yi Yo, Git Along, Little Dogies" in his seminal 1910 collection, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. Two decades later, western author Owen Wister told Lomax that he had noted down the lyrics and melody from a young singer in McCulloch County, Texas, in 1893. The earliest recordings of the song appeared in 1928. The first by Harry "Haywire Mac" McClintock, a noted itinerant radio artist, hobo and union man. The second waxing was by the obscure but authentically western Cartwright Brothers, Bernard and Jack.

"Get Along, Little Dogies" became a cowboy anthem of sorts and was recorded later by such media-savvy artists as movie cowboy Maurice "Tex" Ritter and NBC radio singer John I. White. It was also recorded by Chicago radio artists Ken Houchins and the Girls of the Golden West, who appeared on WLS's National Barn Dance in the 1930s.

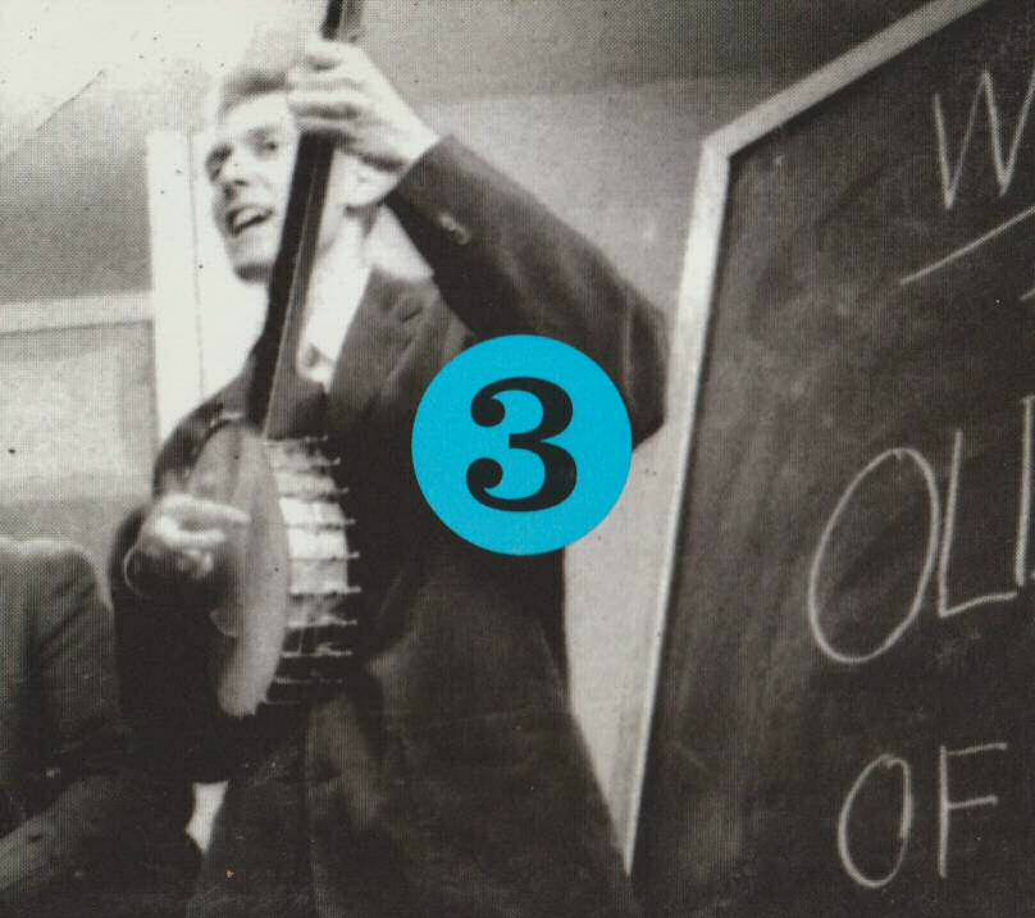
19 **Lonesome Road.** A bluegrass and old time music standard, the "Lonesome Road Blues" or "Going Down That Road Feeling Bad" was one of the earliest songs to be recorded by a country singer. Henry Whitter, a textile mill worker from Fries, Virginia recorded the song in 1923. The following year, two versions were waxed by blind minstrels well known in the southern cities: George Reneau of Knoxville and Riley Puckett of Atlanta. Claude Moye of Gallatin County, Illinois, who was better known as the radio artist Pie Plant Pete, was one of three dozen country singers who recorded the song in the 1920s and '30s.

20 **Cindy.** Art song composer Robert Beaser included "Cindy" in his 1984 suite of *Mountain Songs*, identifying it as a "frolic" or "minstrel fiddle tune." This claim suggests that "Cindy" dates back to pre-Civil War plantation life, or at least to the skewing of African-American folklore represented by 19th century blackface minstrel theatre. However, the earliest documentation for "Cindy" is from a 1915 report of a "banjo song" by that name heard in Wolf Creek, Tennessee. In *American Negro Folk-Songs* (1928), Newman White opined that the song came from white rural musicians. A few years later, R.D. Bass concurred in the *Journal of American Folklore*: "The tempo of 'Cindy' sounds more like the time in a Buckra [i.e., white] dance number than the time in a Negro song."

The earliest waxing was in 1924 by the first women country music recording artists, Eva Davis and Samantha Bumgarner of North Carolina. Early Chicago radio starts Bradley Kincaid and Lulu Belle and Scotty recorded the song, respectively, in 1929 and 1935. The National Barn Dance Orchestra included the melody with square dance calls in their 1933 disc, *Barn Dance, Part II*.

21 **When The Saints Go Marchin' In.** In America's imagination, this song belongs to New Orleans and is associated with the rise of jazz music from the lively sounds emitted by bands on the return leg of a funeral march. However, the song began its life as a spiritual or hymn. It was published twice in 1896 with credit given to J.M. Black and Katherine E. Purvis. The song may have originated earlier in oral tradition. At the least, it quickly entered folk culture and was collected in the Bahamas in 1917.

The earliest recorded versions were by black blues and gospel artists, such as the Paramount Jubilee Singers in 1923 and Blind Willie Davis in 1927. The earliest white country recording of the song was a 1937 waxing by the Monroe Brothers. The most famous versions of the song are by New Orleans native and jazz great Louis Armstrong, who recorded it several times in the 1930s. Today, it is one of the most recognizable and best-loved pieces of musical Americana.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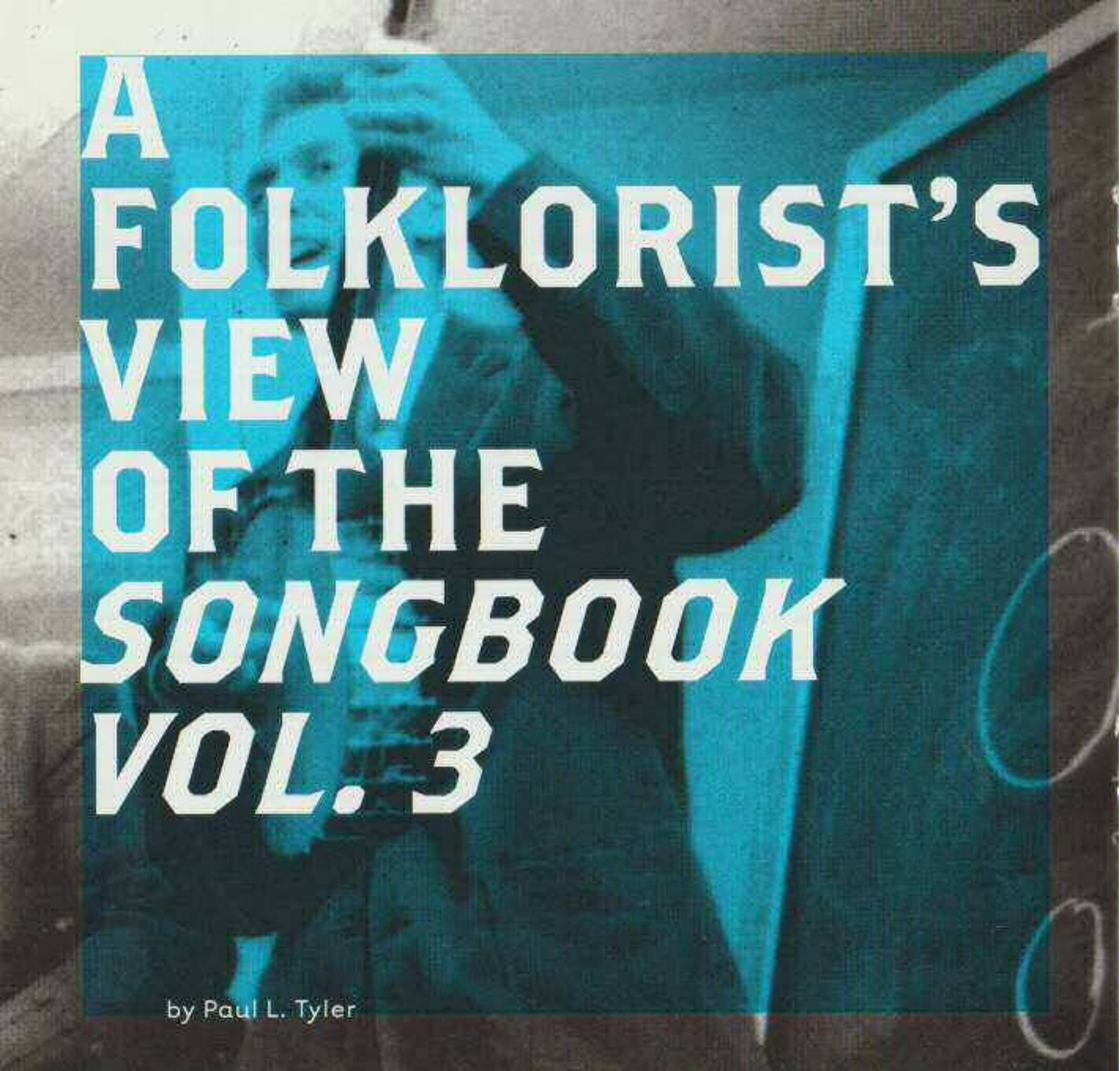


A FOLKLORIST'S VIEW OF THE *SONGBOOK VOL. 3*

by Paul L. Tyler

1 **Nine Pound Hammer.** Hammer songs, like this one, were used on public works projects by African-American laborers who sought to rhythmically coordinate their exertions. One of the earliest such to be described in print, based on the singing of a Texas work gang in 1891, contained the couplet "Oh, roll on, Johnnie; you rolls too slow / For you roll like a man never rolled befo'." Other work songs made more direct use of the hammer image–e.g., "Take this hammer and carry it to the captain," or "Nobody's hammer rings like mine." Out of the merging and morphing of floating verses like these, came such songs as the ballad of John Henry (see previous) and the bluegrass standard "Roll On, Buddy."

The chorus of the Songbook's "Nine Pound Hammer" tells a worker to "Roll on, buddy; don't you roll so slow." This distinctive text, crystallized from the process described in the preceding paragraph was first recorded in 1927 by Al Hopkins & his Buckle Busters. Their "Nine Pound Hammer" featured words and melody that closely resembles Merle Travis seminal recording, which was included in his 1947 album *Folk Songs of the Hills*.

2 **Hard and It's Hard.** This song was recorded by Woody Guthrie in 1941 on an Almanac Singers album called *Sod-Buster Ballads*. Woody was credited as the composer, although this is clearly a song that borrows plentifully from other folk songs. The conventional wisdom is that "Hard, Ain't It Hard" is Woody's reworking of the story of a maiden - perhaps with child - spurned by a lover who preferred the social pleasures of a "Tavern in the Town." That older familiar song was first published in the U.S. in 1891 with words and music by F.J. Adams. An earlier version of the lyrics was credited to W.H. Hills and printed as a broadside in London circa 1880.

3 **Down By The Riverside.** Carl Sandburg was once told by some university students from Alabama that black folk in the South would sing "I Ain't Gonna Study War No More" by the hour, all the while freely borrowing lines from other spirituals. Apparently the song was equally well-loved in Chicago's Black Belt (better known today as Bronzeville), for it was included in *Songs and Spirituals*, a 1919 collection published by the Overton-Hygienic Company, owned by local cosmetic entrepreneuer, Anthony Overton.

The first recordings of the song were made by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers in 1920 and soon after by other refined ensembles as the Morehouse College Quartet and the Elkins-Payne Jubilee Singers. The song crossed over to another cultural stratum in 1927, when it was waxed by Sam Morgan's Jazz Band, and was stretched even further in a 1937 recording by the Blue Chips, a smooth Gospel quartet backed by a jazz band.

4 **Corrina Corrina.** "Corrina Corrina" can be attributed to the Mississippi Sheiks, an African-American string band from Bolton, Mississippi, made up mostly of members of the Chatman Family. A copyright claim for the song lists the composers as "Williams & Chatman." The Sheiks 1930 recording of the song was issued under the title "Alberta Blues." Two years earlier, the number was recorded by one of the brothers, Armenter "Bo" Chatman.

White singers and string bands picked up the song, with early recordings in 1929 by Clayton McMichen and Hugh Cross and by (Tom) Ashley and (W.R.) Abernathy in 1931. WLS band leader Hal O'Halloran recorded it with his Hooligans in 1936. By then, "Corrina Corrina" was a standard among Western Swing bands, such as Milton Brown & his Musical Brownies in 1934 and Leo Soileau's Four Aces in 1935. The 1940 recording by Bob Wills & his Texas Playboys helped ensure the song's persistent popularity.

5 **Hard Times.** When Stephen Foster wrote "Hard Times Come Again No More" in the 1850s, the song was published in 1854, his hometown of Pittsburgh was struggling with rampant unemployment and poverty. Decades later the song was given a new lease on life with its inclusion in a popular turn of the century songster, *Heart Songs: Melodies of Days Gone By*. After a wonderful piano-accompanied, parlando rubato version by the Graham Brothers, recorded circa 1930, the song once again faded from view. Once more it was revived on a 1981 album by the North Carolina string band, the Red Clay Ramblers. Since then the song has been covered by artists as diverse as Mavis Staples, Bob Dylan and Nancy Griffith.

6 **Good News.** An African-American spiritual, "Ain't It Good News" was one of 230 songs included in John W. Work III's *American Negro Songs and Spirituals*, published in 1940. Most of the songs were collected in conjunction with Fort Valley State College in Georgia, when the African-American college ran a series of music festivals between 1938 and '43.

7 **Trouble In Mind.** See notes in volume 1.

8 **Shenandoah.** This song presents some geographical challenges. In 1924, folklorist Joanna Colcord asserted that "Shenandoah" was used as a capstan shanty on deep-water ships in the age of sail. And in 1939, folksong collector Eloise Hubbard Linscott reported that James Linscott had heard the song sung aboard steamships of the U.S. merchant marine. But, one may ask, how does the Shenadoah River of Virginia, or the Iowa city of the same name, relate to the far off horizons of the earth's oceans?

In his 1927 *American Songbag*, Carl Sandburg rendered the name as "Shannadore," and suggested it might be the name of an unidentified ship or Indian chief. Further, Sandburg's title for the song, "The Wide Mizzoura" refers, like the Songbook's text, to a river in the North American interior that has little to do with seafaring.

9 **Hard Travelin'.** This one is by Woody Guthrie, from his 1941 commission from the U.S. Department of the Interior to write songs to promote development of public power from Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia River. Woody recorded the song on an instant acetate disc that was used by government types in Portland and Washington D.C. They lost the original. So along with Cisco Houston on guitar and Sonny Terry on harmonica, he recorded the song again for Moe Asch and Folkways Records in 1947. The lyrics first saw print in typed and mimeographed collection in 1945. There Woody claimed it was one of his "Dust Bowl songs"—and thus predated his trip to the Northwest—written "about a man that rode the flat wheelers, kicked up cinders, dumped the red hot slag, hit the hard rock tunnellin, hard harvesting, the hard rock jail, looking for a woman that's hard to find."

10 **New River Train.** The New River cuts through some of the richest coal country in the southern Appalachian Mountains. And wherever coal was mined, railroads were built. The New River Railroad Companies of Virginia and West Virginia were chartered in 1881, and the New River line was completed in 1883. By the 1890s, the fittingly-named Cripple Creek Extension brought the line through the music-rich area around Galax, Virginia. Banjoist Wade Ward, from nearby Independence, claimed that his family had known the song about the "New River Train" since 1895. The first recording of the song, by Henry Whitter, a guitar-strumming textile mill worker from the area, was made in New York in 1924 and was quickly covered by Kelly Harrell, from nearby Fieldale, accompanied by the Virginia String Band. In 1928, Galax-native Ernest "Pop" Stoneman recorded the song once again with slightly different lyrics that directly referenced railroading. More common versions of the song limit the railroad to the refrain, and use the verses to enumerate the errors and consequences of loving more than one. An influential version by the Monroe Brothers in 1936 brought the song into the core of the bluegrass repertoire.

11 **Nine Hundred Miles.** A good place to start with "900 Miles" is the year 1944, when Woody Guthrie, Sonny Terry and Cisco Houston recorded the song twice for Moses Asch, the owner of Folkways Records. The first recording was an instrumental version, with Woody on fiddle of essentially the same minor melody found in the Songbook but without the tag line to the refrain. In the second recording, called "Railroad Whistle," a mandolin-strumming Woody sang a free form variation of the Songbook's "900 Miles," with the tag line. Moving forward, we find that Woody's version was transcribed by John and Alan Lomax for Folk Song U.S.A., and recorded several times by Cisco Houston and other folk revival artists. Woody's song was echoed in the song "500 Miles," which was Hedy West's adaptation of a song she learned from her grandmother in Georgia. It was West's song that was covered by many 1960s singers.

12 **Hobo's Lullaby.** This song, which borrows the melody of sentimental Civil War-era song "Just Before the Battle, Mother," was written by Goebel Reeves, who called himself "the Texas

Drifter." An erstwhile street singer and occasional merchant seaman, he had a long career as radio artist that took him to points as far apart as Chattanooga, Nova Scotia and Los Angeles.

"Hobo's Lullaby," which Reeves first recorded in 1934, is his best known song, in all likelihood because it was one of Woody Guthrie's favorite songs. Reportedly, Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie always sang the song on visits with Woody, after he was incapacitated by Huntington's disease.

13 **Careless Love.** In 1954, W.C. Handy, the "father of the blues" recalled that he first heard "See What Careless Love Has Done" in Alabama in 1892. After moving up north, he learned that blacks in Kentucky had made up the song to tell how the Governor's son was killed over an unhappy love affair. The song has long been a favorite in folk culture, as Howard Odum reported in a 1911 article "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negro." Robert W. Gordon, who found the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress collected a traditional version that was included in Carl Sandburg's American Songbag (with no identification given of the true folksinger).

14 **Greensleeves.** Easily the oldest piece in the Songbook, "Greensleeves" first appears in the historical record in 1580, when it was registered with the London Stationer's Company as "A New Northern Dittye of the Lady Greene Sleeves." The oldest extant printing of the lyrics is from *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* in 1584 with a slight change in the title to a "A New Courtly Sonnet of the Lady Green Sleeves." The familiar melody, perhaps originally intended for dancing, was first documented a few years later, around 1590, in the manuscript collection now known to historians as *William Ballet's Lute Book*. Shakespeare referred to the song by name in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which was performed perhaps as early as 1597 and published in 1602. Few old English songs have maintained such wide-spread popularity.

15 **Wildwood Flower.** "Wildwood Flower" is the classic representative of the "Carter Scratch" style of guitar playing. The style is named after Maybelle Carter, a member of the original Carter Family of Maces Springs, Virginia—the first family of county music.

The song was recorded twice by the Carter Family, the first time in 1928. In the following month, and before the release of the Carters' performance, "Wildwood Flower" was also recorded by West Virginia native, Miller Wikel. The song started out as sheet music published in 1860 under the title "I'll Twin 'Mid the Ringlets," with words by J.P. Webster and music by Maud Irving. The Carters probably learned the song from oral tradition, as its existence is reported in Josiah Combs and Herbert Shearin's 1911 *Syllabus of Kentucky Folksongs*.

16 **Old Paint.** Carl Sandburg's "I Ride an Old Paint," included in his *The American Songbag* in 1927, is practically identical to the Songbook's setting. Sandburg's source for the song was two southwestern lit erary figures, poet Margaret Larkin of New Mexico, and Oklahoma playwright, Linn Riggs. Without knowning where Larkin and Riggs learned the song, it is tantalizing to ponder whether they reworked a slightly older cowboy song commonly known as "Goodbye, Old Paint." While the Songbook's "Old Paint" features four-line stanzas and a refrain, the latter song is constructed of couplets–shared with other songs like "Rye Whiskey" and "The Wagoner's Lad"–ending with "Goodbye, Old Paint, I'm leaving Cheyenne."

"I Ride an Old Paint" was not put on disc until 1934, when California country star Stuart Hamblen recorded it in Los Angeles in 1934. The next year, his protégé, Patsy Montana recorded it with fellow WLS National Barn Dance stars, the Prairie Ramblers.

17 **Water Is Wide.** This song, under the title "Waly, Waly," dates back to at least the early 18th century. Many scholars connect it to the ballad "Jamie Douglas," number 204 in Francis James Child's monumental *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* and assume that the present short lyric attests to the erosive effects of time, memory and oral transmission. Yet, Child prefaced his narrative texts with an older non-narrative lyric titled "Waly, Waly, Gin Love Be Bony," that begins with three of the four stanzas included in the Songbook.'s version. That early text was from 1729 edition of Ramsey's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, published in Dublin.

18 **Home On The Range.** By the dawn of the 1930s, the music industry had cranked out a multitude of renditions of this western song, assumed by all to be in the public domain. Though Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley were quick to take advantage of its popularity, the earliest recordings were made by country artists like Vernon Dalhart in 1927 and WLS National Barn Dance star, Arkie the Arkansas Woodchopper. Other early records came from a real working cowboy, Jules Allen in 1928, and a show business cowboy, Ken Maynard in 1930. Conflicting claims of authorship were brought forth and the court system got involved.

One New York lawyer, hired by the Music Publishers Protective Association, spent several years traipsing through Arizona and Colorado, interviewing old cowboys, camp cooks and stage drivers. They all testified that the song was "well known to and generally sung by cowboys and other people" in the West. Legal action came to halt when it became apparent that the song originated as "Western Home," a poem written by Dr. Brewster M. Higley, a Ohio-born pioneer, and published in Kansas newspapers as early as 1873. Daniel E. Kelly, a Civil War veteran from Rhode Island, is credited with the melody most commonly paired with the song.

19 **Shine On, Harvest Moon.** This song has long been closely linked with its authors, Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth, In fact, a 1944 film titled *Shine On, Harvest Moon* was a biography of these famous singing sweethearts of early 20th century vaudeville. They published the song in 1908, the same year that Nora Bayes introduced it to the public in the Ziegfield Follies. The first recording was by Bob Roberts in 1909. The authors recorded it for Victor the next year, but their performance was never issued.

20 **Old Time Religion.** Long popular in both black and white traditions, "Old Time Religion" first appeared in print in a 1921 edition of *Songs and Spirituals of Negro Composition*, published by the Overton-Hygienic Company in Chicago. The first recording of the song was by Homer Rodeaver, the longtime music director for evangelist Billy Sunday. Further recordings quickly followed, including renditions by African-American vocal ensembles like the Cotton

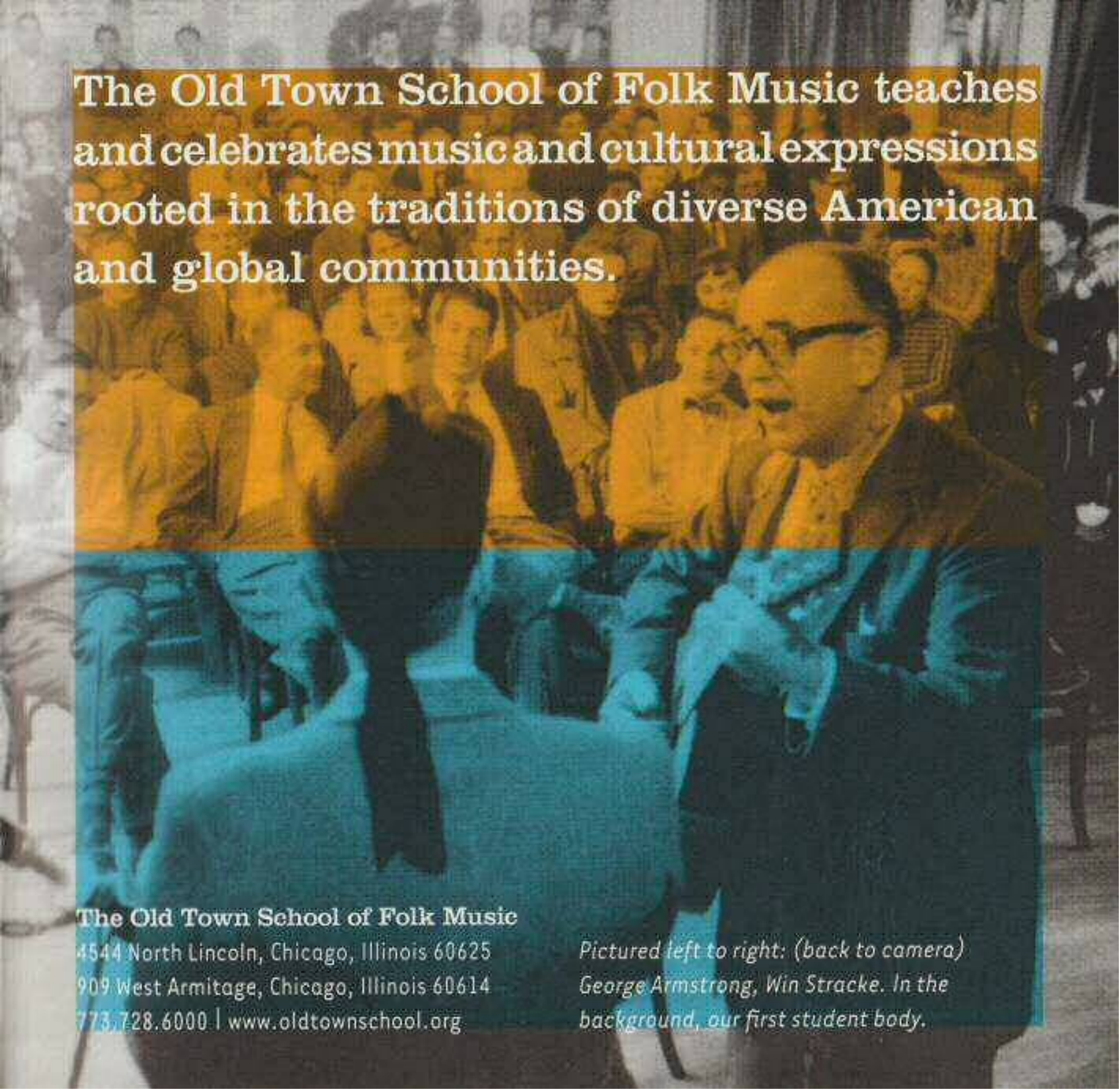
Belt Quartet in 1926 and the Cotton Top Mountain Sanctified Singers in 1929. Other early recordings were made by white country artists, such as Ernest Thompson in 1924 and the Old Southern Sacred Singers in 1927.

The Songbook's version of "Old Time Religion," however, is considerably revised. It was Woody Guthrie who contributed universal new lyrics that reflected his broadly ecumenical views of religion.

21 **Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms.** Ever since a 1936 recording by the Monroe Brothers, Bill and Charlie, this song has been a standard in the repertoire of bluegrass musicians. The first recording of "I'll Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms" was made a few years earlier by the fiddle and guitar team of Buster Carter and Preston Young. They came from the same region of textile mill towns on the North Carolina-Virginia border that produced the influential banjoist and string band leader Charlie Poole.

At least several of the verses found in the Songbook's version had been floating around in oral tradition in the first decades of the 20th century. Reportedly, traces of the lyrics can be found in the manuscripts gathered by Robert W. Gordon between 1923 and '26 for his column "Old Songs Men Have Sung," published in *Adventure* magazine. The earliest printed lyric, the first stanza of Songbook's version, appeared in 1922 as part of "Harvest Song," number 77 in Thomas Talley's *Negro Folk Rhymes*. Talley, a chemistry professor at Fisk University in Nashville, collected most of these rhymes from residents of the countryside of middle Tennessee.

Paul Tyler, a native Hoosier, has lived in Chicago since 1986, and has taught fiddle and early country music at the Old Town School for nearly that long. With a PhD in Folklore and American Studies from Indiana University, he also teaches in the Social Science and Music Departments at National-Louis University. He is currently working on a book on Traditional Fiddling in the Old Northwest, from the Pioneer Period Through the Folk Revival.



The Old Town School of Folk Music teaches and celebrates music and cultural expressions rooted in the traditions of diverse American and global communities.

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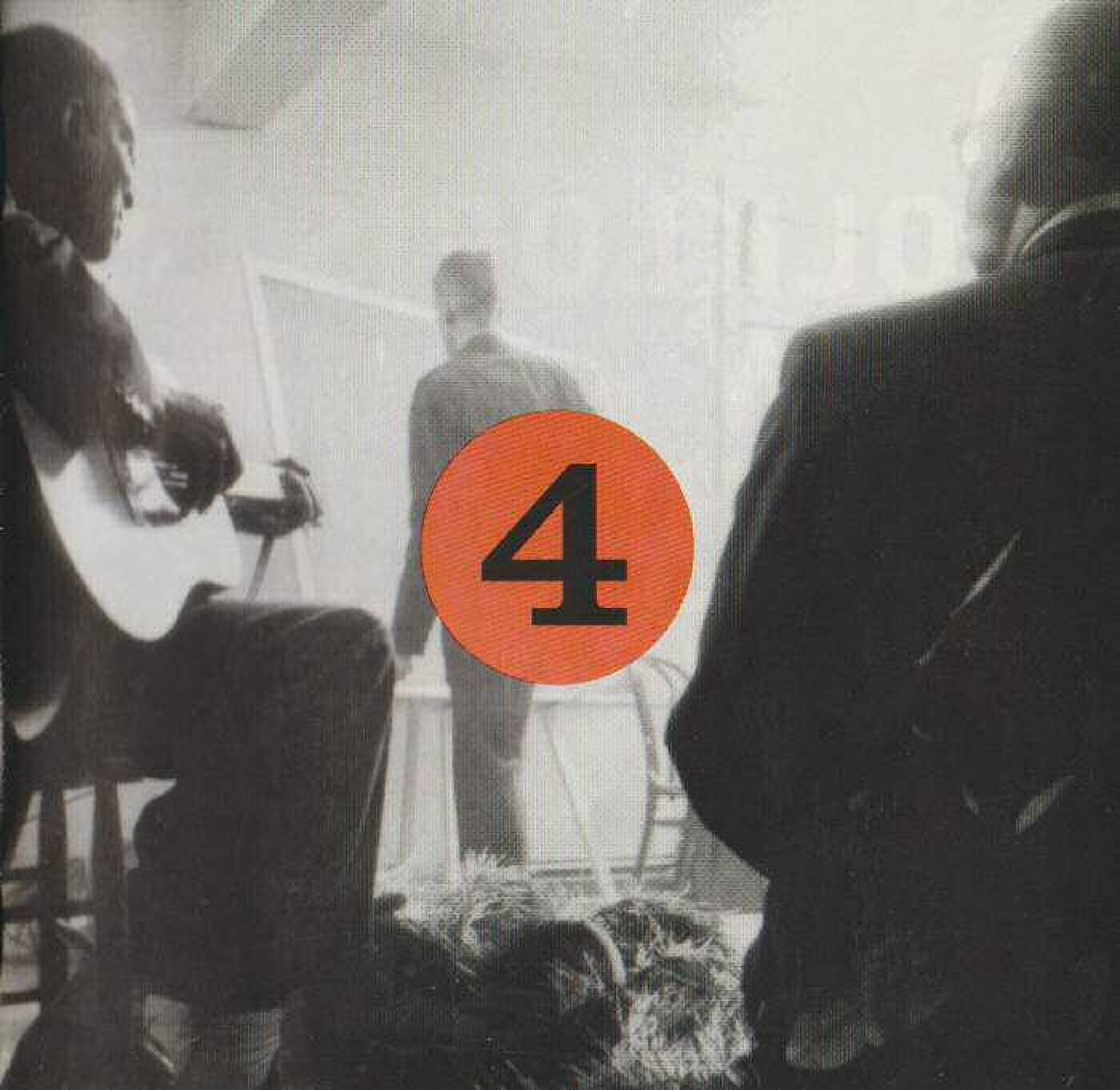
Pictured left to right: (back to camera) George Armstrong, Win Stracke. In the background, our first student body.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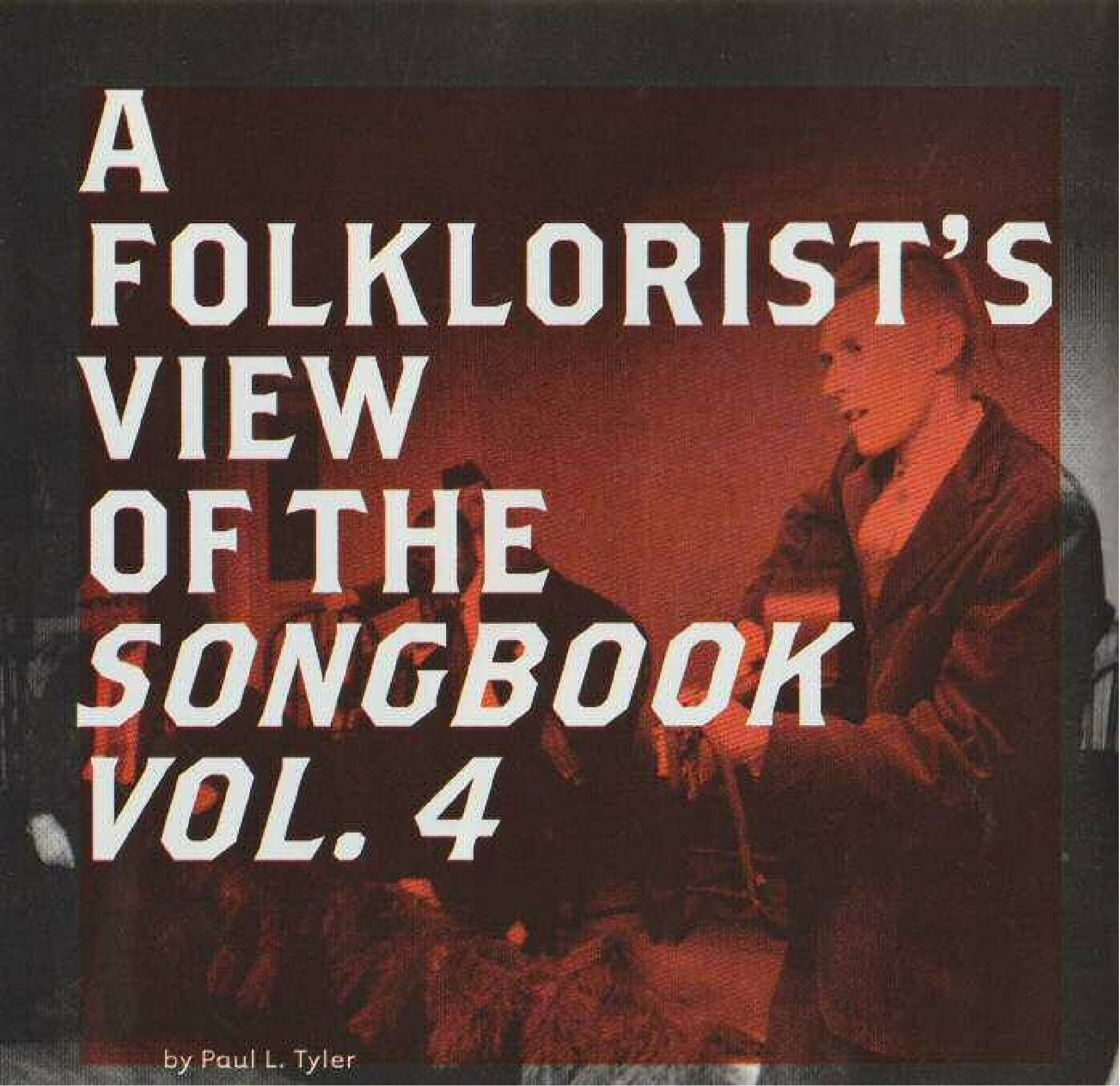
A FOLKLORIST'S VIEW OF THE *SONGBOOK VOL. 4*



by Paul L. Tyler

1 **El-A-Noy.** (Trad.) Carl Sandburg included "The State of El-A-Noy" in his *American Songbag* published in Chicago in 1927 but provided no indication of its source. Sandburg noted that a Chicago attorney of the time remembered his father singing the song when they lived near the Ohio River. A probable ancestor is an obscure broadside called "The State of Illinois," published in New York around the time of the Civil War.

Old Town School of Folk Music founder, Win Stracke, performed the song frequently and recorded it on his album *Songs of Old Town*.

2 **Scarborough Fair.** (Trad.) Folk tales centered on a battle of wits between would-be lovers are widespread in the lore of the world's cultures. A European ballad (a narrative in song) of a contest in which a maid and her suitor assign for each other imaginative but physically impossible tasks is found from Spain to Slovenia. From Scotland comes one such ballad, widely known as "The Elfin Knight" (number two in Francis J. Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*). The earliest known instance was printed around 1670 under the title "The Wind hath Blown my Plaid away." The wardrobe malfunction of the title leads a spectral knight to visit the maiden's bed, but she outdoes him in devising improbable tasks. He secures his tartan, and she keeps her maidenhead.

Common in most American versions are a string of nonsense syllables used as a refrain, such as Indiana folksinger Anna Underhill's "Lie flum-a-lum-a likker slomie." Paul Simon popularized the British "Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme." And while deep symbolism can be elicited from this recitation of herbs, it is not essential to the narrative.

3 **So Long, It's Been Good to Know You.** (Woody Guthrie) There are two well-known versions of this Woody Guthrie classic. The earliest, copyrighted in 1940, was included on Woody's landmark album *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Under the title "Dusty Old Dust," the original was based on the actual events of the 1935 "Black Easter" dust storm in Texas. In Woody's words, the storm turned the day "so dark that you couldn't see your hand before your face." Many people in the Southwest were then forced to say "so long" to their neighbors and homes and head off in search of gainful employment. A later, less edgy version, popularized by

the Weavers, enumerated more universal reasons – the price of butter or the prospect of an unwise marriage – for the narrator's leave-taking.

4 **Colorado Trail.** (James Bliss) This song of the West was originally written by a New Englander, James Bliss, who had a predilection for the compositions of Debussy and Gershwin. Bliss's version first saw print in 1923 and was set to a melody in a minor key. Four years later, a single stanza and the chorus were included by Carl Sandburg in his *American Songbag*. Sandburg obtained the song from a doctor in Duluth, Minnesota, who had learned it from a patient, an old "hoss wrangler." The Songbook's version uses the melody obtained by Sandburg.

5 **Stealin'.** (Gus Cannon) Gus Cannon, banjoist and leader of the Memphis-based Cannon's Jug Stompers is often given credit for this song, as he copyrighted the distinctive opening line "Put your arms around me like a circle 'round the sun." Cannon, however, never recorded the song. The earliest recording is "Stealin' Stealin" by the Memphis Jug Band from 1928. The song was popularized in the 1960s by the Jim Kweskin Jug Band as well as by the Grateful Dead.

6 **Angel Band.** (Trad.) Written before the Civil War, the words to this long-cherished hymn first saw print in 1860 as "The Land of Beulah" in *The Melodion*. Reverend Jefferson Hascall's lyric was married to a 6/8 tune by William Batchelder Bradbury and was first printed two years later. Polished by traditional performance practices, the song is now universally rendered in a gentle 3/4 meter and has become a country and bluegrass standard. The earliest recording was Uncle Dave Macon's 1927 "O Bear Me Away On Your Snowy Wings." A gold standard for the song was set in 1955 when the Stanley Brothers recorded a bluegrass version for Chicago-based Mercury Records.

7 **I Shall Not Be Moved.** (Trad.) This hymn, composed in 1906 by Alfred H. Ackley, was recorded before World War II by a half-dozen rural string bands including the McCravy Brothers, the Cauley Family and the Dixie Reelers and several country bluesmen, most notably Charlie Patton. A 1929 recording by Reverend D.C. Rise was titled "I Shall Not Be Removed." The

song was given new life during the post-war folk revival through the work of North Carolina lawyer, Bascom Lamar Lunsford.

The song's imagery of spiritual steadfastness was easily assimilated by labor union singers, and the song was given new life as "We Shall Not Be Moved," recorded in 1944 by the Union Boys. Pete Seeger, a key member of the group, kept singing the union version, which no doubt contributed to the harassment he received from the House Un-American Activities Committee and other McCarthyites.

8 **Lay Me Down a Pallet.** (Trad.) This song more than likely originated in African-American tradition. It was first referenced in print in a scholarly 1911 article by Howard W. Odum for the *Journal of American Folklore*, "Folk-song and Folk-poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes." A version of the song was copyrighted in 1923 by W.C. Handy, the putative "father of the blues," under the title "Atlanta Blues (Make Me One Pallet on Your Floor)." The first recordings were by female blues singers Virginia Liston in 1925 and Ethel Waters the next year. Country blues artist Mississippi John Hurt followed with a 1928 recording called "Ain't No Tellin'." In later decades, the song was covered by country singer Louis "Grandpa" Jones and folk icon Woody Guthrie. The latter's version was called "Bed on the Floor."

9 **This Train.** (Trad.) The earliest recording dates to 1922, when the song was recorded for the Okeh label by the Florida Normal Industrial Institute Quartet. Seventeen years later, WLS National Barn Dance stars Lulu Belle & Scotty recorded it again for Okeh. In some of his last vocal performances before he lost his voice to throat cancer, Big Bill Broonzy sang "This Train Is Bound for Glory" for WFMT in Chicago (for the Folkways album *Big Bill Broonzy Sings Folk Songs*) and for Pete Seeger's home movie camera (released on the Yazoo video *A Musical Journey: The Films of Pete, Toshi & Dan Seeger*).

10 **Welcome Table.** (Trad.) This proclamation of spiritual victory has been applied to all manner of struggles. The earliest recording was "The Welcome Table" sung by the Florida Normal Quartet in 1922. Before the decade was over, the song appeared as "The River of Jordan" by both bluesman Jaybird Coleman and the Carter Family.

In his *American Songbag* of 1927, Carl Sandburg informs us that the Wobblies, radical unionists belonging to the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World), sang the song loudly when they were jailed. He wrote "Their favorite verse was 'God's Goin' to Set This World on Fire,'" Sandburg's text was contributed by Brooklynite Arthur Billings Hunt who learned it in rural Virginia from a group of African-American singers.

11 **Simple Gifts.** (Trad.) Frank Hamilton, the Old Town School's founding teacher, adds a second verse to this the most widely known of the songs used in worship by the Shakers. Dwelling in communal settlements, the Shakers practiced strict celibacy but nevertheless, have survived, though in small numbers, down to the present. "'Tis a Gift to Be Simple" was a favorite of early Old Town School leaders, George and Gerry Armstrong. Their version is included on the Flying Fish CD *Wheel of the Year. Thirty Years with the Armstrong Family*.

12 **Pay Me My Money Down.** (Trad.) This chantey (or shanty) was sung by stevedores or longshoremen while at work in the West Indies. In 1959, Joe Armstrong of St. Simon's Island (Georgia) told Alan Lomax that while loading timber on a schooner, the song was sung "to make it light for us." Sea shanty historian, Stan Hugill, claimed that as early as 1888, the song was borrowed from the shore workers and adapted by deep sea sailors for use as a halyard shanty.

A version of the song was performed by The Weavers at their seminal Carnegie Hall concerts in 1955. A 1958 recording further popularized the song, as did similar calypso-style "skiffle" versions popular in Great Britain. The Georgia Sea Island Singers, a group of African-American traditional singers organized by Bessie Jones, kept the song alive through the end of the century at folk festivals and educational venues. Most recently the song was featured on Bruce Springsteen's tribute album, *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*.

13 **The Dutchman.** (Michael Smith) This poignant and well-crafted gem emerged from the pen of Michael Peter Smith, a native of New Jersey who moved to Chicago in 1976. The song sprouted in Smith's imagination as another song about young love, until the latent logic of the first two lines propelled the author down another path. "The Dutchman" witnesses to the love between two senior citizens, one of whom is sinking into dementia. Smith first recorded it in 1972. The following year, Steve Goodman performed it on his legendary *Somebody Else's Troubles* album.

14 **City Of New Orleans.** (Steve Goodman) The seeds for Steve Goodman's most famous song were sown in 1967, when the aspiring musician (and less than stellar student), decided to not disembark at the Illinois Central stop near the University of Illinois but to ride all the way to the southern terminus. By the time Goodman got back for his mid-week classes, the important opening lines and parts of the chorus were written. Three years later, when Goodman (by now a full-time performer and songwriter) and his new wife took the train south to Mattoon, Illinois, two full verses and a completed chorus were coaxed from his muse. A few nights later he introduced it to fellow pickers at a club in Chicago. They knew it was a potential hit and urged him to write the final stanza.

The finished song, first recorded on the 1970 LP *Gathering at the Earl of Old Town*, became the springboard to national fame for both Goodman and for the burgeoning singer-songwriter scene in Chicago. Arlo Guthrie made it a big hit in 1972, and since then it has been recorded by countless artists including Judy Collins, Chet Atkins, and Willie Nelson.

15 **Done Laid Around.** (Paul Clayton) Better known as "Gotta Travel On," this well-traveled song was written by Paul Clayton, a singer and song collector who figured large in both the 1950s' folk song revival and the rise of Bob Dylan. The Weavers and Harry Belafonte both introduced the song to American audiences around 1956, and in 1958 it was a hit for country singer Billy Grammer. Then in 1959, Buddy Holly opened what turned out to be his last live show with a solo electric verion of "Gotta Travel On," which allegedly inspired Dylan to add it to his repertoire. Over the next several decades, the song's popularity has continued among folk, country and bluegrass artists ranging from Trini Lopez to Eddy Arnold to Ollabelle Reed.

16 **The Rivers of Babylon.** (Trad.) Based on the biblical Psalm 137, this song was composed by Jamaican singers Brent Dowe and Trevor McNaughton. They had a hit record with the song in 1969 with their band, the Melodians, a group that pioneered rocksteady, a slower and soulful sound that by 1970 had supplanted *ska*. Boney M, a quartet from Jamaica and the West Indies, had an even bigger hit with the song in Europe in a 1978 version produced in German. The Melodians' spiritual plain has been covered by artists as diverse as Sublime, Steve Earle and Sweet Honey in the Rock.

17 **My Home's Across the Smoky Mountains.** (Trad.) Often recorded by white rural string bands in the early days of commercial country music, this song originated in folk tradition. In a 1909 article in the *Journal of American Folklore*, Louise Rand Bascom included lyrics she had collected in western North Carolina. In 1925, Kelly Harrell, a textile mill worker from the Piedmont recorded it with the title "I'm Going Back to North Carolina." Within the next 15 years, it was recorded by such country luminaries as the Carolina Tar Heels and the Carter Family, as well as Grand Ole Opry stars the Delmore Brothers and Fiddlin' Arthur Smith. Most recordings bore the title "My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains." Bascom Lamar Lunsford, a country lawyer and folk festival organizer from near Asheville, North Carolina, used "Smoky Mountains" in the version he recorded for the Archive of American Folksong at the Library of Congress.

18 **Paradise** (John Prine)**.** John Prine was born in the Chicago suburb of Maywood, but his family's roots were in Muhlenberg County in western Kentucky, a landscape heavily scarred by strip mining. Named after the family's hometown, Prine's self-penned lament in waltz time was one of the songs that caught the attention of both Kris Kristofferson and Paul Anka. The two established stars helped the young mail carrier land a recording contract with Atlantic Records. "Paradise" appeared on Prine's first album. It has been covered by John Denver, the Everly Brothers, and numerous bluegrass bands.

19 **Twelve Gates to the City.** (Trad.) A traditional spiritual, "Oh, What a Beautiful City" was first recorded in 1940 by contralto, Marian Anderson. The year before, controversy swirled around Ms. Anderson as the Daughters of the American Revolution barred her, on the basis of race, from appearing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. a crowd of 75,000 people showed up at an alternate concert quickly organized by protestors.

A favorite in the folk revival, it was a staple in the repertories of Joan Baez, Pete Seeger and harmonica wizard Sonny Terry. This rendition of "Twelve Gates to the City" by Ed Holstein, a longtime friend of the Old Town School, owes much to the masterful guitar styling of the Reverend Gary Davis.

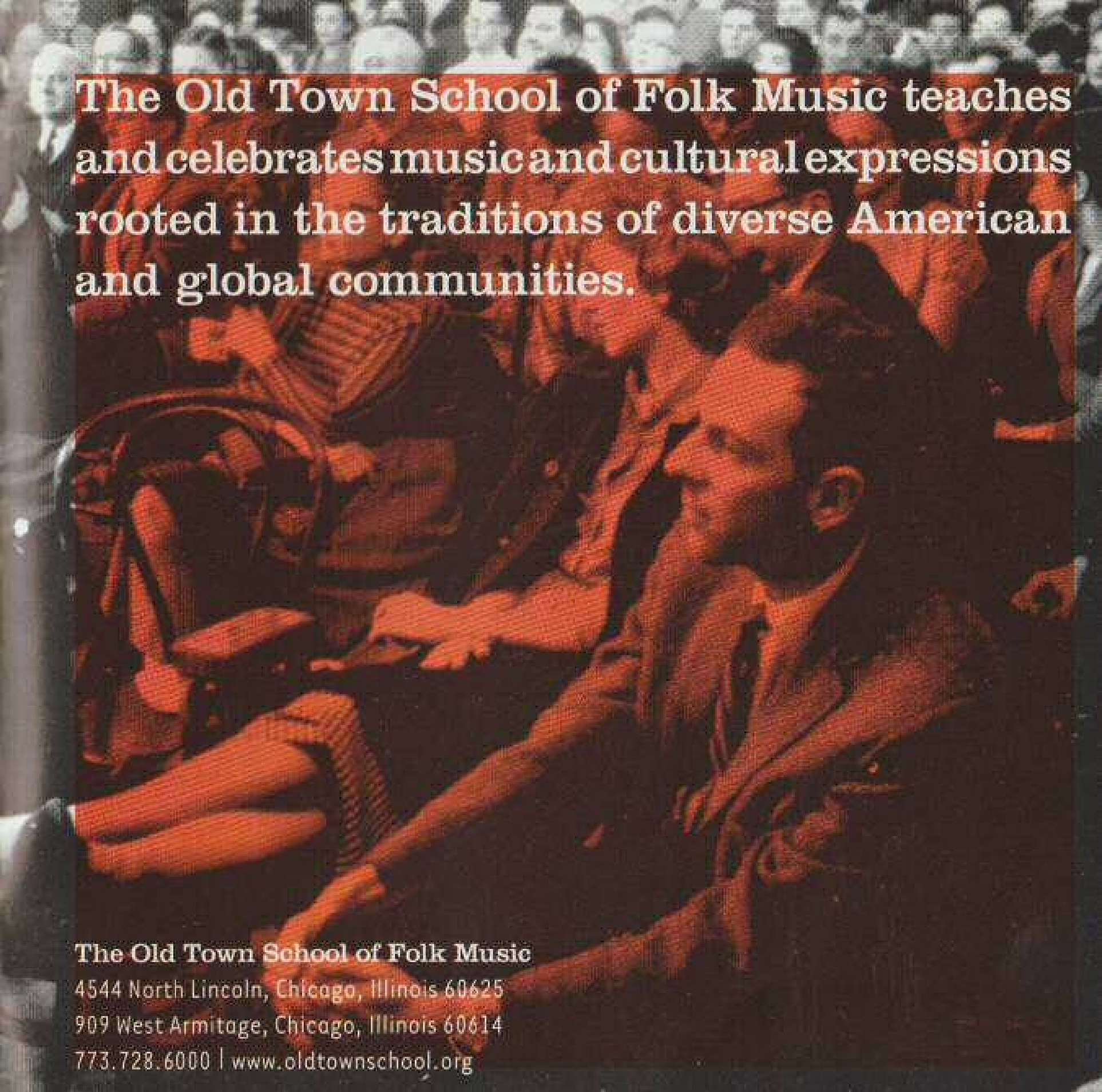
20 **I'll Fly Away.** (Trad.) This hymn was the first one composed by Albert Brumley, a prolific songwriter and composer from the Ozarks. Filled with old favorites, his many inexpensive songbooks, such as *All Day Singin' & Dinner on the Ground*, have been continuously available for decades and can still be found on the Albert Brumley & Sons web site.

"I'll Fly Away" is Brumley's most-recorded song, and has been waxed by such white gospel groups as the Brown's Ferry Four (comprised of the Delmore Brothers, Grandpa Jones and Merle Travis) , as well as by African-American artists like the Rev. Gary Davis and the Selah Jubilee Quartet. The Library of Congress' Archive of Folk Culture holds a non-commercial recording from 1943 made by a group with a name of special interest to Chicagoans: the Lincoln Park Singers.

PAUL TYLER, a native Hoosier, has lived in Chicago since 1986, and has taught fiddle and early country music at the Old Town School for nearly that long. With a PhD in Folklore and American Studies from Indiana University, he also teaches in the Social Science and Music Departments at National-Louis University. He is currently working on a book on Traditional Fiddling in the Old Northwest, from the Pioneer Period Through the Folk Revival.

Volume 4 Credits

El-A-Noy: Win Stracke *Guitar + Vocal* w/Mark Dvorak *Guitar + Vocal* **Scarborough Fair**: Mike Austin Band: Jack Callahan *Guitar + Vocal*, Jimmy Conway *Whistle*, Mike Austin *Bodhran*. **So Long, It's Been Good to Know You**: Tom Paxton *Guitar + Vocal*, Cathy Fink *Banjo + Vocal*, Marcy Marxer *Mandolin + Vocal*, John Abbey *Guitar*. **Colorado Trail**: Jacob Sweet *Guitar + Vocal*, Simon Sweet *Organ + Vocal*, Howie Kantoff *Drums*. **Stealin'**: Devil In A Woodpile: Rick Sherry *Vocal, Harmonica + Jug*, Joel Patterson *Vocal, Guitar, Kazoo*. **Angel Band**: Rita Ruby *Vocal*, Annalee Koehn *Vocal*, Mitzi Lebensorger *Vocal*, Steve Rosen *Guitar*, John Abbey *Guitarón*. **I Shall Not Be Moved**: Andrew Bird *Vocal, Guitar + Violin*. **Lay Me Down A Pallet**: Casey Driessen *Vocal + Fiddle*, Matt Mignano *Bass*, Tom Giampietro *Drums*. **This Train**: Steve Dawson *Guitar + Vocal*, Sue Demel *Vocal*, Chris Walz *Piano*, John Abbey *Bass*. **Welcome Table**: Bill Brickey *Vocal*, Sue Demel *Vocal*, Mike Allemena *Guitar*, Al Ehrich *Bass*, Joel Styzens *Drums*. **Simple Gifts**: Frank Hamilton *Guitar + Vocal*, Mary Hamilton *Autoharp*. **Pay Me My Money Down**: FreezeDried: Kevin Altenburg *Vocal, Trombone + Bass*, Joey Derus *Guitar + Vocal*, John Krawisz *Accordion + Vocal*, Mike Maduzia *Drums + Percussion*, John Okrzesik *Vocal*, Ted Okrzesik *Trumpet + Vocal*. **The Dutchman**: Michael Smith *Guitar + Vocal*. **City Of New Orleans**: Steve Goodman *Guitar + Vocal*. **Done Laid Around**: The Astronomer: Charles Kim *Guitar + Vocal*, Jeff Freling *Guitar*, Tim Joyce *Keyboards*, Jason Toth *Drums*, Al Ehrich *Bass*. **Rivers Of Babylon**: Typhanie Monique *Vocal*, Neal Alger *Guitar*. **My Home's Across The Smoky Mountains**: Barbara Barrow *Guitar + Vocal*, Chris Walz *Banjo + Vocal*, Colby Maddox *Mandolin + Vocal*, Rob Cruz *Accordion*, John Abbey *Bass + Drums*. **Paradise**: John Prine *Vocal + Guitar*, Jim Rooney *Guitar + Vocal*, Sam Bush *Mandolin + Vocal*, Stuart Duncan *Fiddle + Vocal*, Phillip Donnelly *Guitar*, Roy Husky Jr. *Bass*, Kenny Malone *Drums*, Rachel Peer Prine, Keith Sykes, Alan O'bryant, Marty Stuart, Jessica Cash *Vocal*. **Twelve Gates to the City**: Ed Holstein *Guitar + Vocal*, Elaine Moore *Vocal*, John Abbey *Bass*. **I'll Fly Away**: Sons Of The Never Wrong: Sue Demel *Vocal + Guitar*, Deborah Lader *Vocal + Mandolin*, Bruce Roper *Vocal + Guitar*, Steve Goodman *Vocal (on the bridge)* Al Ehrich *Bass*, Chris Walz *Piano*, John Abbey *Percussion*



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OLD TOWN SCHOOL OF FOLK MUSIC SONGBOOK VOLUME FOUR

Produced by John Abbey. Recorded and mixed by John Abbey at the Old Town School's Soccer Club Studios, except "I Shall Not Be Moved," recorded at Mosaic Music by Rich Rankin, "So Long, It's Been Good To Know Ya" recorded by Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer at their studio, "City of New Orleans," recorded by John Anderson on location at the Earl of Old Town, and "Paradise," which was originally available on the Oh Boy! album *German Afternoons*.

Executive Producer/Old Town School Recordings: Bob Medich. Liner Notes: Paul Tyler. Liner Notes Editor: Krista Ortgiesen. Mastered by Dan Stout at Colossal Mastering. Design: Faust Associates, Chicago, *www.faustltd.com*.

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John Prine & Steve Goodman appear courtesy of Oh Boy! Records and Al Bunetta Management. Tom Paxton appears courtesy of Shout! Factory, LLC. Andrew Bird appears courtesy of Wegawam Music. Casey Driessen appears courtesy of Sugar Hill Records. Sons of the Never Wrong and The Astronomer appear courtesy of themselves.

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