

Indiana Hoedoen IH002 & IH054
Traditional Music from the Hoosier State

"COUNTRY TALENT TIME" AND "JOE TAYLOR & THE REDBIRDS" Sessions 2&54 80-042-
Radio broadcasts and commercial discs. Tape 96 OT 6085
Fort Wayne, Indiana
1948 to circa 1960
From the collection of Joe Taylor.

"Country Talent Time" was a weekly radio series organized by Joe Taylor in 1957. It brought together various country music bands working in the Fort Wayne area. Each week a different band was featured, and it's leader was M.C. for the program. Musicians from other member bands would also be on hand at every show for instrumental back-up, duets, or even guest solos. The extra musicians also provided a small but enthusiastic studio audience.

The program was recorded at radio station WGL in Fort Wayne. Only thirteen shows were recorded. The project did not gain the response the originators had hoped for. It played on WGL and a few other stations in northeastern Indiana, but in the long run it was an idea out-of-place with radio's growing infatuation with records and Rock-and-Roll music.

The material that Joe Taylor made available to the ATM is excerpts from nine of the programs, giving a general feel as to the format of the show. The opening theme was played by the musicians on hand for that week, and then the announcer--Smoky Montgomery, a local record store owner--would introduce that week's M.C. The featured band would begin with generally an uptempo group number. Following the fast-paced opening would be a variety of solos and duets featuring various groupings of the featured band, with or without members of other bands or special guests. Halfway through the program--it was usually about 25-minutes long--would be an instrumental bringing together all the musicians in the studio. This would be at least two-minutes long and would allow stations that carried the show to slip in commercial messages. Between musical selections the M.C. would announce where the various groups would be performing that week, offer some humorous banter, or some 'homespun' philosophy. The show would close with the theme song and an adage offered by the announcer.

The musicians who made up "Country Talent Time" included:

Charlie Walters and the Trail Riders

Charlie Walters--piano and accordion

Red Tressler--lead "spanish" (electric) guitar

Don Sinckie--bass

Bill Swift--guitar

(This band, with different personnel, was still active in Fort Wayne in 1980.)

Slim Adams and the Rhythm Sons

Slim Adams--rhythm guitar

Bud Phillips--steel guitar

Francis Geels--fiddle

Ray Kaiser--bass and fiddle

The Burger Sisters--vocals

(See accession #80-040-F, Francis Geels. Slim Adams left town in the middle of the series. The band was reorganized as "Ray Kaiser and the Country Gentlemen.")

Sam Moffet--steel guitar and lead 'spanish' guitar

(See accession #80-047-F/C, Vic Rigsby, for more on "Ray Kaiser and the Country Gentlemen.")

The Country Squires

Bob "Robin" Richards--guitar
Brian Stewart--guitar
Connie Smith--steel and lead 'spanish' guitar
Smith--bass

(Bob Richards and Brian Stewart, I believe, also performed as "The Stewart Brothers.")

Joe Taylor and the Indiana Redbirds

Joe Taylor--guitar
Patty Corbett--vocal
Jay Dickerson--fiddle
Bud Phillips--steel guitar
Bill Allen--bass

"Joe Taylor and the Redbirds" (they dropped the name 'Indiana') had a weekly radio show on WGL from the mid-1950s to 1967. Before that, they had played regularly on WOWO in Fort Wayne. The format of this show was much the same as "Country Talent Time," though much looser. Each Saturday they featured guests, generally other county musicians from around Fort Wayne and north-eastern Indiana. There was much more talking between musical selections, with dedicatitions, news about music and area friends, reports of letters received, etc. This program was an hour long and was not as tightly structured.

The guests on the excerpts recorded here are mostly members of groups that played on "Country Talent Time." Charlie Dickerson was the brother of Joe Taylor's fiddler, Jay Dickerson. For many years, Charlied Dickerson played with "Charlie Walters and the Trail Riders."

Joe Taylor's band is still active in Fort Wayne in the 1980s. Steady members have been Joe and his sister (or sister-in-law) Patty Corbett; Jay Dickerson, who replaced Francis Geels and played with Joe for 25 years until his death in 1976; and Al "Bud" Phillips, who also played until his sudden death. In the 1960s, Joe's band became primarily a family band, feaxing several of his children. Since Jay Dickerson's death, Joe has not felt like trying to find a fiddler to replace his longtime friend and partner, but has added a lead electric guitarist for a more modern sound. He has also added drums, which he thinks might have given a boost to his career if he had used them in the 1950s.

The commercial discs of "Joe Taylor and the Indiana Redbirds" were his first recordings. He was a solo performer in Fort Wayne in the late 1940s, known as "The Cowboy Auctioneer," when a local woman who had written a song engaged him to record the song on her own label. Joe put together a band to do the session. He hired Francis Geels to play fiddle, Francis had been playing with the Burnau Brothers on another radio station, WFTW, on "The Indiana Hayride;" there group was called "The Sycamore Valley Boys" or something on that order. Others in the band were Connie Smith--lead guitar; Bill Allen--bass; Vaughan Marchand--piano; an unknown trumpeter; and Porter McDowell, who imitated the cow.

The first recording was the Redbird coupling of "Whispering Pines,"*written by the local woman, and "He's a Cowboy Auctioneer," one of Joe's first original compositions (it was later covered by Tex Ritter). This disc was recorded in 1948. The London coupling was recorded in Chicago in 1949. On "Tiger Rag," Francis Geels played the tenor banjo. "My Gal's a Square Dance Caller" featured Patty Corbett. The latter song was written by Joe Taylor for "The Hoagland Hayloft," a a locally popular dance hall that gave the band their first regular job.

* "The Taylor Maids" were Patty Corbett, Ruth and Donna Manwiller.