



WPA Alabama Writers Project  
FOLKLORE  
General Information, Procedure

Ready for microfilming: 5-11-1977

Filmed:

SAW

forced him to turn over the work to his son. He has been married 54 years, numbers his white friends by the hundreds and is held in great respect by his own race.

*More good*

Uncle Tom Baker,  
~~A slave's story~~ *bear fight*

"So, I recollects about de slabery days," said uncle Tom as he whittled shavings from a soft piece of white pine. "I lived on a plantation down in Perry County an' I remembers a story bout somp'n dat happen to me a way back dar."

"I was a water boy for fifty fiel' han's dat worked in de sun all day long, an' I hadda carry many a bucket <sup>from</sup> de spring. ~~dat was~~ <sup>from where</sup> one fiel' ober <sup>where</sup> most of dem was workin'. De spring run down between some willow trees an' it was powerful cool down dere in de shade. I use <sup>to</sup> lie on de moss an' let my bare belly git cool an' put my face in de outlet of de spring an' let de water trickle over my haid. Jus' about de time I gits a little rest one of dem niggers would call: <sup>TO</sup> Water Boy! Bring dat bucket! Den I grab up de bucket an' run back out, in de hot sun.

"One day, on my las' trip, I was mighty tired an' I flop down on dat moss wid de sweat a-drippin' from my body, an' <sup>if</sup> I knowed it I done fell slap to sleep. When I woke up, it was almos' dark, an' I couldn't hear de slaves a-singin' in de fiel's, so I knowed dat dey had gone home. I shake my haid, an' look about me, an' my eyes came to rest on a little black bear cub a-drinkin' outen de spring. He so was a cute little boogar an' I made up my mind right den to try an' kotch him. I was jus' a little nigger 'bout ten year old an' didn't have no sense, but I

sho' wanted dat little bear. He ain't seed me a-settin' <sup>dere</sup> ~~des~~, so I snuck up real cautious like, an' afore he knowed it I had dat little debil a-squealin' in my <sup>hand</sup> ~~hand~~s. I <sup>was</sup> jus' about to start home wid him, when I hears a rustlin' in de bushes an' afore I went ten feets, here come a big, black bear a-lopin' along right outen dea willow trees. I drop dat little critter 'kaze I knowed dat <sup>was</sup> his mammy an' she was ravin' mad. When I let de little feller fall it must <sup>have</sup> hurt him soap'n awful 'kaze he howl <sup>more</sup> ~~so~~ dan eber, an' went a limp'n' up to his mammy. Well, suh, dat ole woman she got so mad she made <sup>for</sup> ~~fo~~ me <sup>like</sup> two bolts of lightnin'. But dese here feets of mine begin a-doin' dere stuff. I knowed she was a-gainin' on me so I lets out a whoop for help. She chased me 'c'ross dat empty field an' 'bout dat time I seen big Jim a-comin' through a row of <sup>corn</sup> ~~corn~~. 'Hurry Big Jim,' I calls, 'a bear is <sup>after</sup> ~~at~~ me!' Big Jim was de biggest nigger on our place. He must have weighed as much as a half a bale of cotton. <sup>I</sup> was jus' 'bout gittin' to de <sup>edge</sup> ~~edge~~ of de <sup>corn</sup> ~~corn~~ when dat bear <sup>catched</sup> ~~catched~~ me. He give me a slap wid his paw an' I goes down wid my <sup>mouth</sup> ~~mouth~~ a-scoopin' up de dus'. My back felt like somebody done put a hot iron on it. Dat bear was a mean one. I was expectin' her to chaw me up an' I drewed my body up in a knot and kivered my haid wid my hands an' waited. But dat bear neber touch me egin'. <sup>I</sup> kinda snuck my eye aroun' an' I saw big Jim havin' it out wid her. Jim, he had a long knife an' dey was a-tumblin' an' a-rollin' in de dust, while I sot dere wid my eyes a-poppin' outen my haid an' my back feelin' like it was broke. Jim he wrap his legs roun' dat bear an' 'fore you knowed it he had done stuck dat ole critter a dozen times wid dat knife.

'About fifteen minutes later me an' Jim was a-walkin' back

through de <sup>corn</sup> ~~corn~~ fiel' an' I guess we looked a sight, 'kaze I was all tore up an' Jim he looked like he done mess up wid a fembly of wildcats. He was bleedin' <sup>from</sup> ~~from~~ haid to foot. When we walked into de big house to git some treatments an' medicine for our hurts, <sup>istis</sup> ~~istis~~ was a-standin' dere, ~~and~~ when she seed me an' Jim, she almost faint. She say: 'Whut done happen to my niggers?'

'Atter me an' Jim got fixed up I was jus' as happy, kaze I done seed de bes' fight dere eber was, an' I had me a little orphan bear cub."

Wash. Copy

R.L.D.

5-20-37

HE MISSES DEM  
"SET-DOWN HAWGS"

In Prichard, a suburb of Mobile, lives an old, blind Negro, "Uncle Henry" Barnes, who says he was born in 1858, near Suggsville, Clarke County, Alabama.

"Cose I was borned a slave, but I don't 'member much 'bout hit, 'caze I was li'l. Dere is one t'ing I does 'member, an' dat was when dey cut watermelons at de oberseer's house an' dey want us li'l niggers run races to git our piece. I jes wouldn't run an' my mammy she whup me 'caze I so stubborn an' when I git my piece o' melon, I fly down de lan<sup>d</sup> whar our log cabins was. Dem cabins was daubed wid clay, an' de chimbleys was built outten clay on' stick. Our beds was homemade an' had tree legs wid de yuther side nail to de wall. I 'member etter I got a big boy, my Mammy had a bed made outten lumber an' I slep' in dat bed 'twel I was growed an' ma'ed.

"I 'members us's Ole Mistis, Miss Dell. Miss Dell was a good Mistis an' she useter hab Sunday School ebber' Sund'y mornin' at de Big House an' all us li'l niggers went up dar for her to teach us 'bout de Bible an' Jesus.

"Marse John was good to all he slaves an' he wouldn't stan' no rush er meanness to his niggers. Iffen de o'seer got mean, Ole Marster would turn him off. Ole Marster allus tuk good keer of he slaves, 'caze when dey got sick, he hab de doctor, jes lak when de white folks got sick. One o' Marse John's boys, Marse Bennie, was a doctor, an' he was a good doctor, cep'n' he gin us

bad med'cin', but he cyured you.

"Cose us hab our med'cin' sich lak elderbush tea. Hit was red 'mos' lak whiskey an' us used hit for feber. Den dere was red sassafras tea fer spring feber, an' dey made Jerusalem oak candy full o' seeds an' gib to de chilluns to eat so dey could git rid o' worms. Den us had mullen an' pine-top tea f<sup>o</sup>r colds an' feber. |<sup>o</sup> An' when us had ~~a~~ swellin' dey made a poultice o' mullen leaves to take de swellin' out.

"Sometimes I wishes dat I could be back to de ol' place, 'caze us did hab plenty to eat, an' at hog-killin' time us had mor'n a plenty. Ole Marster kill eight or ten set-down hawks at one time, an' de meat, an' de lard an' de hawgjowl an' de chitt'lin's - m'm' I kin see 'em now.

"What a set-down hawg? Hit's a hawg what done et so much corn he got so fat dat he feets can't hol' him up an' he jes set on he hin' quarters an' grunts an' eats an' eats an' grunts, 'twell dey knock him in de head.

"Dem was sho' good times, 'caze us had all us could eat den, an' plenty-sugar-cane to make 'lasses outten. An' dey made up biscuits in de big wood trays. Dem trays was made outten tupelo gum an' dey was light as a fudder. Us had plenty den, all de time, an' at Chrismus an' w<sup>h</sup>en de white folks get ma'ed, dey kill hawks, turkeys, an' chickens an' sometimes a yearlin'. En dey cook de hawks whole, barbecue 'em an' fix 'em up wid a big apple in he mouf. When de big weddin' come off, dey cook in big pots, so's to hab 'nough for eber'body. Cose us didn't hab eatin' lak dat all de time, 'caze de reg'lar rations was tree pound of meat an' a peck

of meal fer eber' han' from Sat'day twell Sat'day.

"De niggers was 'lowed to hab a li'l patch of dey own, dat dey could wuk at night an' Sat'day ebenin'. What dey make on dis patch was dey'n, an' Ole Marster pay 'em money for hit. Nobody didn't make de niggers wuk dey patches - iffen dey want de grass to look 'em, dat's all right wid Ole Marster. Ole Marster hab a big gyarden 'mos' big as a fiel', whar dey raise greens an' collards an' turnups fer de whole place.

"My granpappy was a carpenter an' Ole Marster contrac' him out to de yuther plantations to build dey houses. De grown niggers had to be up 'fo' day. De oberseer blow he horn fust to git up by an' de nex' time he blow dey hatter be ready to go to de fiel'.

"Dere was a ol' 'oman whar kep' all de li'l niggers, whilst dey mammies was in de fiel'. Dis ol' 'oman cooked fer de li'l uns an' fed 'em all day, an' dey mammies tuk 'em at night.

"Us's clo's was made outten osnaburg cloth an' dyed wid cop'rus an' sometime dey mix terbaccy an' peach-tree leabes wid de dye. Us had a big orchard wid apples an' peaches an' pears, more'n us an' de lawgs togedder could eat up.

"When a nigger died, dey was buried in de graveyard lak dey do now, an' dey shouted an' hollered an' sometime ~~a~~ 'oman she faint an' hab to be tote home. De song dey sing mos' at de fun'ral was:  
Dark from de Toon.

"Us 'sho' did hab plenty singin' o' hymns an' shoutin' at night in de cabins. Iffen de men want to break a night res' he go possum huntin' or rabbit huntin' jes' so he git pass from Ole Marster an' 'em at de fiel' nex' mornin' on time wid de yuther han's.

"I knowed Ole Marster went to de war, 'caze I heerd de folks talkin' bout hit an' wonder iffen Ole Marster grine git kilt. Den I heerd 'em say de niggers was free, but us didn't leave Ole Marster for 'bout a year attter de s'render. Den us went to lib on de young listis' place at Barlow Bend, attter she ma'ed Mr. Bob Flynn. Right dar I stayed twell I was grown and ma'ed. Den de fust move to town, us come up de Alabama Ribber to James' Landin'. I members all de big boats on de ribber. Dey sho' was fine 'uns.

"Den, I 'members attter I groved up dey tell 'bout how de Yankees comin' here an' how dey pester de white folks an' de niggers, too. Broke in dey smoke-houses, burn 'em up an' t'row t'ings away an' lef' nobody nottin' to eat. I don't 'member dat 'caze I was too li'l.

"Lady, you ax me iffen us knowed anyt'ing 'bout hoodoo? Yes, 'caze dere sho' was folkses whar could put spells on you. I sho' was skeered o' dem kin' too. Attter I was nearly grown, dere was a gal name Penny whar been down sick a long time an' dere was a cun-ter doctor wukkin' on her tryin' cyure her, but her wan't 'greeable, so he let her die. Den ~~a~~ boy, name Ed, he had a mis'ry in he foot, an' hit went up he leg an' he cripple. Dere was a hoodoo doctor in de forks o' 'Bigbee Ribber come tend on him, an' he tol' ebber'body git outten de house 'cep'n' him an' Ed an' de Debil. He cyured Ed snack well.

"My mammy said I was borned wid a 'zernin' eye to see sperits, an' I seed sump'n lak a cow wid no haid. So mammy made me stir de fresh lard when dey was rendin' hit, 'caze dat cyures you of seein' de sperits. Attter I stirred de lard, I didn't see 'em no mo'.

"One time I was splittin' rails wid a nigger whar could do anythin', but he was a bad man an' I was 'feered of him. I tol' him,

iffen I had a pain or anyt'ing hurt me, I sho' would kill him wid my ax. I wudda split dat nigger wide open, jes' lak I split dem rolls, iffen he try dat hoodoo on me.

"Telkin' 'bout fishin', I 'members when us would be plowin' down by de ribber, when hit come dinner-time an' whilst de mules eatin', us go down to de ribber an' fish. Den eb'ry Sat'day ebenin's us'd fish. Us kotch trout, gyar, jack an' carp. May was when de mero bite. Dey was so fat den dat you could cook em by deyse'f widout no grease. Den us ketch turkeys in pole pens baited wid corn.

"Lor' what's de use me telkin' 'bout dem times. Dey all pas' an' gone. Sometimes I gits to studyin' 'bout all de folks mos' is dead, an' I is 'ere yit, libin' an' blin'; but I 'spec's hit won't be long twell I is ober de ribber wid de bles'."

Wash. Cooy

S.L.D.

2-11-37

Gertha Couric,  
Eufaula, Alabama.  
John Morgan Smith,  
Birmingham, Alabama.

NATHAN BEAUCHAMP, HALF BREED.

(Photo)

I walked up a little path bordered with small stones, an atmosphere of solitude surrounding me. In the sky, large, white cumulous clouds like great bolls of cotton, floated leisurely northward. Far down the road a ramshackle buckboard disappeared over a slight hill; directly in front the path ran at twenty yards into the dilapidated steps of a Negro cabin, while an old colored man in a vegetable garden to the left to the cabin broke the stillness with the intermittent metallic sounds of his spade digging into thirsty soil. I knew at a glance that this was Nathan Beauchamp.

"Hello, Uncle Nathan," I called.

"Mornin', white folks," he answered, as he discontinued his spading and raised his hand in a friendly gesture.

I walked over to where Uncle Nathan was standing and stopped in the little furrows of brown earth. Already a thick coat of dust had formed on my shoes.

"Uncle Nathan," I said, "I'd like to have a brief chat with you about slavery days, if you can spare a few minutes from your garden here?"

"Yassuh, boss," he said, punctuating his reply with a spat of tobacco that was soon nothing but a dark mark in the parched ground, "glad to be of any 'sistance.

We moved to the shade of a large oak where we sat down together on a sturdy, home-made bench.

"Well, white folks," he went on after taking a long turn at the flipper hanging on the tree which shades a well. "I'll tell you a story of my mammy an' pappy. Nathan Beauchamp, my pappy, belonged to Massa



Next followed the women and children. Last in the long line came the old men.

Men, women and children - all looked thin and tired and sad. They had come a long way and had seen much trouble and sorrow. Once these Indians had lived in Mexico, a country far to the south of Alabama. There they were very happy, but white people came from across the sea and drove them from their homes.

The Indians moving northward found new homes in the wild forest. Here they lived until one day they killed some hunters of another tribe. This made the other tribe angry. Its warriors were larger and better fighters than the Indians who had fled from Mexico. These poor Indians had no rest for they were followed day and night by their enemies. Nowhere could they stay in peace. If they stopped they would hear the distant hells of their foes. Again they would flee on.

On the day they had entered this forest land they had moved slowly for they were worn and weary; but no longer did they hear the howls of their enemies ring out among the trees. At last their cruel foes had given up the chase and the poor wanderers were safe.

The prophet led the way among the trees. Looking about him he saw the loveliest country he had ever seen. "Surely," he thought, "this is a good place for a home!" In the distance sounded a soft murmur. The prophet's keen ear knew that it was the sound of water -- "big water". He led on hoping to reach the stream before nightfall. The other Indians believed that the Great Spirit guided his steps.

CARDS PREPARED BY MISS FRANCES HAILES, c 1942  
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W. P. A.

FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT  
OF ALABAMA

FOLKLORE

- Section 1: General Folklore
- Section 2: Ex-Slave Tales
- Section 3: Life Histories/Stories



Records Management Division  
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY  
1977



This questionnaire has been prepared for use in conjunction with the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Federal Indian Service. (See especially Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Instructions to Field Workers," for methods of handling records and reports, contacts with informants, interviewing, and recording and collecting folk songs.)

**FOLKSONG QUESTIONNAIRE**

It has been assumed that the interviewer interviewee relation according to Part I, and that his file number be used as a check on the material.



The questions in Parts II and III are placed in your file only. Do not to submit the material from these parts. They will not only serve as a check on the material but also as a working study of themselves. Additional questions are suggested.

As far as possible, in Parts III and IV, use the questions in the most form of the informant. If not, however, write down what is your best estimate in the process of the informant which you have first gained the confidence and contact. A general idea of the following questions will help you in handling these questions. Do not be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Following collectors should use their informants for all kinds of material and oral material, including those and some songs and folk tales, to be recorded on discs, and have informants speak as much as possible of the circumstances of information for recording. Other materials, such as records and musical notation, should also be collected.

The questions in Part III and IV should be adapted for types of material other than folk songs.

The questions in Part IV are additional but important for the study of the psychological and aesthetic history of folk singing (melody, form, style, lyrics, appreciation) and should be answered wherever possible.

Each sheet should keep the name and address of the collector.

Joint Committee on Folk Arts, W.P.A.

March 15, 1939

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS



1. This questionnaire has been prepared for use in conjunction with the Manual for Folklore Studies of the Federal Writers' Project. (See especially Section 6, "Instructions to Field Workers," for methods of locating sources and making contacts with informants, interviewing, and recording and submitting data.)
2. It has been suggested that the interviewer interview himself according to Part I, and that his life history be used as a means of evaluating his material.
3. The questions in Parts III and IV should be phrased in your own way. Be sure to submit the rephrased questions together with the answers. These will not only serve as a check on the answers but will make an interesting study in themselves. Additional questions are also welcome.
4. As far as possible, in Parts III and IV, take down the answers in the exact words of the informant. Do not, however, write down more than is absolutely necessary in the presence of the informant, unless you have first gained his confidence and consent. A remark like the following will often prove helpful in breaking down prejudice against note-taking: "What you say is so good that I want to get it down just as you say it."
5. Folksong collectors should ask their informants for all kinds of musical and oral material, including game and dance songs and folk tales, to be recorded on discs, and have informants speak as much as possible of the accompanying information for recording. Group materials, such as sermons and conversations, should also be recorded.
6. The questions in Parts III and IV should be adapted for types of folklore material other than folksongs.
7. The questions in Part IV are optional but important for the study of the psychological and aesthetic factors of folk singing (mood, tone, style, taste, appreciation) and should be answered wherever possible.
8. Each sheet should bear the name and address of the collector.

PART I

Case History of the Informant



1. Full name
2. Complete address (street or RFD, town, county, state)
3. Place and date of birth
4. Family history
  - a. Father's name, birthplace and ancestry
  - b. Mother's name, birthplace and ancestry(The family history should be carried back as far as possible.)
5. Places of residence and travel, with their approximate time
6. Education
7. Extent and nature of reading
8. Church membership and activity
9. Memberships and activities in other organizations
10. Other social and cultural contacts and general social and cultural standing
11. Occupational history, with place and approximate time of employment
12. Family (wife, children, grandchildren)
13. Names and addresses of close friends and acquaintances (to be used for additional information and as additional informants)
14. Population and geographic situation of community
15. Ethnic and industrial composition of community
16. Historical, antiquarian and folklore societies, library and educational facilities, in or near the community
17. Description and character sketch (and if possible, photographs) of informant, (Pictures of informants, in both working and "best" clothes, are valuable data for the history of American costume.)

PART II

Circumstances of Interview



1. Date and time of interview
2. Place of interview
3. Source of information (name and address of person leading to contact)
4. Intermediary (name and address of person arranging interview)
5. Name and address of person accompanying interviewer
6. Description (and, if possible, photographs) of room, house, surroundings, etc.
7. Description (and, if possible, photographs) of folk or unusual musical instruments played or owned by informant. (See Some Notes Upon the Recording of Folk Music.)
8. Comment (preferably in narrative form) on other circumstances of the interview, especially details which contribute to our understanding of the method of handling informants, the technique of questioning, the informant's attitudes and reactions, etc.

PART III

Case History of the Song



1. How was the song collected -- from dictation or singing or both? (If possible get the song from the singer first by dictation, after hearing it sung once; then, after the singer has approved the written text, get him to sing it again and indicate the variations made in the singing. Check every text by reading it back.)
2. By what title or name is the song known to the singer? Has he ever heard it by any other name?
3. When, where, and from whom did the singer learn it, and when, where and from whom did that person learn it?
4. How did he learn it? Actually taught? Heard at regular intervals, on such occasions as parties, work? Heard under unusual circumstances? At what age? How long did it take to learn?
5. Why did he learn it? What quality in the song (melody, interest of story, words, truthfulness to life) attracted him?
6. Has he changed it from the way he learned it? If so, how?
7. Did the singer ever see it written down or printed or hear it on a record? If so, where? Did he learn it from that source? Is the recorded version like his?
8. When and how frequently does the singer sing it?
9. How is the song sung? (Solo? Ever sung in a group and if so, how? What instrument used for accompaniment?)
10. What kind of song is it? (Try to get the singer's own classification. Do not suggest classifications unless the singer fails to understand, and then preferably by indirection; e.g., If the song is a sad one, you might say, "You wouldn't call this a comic song?")
11. How good does he think the song is, and why? (This may be a comparative question; that is, after ten songs have been recorded you may ask: "Which do you like better, and why?")
12. Does he know whether the song deals with an actual happening? If so, when and where did it take place? If not, what does he think about the truth of the song, and why?
13. Give the singer's explanation of peculiar and obsolete words and phrases.
14. Is the song widely known in its present form, or is it known to comparatively few?
15. Does he know other tunes to the same or similar words or other words to the same tune?
16. If the singer has a manuscript of the song, ask permission to copy it. Copy it exactly, but do not use it as the collected text. (In singing, singers frequently vary a text.)

PART IV

Aesthetic and Psychological Factors



1. When did he first really like songs?
2. When did he first like to sing?
3. How did he feel when he first began to sing, especially publicly?
4. Did he ever sing in school?
5. Has the singer performed at festivals, in competitions, upon platforms, or for radio or sound-recording?
6. Does he sing differently (e.g., more or less loudly) under different conditions or circumstances?
7. Does he drink when he sings?
8. What has his reputation as a singer been, and why?
9. What is his style of singing and repertoire (clarity, expression, loudness; completeness of memory; number of songs; kind of songs)?
10. What effect do his songs have on the rest of his life and on the lives of the people who listen to them?
11. Do women specialize in certain types of songs? When do they sing?
12. Where and when do people sing most? At night? At parties?
13. Why, when, and where does he like to sing?
14. Do certain songs go with certain moods? What are they? .
15. What kind of songs does he like best?
16. What kind of songs does he like and dislike on phonograph or radio?
17. What kind of singing does he like and dislike on phonograph or radio?
18. Why did people like to sing in the old days?
19. What kind of songs did they like, and why?

20. What do people think of the old songs nowadays?
21. Why is it that most church people don't sing old-fashioned songs?
22. Why do more men sing publicly?
23. What is the difference between old and new songs (especially ballads and sentimental songs, folk and popular songs)? How would he know an old song from a new one?
24. What is the difference between different kinds of old songs?



Instructions to Field Workers

- A. Method of locating individuals having contacts with informants
- B. Method of interviewing
- C. Method of recording and submitting data

Types of Materials

- A. Songs and lyrics
- B. Texts
- C. Linguistic "collected" material
- D. Orbits, collections, and activities
- E. Folksongs and ballads

Fields for Interviews

- Field A. Circumstances of collection
- Field B. Personal history of informant
- Field C. Method of collection
- Field D. Other data

C O N T E N T S

- I. Prefatory Note
- II. Correlation with the Social-Ethnic Studies
- III. The Folklore Series
- IV. Folklore: Its Nature and Study
- V. Instructions to Directors and Supervisors
  - A. Selection of Material
  - B. Basic Principles of Collection
  - C. Exploratory Information
  - D. Collaboration with the Historical Records Survey
  - E. Assigning Workers
- VI. Instructions to Field Workers
  - A. Method of Locating Sources and Making Contacts with Informants
  - B. Method of Interviewing
  - C. Method of Recording and Submitting Data
- VII. Types of Folklore
  - A. Songs and Rhymes
  - B. Tales
  - C. Linguistic "Floating" Material
  - D. Groups, Gatherings, and Activities
  - E. Beliefs and Customs
- VIII. Forms for Interviews
  - Form A: Circumstances of Interview
  - Form B: Personal History of Informant
  - Form C: Text of Interview (Unedited)
  - Form D: Extra Comment





I. Prefatory Note

This manual is designed to guide, without hampering, supervisors and field workers in the collection of material for the folklore studies.

Every collection requires a careful adaptation of technique to local conditions and the personalities involved. The National Editor of Folklore Studies will assist in instructing supervisors and field workers in the use of the manual and in planning, setting up, and directing local studies.



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II.

Correlation with the Social-Ethnic Studies.

As an important part of its immediate program the Federal Writers' Project is planning two series of cultural studies -- the folklore studies and the social-ethnic studies.

In both the folklore and the social-ethnic studies the approach is functional. The studies will be organized around nationality groups, regions, and communities. The emphasis is on ways of living and cultural diversity with special reference to population distribution and change.

In correlating the work of the two series, the following connections and distinctions should be observed:

1. The social-ethnic studies deal with the whole life of a group or community, including cultural backgrounds and activities; the folklore studies deal with a body of lore in relation to the life of a group or community.

2. The social-ethnic studies involve special and separate treatments of nationality groups; the folklore studies fit native and imported traditions into the diversified American pattern.

3. Supervisors in the two series should familiarize themselves with the methods and materials of both the folklore and the social-ethnic studies, since in many cases the work will be carried on by the same staff.

4. The preparation of both series calls for:

- a. The gathering of field data, including selected interviews, personal histories, and documentary material:



b. A staff of field workers drawn from the group or community being studied, having the advantage of familiarity with local conditions, inhabitants, and organizations:

c. Full cooperation with consultants drawn from the ranks of State writers, historians, folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, etc., and with historical and folklore societies, foreign-language organizations, etc.

4. All correspondence concerning folklore studies should be marked,

Subject: Folklore. All correspondence concerning social-ethnic studies should be marked, Subject: Social-Ethnic Studies.

2. III.

The Folklore Series

The folklore series will consist of three kinds of publications:

1. Collections of special types (e.g., tall tales, children's rhymes)
2. Collections for regions, occupations, localities, and ethnic groups (e.g., The Folklore of the Berkshires, The Folklore of the Great Lakes)
3. The foregoing will lay a basis for possible national volumes (including American Folk Stuff, representing all states and types, and A Folklore Atlas of America, showing the distribution of folk groups and folklore types)

Apart from their use in the series, the field data, including texts and phonograph disks, will be deposited in a national archive of American folklore. Through the archive as well as through the publications the source materials will be made available to scholars, educators, and writers over the country. Publications will be designed to meet the needs of the general reader rather than the specialist, but a high standard of accuracy as well as interest will be aimed at throughout. By means of large, cheaply printed editions,

pamphlets, school readers, etc., the folklore studies are expected to reach a large audience and to find increasing use in education. By viewing the materials with a fresh eye, workers will uncover a new as well as an old America and will have a part in awakening it to a new understanding and appreciation of its cultural heritage.



3  
17. Folklore: Its Nature and Study

Folklore is a body of traditional belief, custom, and expression, handed down largely by word of mouth and circulating chiefly outside of commercial and academic means of communication and instruction. Every group bound together by common interests and purposes, whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, possesses a body of traditions which may be called its folklore. Into these traditions enter many elements, individual, popular, and even "literary," but all are absorbed and assimilated through repetition and variation into a pattern which has value and continuity for the group as a whole.

Although in most cases it is impossible to establish the origin of a piece of folklore, we want to know as much as possible about its source, history, and use, in relation to the past and present experience of the people who keep it alive. This information enables us to understand the function and meaning which folklore has for those who use it and so enhances its interest and significance for others. Just as a folk song or folk tale cannot be said to have a real existence apart from its singing or telling, so in all folklore collections the foreground, or lore, must constantly be related to the background, or life.

In helping supply this living background, the data compiled for the social-ethnic studies will be of great value. At the same time the personal histories and interviews compiled by folklore collectors can be of equal service in social-ethnic studies by showing how the songs people sing and the stories they tell grow out of or are adapted to the work they do and the things they know



and believe in. Finally, in addition to the human interest of its everyday use, folklore possesses the poetic interest of idiom, imagery, and symbolism which provide forms and materials for the artist.

As part of this social and functional approach, the folklore studies are further interested in the process of making and remaking which, in the course of its adaptation to time and place, folklore is constantly undergoing. Not only do modern conditions (as in urban and industrial areas) give rise to new forms and materials, but every variant and variation has, above and beyond its intrinsic interest, value for the student of the history of a particular item and the processes of oral and popular composition and transmission.

4 ~~4~~  
Instructions to Directors and Supervisors

A. Selection of Material. In each case the type of material and the group to be studied will be selected in accordance with local needs and resources. The aim should be to choose types and groups that have not yet been fully treated and to avoid duplication of material already in print.

A → Emphasis should be placed on groups that are indigenous or rooted in the local life. Too much attention should not be paid to "cast-offs" and degenerate groups or to the exotic and eccentric.

B. Basic Principles of Collection. The present plans for folklore collection are based on the following principles:

1. All material is to be taken from oral sources exactly as heard.
2. Every collection should have a purpose and reason for existence. It should be tied up with the life of the community or group and of the individual informant as a part of the community or group.

3. The working unit is the full unedited field notes for each interview, together with the personal history of the informant, submitted on the regular forms, which are to be duplicated in the State office.

C. Exploratory Information. Before undertaking local studies, the State Director should submit information on the following points:

1. The number and distribution of workers capable of handling and interested in folklore material;
2. The available supervisors and consultants;
3. The types of material, the areas, and the folk groups that offer the richest possibilities in the State;
4. The number and distribution of prospective or possible informants;
5. The possibilities of sponsorship for each study.



D. Collaboration with the Historical Records Survey. Attention is called to the work of the Historical Records Survey in making inventories of unpublished Government documents and records, covering many phases of local history, past and present. In the inventories of State, county, town, and other local archives the records are conveniently arranged under subject headings. Some of the following records will be found useful in compiling exploratory information for folklore studies:

Naturalization Records  
 Census Reports (especially old records)  
 Church Records  
 Cemetery Records  
 Vital Statistics (births, deaths, marriages, divorce, inheritance, wills)  
 Tax Records  
 Real Estate, Mortgages, and other Records  
 Professional Registers  
 School Records  
 Board of Social Welfare Records



In the use of records survey workers will often have discovered the existence of ethnic islands, colonies, religious and folk groups, and experimental communities of the past. In some cases the Historical Records Survey is listing manuscripts, diaries, and journals and compiling personal histories and life sketches.

State Directors should apply to the State Director of the Historical Records Survey for the aid of local supervisors in a particular area. The Historical Records Survey will give reasonable assistance to folklore workers in using lists, in finding little-known records, and in seeking out pertinent data. Dr. Luther H. Evans, the National Director, has kindly offered his cooperation and is notifying his State Directors of these arrangements.

E. Assigning Workers. In assigning workers the following instructions should be observed.

1. Workers should be assigned to their own communities and groups on the strength of full familiarity with the materials, the people, and the problems involved. In the case of foreign-language groups the worker should, obviously, have a working knowledge of the language.
2. Workers unsuited for actual interviewing may be employed in obtaining exploratory information (such as charting out distribution of types, groups, and areas, locating sources and making contacts). The work of interviewing may be shared by two workers, one of whom is assigned to take notes. In some State offices it may be possible to assign stenographers for the latter purpose.

3. Interviewers should not be assigned until their qualifications for handling the work efficiently and tactfully have been thoroughly checked and tested. Field workers should be tried out on small assignments and wherever possible samples of their work should be submitted to the Regional Director or to the National Editor of Folklore Studies. These precautions are necessary for two reasons:



- (1) A good informant can be spoiled by bad handling:
- (2) A tactless worker may do considerable damage to the work by needlessly stirring up prejudice.

VI.

#### Instructions to Field Workers

##### A. Method of Locating Sources and Making Contacts with Informants

1. Locate people over 60 with good and reliable memories.
2. Locate square-dance managers and callers.
3. Locate individuals who own or play folk or unusual instruments or who play instruments in a folk fashion (that is, without notation and in a traditional form).
4. If the instrument has been made locally, find out who made it and secure from him the names and addresses of musicians for whom he has made instruments.
5. Locate local and "homespun" poets (who rhyme local events and characters or make up ballads).
6. Locate the time and place of old-time dances and parties, country auctions and fairs, etc.
7. Locate the time and place of old-fashioned religious gatherings and meetings of modern cults.

8. Locate work gangs and camps and other occupational groups with a distinctive folklore.
9. If you are not personally acquainted with the informant, it is often a good idea to have some one who is accompany you.
10. If possible, do not wait until a list of leads and sources has been compiled before interviewing but as soon as possible follow up each of them in turn.
11. It often takes two or three visits to break the ice and get the informant warmed up. Do not rush him.
12. In approaching the informant, stress the historical nature and value of the work. Often it will pave the way for a successful interview if the questioner leads with some statement such as, "The Works Progress Administration of the United States Government is endeavoring to preserve some of the local history and traditions of this region and you have been recommended to the project as a person with accurate knowledge and a good memory."

B. Method of Interviewing

1. Do not draw upon your own memory for folklore material, except for supplementary purposes. Remember that you are to make a fresh collection of first-hand material taken down directly from an informant.
2. For successful results, establish a friendly and confidential relation with the informant. Do not cross-examine him, but use these instructions as a guide to be kept in mind and adapted to the specific situation and person.



3. Your method should be to get the informant to talking freely about himself, and in the course of easy, natural conversation let him tell you what he knows. To do this successfully, you should be able to "talk the same language"; that is, converse on subjects and in terms familiar to him. Make him feel important as a collaborator and at the same time make the interview a social occasion and outlet for him. You will soon learn how much folklore material he has and how to get it from him.
4. Avoid skipping about from point to point. In drawing the informant out, also guide him skillfully along so that in progressing you exhaust each topic before leaving it.
5. The people who know folklore are sensitive and intelligent and respond to a sensitive and intelligent approach. Unless from the start your attitude is one of sympathy and respect, your chances of a successful interview are spoiled.
6. Rather than ask directly for certain types of folklore material, let the collection grow out of the interview, naturally and spontaneously.
7. Do not tire the informant. After an hour or so, it is often best to stop. Two or three visits are usually better than one. The rest gives the informant time to jog his memory and you a chance to think of questions to ask him.





8. Forget your own preferences or prejudices.
9. Do nothing to antagonize the informant. It is important not to contradict or argue with him.
10. Do not display or fill out forms in the presence of the informant. Fill them out later from your field notes.
11. In addition to oral material two kinds of records are important:

(a) The informant may have in his possession manuscript copies of songs or handwritten ledgers, diaries, cook books, and "ballet books" with songs in them. These are valuable not only for their texts but as documents in the history of folk song in America. Inquire after them and borrow them for the purpose of making typewritten or photostat copies. Where the permission of the owner may be obtained, arrange for the permanent deposit of the originals in the Archive of American Folk Song in the Library of Congress (full credit, of course, being given to the donor).

(b) At the close of the interview (not before) ask for a snapshot or for permission to take one.



C. Method of Recording and Submitting Data

1. Take down everything you hear, just as you hear it, without adding, taking away, or altering a word or syllable. Your business is to record, not to correct or improve.

2. Give each song and tale the title by which it is known to the informant.

3. Wherever possible, take down several versions of the same song or tale from the same or more than one informant, for the purpose of checking and comparing the texts.

4. In noting oral material, please observe the following linguistic instructions carefully:

(a) Record all obscure and peculiar terms and phrases as heard, then try to determine their meaning and origin. Use as many sources of information as possible, giving the name and address of each informant.

(b) In noting dialect be faithful to grammar, idiom, typical vowel and consonant sounds, mutilations, and corruptions. (Special instructions for handling special dialects will be sent on request.)

5. Although the field notes are to be submitted without editing by the worker, supervisor, or director, marginal headings may be inserted to indicate the types of material included.

6. Only typewritten copy should be submitted. One carbon is required with each original.

VII. ~~Types of Folklore~~ Types of Folklore

A. Songs and Rhymes

1. Square dance calls
2. Play-party songs of adults
3. Game songs and rhymes of children  
(including counting-out, rope-skipping,  
and ball-bouncing rhymes)
4. Nursery songs and rhymes
5. Riddles
6. Street cries
7. Religious songs
8. Work songs
9. Labor songs
10. Ballads of local characters and events
11. Love songs
12. Blues

B. Tales

1. Local anecdotes, jests, and hoaxes
2. Place-names and local legends
3. Tall tales and tales of American legendary  
heroes (especially little-known local heroes)
4. Animal and just-so stories
5. Witch tales and related lore
6. Devil tales and related lore
7. Ghost tales and related lore
8. Tales of lost mines, buried treasure, ghost towns,  
and outlaws



9. Fairy and household tales

C. Linguistic "Floating" Material

1. Localisms and idioms
2. Local, proverbial, and popular sayings
3. Folk and popular similes and metaphors
4. Wisecracks and humorous expressions
5. Nicknames
6. Coinages and new word formations
7. Curious street and shop signs
8. Mottoes and slogans (including inscriptions in memory books, etc.)
9. Trade jargon
10. Samples of speech
11. Conversations
12. Sermons and prayers



D. Groups, Gatherings, and Activities

1. Accounts of religious gatherings, cults, and sects
2. Accounts of work gangs and camps and occupational processes and customs
3. Accounts of dances, parties, sports, pastimes, celebrations, festivals, and other social practices and gatherings
4. Accounts of foreign enclaves, colonies, nationality and isolated groups, and other "islands" and pockets of culture
5. Interviews with fortune tellers, mind readers, witch doctors, herb doctors, and healers



6. Interviews with old-time and street musicians and singers, with lists and specimens of their repertoires
7. Interviews with local poets and story-tellers, with lists and specimens of their works or repertoires

E. Beliefs and Customs

1. Luck signs, omens, taboos, and miscellaneous superstitions
2. Weather lore
3. Crop lore
4. Cures and remedies
5. Love, courtship, and marriage lore
6. Birth lore
7. Death and burial lore

NOTE:

Indian folklore falls outside the scope of The American Folklore Series, but material involving relations between Indians and Whites may be submitted.

*Stop*

1. Folklore



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3. The preparation of both series calls for:

a. The gathering of field data, including interviews, personal histories, and documentary material:

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## 2. Folklore

local conditions, inhabitants, and organizations:

c. Full cooperation with consultants drawn from the ranks of State writers, historians, folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, etc. and with historical and folklore societies, foreign-language organizations, etc.

4. All correspondence concerning folklore studies should be marked, Subject: Folklore. All correspondence concerning social-ethnic studies should be marked, Subject: Social-Ethnic Studies.

### 2. The Folklore Series

The folklore series will consist of three kinds of publications:

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9. If you are not personally acquainted with the informant, it is often a good idea to have some one who is accompany you.

10. If possible, do not wait until a list of leads and sources has been compiled before interviewing but as soon as possible follow up each of them in turn.



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that is, converse on subjects and in terms familiar to him. Make him feel important as a collaborator and at the same time make the interview a social occasion and outlet for him. You will soon learn how much folklore material he has and how to get it from him.



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from your field notes.

11. In addition to oral material two kinds of records are important:

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Inquire after them and borrow them for the purpose of making typewritten or photostat copies. Where the permission of the owner may be obtained, arrange for the permanent deposit of the originals in the Archive of American Folk Song in the Library of Congress (full credit, of course, being given to the donor).

(b) At the close of the interview (not before) ask for a snapshot or for permission to take one.

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1. Take down everything you hear, just as you hear it, without aiding, taking away, or altering a word or syllable. Your business is to record, not to correct or improve.

2. Give each song and tale the title by which it is known to the informant.

3. Wherever possible, take down several versions of the same song or tale from the



same or more than one informant, for the purpose of checking and comparing the texts.

4. In noting oral material, please observe the following linguistic instructions carefully:

(a) Record all obscure and peculiar terms and phrases as heard, then try to determine their meaning and origin. Use as many sources of information as possible, giving the name and address for each informant.

(b) In noting dialect be faithful to grammar, idiom, typical vowel and consonant sounds, mutilations, and corruptions. (Special instructions for handling special dialects will be sent on request.)



6

### Types of Folklore

#### A. Songs and Rhymes

1. Square dance calls
2. Play-party songs of adults
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(including counting-out, rope-skipping, and ball-bouncing rhymes)
4. Nursery songs and rhymes
5. Riddles
6. Street cries
7. Religious songs
8. Work songs
9. Labor songs

10. Ballads of local characters and events
11. Love songs.
12. Blues

B. Tales

1. Local anecdotes, jests, and hoxes
2. Place-names and local legends
3. Tall tales and tales of American legendary heroes (especially little-known local heroes)
4. Animal and just-so stories
5. Witch tales and related lore
6. Devil tales and related lore
7. Ghost tales and related lore
8. Tales of lost mines, buried treasure, ghost towns, and outlaws.
9. Fairy and household tales

C. Linguistic "Floating" Material

1. Localisms and idioms
2. Local, proverbial, and popular sayings
3. Folk and popular similes and metaphors
4. Wisecracks and humorous expressions
5. Nicknames
6. Coinages and new word formations
7. Curious street and shop signs
8. Mottoes and slogans (including inscriptions in memory books, etc.)
9. Trade jargon
10. Samples of speech
11. Conversation

*Some crossed*



12. Sermons and prayers

D. Groups, Gatherings, and Activities

1. Accounts of religious gatherings, cults, and sects
2. Accounts of work gangs and camp and occupational processes and customs
3. Accounts of dances, parties, sports, pastimes, celebrations, festivals, and other social practices and gatherings
4. Accounts of foreign enclaves, colonies, nationality and isolated groups, and other "islands" and pockets of culture
5. Interviews with fortune tellers, mind readers, witch doctors, and healers
6. Interviews with old-time and street musicians and singers, with lists and specimens of their repertoires
7. Interviews with local poets and story-tellers, with lists and specimens of their works or repertoires



E. Beliefs and Customs

1. Luck signs, omens, taboos, and miscellaneous superstitions
2. Weather lore
3. Crop lore
4. Cures and remedies
5. Love, courtship, and marriage lore
6. Birth lore
7. Death and burial lore

10/12/38

L.H.

THE FOLK AND THE INDIVIDUAL: THEIR  
CREATIVE RECIPROcity

B. A. Botkin<sup>1</sup>



.....Long and painstakingly, I cultivated and cemented confidences with individual Negroes without which any attempt to get to the core of the living folklore is foredoomed to failure.....

I slept on dirty floor pallets in miserable ghetto hovels or ramshackles half disappeared in malarial swamps. I fared on the usual Black Belt coffee "bitter as gall," 'taters, cow peas, perhaps augmented by sow belly or a "piece o' lean." .....And always there would be a brother or sister or friend to "git lookin' up"--a new contact somewhere along the lonesome red-clay road ahead.

Through Georgia, the Carolinas, way over in Mississippi and Louisiana even, in city slums, on isolated farms out in the sticks, on chain gangs, lumber and turpentine work camps, I gathered more than three hundred songs of the black folk--songs that reveal for the first time the full heroic stature of the Negro dwarfing for all time the traditional mean estimate of him.

Work reels they call them, the tempo and swing depending upon the type of work performed and the required motion of the implement used....here, too, work progresses with a leader singing a line and all joining in the chorus. While the total is raised a line is sung. The downward stroke is accompanied by a prolonged exhalation that becomes explosive as the blow is delivered.

These songs are still in the making. Never sung twice quite in the same way new verses are constantly improvised, the text doggerel, nonsense, bawdy, or protest, depending upon the mood of the singers or whether whites are within earshot.....

And finally, these songs, reflecting as they do the contemporary environment--the daily round of life in the Black Belt--aside from the musical and literary worth, are human documents. They embody the living voice of the otherwise inarticulate resentment against injustice--a part of the unrest that is stirring the South. They speak now mildly, now sarcastically, now angrily--but always in a firm and earnest manner.

And they will be heard!--Lawrence Gellert, Negro songs of Protest, pp. 6-7.

<sup>1</sup>Assistant professor of English in the University of Oklahoma; editor of Folk-Say and other regional anthologies; and author of The American Play-Party Song.



WORK ALL DE SUMMER

Work all de summer, summer	Some o' dese days, days,
Work all de fall, fall,	Days bright an' fair,
Gonna make dis Chris'mas, Chris'mas,	Gonna hitch up mah wings, wings
Christmas in mah overall.	An' try de air.
Don't mind de weather, weather	I feels mah hell a-risin'
So de wind don't blow,	Six feet a day.
Don't mind de chains, chains	Lawd, if it keeps a-risin'
So de ball don't grow.	Gonna wash dis dam lan' away!

--Ibid., pp. 18-19

.....The significance of Foster's songs has been appreciated only in recent years. In his own day they were sung all over the world, but then they were looked upon as mere popular songs of the moment, destined to the early oblivion that awaits most of our current balladry. The respect of immortality for his songs never occurred even to Foster himself.

Many of the songs are now eighty years old, and the best of them are more alive than ever. Within the last quarter of a century musicians, as well as laymen, have come to realize that they are a genuine folk expression, that Foster assimilated the native influence with which he was surrounded, and gave them an expression that was natural and unaffected, spontaneous and unmanufactured. He wrote for a market, but when he was himself, the market never soiled his work--it merely gave him a voice that would be understood.

Nor are Foster's best songs merely a folk expression. They reflected the character and temperament of the man who wrote them, and in that sense they are truly an art product. The two hundred songs and compositions that Foster wrote, the best and the worst, form an autobiography of the man who composed them.....(pp. 1-2).

"Oh! Susanna" is a glorious bit of nonsense....The very lilt of the song was catching, so contagious that almost every one in America was singing it before he realized what he was singing. The song travelled to foreign lands, The Germans sing "Ich komm von Alabama, Mit der Benjo auf dem Knie," and many nations have their version of the song. Bayard Taylor, writing in 1853, tells how he heard a wandering Hindoo minstrel sing "Oh! Susanna" in Delhi.

But what has made the song most typically an American folk-song is the use that was made of it by the forty-niners. In January of 1848 gold was discovered in California. February second of the same year the United States signed a treaty with Mexico, and California and New Mexico were ceded to us. By 1849 the trails were almost choked with westward travellers, and their favorite song en route and around their camp-fires at night was "Oh! Susanna." Maybe it was the care free, jaunty lilt of the song that made it so appropriate, but whatever it was that endeared it to these pioneers, "Oh! Susanna" is always considered the "theme song," the "leitmotif" of the California gold rush, whether it is pictured in books, the movies or on the radio. . . . (pp. 144-45).

and with the folk? The point of view is one of reciprocity, not only be-

....As to how much Stephen Foster may be responsible for some of the so-called Negro folk-songs. Certain it is that many of these spirituals are more affected by what the Negro heard in this country than by what he may have brought with him from Africa. It is also a fact that thousands have sung "De Campdown Races" without knowing at all who wrote it, and not particularly caring. It is largely for this reason that Foster's songs may be called folk-songs--they have become far more important in the minds of the people who sing them than the man who composed them. (p. 407). John Tasker Howard, Stephen Foster: America's Troubadour.

In these quotations we see the folk and the individual in all their creative reciprocity. First, in the black workers of the South we observe an actual folk group at work and living folklore in the making. Next, in the work of Stephen Foster we have an example of the opposite process by which the artist succeeds in identifying himself with native and group influences and in writing songs that are folk songs and art songs at the same time. In both cases certain basic requirements of folk groups and folklore are fulfilled. In the Negro song of protest, "Work All de Summer," we see clearly what Martha Warren Beckwith means by the "superadded element" of "fantasy," "over and above sheer utility which gives aesthetic quality" to folklore, the charm of style--imagery, symbolism, repetition, parallelism-- added and adding to the power of the protest as useful propaganda. In Gellert's account of folk-song variations we have an illustration of Louise Pound's "instability of text" and of Miss Beckwith's concept of folklore as differing from individual fantasy "as pattern from picture, through the effect of oral repetition."

.... Every folk fantasy begins originally from an individual source, but it takes on, through infinite repetition and variation, the character of a group composition." In "Oh! Susanna" is proof of Miss Pound's contention that it is the history and use of a song, including loss of sense of authorship, not its origin, that makes it a folk song. Finally, in both the Negro workers and the forty-niners we have occupational as well as regional groups, according to the principle stated in the Introduction to Folk-Say: 1929: "For oral tradition is necessarily regional in that there is not one folk but many folk groups--as many as there are regional cultures or racial or occupational groups within a region." (In 1931 Miss Beckwith also mentions geographical conditions and occupational divisions along with "common language and national heritage" as "isolating" factors that differentiate folk groups.) In the case of the forty-niners, it might be added, there is only a general social and economic coloring in the fact that "Oh! Susanna" lent itself to a pioneering situation. But in the case of the Negro there is an inherent connection between the social and economic conditions of the singers--conditions of social inferiority and economic subjection--and the burning if somewhat veiled, necessarily veiled, protest, as well as the immediate function of the song as a work reel.

From these quotations emerges our twofold problem of the relations of the folk and the individual, society and personality, in literature. First, what are the values that may properly be spoken of as folk values in modern life, and, second, how can these values be realized and utilized by the writer? Or, to put it in a slightly different way, what can the folk do for and with the individual? And what can and does the individual do for and with the folk? The point of view is one of reciprocity, not only be-



tween the folk and the individual but also between literature and culture. That is to say, the individual is back of so-called folk creations just as truly as folk motives and patterns underlie a good deal if not all of literature; and literature and culture as a whole are interactive, to their mutual strengthening and enrichment.

This point of view fits in neatly with the point of view of this conference; namely, that, literature being the expression of experience, we cannot forget or forsake the basis and goal of literature in experience, Yet the problem is more than one of materials, since materials tend to break rather than make a writer. And it is more than one of taste and technique, though folk art is a category of both. It is a problem of values and ideals, of attitudes and responses, on the part of both the writer and his audience. To get back to the folk problem as a relationship between writer and audience is the purpose of this paper.

A sense of the folk group as a "plural convened audience," in which there is no sharp distinction between participant and spectator will enable us to break down at the outset the stereotypes and presumptions that have all but rendered useless the terms "folk" and "folk art." First we must reject as arbitrary and brand as false all attempts at absolute criteria and distinctions, all claims of uniform traits and inherent superiorities in folk literature, all dichotomies and antitheses between the folk and civilization, the folk and intelligence, the folk and literature, the folk and the individual. Two errors in particular must be guarded against. One is the nationalistic theory of folklore, rooted in the myth of pure national cultures and pure races, that is, folklore as the expression of the soul of a race or nation, a corollary of the beliefs that the national state is the true reality. The other misconception or partial truth, related to the fallacy of the dominant state, is the idea that, the individual--individual freedom, individuality--plays a negligible role if any in folk and primitive life. Both these errors are the product of blood-and wish-thinking, a confusion of the organic with the cultural, the evolutionist fallacy, naturism, and primitivism--an expression of disintegrated and frustrated modern man's mystical and romantical attempt to find wholeness and unity, and so comfort, not by relating the part to the whole but by losing himself in the whole, here confused with the totalitarian state, the totality of nature, and the supposedly undifferentiated intuitive collective life of the compact primitive group.

As a matter of fact, from the point of view of modern anthropology, in dealing with culture we must deal not only with specific cultures but with specific events and individuals. And as to the differences between primitive and modern culture, it would be more accurate to say not that the latter is more individualistic but that--following Radin and Goldenweiser--with the art of writing and the machine (two differentiae of modern life) there has been a greater separation between the subjective and the objective, the worlds of thought and action, whereas on the bookless level culture "comes an experience," by direct contacts, with fewer "alternative patterns" but with room for development within the pattern nevertheless. Modern man, with his "illusion of self-acting" and the foreshortening of time and space--the result of both books and machines--is freed from the necessity of preserving and repeating the past and is freer to change, experiment, and be himself.



But for the privileges of a larger audience, permanency, and privacy he has had to give up an even greater amount of centrality and solidarity of thought and action. Under the burden of new and more stresses, tensions, and conflicts he has not less integrity but less integration, not more individuality, but more ego--the conflicts and divisions of personality being aggravated by the anarchy and chaos of competitive society. Accordingly, it is not only in times of overcivilization, at the end of an era, but in times of intense social and cultural conflict, at the beginning of a new order, that writers should turn to the folk not for refuge but for the roots and soil of social thought and a socialized literature.

The need of a "focal center" has been felt especially in America not because, as Lewisohn puts it, "our folk and bardic periods lie far away and long ago in other lands and have never been a living force among us," but for the very opposite reason that we have a more diversified cultural heritage and that our many folk cultures are not behind us at all but right under us. Below the surface of the dominant pattern are the popular life and fantasy of our cultural minorities and other nondominant groups--nondominant but not recessive, not static but dynamic and transitional, on their way up. And on their way with them, and meeting them more than halfway, are the writers of the lower middle classes, who are, in outlook and sympathy if not in actual circumstances, closer to the bottom and the bottom dog. The rest, those nearer the top and determined to stay there, refusing to be declassed, do not count, even though from among their number are recruited many so-called folk writers and students. The folk movement must come from below upward instead of above downward. Otherwise it may be dismissed as a patronizing gesture, a nostalgic wish, an elegiac complaint, a sporadic and abortive revival--on the part of paternalistic aristocrats going slumming, dilettantish provincials going native, defeated sectionalists going back to the soil, and anybody and everybody who cares to go collecting. Folklore is the last stand of the "highbrow" (in Van Wyck Brook's highbrow term) seeking a new outlet for ethical idealism and intellectual culture in the cult of the "lowbrow". And, like the myth of nationalism, the myth of the folk may be used as a smokescreen to hide economic facts.

To help dispel the smokescreen writers must have a firm grasp of the economic realities underlying not only particular folk cultures but society as a whole, and remember that as things are cultural not in themselves but in their use so literature, to be truly cultural, must have a cultural point of view as well as culture content. And since there can be no culture without society, even culture determinists, who are not too optimistic about what they call the "nature and possibilities of our civilization," had better give a thought to the kind of society they would like to live in, and folklorists to the kind of society most of our folk is condemned to live in. Better still, they ought to go out and live in it, as Lawrence Gellert did, though I doubt whether they can all do it as wisely and as well.

see that even now the borders between the two worlds of the individual and the group, the subjective and the objective, giving and receiving, are not constant but always shifting.

For a cultural and economic as well as metaphysical interpretation of folk values in art, the first horn of our dilemma, I turn to Kenneth Burke, in an article on "The Nature of Art under Capitalism." Lewisohn's prescription for restoring the folk or bardic period of art, which, it is true, is far





away and long ago in any modern society, though folklore and folk life are still with us, is somewhat as follows: Scripture having become literature, it is necessary for literature to become scripture again. But in spite of Lewisohn's hatred for Puritanism, whose "division of experience from expression" he blames for all our dualism of art and life, form and content, artificer and creator, his remedy sounds dangerously like more Puritanism--the Puritanism of what Granville Hicks, reviewing Expression in America, called Lewisohn's "Sunset Glow of Individualism." (Since then the afterglow has died.) Burke's diagnosis and prognosis are more scientific. The "breach between work and ethics, indigenous to capitalistic enterprise," he shows, "requires a 'corrective' kind of literature."

What interests us in his analysis is that, as the symbol of the basic integration of work patterns and ethical patterns or the ethical values of work (consisting in the "application of the competitive equipment to co-operative ends"), he takes the primitive group dance; "It has been suggested that the primitive group dance is so highly satisfying 'ethically' because it is a faithful replica of this same co-operative fusion. It permits a gratifying amount of muscular and mental self-assertion to the individual as regards his own particular contribution to the entire performance, while at the same time it flatly involves him in a group activity, a process of giving and receiving."

Now the primitive group dance, although valid as a symbol of the sort of basic integration we have lost, cannot be taken as the type of all folk art. Yet Burke's analogy implies, though it does not state, the possibility of a restoration of this integration by a return to folk and primitive patterns. He himself calls for a "large corrective, or a propaganda element in art," as a corrective of the "pure" art and humor that promote acceptance of the frustration of the competitive-co-operative fusion. But his thesis, he says, does not imply the abandonment of "pure" art, since it helps to make the present system "tolerable," through "fusing, in aesthetic symbols, mental conflicts which cannot be fused in the practical sphere." His solution may be said to smack of "pure" metaphysics, inasmuch as "toleration" is very close to acquiescence." But Burke always takes at least one step forward for every two steps he takes backward, and his stricture of bad proletarian writing may be applied here to bad folk writing: "Too often, alas, it serves as a mere device whereby the neuroses of the decaying bourgeois structure are simply transferred to the symbols of workingmen."

From this point we may proceed as follows: Only by restoring the basic integration of work patterns and ethical patterns can we restore art and the artist to their central place in society, and the artist and his audience to each other--the goal of the folk movement. Then the breach between expression and experience, universality and personality, the artificer and the maker, the subjective and the objective, will be healed. But until the reintegration of work and ethics can take place in society, we have still to see that even now the borders between the two worlds of the individual and the group, the subjective and the objective, giving and receiving, are not constant but always shifting.

Let me make myself clear. At any given moment what we call "folk literature" includes at least four kinds of material; which to a certain extent overlap:

1. Folk productions proper, such as work, play, and dance songs which express, accompany, and direct rhythmic and co-operative activity, comparable in their functional nature (chiefly that of self-gratification) to beliefs and practices (on the level of self-preservation) which give sanction or precedent to morality and control over nature and people.

2. Survivals, such as are found in religion, mythology, proverbs, and speech, which have only a conventional, symbolic, aesthetic, or emotional rather than practical value.

3. Sunken Culture, which is folk only by possession and usage, not in source, having been transmitted from a higher to a lower social level, so that the latter remembers what the former has forgotten.

4. Folklore in the making, including both contemporary folk expressions, arising out of present-day events and forces, such as the southern mill-workers' and coal-miners' songs of Ella May Wiggins and Aunt Molly Jackson, and popular productions of the present, such as popular songs and sayings--slang, slogans, mottoes, and comparisons--on their way to becoming folklore of the future.

The classification gains in significance when we recognize further that a good deal of folklore imbedded in the past of Old World or universal customs and beliefs, the product of diffusion, has little relation to immediate social structure, except as it functions in the cultural pattern; whereas folklore of the present, the product of social change and cultural conflict and adaptation, throws valuable light on actual social conditions and problems realistically portrayed. Thus, Negro spirituals and animal tales survive as an expression of Negro fantasy, on the plane of self-gratification, passing into formal art as concert and anthology pieces--folk classics. On the other hand, the social songs of the present-day Negro worker, including blues and work reels, are living social documents, organizers as well as interpreters of social thought--folk protests.

Beside folk fantasy, we must also make room, on the popular level, for a kind of folk knowledge and history, marginal to folklore and throwing valuable light on its background, such as old-timers' stories and reminiscences; and, on the academic or sophisticated level we may again distinguish three types, to which the term "folk" may be extended:

1. Literature about the folk, historical, sociological, ethnographic, psychological, and journalistic as well as purely folkloristic, seeking and gaining critical acceptance.

2. Pseudo-folk works, imitating or adapting folk motives, forms, and moods, as in pseudo-Indian and Negro songs, and gaining popular but not critical acceptance.

3. Quasi-folk works, the productions of genius mined out of folk consciousness, fusing written and unwritten tradition, and becoming part of the permanent cultural heritage of the people, breaking down all barriers between folk, popular, and critical acceptance.

From the dynamic point of view, then, folk literature is literature in flux-floating literature--not only because it fluctuates in form but be-



cause it fluctuates between vulgar and academic. The process works both ways. Now what is fixed becomes floating and now what is floating becomes fixed. Even what we call popular, as intermediate between folk and academic, is not all of a kind, but may be closer to the folk level as it expresses the people, or to the academic level, as it gives the people what they want. In view of all this mobility there would seem to be no valid reason why individual writers cannot cross and recross the shifting line between folk and sophisticated expression and bring back at least a vision of "basic integration."

Corresponding to the dynamic view of folk literature is the modern dynamic conception of the folk. When, writes Goldenweiser of primitive groups, "a great number of individuals within a tribe and locality feel and act along similar lines, and not a few activities and experiences are participated in by nearly all the tribesmen," we have folk culture. Substitute for the tribe modern social units--family, church, club, college, occupation, community, region; and for experiences participated in by tribesmen the common crises or "periods of emotional stress in the life of an individual in relation to the group"--birth, marriage, death--and you have, following Miss Beckwith, the actual folk factors found even among the educated in our urbanized, industrialized society.

Although some scholars, including Miss Beckwith, insist further on isolation or comparative stability, as a necessary condition for developing a common culture, it is difficult to see how, with modern diffusion and assimilation, even cultural isolation, let alone geographical isolation, can be insisted upon, or any kind of isolation save the economic isolation of class and occupational divisions and the emotional isolation of social organizations. In any case, isolation is only relative and partial at best, and the deliberate reactionary isolation of nationalism and sectionalism is self-destructive rather than self-perpetuating. And if the writer is to identify himself with the folk, he, for one, must break down his own isolation. At the same time he can do a lot for the folk by helping break down its isolation, not to wipe out but to conserve and strengthen its heritage by releasing it and making it a living force for differentiation within an integrated society. False national culture, with its delusions of purity and superiority, may require closed doors, but not true folk culture, for culture, like love, laughs at locksmiths.

### III

Coming now to the second and more difficult horn of our dilemma! How can the individual writer recover folk values for himself and literature and society? I should like to suggest four possibilities: "corporate anonymity," folk symbols, the point of view of the participant or eyewitness, and group solidarity. In each case the term stands for both the quality to be recovered and the method of recovery.

By "corporate anonymity" I mean something more and less than it does to Radin, from whom I borrow the term. "Where there is no written record," he says, "personal views and personal interpretations tend very naturally to be lost in corporate anonymity." Using it in an applied or transferred sense, as one must in our written tradition, I take it to mean the author's own loss



Related to folk speech and the speech tradition is the point of view of the participant or eyewitness. This is the point of view of "I did or saw and heard these things myself." Although on the superstitious and mythological side the tendency of the folk to rely on gossip and hearsay in the form of tradition has always been emphasized, the reliance on experience, on the historical side, also deserves emphasis. In a culture of which the "spoken, living word," says Goldenweiser, becomes the "principle vehicle," "the past comes to the present as things or words; what is neither seen nor said nor remembered vanished beyond recovery." The result is not merely concreteness and natural eloquence--eye-and ear-mindedness--but tremendous sincerity. Folk art, like all great art, is nothing if not sincere.

The point of view of the participant or eyewitness implies closeness between artist and audience, performer and spectator, individual and group--a relationship which originates in ritual and in working together and extends to art. This is what Burke designates as a "process of giving and receiving." It leads from and to group solidarity, as the "plural convened audience" is the social group. It involves social working together, in the sense of common labor and common play, in a common cause. If people feel this interaction even in a crowd, in the joy of what Durkheim calls the "mere fact of their being together," how much more must they feel it when they are working together, co-operating.

The importance of working together and of work has been stressed throughout the present view of the folk, but it cannot be overstressed. Work, of course, is related to place; out of place comes work, and out of both, the adjustment of one to the other, comes folk, according to Le Play. But with modern acceleration in the diffusion and assimilation of culture the geographical like the racial, sense is wearing thin. Nationalism is the last stand of geography and race, whereas regionalism is or should be not geographical but cultural. Political--that is, party--ties are also growing frayed. But economic bonds are tightening and strengthening. And with the national, racial, political, and geographical props knocked out from under folklore, what is left but the sense of vocation, of co-operative labor, co-operative organization, and class as the basis of both folk and social consciousness. This would seem to be the only route left to the individual who seeks contact and kinship and identification with the folk and with society.

This is not the place to rehash the arguments concerning the relative advantages and disadvantages of the terms "workers," "masses," "proletariat," "people," "folk," and "folk." They are all pretty nearly synonymous. It is enough to say with Carl Sandburg: "The people, yes." To him--and to us--the folk is the people and the people are human beings, human occupations, and human fantasy--"you and me and all others," the "laboring many," the anonymous folk singers and sayers of the songs and stories and sayings that give bone and muscle to our language and literature. To treat one without the other, the human occupations without the human beings and vice versa, or to treat both without the fantasy, the joy and sorrow of the songs and the tales, would be a "mighty bloodless substitute for life." In the last



analysis the folk is the bone and the muscle and the flesh, and the individual is the blood that feeds it. Together they give pattern, structure, response, and continuity. And these are the values that folklore can restore to the individual and that the individual should seek to recover from folklore for literature--a sense of the continuity of human nature; a sense of art as a response instead of a commodity; a sense of social structure, based on social intelligence and good will; and a sense of pattern, in its primitive use as a model and guide rather than a limit, which, to quote Goldenweiser, "points the road one is to travel," and sets and "defines a task, concrete and complete."

#



SAMPLE OF EXPLORATORY INFORMATION

To further the folklore work in the State, I should like you to submit at your earliest convenience the following:

(1) A plan for a New York State folklore collection by counties, suggesting procedure, personnel, work done to date, time required, etc.;

(2) A plan for a book of New York lumberjack ballads, indicating what has already been done and what remains to be done;

(3) A plan for cooperation with the State Historical Society and the State Board of Education, in the organization, sponsorship, and publication of State folklore work;

(4) All folklore material in the State files, including the field notes used in, or left over from, the preparation of the Folklore Essay in the State Guide.

Report on New York State Folklore by  
Roland P. Gray



I

(1) The personnel should be men or women already trained in or familiar with folklore or capable of being trained in a reasonable length of time. To this end the cooperation of other projects in the transfer of appropriate workers should be sought. In all probability there are available several who have had experience in collecting folklore but I fear are not eligible. Possibly you can arrange for a liberal number of non-relief workers.

(2) If, for instance, only 12 capable people are available 4 should be assigned to each of three counties. As soon as one county has been satisfactorily covered, this county squad should be assigned to another county. The counties should be worked in contiguous groups so that only one field supervisor would be necessary. Of course if more than 12 capable people are available necessary adjustments can readily be made.

(3) Each field worker (or if the number is large, each field supervisor), should be furnished by the state supervisor with adequate information regarding key people in a county who are likely to cooperate, as local historians, librarians,

of the state, and have on file their reports of books, pamphlets and papers in their libraries concerning New York State. Usually, too, they know the traditions and people of the town.

Each worker should be furnished also with definite instructions regarding procedure and the information desired in addition to and respecting the folklore collected. This may need the cooperation of the ethnic relations investigators or someone who knows a specific foreign language. In Amsterdam, Montgomery County, for instance, is a large Polish population whose priest seems to be the spokesman for these people. The need for folklore is for someone to get direct access to these people; probably someone who speaks Polish or who belongs to the race. Special types of folklore may need specific directions. In general, I would like to have the following information reported with the copy of the folklore:

(1) Name and residence of informant. If the item is printed give name of book, paper or pamphlet, author, publisher, place, date, volume, page. If publication is rare, give depository.

(2) Exact or approximate date of song, or ballad, or other folklore.

(3) Source; direct, then tracing to original if possible.

(4) Authorship; if individual, give name; if communal, give occasion and circumstances. Seek the colorful human interest connected with.

(5) Geographic relationships.

(6) Special occasions and people associated with.

(7) Considered as a human document, just what does the song or ballad seem to mean to the person or people associated with it.

(8) Report every song, ballad, etc., precisely without change of any kind. Exact language and dialect wanted. Get variants or where likely to be found.

(9) Wherever possible get the music. If a folk dance, give characteristic name or describe the dance.

(10) The only systematic work accomplished by counties is Emelyn E. Gardner's Folklore of the Schoharie Hills, University of Michigan Press. Unless I am greatly mistaken this is not complete.



In Indian lore considerable has been published by Beaucamp, Parker, Morgan, Mrs. Converse. The legends published by Parker are from the Senecas. Much remains to be done among the Iroquois particularly in poetry, song and dance as well as legends. Burke's Symphony Iroquin (1937) concerns Indian melodies. Bates of Cornell has a little book Tell me an Indian Story which I have not read, although I know Bates. Most of his work has been among Indians outside of New York. I know an intelligent and interesting Indian Medicine Man who will be helpful.

Throughout the state from time to time various people have interested themselves in gathering local folklore, mainly individual or isolated items. Professor Thomson's work, still in process, is suggested by his paper delivered before The New York State Historical Association.



My own work is also suggested in my paper delivered before The New York State Historical Association. In addition I have had students and others collecting for me wherever good fortune indicated. The only systematic work has been in the Adirondacks. The Keene Valley has been only skimmed and the region north and west of the Glens Falls - Blue Mt. - Lake Placid line unworked.

In addition to our project folklore material recently sent you, we have also here material marked by field workers "folklore" which often is history or factual and old customs.

Under another cover I am sending you a copy of New York History, mainly that you may see the excellent work of L.D. Jones, (Albany,) (p.192).

The time required to complete the work in 57 counties depends mainly and obviously upon the number and efficiency of the workers and executives expertness in administration. Some counties will require more time than others. If there are no obstructions, like insufficient travel budget, with 3 people to a county the collection of the folklore may be completed within a year. A great deal could be accomplished in six months, but we would once again be skimming the surface. Nearly every home is a source of some kind of folklore. The importance both of the state and of the subject itself calls for a thoroughgoing search even if it takes more than a year.

Any plan for the collection of New York State folklore is circumscribed by the

requirements of the State WPA organization. Without delaying for a complete response to your several requests I am sending you at once some general information which I hope will be helpful; notably, the state map together with the WPA set-up; also a sample of some of the information to be furnished field supervisors and field workers; and a plan of organization in harmony with the local State WPA.

The Field Supervisors should be, of course, trained men. There are 57 counties. If we may have three men to a county, a total of 171, the work possibly may be accomplished within a year. This would make a grand total of 178. Our state is rich in history and folklore. My ambition is for a field worker to remain in town or hamlet until he has gathered all the folklore the place can yield. From the cost angle this is also important as in the past unnecessary expense has been incurred by several visits to the same place.

## II



You ask for a plan for a book of New York lumberjack ballads. The scheme for collecting them is threefold: 1. The collecting general folklore by counties will be instructed to seek, as a special item, (a) the names and addresses of old woodsmen who can or could sing; (b) the lumberjack songs and ballads and stories which may chance to be remembered by anyone in a county town. 2. Concurrently I want, at the earliest practical moment, to visit personally six key men, then others as they are discovered. 3. Volunteer service by newspaper editors, local people and organizations. I have already the cooperation of the State Conservation Department. I have on several occasions created much interest in the subject by addressing Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs.

I submit also a tentative plan for the book. As a rule the subject matter makes its own logical plan, hence the following is only a preliminary guide: 1. Enough of the history and geography of lumbering to make clear the lumberjacks' life, his contributions to society, and (perhaps) some pertinent reactions upon him. 2. The ballad in general and the type in particular. 3. Narrative of personal search for the lumberjack singers; impressions of the men, their singing, their songs and ballads etc., including here the songs and music thus gathered, together with colorful and significant connected or surrounding data. 4. Other lumberjack songs and ballads

and general folklore - obtained in various ways - with interesting and significant data. An attempt at a classification of the ballads.

The lumber districts are located in 27 counties, some of which are only of commercial interest, yet all of which should be investigated.



### III

On the authority of Dr. Alexander C. Flick, State Historian, and Corresponding Secretary of the New York State Historical Association, we may count on the cooperation of the Historical Society.

(1) In approving an application of an organized folklore group as a special unit or division, though a subordinate one, of the Historical Association. The exact terms were not specified though likely to be simply that each member of the folklore division pay the Historical Association dues of \$3. a year. The annual meetings would coincide in time and place.

(2) A committee of the Association would act as sponsor, exclusive of financial matters of the WPA folklore publications. This means valuable advice, information and constructive criticism. Probably no one knows every nook and corner of the state, and its history as intimately as Dr. Flick. Over a period of 20 years, I have always found him most generous in his help. Dr. D.R. Fox, President of the Union College and also of the New York State Historical Association, would also be a member of the committee.

(3) Folklore books would bear the imprint - "Published under the auspices of the New York State Historical Association."

The financing of folklore books in a project and government responsibility and a problem not easy to discuss in the abstract. I believe, however, that it will be possible to find within the counties organizations and publishers willing to sponsor the publication of books of their own folklore when we can show them worthy copy. Dutchess County and Rochester and Monroe County published separate guide books. A few counties have requested county histories. The State is more or less county conscious with considerable pride and interest involved.

Personally, I prefer a volume or two of New York State Folklore, which would indicate the locale but avoid repetitions. In county books repetitions of exactly the same songs or ballads is unavoidable. Variants, of course, would be desirable. The financing of a state book would be a much simpler proposition. A publisher can be found, possibly one of the University presses. I am acquainted with the New York publishers and will sound them out.

There is more interest in folklore than is generally thought. My book, for instance, published in 1924, has yielded me royalties every year since publication, including the present year. A state book can be made saleable as well as scholarly in completeness and accuracy.

11/23/38

L.H.

