Mississippi Folklife

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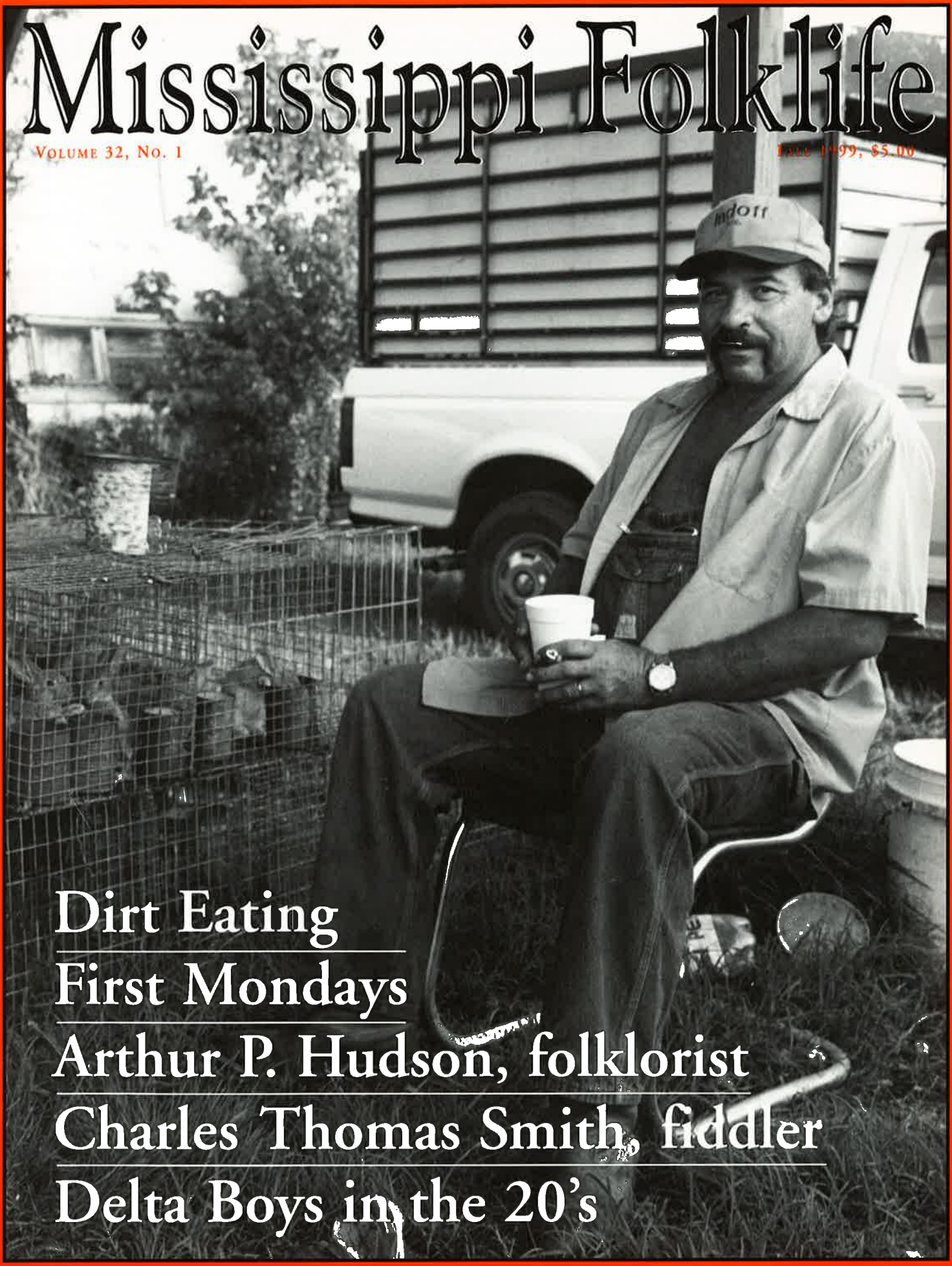


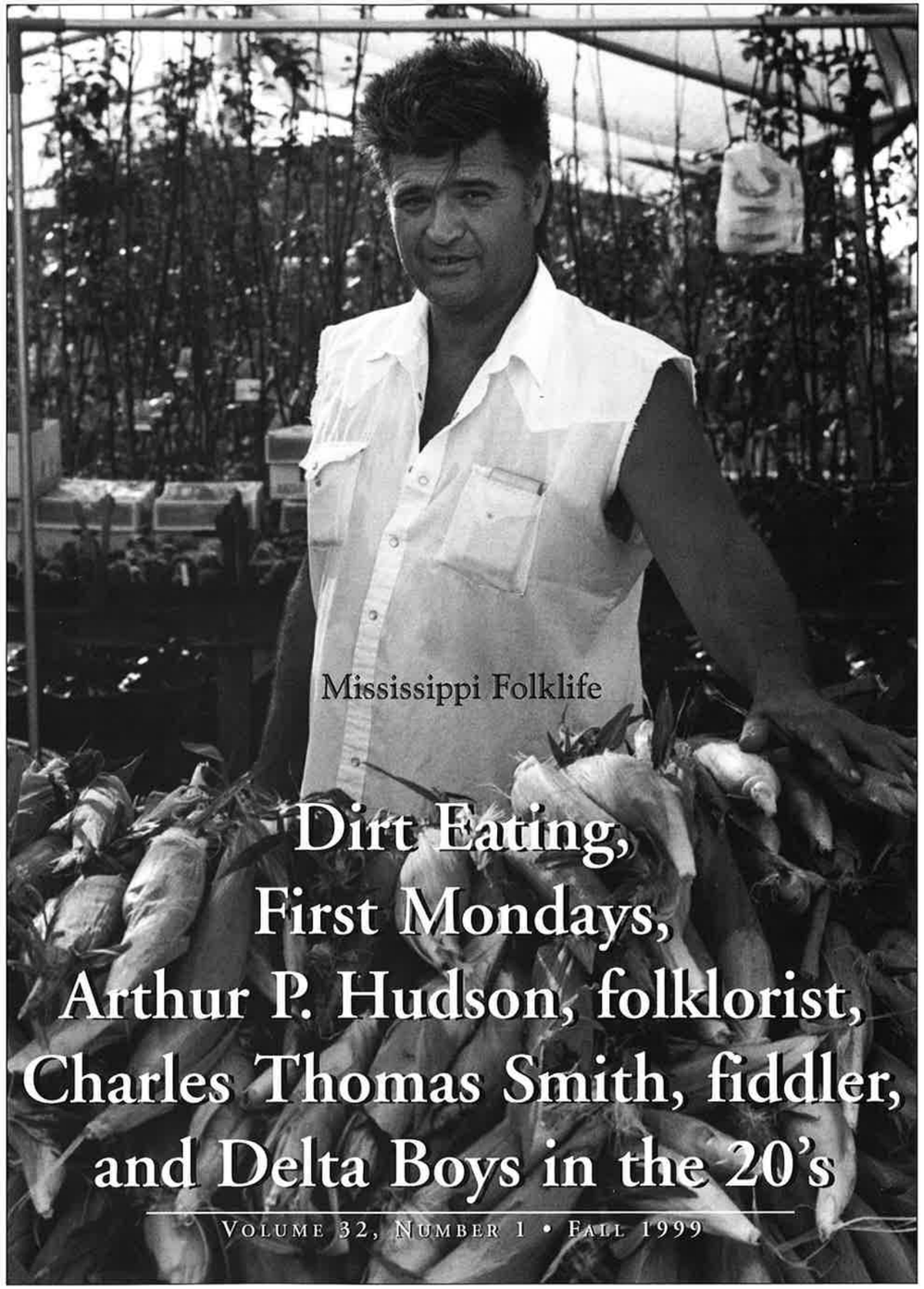
Dirt Eating

First Mondays

Arthur P. Hudson, folklorist

Charles Thomas Smith, fiddler

Delta Boys in the 20's



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Dirt Eating, First Mondays, Arthur P. Hudson, folklorist, Charles Thomas Smith, fiddler, and Delta Boys in the 20's

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Cover Photo and page 1 from Ripley, MS. Port Gibson, MS by David Wharton.
Opposite, from left to right: Dirt. Photo by Dennis Frate.
Doll from Ripley, MS. Photo by David Wharton.
Arthur Palmer Hudson. Photo courtesy Special Collections, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.
Charles T. Smith. Photo by Norman Mellin.
Sling Shot. Illustration by Moss M. Butler and Ashley M. Ferriss

Editor's Note

This issue shows the variety of approaches and topics that come under the heading of folklife scholarship. Dennis Frate's interview with a Mississippian who continues the practice of eating dirt to supplement her diet reveals both the best and the worst of Mississippi. The best is the warmth and openness she shows in the interview and her creativity people in the face of poor economic conditions; the worst is the poverty that makes such a choice necessary. The author finds that the practice of eating dirt has declined in the past 25 years, but it lives on in the habits of a few people, and in memory. David Wharton's photo essay brings to life First Monday Trade Day in Ripley, where long traditions of barter and making goods at home goods continue today. The buying and selling of home-made crafts, home-raised animals, fruits, and vegetables, and all sorts of old and new goods combine in a carnival atmosphere that may be as important as the buying and selling.

Bonnie J. Krause describes the life of Mississippi folklorist Arthur P. Hudson, who spent much of his career collecting and writing about Mississippi folk songs and humor and was crucial in starting the Mississippi Folklore Society. Norman Mellin's interview with fiddler Charles T. Smith documents where, how, and with whom Smith learned to play old-time music. The article on the play of boys in the Mississippi Delta by folklore scholar Abbott T. Ferriss describes some games that current readers may find familiar, and many games they will not. Drawings help bring the toys and games to life.

Some of the essays yield surprises within what may be familiar themes. For example, folklore scholars are familiar with people who hold on to traditions while fearing the younger generations are losing interest. But we are not familiar with people, like the subject of Dennis Frate's article, who describe eating dirt as part of a family tradition children in today's generation do not appreciate. And we are familiar with musicians who learned skills in the rural South, but we are less familiar with someone like fiddler Charles T. Smith, who met and was inspired by Grandpa Jones while in Europe in World War II.

Three projects at The Center for the Study of Southern Culture should be of interest to *Mississippi Folklife* readers. The Southern Foodways Symposium, October 20-22, 2000, has the theme "Travelin' On: Southern Foodways En Route." "Voices of Perthshire" is a new edition of a 1940 home movie Delta resident Emma Knowlton Lytle made to document plantation life. The new edition adds recent narration both by Ms. Lytle and by two people who worked on Perthshire plantation. Thirdly, "Mississippi Portrait" is a visually impressive and classroom-useful cd-rom containing all of the FSA photographs of Depression-era Mississippi. Information on all of these projects is available at www.olemiss.edu/depts/South/.

Photographs in this issue by Norman Mellin and Dennis Frate were originally in color.

Finally, thanks to the Mississippi Arts Commission for its continuing support of *Mississippi Folklife.*

Ted Ownby

Mississippi Folklife

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A Conversation with a *Dirt Eater*

by Dennis A. Frate

The practice of eating dirt, for generations a way for some Southerners to supplement their diets, has declined in the past thirty years. But the practice continues in the memories and on the table of people such as this Mississippi woman.

It was a hot, humid mid-July day in rural Mississippi. Driving down the dirt road you could see the heat rising from the surface. This was not a new experience for me; I have driven down these dirt roads here for over 25 years. Today, my research team and I were "scouting out" this area locating households to be interviewed for our study on environmental health risks.[1] This area was deliberately selected through a procedure called cluster sampling. This survey research technique randomly selects geographic areas where household clusters are located. Today, we were in a mile square grid off "River Bottom Road." Sizing up the area, we located seven households. While turning around in the driveway of the final house located in this mile-square grid, I turned and noticed a sight I had not seen for about 10 years, an active and recently used dirt site.

This term "dirt site" probably needs some clarification. In 1971, I conducted a field study on the practice of geophagy here in rural Mississippi. Geophagy is the conscious and deliberate consumption of soils; it is a practice that historically has been observed worldwide. My study determined that geophagy was not a physiologic response to dietary deficiencies but rather was, like all foods, a dietary practice with cultural underpinnings and was a learned behavior. The practice among African Americans here had strong ties to West Africa as it "survived" the translocation of the population during slavery. Even though clay particles are consumed, the local vernacular refers to the substance as dirt. The study conducted during 1971 determined: who consumed the soils (adult females and young children); what soils they consumed (clay particles); how the soils were consumed (prepared by baking and at times with additives used for flavor); the chemical analysis of the soils (no heavy metals); and, the health outcome (no discernable effects on blood hemoglobin). In 1971, the practice was so widespread that it was not unusual in the evenings to see women sitting on the front porch conversing while they were passing around and sharing a container of dirt. After a rain you could drive out to a "popular" dirt site and find a number of cars lined up to extract the clays. It actually reminded me of a drive-in fast food restaurant. A person would exit their car, go to the dirt site, extract some clay and leave. Each car would move up a spot to wait their turn.[2]

Approximately 15 years later I conducted an update of the practice. Based on the results of that study, I was somewhat surprised to find how dramatically the practice had changed. First and foremost, it was dying out. Few women were now actively consuming soils. Some women shifted from clays to geophagical substitutes, such as laundry starch and baking soda, commercially produced products that apparently have less of a stigma attached to it but have a similar texture as the clays. Basically, no longer could you walk down

A Mississippi dirt site. PHOTO BY DENNIS FRATE

a residential area and find women sitting on the front porch eating dirt, a very common sight in 1971. Now, you had to contact previously known dirt eaters to find anyone still practicing geophagy. This region had undergone rapid acculturation between the late 1960s and the early 1980s and geophagy appeared to be a victim of the adoption of mainstream culture. If the rate of change continued, I speculated, that in another 10 years the practice would truly disappear; I was wrong.

Feeling compelled to find out more about who was using this dirt site I found, I later returned to River Bottom Road. The following is an ethnographic account of my encounter with the individual using the site, Mrs. Ann Stevens (pseudonym).

One thing I learned in 1971 is the location of a dirt site is not necessarily a key to who uses it. It is not always used by residents of the home nearest to the site. But, it was a starting point. So I began to make inquires about who was using the site at the nearest house.

At the first house contacted, I asked an older women, about 70 years old, if she knew who was using the dirt site. She was quite convincing in telling me that it was not her. She used to eat dirt as a young woman but had not consumed any for about 20 years. She did, though, know who was using the site—her neighbor, Mrs. Ann Stevens. I thanked her and walked down the road to Mrs. Ann Stevens' residence. I knocked, she answered, and I introduced myself and explained my curiosity about the dirt site. Mrs. Stevens was about 50 years old, without hesitation she said, "Oh yes, that's my site. I just got back from getting some." I asked if she had some time to talk and she did. The following discussion was reconstructed from my notes and recall; I intentionally do not use a tape recorder in the field. The following narrative is presented as continuous dialogue but in reality was, of course, peppered with numerous questions from me.

"When I was a little girl, my mother used to give me some dirt to eat while she was having some herself. She ate dirt most of her life. She passed about two years ago. My Grandmother used to eat it too when I was young. I remember playing around them on the porch and they would give me some if I asked for a taste. My Mother used to bake her dirt for about one hour before eating it. She would spread it on a cookie sheet and put it in the stove, which at that time was wood burning. Every now and then, but not every time, she would sprinkle some vinegar on it before she put it in the oven. That gave it a real nice sour taste. We didn't live here when I was a little girl. We lived over in Johnsontown, that's a little church community a couple of miles from here. She used a couple of different places to get her dirt. One place was pretty close to our house. Sometimes she would walk over to it to get some dirt and other times she would send me or my sisters to go. Didn't seem to matter when; I guess just when she felt like eating some dirt. We would usually gather a shoe box full and bring it home. She had another place too that she got dirt from; it was further away and she didn't use that one too often. I'm not sure why she had two places. Probably because they tasted different. I was too young, about four years old, so I don't exactly recall. I don't remember eating dirt after I was 4 or 5. I started having some again when I got to be about 12 or so. About that time I moved to Chicago to live with my Auntie. Being in Chicago we didn't eat any of that dirt up there. I do remember though every now and then my mother would mail up a box of dirt from back home. It was a real treat.

"I went back to Mississippi in the summers but I didn't really start eating it regularly until I got married. I had just finished high school and moved back for good and then I married Sam. I had known him since I was a little girl. His family had this land here and so we got married. I started to use this dirt site about that time. It tasted pretty much like the dirt I had as a little girl. I do bake it like my mother used to, although I think I use more vinegar on it than she did, but that's how I like it.

"I have four children, three girls and one boy. They all used to have a taste when they were young, but none of the girls wanted to eat it once they grew up. One girl, Mary, lives up in Chicago and every now and then she will eat some Argo Starch. I don't think she does it too often though. Sometimes I think it's kind of sad that my girls don't do it. I mean their Mama eats it; their Grandmother and their Great Grandmother ate it. For all I know it goes back to slavery and beyond. Pretty much a family tradition. But now-a-days traditions don't mean as much to the younger generation. I don't really know too many young people who eat dirt now. I guess it's disappearing. Pretty much like hog killing. Those were the days when a family would butcher a hog and the whole community would come over to eat. You don't see much of that now either. Times change.

"I often wondered if dirt-eating was good for you. But my Grandmother and Mother lived into their 70's so I guess it can't be too bad. I've heard lots of stories how some people say that dirt-eating makes you sick, but I've really never saw anyone get sick from it. Like they say, 'You have to eat a peck of dirt before you die.' I sure have eaten my peck. My husband still asks me why I eat it and I just tell him, 'I like it and it's a women's dish.' I'm a woman so I guess I was born to eat it. I don't eat a whole lot of it, probably about a handful or so a day. Sometimes though after a rain and everything smells so sweet, I really have a craving for some dirt. I usually like to have some then. They say you are born of dust - when you die you go to dust - I guess I just filled in the middle with dust too.

"Not many grown women my age around here eat dirt now. Like I said before, times change. It used to be sort of a social thing - sitting around the porch on a warm night talking to your neighbors, eating some dirt. Every now and then when I am in a store, I see a woman buy some Argo (laundry starch). I'll bet they are taking it home to eat, but I really don't know for sure. My grandchildren will probably never do it – I guess. I do hope my daughters tell them about it though. It was a family tradition, but like I said, 'Times change.' "

During our conversation Ms. Stevens crumbled some dirt on to a baking pan. She sprinkled some white vinegar on it and placed it in the oven. After our conversation she took the pan out of the oven. I tried some; she was right, it did have a nice sour taste. I was happy to have had this opportunity to talk to Ms. Stevens. As an anthropologist, I was happy to archive a disappearing cultural practice. Like Ms. Stevens said, "Times Change." MF

DENNIS A. FRATE, PH.D. Research Professor of Pharmacy and Anthropology and Coordinator of the Rural Health Research Program at the University of Mississippi.

END NOTES

1. This study was partially supported by the Earthwatch Institute.

2. A number of journal articles were published by the author on this research including:

Vermeer, D.E. and D.A. Frate, "Geophagy in a Mississippi County," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 65 (1975), 414-24.

Vermeer, D.E. and D.A. Frate, "Geophagia in Rural Mississippi: Environmental and Cultural Contexts and Nutritional Implications," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 32 (1979):2129-35.

Frate, D.A., "Last of the Earth Eaters," *The Sciences* (November/December, 1984), 34-38.

Frate, D.A., "Geophagy," *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, William Ferris and Charles Reagan Wilson, ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1368-69.

First Monday Sale and Trade Days in Ripley

A Photo Essay

by David Wharton

First Monday in Ripley brings together people ready to buy and sell almost anything, and the buying, selling, and talking often seem more important than the things themselves.

The First Monday Sale and Trade Days (usually referred to as "First Monday") has been part of community life in Ripley, Mississippi since 1893. Originally held on the first Monday of every month, it now takes place on the weekend before the first Monday. It boasts hundreds of vendors, who sell a wide variety of merchandise, new and used. Some of the vendors are professionals who visit Ripley, the seat of Tippah County, in the northeastern part of the state, as a regular part of their travels on the Southern flea market circuit. Others are amateurs who participate more for fun than profit; most of this latter group sells only at Ripley. The town normally has a population of about 5000, but thousands more flock to Ripley on First Monday weekends, eager to trade, buy, talk, and gawk. They come from throughout the deep South and often from much farther away. On July 31, 1999 there were cars from Texas, Missouri, Ohio, Arizona, Indiana, and New York in the parking lot, as well as from Mississippi and surrounding states.

The standard wisdom is that you can find anything you want at First Monday (and a lot you don't want but might buy anyway). Items available for sale or trade include sunglasses, guinea fowl, videotapes, baby strollers, sweet potatoes, bumper stickers, shotguns, porch swings, farm implements, dolls, microwave ovens, dogs, T-shirts, artificial floral arrangements, and just about anything else.

Originally held on Ripley's courthouse square, First Monday has changed locations several times over the years. At first, it enjoyed the support of both the town's business community and local government. Hoping to profit from rural people coming to town on Trade Day, Ripley's merchants designated the first Monday of the month a special "Grand Bargain Day." The county pitched in by having the sheriff's office hold auctions of stray livestock and other unclaimed property from the courthouse steps. Before long, though, the congestion caused by the monthly influx of people, animals, and wagons began to outweigh what the merchants saw as Trade Day's advantages, and sometime during the 1910s, First Monday relocated to a site a few blocks off the square. In the 1940s, because of noise and sanitation concerns, the event moved out of Ripley's business district altogether, to the intersection of Highways 4 and 15, about a quarter of a mile from the square. In the early 1950s, First Monday relocated again, this time to the Tippah County Fairgrounds, about a mile south on Highway 15. It moved to its present location, even farther south on Highway 15, in 1978.

First Monday now takes place about two miles south of downtown Ripley, at what was once a drive-in movie theater on the east side of Highway 15. The unpaved parking lot is right next to the highway. Local teens collect $1.50 from those who want to park there. (Some people prefer to park for free on the highway's

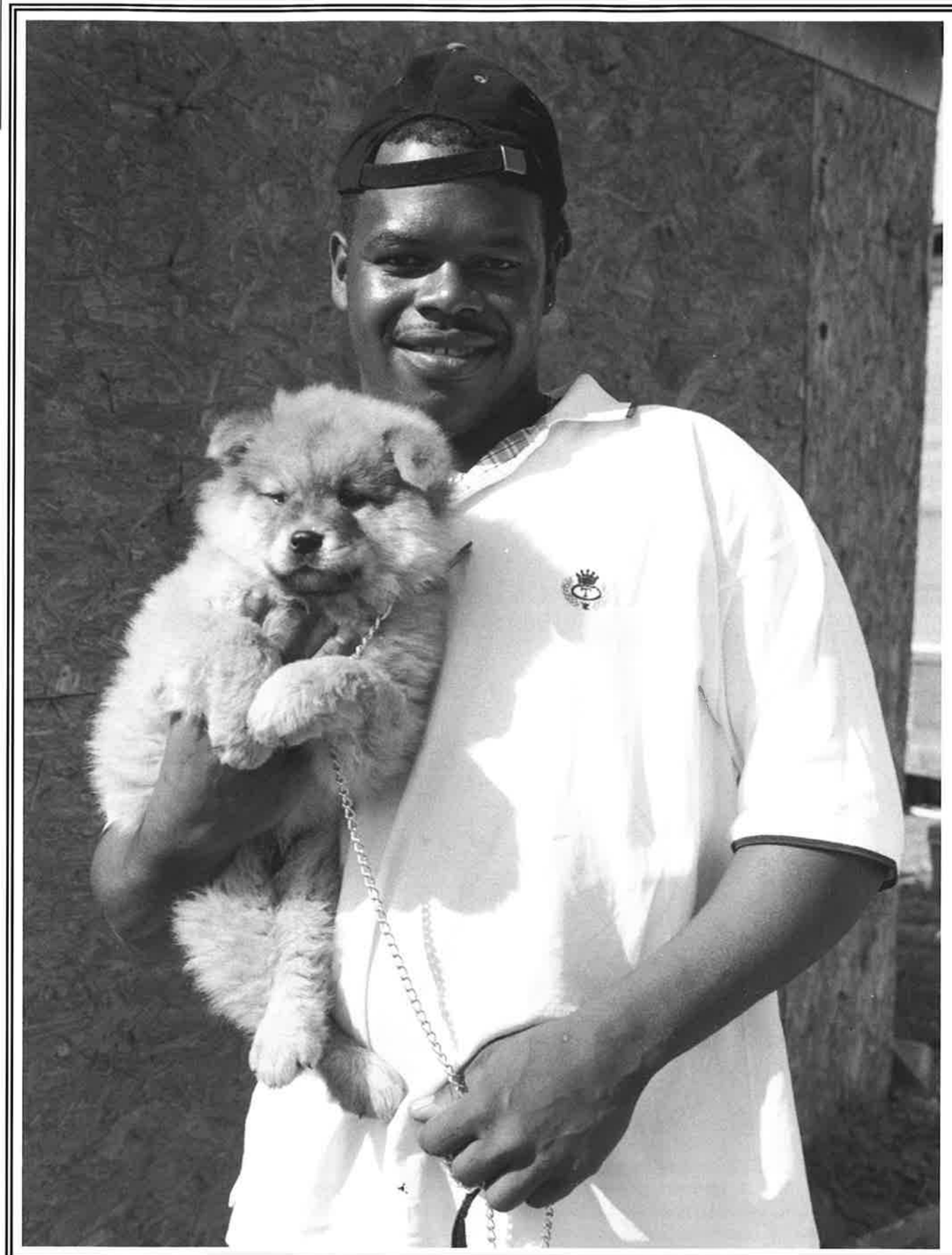
This vendor's sign embodies the prevailing spirit of First Monday. PHOTO BY DAVID WHARTON

Top: Sharon Lea Williams, known to most at First Monday as "the hat lady," travels to First Monday from Holcolm, Missouri every month to sell a wide variety of hats. Bottom: Many different kinds of livestock are available at First Monday. Here, two men try to make a deal for the goat in the foreground. PHOTOS BY DAVID WHARTON

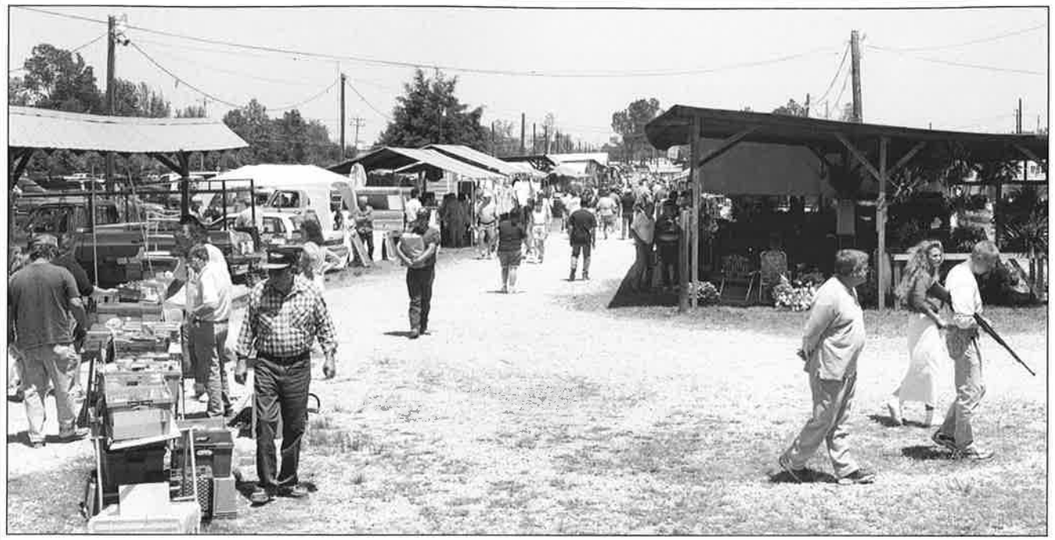
western shoulder, despite the possibility of being towed.) On the other side of the parking lot are the sales grounds—about fifty-acres' worth of booths arranged in irregular rows. The ground is covered with a light-colored gravel; this makes the site dusty when it's dry and glaringly bright in the summer sun, but it also keeps the place from getting too muddy when it rains. The aisles between the rows of booths are often crowded: couples, cruising teenagers, families, gangs of children, tourists, working people, and retirees roam from booth to booth, always looking, sometimes stopping to talk or bargain with vendors, occasionally buying something. Scattered throughout are refreshment stands where you can get such all-American standards as hamburgers, corn dogs, sausage-on-a-stick, french fries, popcorn, ice cream, and soft drinks. (No alcoholic beverages are served at First Monday.) Foods with a more Southern flavor include pork rinds, boiled peanuts, fried pies, sweet tea, and fresh-squeezed lemonade. For those who prefer to get in out of the weather, there is the Trader's Inn, a cafeteria-style restaurant that serves hearty breakfasts, as well as "dinner" (served in the middle of the day) and supper in the plate lunch "meat & three" tradition.

As with any long-standing tradition, First Monday has changed over the years. At first, it was almost exclusively a "trade day"—"an old hound dog for an old single barrel shotgun or plow tools for a mule,"

Top: Natha Jackson (left) sells "mamaw and papaw" dolls in several different sizes. She also makes all of their clothes. The dolls come in both black and white. Bottom: Martha Garner, a lifelong resident of Ripley, has been selling home-made dolls at First Monday since the early 1980s. She rarely misses a month. PHOTOS BY DAVID WHARTON



Opposite: Michael Crumb had bought his new dog Rocky just an hour or so before this picture was taken. Top: Elmer Rinks, who lives near the Shiloh battlefield in Tennessee, travels the Mid-South buying used clothing. After laundering and repairing it, he and wife sell the best pieces at First Monday. Bottom: Roger Foster, from Lawrence County, Tennessee, raises rabbits to sell at First Monday. PHOTOS BY DAVID WHARTON

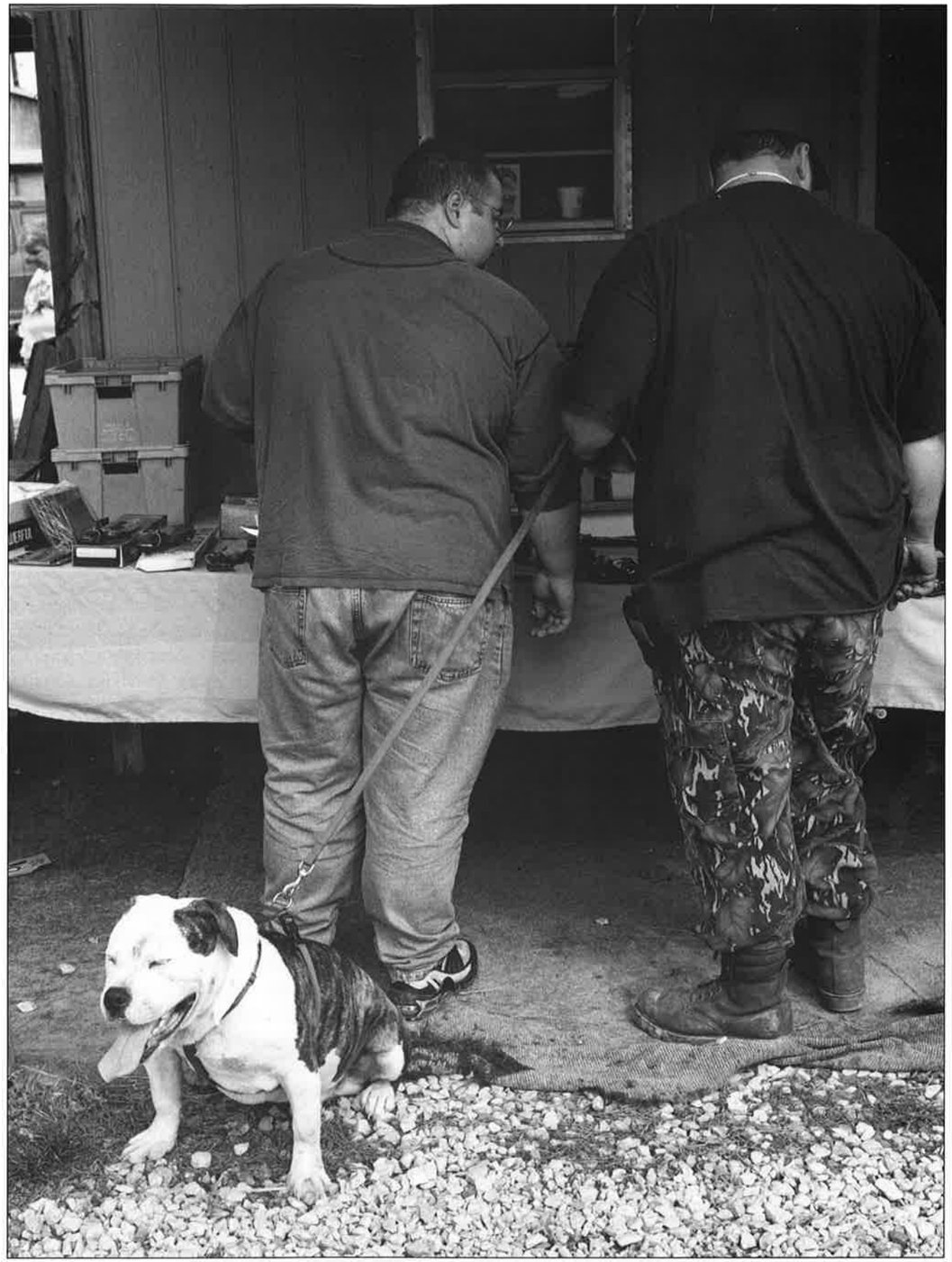


as one life-long resident of Ripley put it—at which little or no money changed hands. This was largely out of necessity, since most turn-of-the-century farmers in northeast Mississippi were cash-poor in the extreme. Such "trading" is now pretty much a thing of the past at First Monday, though as recently as the 1960s and '70s, some old-timers disdained cash sales for the more subtle art of barter. One Ripley native recalls trying to buy a shotgun at First Monday from a man who was willing to trade but wouldn't even consider taking cash. Another person remembers an elderly farmer wandering the grounds with a large pipe wrench over his head shouting, "Who will trade me a billy goat for this pipe wrench? I need a good billy goat, who needs a good pipe wrench?" There is also an old First Monday story, probably apocryphal, about a man who went to First Monday with a shotgun to trade. Early in the day, he traded it for a hunting dog; a little while later, he traded the dog for a sewing machine. After several more trades, he wound up with a shotgun. Only after getting home did he realize it was the same shotgun he had started the day with. True or not, this story hints at the passion among some at First Monday for trading. Today, even though price is sometimes open to negotiation, nearly all First Monday business is transacted in cash. Some people mourn this change, believing it has turned First Monday into "just another flea market" that has lost connection with its rural past. Whether such critics are right or not, on a busy summer weekend—when tens of thousands of people descend on Ripley—First Monday is still a sight to behold. MF

DAVID WHARTON is director of documentary projects and assistant professor of Southern Studies at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In 1999, at the suggestion of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran and with financial support from a Mississippi Humanities Council mini-grant, a team from The University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture documented First Monday for inclusion in the Library of Congress' Bicentennial "Local Legacies" project. David Wharton, director of documentary projects and assistant professor of Southern Studies at the Center, along with oral historian and folklorist Wiley Prewitt, Jr. and graduate assistant Donna Buzzard, visited Ripley repeatedly to record the sights and sounds of First Monday. Thirty of the photographs and twelve taped interviews were donated to the Library of Congress, and "First Monday in Ripley" is one of the projects featured on the Library of Congress' Local Legacies website (http://lcweb.loc.gov/bicentennial/propage/MS/ms_s_cochran1.html). In addition, sixty-nine of the photographs, along with quotes from the interviews, have become a permanent exhibition at Ripley's Tippah County Museum.



Above: A hot summer morning at First Monday. Opposite: Dogs, hunting gear, and camouflage clothing are always in abundance at First Monday. Here, two men inspect a selection of hunting knives. PHOTOS BY DAVID WHARTON

Arthur Palmer Hudson

Mississippi Folklorist

by Bonnie J. Krause

Attala County native Arthur P. Hudson brought his passion for collecting folksongs and stories to The University of Mississippi in the 1920s and The University of North Carolina in the 1930s. He helped organize the Mississippi Folk-Lore Society in 1927 and helped reinvigorate it in 1967.

Arthur Palmer Hudson is considered one of the first collectors and recorders of Mississippi folklore. In 1928 in the introduction to *Specimens of Mississippi Folklore* entitled "Significance of Mississippi Folk-Lore," Arthur Palmer Hudson stated: "...Mississippi Folk-Lore as representative of a body of traditions which...have been almost completely obscured...are...more genuinely and vitally characteristic of our people...than the legend of the Old South."[1]

This theme dominated Arthur Palmer Hudson's long career and occupation with Mississippi and American folklore. As a child of Mississippi, born in Attala County, May 14, 1892, Arthur Palmer Hudson was raised in a little frame house on a small farm of 180 acres. His parents were "children of the Reconstructed South...both were poor." Hudson's great-grandfather, Hastings DeJournet Palmer, of Scotch-Irish ancestry, moved from South Carolina to Georgia to Attala County, Mississippi in 1844. He settled ten miles north of Kosciusko and built a large two story house with the help of slaves. Hudson's maternal grandmother was a Harrison from a Mississippi plantation whose father came from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The Hudson line of the family was probably originally from South Carolina.[2]

In his "An Attala Boyhood" written for the *Journal of Mississippi History,* Hudson recounted his family history and episodes recollected from his youth. This included his father as justice of the peace, roads and creeks, neighbors, and community businesses such as the blacksmith, the store, post office, and school. He discussed farming, childhood games, going to town, and other personal memories including sights, sounds, and smells.[3]

Hudson attended the University of Mississippi from 1909 to 1913 where he was a classmate of Congressman Wall Doxey, Latin American writer Muna Lee and Congressman- judge Thomas Webber Wilson. In his junior year he was managing editor of *The Mississippian,* and in his senior year he became editor-in-chief, initiating his lifetime writing career. During his college years he wrote verse such as "The Slave Graveyard" for the 1910 *University of Mississippi Magazine.*[4]

With his "To an Indian Arrowhead" for the 1913 *Ole Miss Annual,* Hudson recalled picking up arrowheads on a bend on the Sha'key Creek on the family farm near a Indian mound which may have been a village. This early verse illustrated his growing interest in cultural traditions. He would later say of his early poetry, often done while on vacation, that it was "an expression of real emotional experiences normal to a youth and young man."[5]

He graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1913. He became Principal of Gulfport High School from 1913 through 1918, then joined the faculty of the Gulf Coast Military Academy. In 1919 he returned to Oxford, Mississippi, to become the Superintendent of Oxford Schools. While in Oxford he completed his Master's Degree at the University in 1920 and joined the University English Department faculty. Between 1920 and 1930, starting as Assistant Professor, he advanced in the Department, while acquiring another Master's Degree during the summers of 1923-24-25 at the University of Chicago.[6]

In 1923, while teaching an English course on English and Scottish ballads, Hudson began to consider a course on folklore. Students reported local citizens they knew who recalled old ballads and songs. In 1925, Hudson, with a student, visited Mrs. G. V. Easley in Calhoun City who remembered and sang for them over 25 ballads. In 1926, Hudson proposed a separate course on Mississippi folklore to be taught in the English department. It would be organized on a seminar basis, based on field collecting by students, with four to six hours credit.[7] It would cover eleven areas of folklore: anecdotes, ballads, characters, charms, dialect, epitaphs, fables, legends, games, riddles and rhymes, and superstitions. The class was successful. Eight students participated with six completing their own folklore collections.[8]

In 1926 Hudson published "Ballads and Songs from Mississippi" in *The Journal of American Folk-Lore.* He credited the original informant, who recorded the song (often his students), where, and how it was recorded. In addition, he used major folk song collection references to place the individual ballads and songs within the American framework. The folk songs included traditional songs and ballads including "Edward," four versions of "Barbara Allen," three versions of "Paper of Pins," "Sally Goodin," "Wife of Usher's Well," among others.[9]

Another class was formed from 1927 to 1928. Over 1,000 songs and ballads and 1,500 pages of text were compiled. In 1928 Hudson published the collections as *Specimens of Mississippi Folk-Lore.* The collected content came mostly from six north Mississippi counties: Lafayette, Panola, Pontotoc, Lee, Calhoun, and Yalobusha with the majority of materials from Calhoun, 139 items, Yalobusha, 89 items, and Lafayette, 101 items. The volume covered four major folklore subjects: ballads and songs, folk games, beliefs and customs, and folk tales.[10]

The ballads and songs section collected by students covered seven areas: English and Scottish, other imported, American origin, the West, outlaws-criminals and vagrants, Civil War, Negro spirituals and workaday, and miscellaneous. Songs were included in the collection based on the following test: "1. existence independent of print, oral transmission from person to person; 2. retention of vitality through a fair period of time; and 3. Loss by the singers of all sense of authorship and provenience (sic)."[11]

English and Scottish ballads included "Lord Randall," "Edward," "Bonny Barbara Allen" and numerous others. A sampling of songs of American origin collected were "The Jealous Lover," "The Silver Dagger," and "Wicked Polly." Songs of the west were: "The Jolly Cowboy," "O Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie;" songs of outlaws, criminals and vagrants: "Jesse James," "The Dying Hobo," and the "Railroad Bum;" Civil War songs: "The Yankees are Coming," "The Southern War Cry," "I'll Eat When I'm Hungry," and "The Homespun Dress;" and Negro Spirituals and Workaday songs included "John Henry," " I looked over Jordan," and "Lord I'm Sinkin Down." The miscellaneous songs were "Paper of Pins," "Turnip Greens," "Old Blue," and "The True Lover's Farewell."[12]

The section of folk games included play party games—games played in a group gathered for a party. This included "Chickama Craney Crow:"

Chickama, chickama, craney crow:
I went to the well to wash my toe.
When I got back my black- eyed chicken was gone.
What time is it, Old Witch?

This game consisted of clockwise marching hens and chickens which the witch attempted to catch by telling time. Captured fowl are penned and the game continued until all the fowl are caught. The first caught is the witch for the next game.[13]

Other games included "William Come Tremble Toe:"

William come tremble toe
He's a good fisherman, all of us know,
Catches hens, puts 'em in pens.
Some lay eggs, some lay none.
Wire, Brier, limberlock,
Three geese in a flock,
One flew east and one flew west,
And one flew over the cuckoo's nest.
O-U-T spells out and go,
You dirty dish rag YOU.[14]

Additional games were "Molly Bright:" a chasing game with another witch, "Brother I am Bob:" a sort of blind man's bluff, "Horny Cup:"guessing the number of fingers, "Club Fist:" knocking fists off a column of fists, "Pecan Game:" guessing the number of nuts in an opponent's hand, "Tar Baby:" balls placed in hats and then thrown at players, and counting-out, hide-and-seek, handkerchief dropping, and rope skipping rhymes.[15]

Singing games included "Marching Round the Levee," "Had a Big Fight in Mexico," "King William," "Little Sally Walker," "Needle's Eye," "Threading the Needle," and "Frog Went a-Courtin'." Play parties recorded were based on square dancing and promenades such as "Hog Drovers," "Rally Boys Rally," "Skip to My Lou," "The Jolly Miller," and "Coffee Grows on White Oak Trees."[16]

Specimens also offered a variety of riddles:

Crooked as a rainbow, teeth like a cat
Guess all your lifetime and you can't guess that. (A brier)

Round as a saucer, deeper than a cup
All the king's horses can't pull it up. (a well)

Big at the bottom and little at the top;
In the middle it goes flippety-flop. (a churn)

Little Nan Etticoat
In a White petticoat
With a red nose:
The longer she stands
The shorter she grows. (a candle)

Over hills and over hollows;
Eats, but never swallows. (rust)

A little white fence that's always wet,
But never has been rained on yet. (teeth)[17]

Under "Beliefs and Customs," *Specimens* considered snakes and their bites. Snake bites should be treated with a freshly killed young chicken which will turn black when the poison is out. Or a snakebite could be treated with whiskey, tobacco or kerosene. The Hoop snake, who grabbed its tail in its mouth, rolled down a hill and when it hit a tree it killed it with its infamous fang. The chicken snake swallowed eggs. Another snake drank cows dry of milk.[18] Other beliefs and customs covered May Day, love and marriage, weather lore, signs and omens, leeches, and the madstone. Stories and folk tales in *Specimens* included "The Bell Witch," "The Doe with the Charmed Life," "The Graveyard 'Possum," and "Swift Peter."[19]

In May 1927, Hudson with a group of others founded the Mississippi Folk-Lore Society. Its goal was to collect, study and publish Mississippi folklore. With Hudson as president and T. A. Bickerson as secretary-treasurer, the original group included David H. Bishop (chair of the English department), G. E. Bynum, A. R. Eidt, Calvin S. Brown, and Lois Womble. They met in the Peabody building at the University of Mississippi. It was through the Mississippi Folk-Lore Society that Hudson published *Specimens of Mississippi Folk-Lore.*[20]

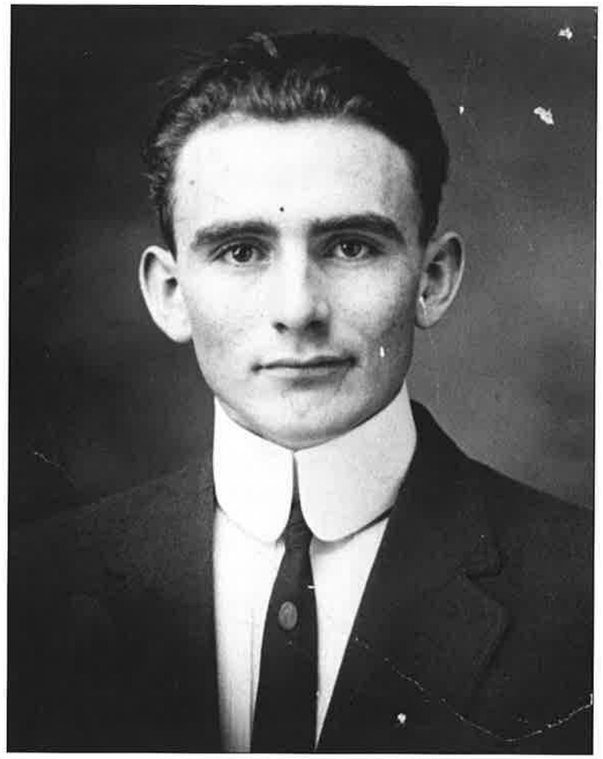
The collection of folk songs and folklore drew Hudson into speculation of their wider importance. In a 1929 letter to Stark Young, playwright and theater critic, he stated:

> It is my theory, (a part of it, at least), that though folk-song and other forms of folk-lore had their seat of power among the humble folk they touched the inner life of the aristocracy as well and served as a sort of least common denomination between two classes whose interests (economic and political) were poles apart.[21]

Hudson was absent in 1930 from the University of Mississippi, working toward his PhD at the University of North Carolina, when Theodore Bilbo, a controversial governor who dismissed professors, made his indelible mark on the state of Mississippi. Hudson had a telephone call from Dr. Alfred Hume in Jackson "notifying me that the head of my department…had been dismissed from the faculty and that I had been elected head of the department."[22] Hudson later stated: "I had not been a 'Bilbo man' and was innocent…."[23] Hudson left the University of Mississippi in 1930 after "the Bilbo earthquake" when he was appointed to an administrative position "which I could not retain without making myself a party to the forces which had devastated the higher institutions of learning."[24] He fled to the University of North Carolina where he completed his PhD that same year. His dissertation was *Folk Songs of Mississippi*, and he joined the faculty.[25]

Probably influenced by the work of Frederick Koch, a colleague at North Carolina, Hudson created dramas based on folk tales. Hudson wrote the play *Git Up an' Bar the Door* based on the folk song between 1929 and 1930 and produced the play in 1930-31.[26] Frederick Koch, the editor of *The Carolina Play-Book*, in his introduction calls "Git Up an' Bar the Door" a "delightful farce of Mississippi hill-country folk." which was based on a ballad.[27] The play was originally produced by the Carolina Playmakers at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in November 1930.

The play included Burrus Stubbs, a farmer, Jenny, his wife, Rett Starnes, a neighbor, and Pink, Tol, and Jack Armstrong who were a gang of criminals. Rett came to visit Jenny saying he had news. The Armstrong boys robbed Dick Stegall of his $200 cotton money, then tied him on his horse backwards. Jenny was out of firewood from rendering lard all day, and the kitchen was cold. The kitchen door latch was also broken, although she had reminded Burrus repeatedly to fix it. As Rett left, Burrus stumbled in drunk and Jenny reminded him to feed the stock and bring in wood. After Burrus cut the firewood, Jenny complained about the broken door latch. Burrus gave her a comb as a peace offering. Jenny wanted the door fixed. They argued, and then agreed that whoever talked first would lose the argument. As they sat down to eat, the dog barked; it was the Armstrongs. Neither Jenny nor Burrus responded to the Armstrongs who tied them up and then ate their dinner. The Armstrongs could not shut the door. They cut Burrus's beard and tried to kiss Jenny. Burrus got their gun and Jenny still did not say a word. As Burrus fell down, Jenny scalded the Armstrongs with boiling water. The Armstrongs escaped. Jenny said that Burrus had lost the game because he yelled at the Armstrongs and she told him to "Git Up an' Bar the Door."



A. P. Hudson as University of Mississippi student. PHOTO COURTESY A. P. HUDSON PAPERS, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, JOHN D. WILLIAMS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

The *Blue Boar*, a Negro folk tale from Mississippi, Hudson wrote into a short story and eventually a three act drama for the Carolina Playmakers in 1930.[28] The *Blue Boar* was created from several folk stories collected from different areas in the state; the central counties and the Mississippi Delta. The tale concerned Chloe, a 16 year old quadroon, who was being pursued by "Tiger Cat" Parker, a mulatto with an automatic pistol. Mose, Chloe's father, worked on Bob Chilton's plantation as a share cropper, taking care of the hogs which included a "shaggy blue-black tusked boar." The boar was separated from the other hogs because of his wild and aggressive nature. Mose was suspicious of Tiger Cat's intentions and, when at the store to buy tobacco, Tiger Cat invited Mose and Chloe to his barbecue and threateningly suggested Mose bring the hog to barbecue. Mose asked Tiger Cat to help him catch the boar that night. The next morning Bob Chilton and his hunting party discovered Tiger Cat dead in the boar's pen, an axe laying near him. They held court and, as Mose was about to confess, the hunting party found the boar guilty of the murder of Tiger Cat who was about to steal him. This story by Hudson was a collection of folk culture and history including references to a honeysuckle basket, crazy quilt, hickory splint rocker, a porch hound dog, the "Home Canning Club Girl's Manual," the tin dipper as a carrier of disease, "Egyptian Straight" cigarettes, the Volstead Act, and the plantation bell call for those in the cabins to come to the "big house."

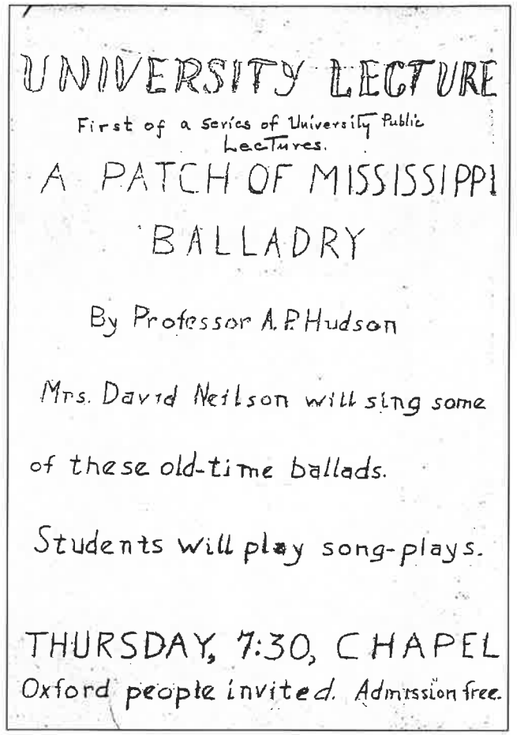
In that same year Hudson also created the three act play *The Bell Witch.*[29] The story concerned a John Bell, his daughter Mary, and a hired overseer living in Mississippi. Bell killed the overseer, supposedly in self defense, for mistreating the Negroes. After major crop failures and farming disasters, Bell moved his family to Tennessee. However, strange happenings followed the family. A servant proclaimed it was the "ha'nt of the overseer." During this time, supposedly, Andrew Jackson visited the family and was also attacked by the "witch." Milk disappeared, food flew from cabinets, wheels fell off wagons, horses and mules became sick. The witch began to show interest in Mary. The family decided to return to Panola County in Mississippi and again the witch followed them. He

demanded to marry Mary and make her famous for her marriage to a ghost. John Bell refused. Mary became ill and died, horrified by the witch's proposal. The coffin was followed by a black bird similar to a buzzard. The bird finally disappeared after circling the grave.

It was this same tale that had been included in *Specimens of Mississippi Folk-Lore* and originally collected in Water Valley, Lafayette County, and in Panola County.[30] In 1934, with Pete Kyle McCarter, Hudson wrote "The Bell Witch of Tennessee and Mississippi: A Folk Legend" in the *Journal of American Folk-lore*.[31] B. A. Botkin included Hudson's version in his *A Treasury of Southern Folklore* in 1949.[32]

Hudson published his *Folksongs of Mississippi and Their Background* in 1936.[33]

Also in 1936, Hudson edited *Humor of the Old Deep South* which he had researched over the previous two years at the Library of Congress through a fellowship in the humanities from the Rockefeller Foundation.[34] *Humor of the Old Deep South* was a collection of antebellum writings from Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Hudson used travel books, histories, historical materials, biographical writings, poems, almanacs, newspapers, and magazines. He divided the materials into chapters that roughly define the "drama:" "Prologue, Scene, Props, Antecedents." Then he moved to chapters based on the main characters such as "Indians; Hunters and Fishermen; Doctors, Lawyers, Judges," and many more. He completed the volume with "The Fourth Estate" and " Motley's the Wear" to include the miscellaneous. Donald Davidson in a review in the *American Review* called it "one of the most valuable and delightful miscellanies" noting that the tales were heard by most Southerners during their upbringing. He compared Hudson to Walter Scott "gathering up a border minstrelsy."[35] Stark Young in his review in *The New Republic* remarked on Hudson's "astonishing range" of resources from a 1609 account of DeSoto to local contemporary newspaper stories. Young noted that Hudson had edited about 250 entries. He believed the importance of the collection lay in the story-telling and tall tales and he linked them to Mark Twain's writings.[36]


UNIVERSITY LECTURE

First of a series of University Public Lectures.

A PATCH OF MISSISSIPPI BALLADRY

By Professor A.P.Hudson

Mrs. David Neilson will sing some of these old-time ballads.

Students will play song-plays.

THURSDAY, 7:30, CHAPEL

Oxford people invited. Admission free.

Flyer for a University of Mississippi lecture, 1926. PHOTO COURTESY A. P. HUDSON PAPERS, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, JOHN D. WILLIAMS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

In 1937, through the Federal Theater Project of the Works Progress Administration, Hudson published *Folk Tunes from Mississippi* with the melodies and texts of songs not included in his past works. These were songs from his original collecting in the 1920s in Mississippi and credited the singer and location.[37] The second edition included a preface by Ellen S. Woodward, a federal WPA administrator originally from Mississippi.

As a professor at Chapel Hill, Hudson continued his extensive research, writing, publishing, editing, and activities in folklore and folklore societies of North Carolina and the South.

In 1963 Lois Dollarhide, professor of English at the University of Mississippi, wrote an article "Mississippi Folklore Neglected Since Hudson" in the Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion Ledger*.[38] After 40 years of inactivity, the Mississippi Folklore Society was revitalized in 1967 with 107 members and began publication of the *Mississippi Folklore Register* which continued until 1994 when it was renamed *Mississippi Folklife*. The Society included Dr. Arthur Palmer Hudson as Honorary President, Dr. George Boswell, a English professor at the University of Mississippi, as President and W. Jack Crocker at Mississippi State College for Women, as Secretary-Treasurer. The Executive Council in 1967 included Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander from Jackson State College, Dr. Louis Dollarhide at Mississippi College, A.S.M. Zahural Haque from Alcorn A & M College, Diane McPhail of East Central Junior College, and Jack Smith of the University of Southern Mississippi. The first issue of the *Register* included greetings from Arthur Palmer Hudson.[39]

Arthur Palmer Hudson retired from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1963. In 1965 he created the "Arthur Palmer Hudson Mississippiana Collection" at the University of Mississippi's J. D. Williams Library Special Collections. He also organized an additional collection of North Carolina folklore in the Chapel Hill library. He died April 26, 1978.[40]

Arthur Palmer Hudson spent less than ten years of his professional life collecting Mississippi folklore within the state. But he continued throughout his life to publish from those early collecting years. Hudson planted the roots and encouraged the growth of the academic and popular field of Mississippi folklore and folklife which continues to flourish today. MF

BONNIE J. KRAUSE is the Director of the University Museums at The University of Mississippi.

ENDNOTES

1. Arthur Palmer Hudson, *Specimens of Mississippi Folk-Lore* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 1928), iv.
2. Arthur Palmer Hudson, "An Attala Boyhood," *Journal of Mississippi History* 4:2 (April 1942):128, 59-61, 62; Arthur Palmer Mississippiana Collection 76-3-1-13, Special Collections, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi (hereafter Hudson Collection).
3. Hudson, "An Attala Boyhood," 127-55.
4. Hudson Collection 76-3-1-14.
5. Ibid.
6. Hudson Collection 76-3-1-5, 76-3-1-13.
7. Hudson, *Specimens,* i.
8. Hudson Collection 76-3-3-5.
9. Arthur Palmer Hudson, "Ballads and Songs from Mississippi," *The Journal of American Folk-Lore* 39 (1926): 94-199.
10. *Specimens* was mimeographed under the auspices of the Mississippi Folk-Lore Society, the copyright was in Hudson's name with credit given to his students; Hudson, *Specimens,* "Contents."
11. Hudson, *Specimens,* viii.
12 Ibid., 2-108.
13. Ibid., 112.
14. Ibid., 113.
15. Ibid., 114-18.
16. Ibid., 123-29.
17. Ibid., 131-32.
18. Ibid., 141-44.
19. Ibid., 157-64.
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21. Arthur Palmer Hudson to Stark Young, 12 June 1929, Hudson Collection, 76-3-3-3.
22. Hudson Collection, 76-3-1-10; A different interpretation of Theodore Bilbo's influence on Mississippi higher education can be found in David G. Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 91-110.
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25. Hudson Collection, 76-3-1-13.
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29. Hudson Collection, 76-3-1-19.
30. Hudson, *Specimens,* 158-160.
31. Arthur Palmer Hudson and Pete Kyle McCarter, "The Bell Witch of Tennessee and Mississippi: A Folk Legend," *Journal of American Folk-lore* 47 (1934): 45-65.
32. B. A. Botkin, *A Treasury of Southern Folkore,* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1949), 527- 30.
33. Arthur Palmer Hudson, *Folksongs of Mississippi and Their Background,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936).
34. Hudson Collection, 76-3-2-11. Arthur Palmer Hudson, ed., *Humor of the Old Deep South,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936).
35. Donald Davidson review of *Humor of the Old Deep South,* by Arthur Palmer Hudson, ed., *American Review* 7 (Summer 1936): 335 quoted in Mertie M. James and Brown Dorothy Brown, eds., *Book Review Digest,* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co.) 32 (March 1936 to February 1937): 491.
36. Stark Young, "Every Section Its Humor," *The New Republic.* 87 (June 3, 1936): 105.
37. Arthur Palmer Hudson and George Herzog, *Folk Tunes from Mississippi,* National Service Bureau, Federal Theater Project, Works Progress Administration, Publication No. 23, December 1937.
38. Hudson Collection 76-3-2-11.
39. *Mississippi Folklore Register* 1 (1967).
40. "Arthur Palmer Hudson," Hal May, ed., *Contemporary Authors* 111, (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1984), 235.

Charles Thomas Smith

A Mississippi Fiddler

by Norman Mellin

Webster County's Charles T. Smith learned to play the fiddle as a child. In this interview he tells the story of his life as an old-time fiddler.

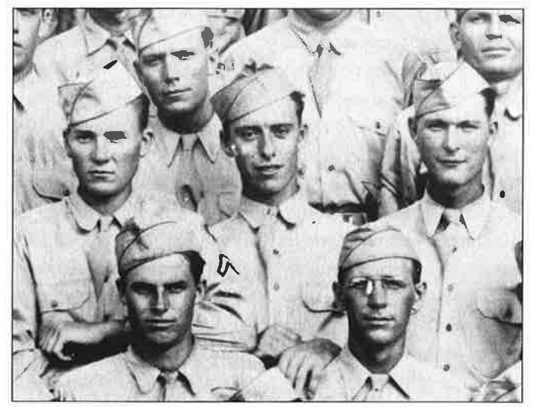
Charles T. Smith began playing the fiddle as a child, and he continues to play at local musical gatherings and at home with friends. His music represents the older generation of fiddlers in Mississippi who were self-taught and learned by ear. This interview, which took place at his Webster County home on March 30, 1991, traces his life as an old-time fiddler.

Charles T. Smith. PHOTO NORMAN MELLIN

Charles Smith's playing, a blend of old-time fiddling, bluegrass, swing and the popular music of his day, has old-time characteristics that distinguish it from the more modern forms of bluegrass and contest fiddling. Old-time fiddling is more for dancing, while bluegrass fiddling and contest fiddling are more for listening. In old-time fiddling, a rhythmic bow arm using short strokes is more prominent than the left-hand notes. This rhythm accentuates the feeling of the dance steps. In bluegrass and contest fiddling, a highly polished, smooth bow arm is used, and the listener's ear is focused on the left-hand notes.

Charles T. Smith can trace his family back to his grandfather, Lorenzo Dow Smith, a farmer who was born in Ohio and moved to Missouri after the Civil War. He served in the Union Army as a private in the 152nd Regiment of the Indiana Infantry. His great uncle on his mother's side fought for the Confederacy. "My grandfather was a horse rancher. He had a ranch near St. Joseph, Missouri. Then he sold that and moved to the southern part of Missouri near Ironton and died in Salem." Charles's father was born in Ironton in 1879. He farmed near Kansas City and then moved to Oklahoma City. He later worked in the Chickasha, Oklahoma post office before moving to Cumberland, Mississippi in 1920.

"My father was a farmer here in Cumberland. He had three or four different acreages. The largest I think was about 40 acres. Back then they farmed with mules. You couldn't handle a big farm. He raised cotton, sorghum, corn, cattle and other livestock, but mostly cotton. Cotton was the money crop. This was all during the Depression. He also worked at a planer mill in Cumberland. It was a good sized little town at one time when they had the Bays & Slade Lumber Company. They had what they called 'dummy lines.' Those little railroads that were built all through these woods. The trains would haul logs to the planer mill. It was a big operation. There were twelve or more stores in Cumberland in the old days. Now there's one store and a schoolhouse and that's it."



Top: Charles and Mae Smith. PHOTO NORMAN MELLIN *Below: Charles T. Smith (center), Company B, 512th M.P. Battalion, Camp Shelby, MS. August, 1943.* PHOTO COURTESY CHARLES SMITH

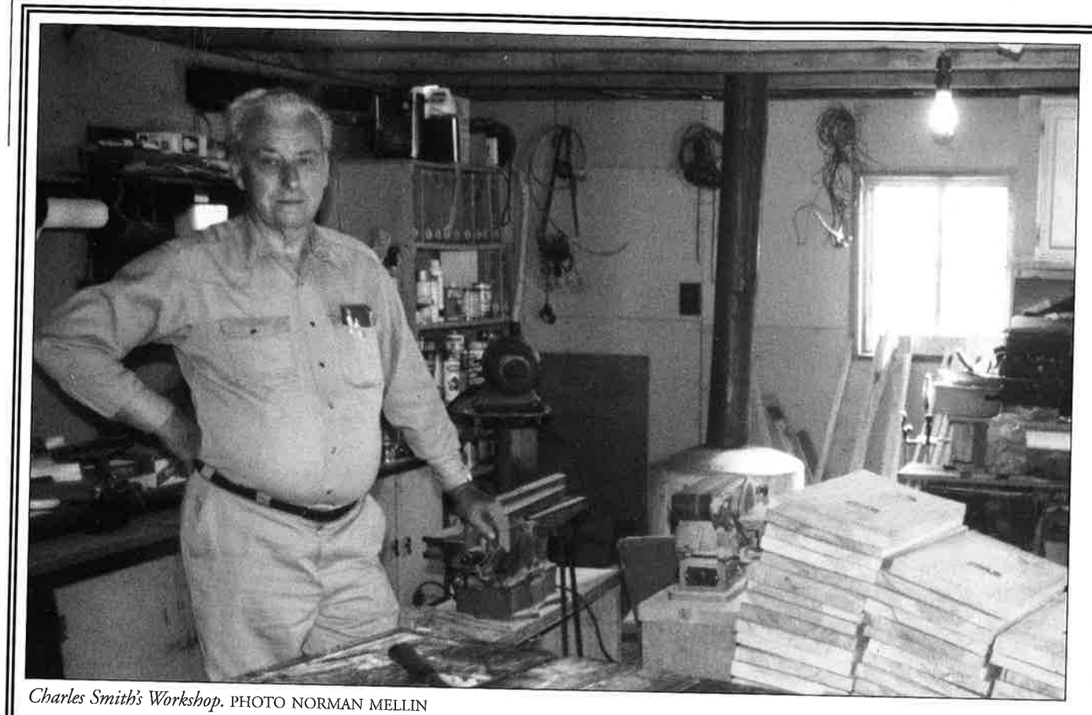
Living, Working, Military Service, and Retiring

"I was born on July 31st, 1922, in Webster County. Right across that road over there. There should be a big marker up there but there's not! It was between Cumberland and Maben. I lived in the Delta a long time; then I lived in Greenwood, about fourteen or fifteen years. After that I lived in Greenville until moved back to the Cumberland area in 1968.

"The first thing I did was carpentry work when I quit high school in the eleventh grade. I met my wife in 1942 while I was doing carpentry work in Greenwood. I was building houses and then we started building air bases and military installations. I was a third year apprentice carpenter working for J.A. Jones Construction Company at that time when they were building Camp McCain in Grenada. We didn't know each other longer than three months before we got married on November 8, 1942.

"Six months after I got married I was inducted into the service on May 8, 1943 and discharged December 10, 1945. I did my basic training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. I was in the Third Army attached to the 4th Armored Division, under General Patton. It was the 512th Field Army Military Police Battalion which was like a highway patrol in a battle zone. It was the first of its kind. I was in traffic control directing supplies, troops, and equipment back and forth from the front lines. During the war I played with an accordion player in my unit named Don Gooding from Frankton, Indiana. We wrote a song together that I still play.

"They transferred me over to the 380th M.P. battalion and that's where I got to know Grandpa Jones. He was in it. We played together at times. He's an old claw-hammer style banjo player. He had a little program on the radio in Munich after the war ended. He and I both played on the radio program but not together. Later, I worked on a farm for a while and ran a dairy one year. I didn't like that. Those cows didn't know Sunday from Monday! Then I got into mechanic work for several years and got to be assistant shop foreman at International Harvester in Greenville where I worked for seven years. I did maintenance work for a while and that's where I got into machine work and liked it a lot



Charles Smith's Workshop. PHOTO NORMAN MELLIN

better. I learned tool and dye making, and that's what I did until I retired in 1984 from Pep Industries in Houston, Mississippi. They make wire harnesses for Ford automobiles. I was making the tools that crimped the fixtures on the wires."

First Fiddle: Learning to Play

"My father was an old-time fiddler, but he hadn't played for a long time. In 1929, when I was seven years old, he planted a bunch of sugar cane. Those were hard times. Dollars looked like wagon wheels back then! I believe he sold his molasses for about 25 cents a gallon and a bucket cost either a nickel or a dime. He planted a bunch of cane that year but people didn't have any money to buy it, so they traded whatever they had for it.

"My half brothers were ten and twelve years older than me and they were big enough to begin to play the fiddle. They found a fellow who had a fiddle and a guitar that were all broken into pieces. Dad could fix anything, so he traded his molasses for the fiddle and the guitar. That's how I got started. My mother could play guitar a little, so Dad patched them together and started sawing on that old fiddle. He never played a whole lot. He had been a good fiddler back in his younger days, but he hadn't played for so long that he never really got back into it.

"I would sit and listen to him, keying the fiddle and playing it. One day, I heard Dad tuning that old fiddle and I could tell when it was in tune. We didn't have a case for it. It was hanging up on a nail on the wall, out of my reach. I started begging for that fiddle. Mother said, 'Well if you sit right down in the middle of the floor now, I'll let you hold it a little while.' I said, 'All right.' It was out of tune so I started to tune it and boy, I got in trouble! She jumped all over me for that. I finally convinced her to let me tune it. Before the evening was over, I could play a tune. It was called the 'Prisoner's Song.' It's that old song about how I wish I had wings like an eagle, over these prison walls I'd fly. Mother said, 'Let me put it back up now, it's about time for them to come in.' I was tickled to death. After supper we were all sitting around the fire and she got that fiddle and handed it to me and said, 'Show them what you learned today.' It scared me to death! I thought they were going to get all over me for fooling with that fiddle. I sawed through that tune where you could tell what it was. My brother said, 'Well, I'll tell you one thing, he can beat

Left to right: John A. Bell, Charles Smith, Wayne Putt, and Larry Wallace. PHOTO NORMAN MELLIN

me right now, so he can have it!' That's how I got my first fiddle.

"I started sawing on it with Dad giving me a few pointers. About two years later my brothers went to a country dance one night and brought a fellow home with them named Jim High. He was about thirty-five and a good fiddler! He was the one who got me interested. I learned 'The Eight of January' from him."

Phonographs and Radio

"We had an old record player, but I never did learn much fiddle music from it. Most of what I picked up was by hearing someone else play. That's probably the reason that most of what I play I don't play right. I'd hear it and have to wait until I got home to play it. When I couldn't remember it all, I'd have to fill in the gaps.

"We didn't have radio when I started to play. I imagine I was probably twelve or thirteen before we ever got one and then the old batteries were dead about half the time. I think it had about five batteries. Back then you had an A, B, and C battery to power it.

"We couldn't pick up many radio stations back then. The first I can remember was The Barn Dance from somewhere up north. It may have been Chicago. They didn't call it the Grand Old Opry. Back then those old battery radios had a good range. We had a big outside antenna way up high. There weren't many stations so you could pick up a clear signal. There would usually be one radio in the community that was working and everybody would gather at that house on Saturday night and listen. I think that's one reason so many people played back in those days. They didn't have anything else to do. People would meet at somebody's house and play two or three nights a week.

"I got a chance to play over the radio myself in 1940 on station WJPR in Greenville, Mississippi. I played with Uncle Pat and The Sunshine Playboys out of Clarksdale."

Playing for Dances

"I started playing for country dances, when I was about eleven or twelve. My two half brothers wanted to dance, so they took me there to play. They'd have them at somebody's house. They'd just move all the furniture out of one room, and have a dance. Back then, times were rough. Men were working out in the fields for 75 cents a day. I'd go to a country dance, and make two or

three dollars in one night. They'd toss those dimes and nickels in your hat if you'd quit playing.

"Many times at those square dances you wouldn't have any accompaniment. But somebody would be there that could beat straws. A lot of folks used knitting needles or coarse dry grass. It takes the place of having a guitar or a banjo behind the fiddle. I have done that a lot but I was never too partial to it. I'd rather have a good guitar behind me, but if you didn't have it, that was a good substitute. Someone would beat spoons and another would play the rub-board. They raked that thimble up and down that board to the beat."

Early Fiddle Contests and The Blackwood Brothers

"The first contest I ever entered was in 1934 when I was twelve years old. That was at the Greenwood Centennial. I had to play against every fiddler since I was too old to play against the younger ones. I think I came in third place.

"James Blackwood and Ron, his brother, were about thirteen and fifteen years old at the time they had a fiddling contest at Hohen Linden. They were singing at that contest. They were raised down below Tom Nolan. Those boys would go to the fields and work all day and when they came in at night, after supper, they would start practicing. You talk about some harmony, they had it! A fiddling contest back in those days was a musical contest that anybody could enter. It could be just about anything. They had a prize for everything. It wasn't much but they had something. They had a prize for quartets, duets, fiddles, guitars, and banjos.

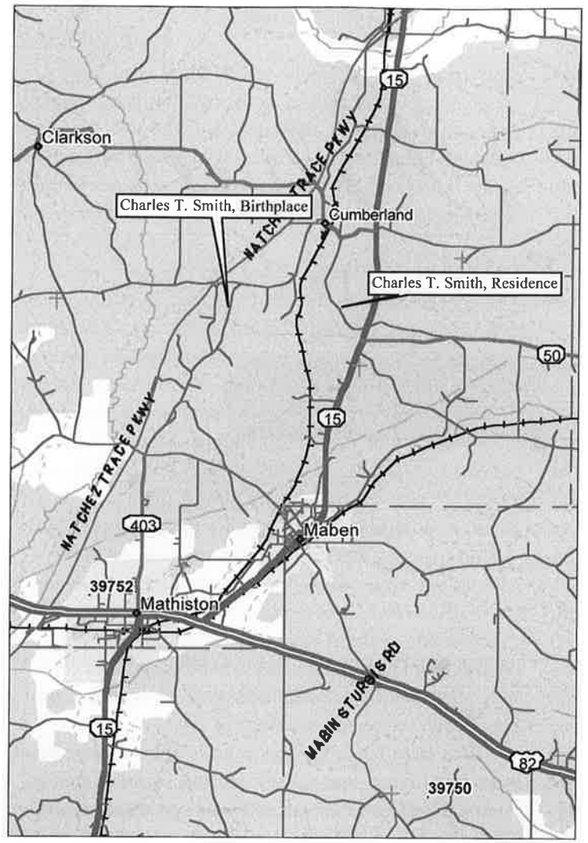
"I went up to the contest at Hohen Linden when I was about twelve years old. No one had a car back then since those were hard times. When something was going on, a school bus or flatbed truck would carry everybody to it. Lem Stallings drove the school bus around here. Back then you furnished your own bus.... I think we paid about a dime to ride up to the contest. That truck didn't even have a cab on it, just a windshield. We were going up there on a gravel road that day and there was a bad bridge ahead. He didn't notice it until he was right on it and then he hit the brakes. It just fell like a stack of dominoes! Everybody fell forward that was standing up. My cousin was standing right behind my half-brother Dale Duckworth, who was ten years older than me. He didn't have any case for his guitar, and I had my fiddle in a pillow slip. My cousin fell on that guitar and his knee crashed right through the back of it!

"We went on up there with the back out of the guitar and didn't know what we were going to do. We decided to tune it up and see if it would hold and it did. That night Ron Blackwood and James Blackwood were up there. James was about my age and Ron was just a little older. They got up there and sang a duet, 'Rocking Over the Ocean Waves.' They won first place in the duets. Well, when the fiddling came around, I won third place. Years went by and I hadn't seen then. They had been in the music business and made many recordings. One day a friend of mine introduced us after all those years. I said, 'You hadn't seen me in almost fifty years. Do you remember singing with your brother at Hohen Linden one time at a music contest?' He looked at me and said, 'I sure do! You're talking in the thirties.' I said, 'Yeah.' He says, 'I sure do. I remember that very well. Were you there?' I said, 'Yeah, I played in the fiddle contest.' He said, 'I believe I remember you. What did you win?' I said, 'A five cell flashlight, a middling of meat, and a five pound sack of sugar.' He said, 'I won a ham and a sack of flour and a pound of coffee.' That's all the prizes they had. Nobody had any money. The merchants would just donate things to give as prizes."

Some Old-Time Fiddlers

"There used to be a real good fiddler that lived in Mathiston when I was a kid. He was blind. He would win every contest he went to. His name was Bill Parrish. His son would back him up on the guitar. He was an old man when I was just a kid. I learned a lot of tunes by just listening to him when I was growing up. He had a style all his own. He played that old 'Indian War Hoop' that Hoyt Ming played and recorded. He played another one called the 'Fox Chase.' I never heard anybody play a fox chase on a fiddle. He was the only fiddler I ever heard do it and he could make those dogs bark!

"Bill Parrish was mostly a hoe-down fiddler. I never heard him play a lot of waltzes. He knew how to get a crowd's attention. He had a lot of Uncle Dave Macon's tricks about him. He'd do a lot of stunt fiddling. Playing that fiddle on top of his head and under his arm. I could do a little of that myself. Fiddle contests had stunt fiddling as a separate category. I'd play it on top of my head and under my arm, behind my back, behind my legs, and then I'd place the bow between my knees, holding the fiddle down in front of it and saw on the fiddle. I played some cross-tuned fiddle tunes but I can't recall their names. 'Pop Goes the Weasel' was one of the stunt tunes, but you didn't need to cross-tune your fiddle. You'd pick it with your left hand and that would give you time to change positions. I got good at that at one time and then I just let it go. It got where there was no demand for it, and they stopped having it in the contests.



Charles T. Smith's residence and birthplace. MAP BY NORMAN MELLIN

"Georgia Slim and Bob Ruckman that played with old Howdy Forrester came to the school house here in Cumberland around 1936 or '37. I believe I was about fourteen or fifteen years old at that time. Howdy, Slim and several of those Grand Old Opry stars came with them. They did some stunt fiddling that was something else. Old Howdy and Slim were playing fiddles, and when the guitar took a break they came back in with Slim pulling the bow on Howdy's fiddle while Howdy was noting his fiddle and vice-versa. They were twin fiddling. They didn't miss a lick. That beat anything I saw in my life! They didn't even have a P.A. system or electricity then in that old school. They had old kerosene lamps hanging on the wall.

"I knew Shell Smith long after he had quit playing. He would come over and borrow my squirrel dog and hunt. He was living in Greenwood at that time. I knew Willi Narmour since he would come by my home when I was living in Greenwood. I was just about twenty-four or twenty-five years old and just out of the service. My wife's mother and daddy lived there. He was a first cousin to her mother. We'd talk, get together and play sometimes. I went to his house one time for a jam session. When his twelve-year-old boy died he put that fiddle down and wouldn't play it for years after that.

"I met Hoyt Ming when they were having the state championship fiddling contest at Grenada. I never heard Hoyt or the Ray Brothers play when I was young. If they didn't play on the radio or make some records, you didn't hear them. I never got any of their records, and it was a long way from here to Chester in those days."

Bands and Contests

"Since I have moved back to Cumberland, I played in several bands with local musicians: The Cumberland Boys, The Choctaw Bluegrass, and Cumberland Gap in Starkville. In 1986 the folks down in Chester started a get-together at the Chester Community Center. They would have a pot-luck supper and folks would come from all over to play music, so we formed a band. We called it The Chester Bluegrass. During that time, I still went to fiddle contests. I won first place in the Jackson State Fair fiddling contest in 1986, 1988, and won second place (65 or over) in 1990. The last contest I ever played in was the Natchez Trace Old-Time Fiddlers Contest in Kosciusko, but since then I have quit going to contests altogether." MF

NORMAN MELLIN lives in Starkville, Mississippi. The author has recorded 124 fiddle tunes and songs in Charles Smith's repertoire. These recordings are preserved on five CDs the author recorded and produced. Copies of these CDs are $16 each and are available by writing to Charles T. Smith, Route 2, Box 427, Maben, MS 39750.

The Ingenuity of *Delta Boys* in the 'Twenties

by Abbott L. Ferriss
with Illustratons by Moss M. Butler and Ashley M. Ferriss

Combining personal memories
with drawings and analysis helps to document the home-made ways
Delta boys enjoyed themselves in the 1920s.

It was not that Delta boys didn't have store-bought playthings. They had bicycles, electric trains, scooters, erector sets, movie and lanternslide projectors, and many others. Rather, they thrilled at making things themselves. Like older boys did. Things we could hunt with or make noise with, pester our teachers with or merely to show our cleverness. Kites were the things to make when the March winds blew strong enough to carry them high across the cotton fields. A bow and arrow, a sling shot, tap stick were in vogue in fall when thoughts turned to hunting. Halloween brought on the idea of rat-tat-tat to annoy our teachers and any time a pea-shooter came in handy to pop a girl in the back of the head as she headed home from school. What store-bought treasures afforded delights such as these?

"Delta boys" consist of that cohort of lads who grew up in the Mississippi Delta during the 1920s. Some called the times the "Roaring 'Twenties" but to Delta boys those years brought fascinating discoveries, growth and expanding limits. While the radio and automobile were becoming commonplace, the culture had not yet become so complex that lads could not meet it on their own terms and find delight in mastery. Some of them helped me recall the ingenuities reported here. They were Moss Marcellus Butler, Seelig Bartell Wise, Robert Carlton Shelby, and James Alcorn Russell. You'd think such notable Delta family names would suffice, but, no! They were affectionately known as Snooky, Bushy, Pete, and Jim. I often responded to Skinny or Doc.

"You learn by doing," say educators, but Delta boys were just having fun, merely playing, making things. Formal learning was something forced on them at school. Without understanding it, they were engaging important laws of physics and other sciences. Adding lengths to its tail could stabilize a wobbling kite in a high wind. A flat kite would fly better if its side tips were tied together to force the face of the kite into an arc. A stick on a string would burr better when the edges were beveled so as to slice the wind like an airplane propeller. The notes of a Peter Pan Pipe could be altered by changing the diameter of the cane and its length and adjusted to a cascading scale.

These bits of wisdom they shared among themselves and later passed on to younger brothers. They became the skills and interests they were to build upon in college and later years—interests that brought them face to face with life and evolved into competencies of engineers, lawyers, teachers, farmers, pharmacists, Army air pilots and other professions.

One for the money
Two for the show
Three to get ready
And four to go.

Sound

Peter Pan Pipes

Delta boys made music whistling, with paper and comb, with the mouth harp and sometimes with conventional instruments. Peter Pan Pipes, perhaps, were their most sophisticated crafted instruments. The musical note came from the strength of the draft of air across the mouth of the pipe, and from the diameter and length of the cane.

Cane "brushes" had been common in the swampy Delta. Although less common in the 'Twenties, they still could be found. Delta boys looked for growth to the required diameter and sawed the cane to graduated lengths. (Each pipe is closed at the bottom by the natural joint of the cane.) They sanded or whittled the mouth of the pipes, so their lips might press comfortably upon them. Then they set them in graduated sequence and bound them tightly with a copper wire or stout string. The more pipes the greater the range of notes.

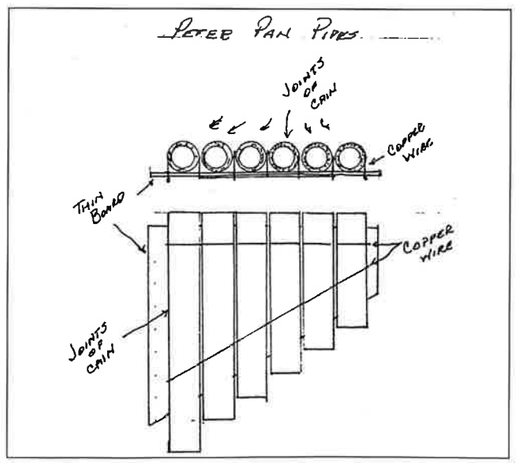
What to do with a scale of seven or more notes? Only the ear attuned to music of the town could tell, and by trial and error tunes came forth to the delight of the innovator and the applause of mothers and fathers. Jean-Pierre Rampal the Delta boys were not, but they made music to the delight of all!

Rattler

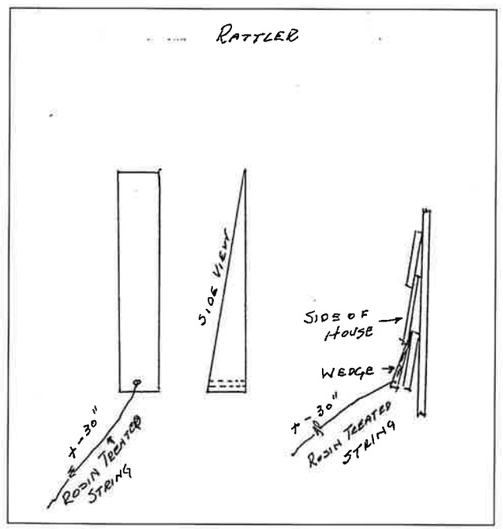
To annoy teachers on Halloween or other spooky nights, or to annoy even girls anytime, nothing was better than a rattler. A thin board (10"x1"x1/4") was beveled so it would wedge under the clapboard siding of a house. A stout string was secured through a hole in the bottom of the board. The string had to be rendered taunt with rosin. How long should the string be? How far away from the teacher's house should you be when you rubbed the string to produce a vibration of the wedge against the house? Usually 20 or 30 yards was sufficient. Perhaps you could hide behind an azalea bush or hedge, and then you would not be seen when the teacher came to investigate the rat-tat-tat.

Burring Stick or Bullroarer

The Burring Stick was an innocent looking board, deceptively clean and guileless, but it could create a mighty roar. The bullroarer is found among peoples worldwide, being used in sacred rites to simulate thunder, etc., but Delta boys were unmindful of this. They enjoyed the roar. It emanates from the beveled stick twilling through the air, increasing in zoom as it increased in velocity. Onlookers turned to wonder what caused the mighty roar. Construction was simple. A 10" x 2" thin board was beveled along the edges like an airplane propeller. A strong string or leather cord was introduced through a hole in the board. The 3 or 4 foot cord was strung through another short board, or handle. When twirled, the Burring Stick set up a moaning that created a periodic wave of sound impulses that attracted attention, frightened chickens, and brought all wandering hunting dogs to the fold.



Peter Pan Pipes.



Rattler

Cigar Box Banjo

Banjo picking fascinated Delta boys. Minstrel shows that traveled the South in the fall, when cotton picking brought money to the land, featured banjo pickers. Banjoes gave rhythm to the melody. Not everyone could boast of a banjo, but a ukulele-style one could be made. A cigar box attached to an arm, a round hole cut in the middle for resonance, tapered holes and plugs for the handle to turn the strings, a bridge, and "plunk-plunk," the Delta boy had a banjo of sorts. Steel strings or catgut, for guitars, were sold in stores. No sophisticated tonal quality could be promised, but with trial and adjustment and trial again, the Delta boy could approximate a scale and strum away while singing blues or a game song or might imitate a ditty heard on the radio.

One, two, buckle my shoe,
Three, four, shut the door,
Five, six, pick up sticks,
Seven, eight, lay them straight,
Nine, Ten, a big fat hen.

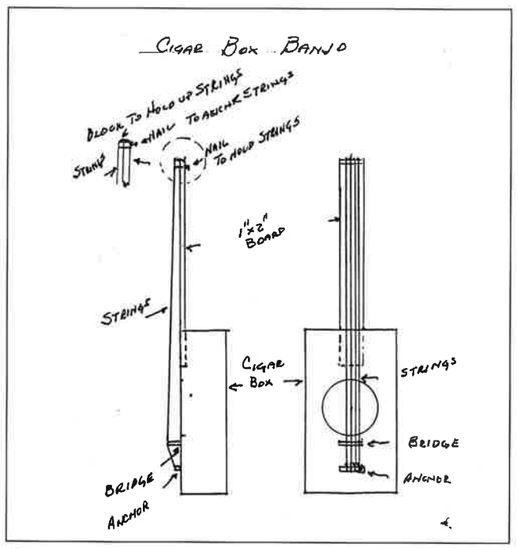
HEIGHT EXTENDERS

Stilts or Tom Walkers

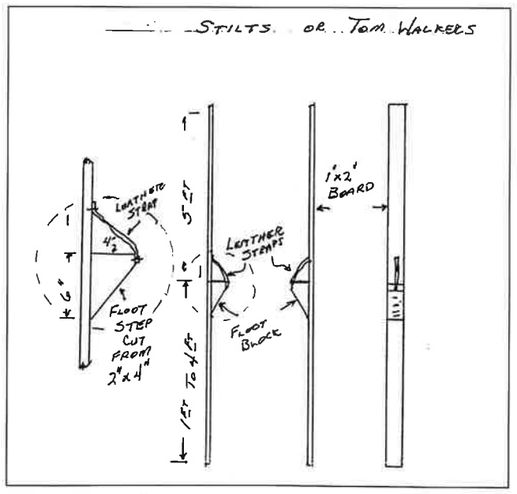
In the 'Twenties, the dark, deep hardwood forest of the Delta still was being harvested. Trainloads of oak, hickory, ash and sweet gum chugged to the sawmills of Memphis. The whine of smaller sawmills, also, could be heard in towns near forests and railroads. These sawmills cast off strips that Delta boys found useful. They made strips into stilts to make a lad stand tall and display his skill in balance, motion and endurance. The height of the foot block, or stirrup, could be one foot above ground or as high as four feet. A leather or cloth strip helped secure the foot in the stirrup. Mounting the higher stilts could be done by stepping into them from a bench or stump. Once mounted, motion forward assured a smoother balance; standing stationary made balancing wobbly and uncertain. Stilts were not merely to demonstrate balance and motion. Delta lads competed with one another, the object of one Tom Walker being to shove or shoulder another Tom Walker to unbalance and topple him to the ground. A favorite tactic was to stand on one stilt and with the other strike the stilt of the opponent until he fell. Great fun! Somehow the larger boys usually won the contest.

Tin Can Walkers

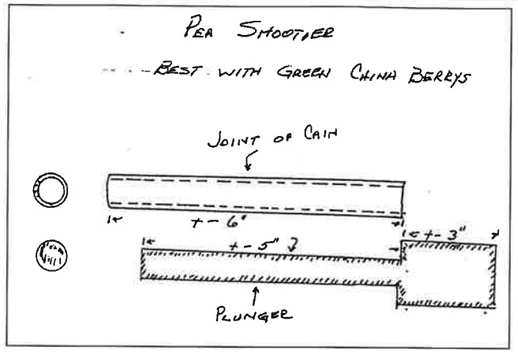
Growing children looked forward to being taller. Parents egged them on each anniversary by marking their height on the wall to show growth since last year. What glee, then, came from instantly adding five or six inches with Tin Can Walkers. Delta boys punched opposing small holes in the bottomæænot the openæend of the can. A stout string through these holes had to be long enough to hold in the hand. After mounting, the feet are held snug to the can by the strings. Thus elevated the boy, or girl, may walk about at a height that he or she will not actually achieve for a year or two. Instant growth!



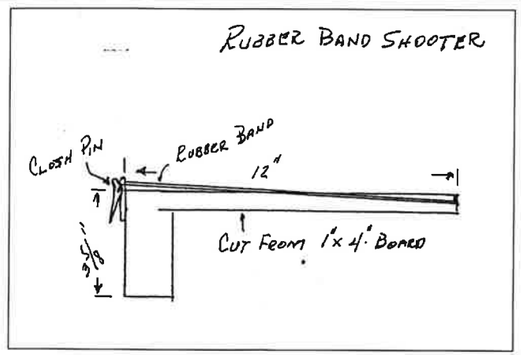
Cigar Box Banjo



Stilts or Tom Walkers



Pea Shooter



Rubber Band Shooter

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
Sugar is sweet,
And so are you.

PROJECTILES

Pea Shooter

A peashooter was a marvelous toy with which boys annoyed others, especially girls. The joint of a bamboo cane, found in the swamps of the Delta, needed to be six or eight inches in length and the plunger, a whittled stick molded to fit precisely, made of wood, or a dowel. To fit into the shooter, boys searched for green chinaberries that were perfectly round. Otherwise, they could use dried cornfield peas. Used without the plunger, the missile was placed into the near, or mouth, end of the shooter, the lips tightened around the shooter, and with a deep breath, a sudden puff of wind from the lungs sent the missile toward its target. The pea shooter was especially useful for pestering girls walking home from school, but in the schoolroom, it had to be craftily concealed, for teachers loved to hoard them in their desk drawers.

Rubber Band Shooter

Imitating cowboys of the movies Delta boys fashioned Rubber Band Shooters, frightening their mothers' hearts with fear that an eye would be zapped. But, what joy boys took in the simulated fight, the delight in hitting the tail of a fleeing "Indian," and the pride of marksmanship! These accomplishments, however, were seldom achieved, for the rubber band seldom went the distance. Delta boys sawed or hewed a pine board to resemble a pistol or gun. A clothespin at the handle end served as a trigger release. The rubber band was stretched from the notched front to the clothes pen. When released it darted forward toward its target. The distance depended upon the length of the shooter and the strength of the rubber band. The "Indians" were fairly safe from the cowboy sharpshooters.

Tap Stick

Small game, birds, rabbit, squirrel, raccoon and the like found homes in the woods and thickets surrounding the fields of cotton and corn of the Delta. To hunt them, some boys received their shotgun on their twelfth birthday while others had to wait until their sixteenth. Christmas, also, was a time to look forward to receiving hunting gear. Until those happy ages arrived, play at hunting with B B gun, bow and arrow, and tap stick substituted, for hunting (and fishing) were part of the recreational subculture of Delta boys.

A twelve to eighteen inch shaft from a sapling or a discarded broom handle was whittled at one end to fit the hole of a large nut. Hardware stores sold the nuts, or they might be found along the railroad track, cast off by the maintenance gang. The nut was pounded until it fit snugly on the shaft. Then, any excess wood protruding from the nut was sawed off. When thrown the tap-end, being heavier, would become the head of the weapon. Lucky would be the boy quick enough to throw it at a rabbit unlucky enough to be "kicked up" in a field. Birds were almost impossible and squirrel much too quick. It was not a very effective weapon for hunting, but it was a weapon to extend the boy's dominance.

Sling Shot

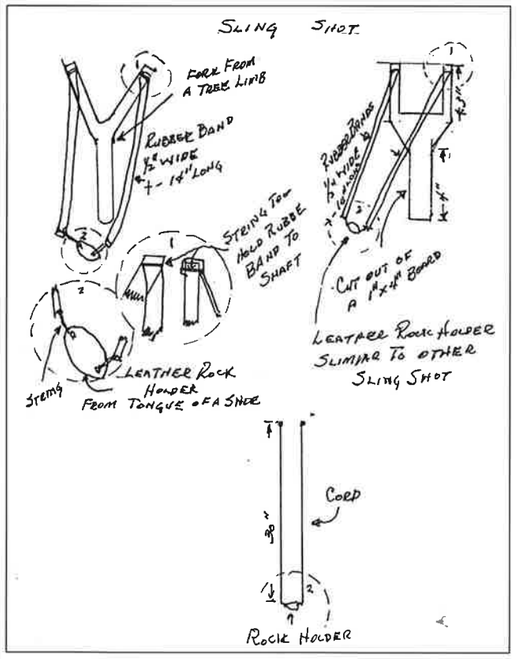
A boy could chop a "Y" branch from a hardwood tree, preferably oak, hickory, ash. Saw, to make the Y symmetrical and the stock about three inches long. With a pocketknife, he notched one-quarter inch below the tip of the two arms over which he stretched the rubber from inner tubes and tied with a string. The pouch for the rock could be of heavy cloth but leather or rawhide was best. Alternately, the Y of the stock could be carved from a discarded piece of hardwood (not pine or other brittle wood). The two arms formed a U, rather than a Y. Practice, practice, practice was required to master sighting, to pull the elastic back the proper distance, to consider the trajectory, the target and the motion of the hand holding the stock. The weight of the missile, also, had to be taken into account. Altogether, skill in hitting a target, such as a tin can on a fence post, only came from much practice and competition with other boys.

The type of slingshot with which David slew Goliath consisted merely of a leather pouch attached to a heavy cord. When "loaded" with a rock, the sling was twirled in a circle at a high speed and one string released to eject the missile. The trajectory was tangent to the circle made by the twirling. This type of slingshot was less popular because of the extreme skill required to master the release point for the bulls-eye. Some Delta boys never mastered it. David, however, practiced enough to subdue Goliath.

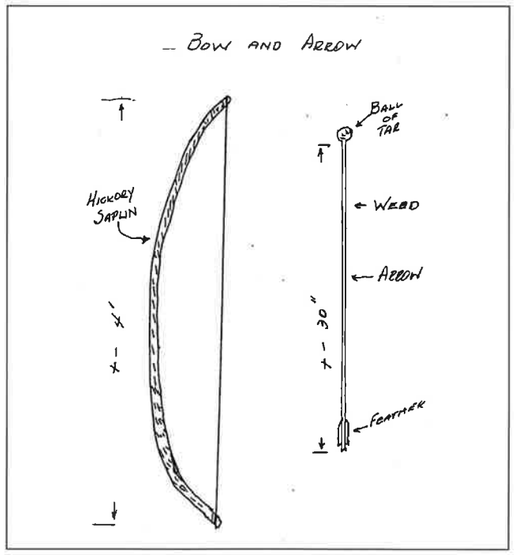
Bow and Arrow

Visits to the movie theater at the county seat were enjoyed only on Friday or Saturday. "Robin Hood" or a cowboys and Indians thrillers turned Delta Boys in the 'Twenties into Sherwood Forest men or cowboys and Indians. Cap pistols and bows and arrows led to mighty battles behind hedges and woodpiles. The bow and arrow could do little damage, for seldom were the bow-sticks seasoned adequately and the arrows fell lamely to the ground short of their intended target. A properly seasoned hardwood needed to be tapered from the middle to the ends and notched at the ends to secure the bowstring. Arrows required a feather to insure straight passage. These necessities, however, were seldom observed by Delta boys in their gleeful rush to enact the frightful battles of the movies. After a day or two the enthusiasm of the movie battle would die and another enthusiasm would replace it.

Georgy, Porgy, pudd'n and pie
Kissed the girls and made them cry.



Sling Shot



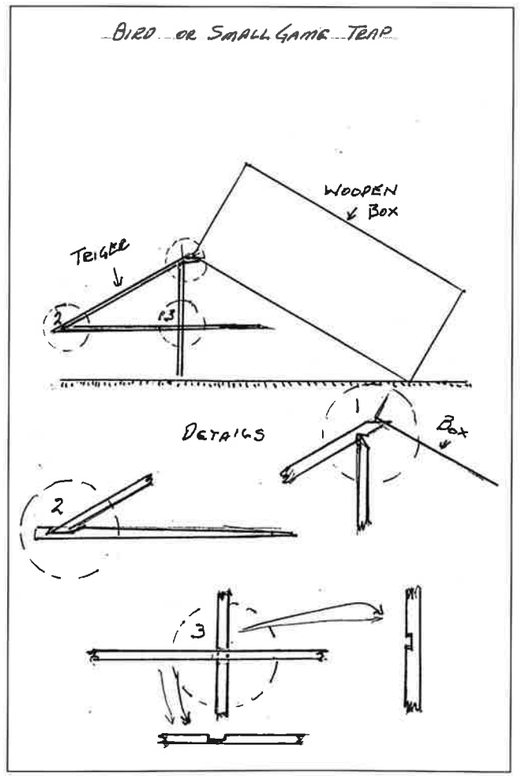
Stilts or Tom Walkers

CAPTURING THEM ALIVE

Traps

Delta boys made traps that caught animals alive and unharmed. They often released the catch back into the wild. After setting the trap with grain to attract birds, they might watch from a blind with a string linked to the trigger. Using a box for a trap led to trouble, for the box concealed what animal might be caught inside. A wire lid for the box solved this problem, and so did a lattice-style pyramid. In both the problem remained of capturing the prize without being pecked or scratched or bitten, since leather gloves were not always handy.

The three sticks comprising the trigger had to be skillfully crafted so that when the bait on the inside arm of the "4" was pecked by the bird or squirrel, the lever would fall and topple the box, enclosing the animal. Other problems arose when the poor creature, finding itself restrained, would batter its head against the sides in futile attempts to gain freedom. Sometimes the Delta boy found an exhausted animal with a bloody head, so precious is liberty to those pent up.



Cigar Box Banjo

WIND MASTER

Kites

Without realizing it, Delta boys engaged principles of aerodynamics in constructing, adjusting, and flying kites. They could purchase kites in the stores, of course, but who would want a store-bought kite when so much fun could be had making them? Light pinewood was commonly used. Shafts 1/4" x 3/8" were best for the main struts. At the cross-points a string bound the sticks together. Balance has important and distances from the focal point to the end had to balance. Delta boys notched the ends of the struts to secure the outline string. Once outlined, the kite came into being with tissue paper or newspaper, cut with a one-inch overlap. The overlap was carefully folded over the string and glued. The halter was strung on the paper-side of the frame, first at the crossing, which required a small hole in the paper, then at the bottom. Delta boys made the final adjustment to the kite by tying a string between the ends of the crossbow stick, giving the bow a curvature of some 2 1/2" to 3" at the center. Depending upon the flexibility of the wood, the arc of the crossbow sometimes had to be adjusted. The final touch was the tail, typically fashioned from one of mother's discarded sheets. Extra yardage needed to be handy, for, depending upon the strength of the wind, more or less length of tail might be required. The box kite, shown in the illustration, required much greater skill in construction, and patience, but, when aloft, became the proudest of the Delta boys' attainments.

Once airborne the kite might receive a "message" up its line. A hole is made in a piece of paper, say 3" x 8", or light cardboard, and the kite's lead line passed through the hole. The Delta boy would twirl the paper to send it fluttering up the line toward the kite.

Delta boys did not have hills from which to launch kites. But in March and some fall months the wind swept freely across the wide cottonfields. They were careful to avoid trees and power lines and telephone lines. Delta boys, also, were careful to avoid flying their kites during a storm, for the kites might attract electricity, as Benjamin Franklin proved. While the aerodynamic principles that make flight possible would come to Delta boys in later physics classes and aviation school, in launching their kites, they, already, had mastered the simple concepts of flight.

I wish I had a little red box
To put my chewing-gum in
I'd take it out – smack, smack, smack
And put it back a-gin.

OTHER SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

The ingenuity of Delta boys extended to many small, less significant things. Chalk pocketed while reciting at the blackboard became the means of inscribing a hopscotch lattice on the sidewalk for a contest en route home from school. A rock or chip of wood served as the block, to be tossed into a square, hopped to, and retrieved while standing on one leg, and hopped back to the beginning.... Boys also drew the checkerboard maize on heavy cardboard, or wood, and blackened in the alternate squares with shoe polish. Checkers were soda bottle caps, with exterior top for one player and the interior for the other. They made musical sounds with a comb rapped in tissue paper, placed over the mouth. By humming the tune, the comb-tissue paper magnified the sounds.... A loop of string between two deft hands became the means of construction the Jacob's ladder, cat's cradle, or other ingenious string structures. They were a source of endless fascination to both boy and onlooker.... Practicing the art of origami led Delta boys to perfect peeper airplanes that darted across unsupervised classrooms, and to fold paper into useful cups for a taste of water. They did not cultivate the paper-folding craft further, however, as the Japanese have done.... By dissembling a skate and screwing the wheels to a 2 x 4, the boys constructed a crude scooter, an upright providing "handle-bars" to guide it....

Delta Boys' failures were not uncommon but they were quickly abandoned for more promising prospects. Constructing a performing stage, with curtains (of mother's sheets) became an all-day team effort. When ready for a shadow show, the audience may have been called home to supper.... Weaving a string seat for a chair, also a tedious undertaking, sometimes became hopelessly entangled midway and abandoned in disgust.... Whittling a figurine in wood, working with wood that splintered with a knife unsharp, often led to severing the figures nose or head, and an abandoned project.... More technical attempts also failed, such as an effort to construct a crystal radio receiver destined never to pick up WMC-Memphis. While Delta Boys always gave the failure another try, they sometimes abandoned the effort in favor of more certain successes.

The lesson all this offers to moms and dads of the new millenium: See that they have the materials to make it themselves. Designing and constructing project sboys elect and set for themselves, when successful, will spur them to another attempt, and another success. MF

ABBOTT L. FERRISS is Professor of Sociology, Emeritus, of Emory University, Atlanta, and has written about Mississippi's children's gamesongs.

ASHLEY MITCHELL FERRISS is a student at Emory University, and draws as a hobby.

MOSS MARCELLUS BUTLER, qualified as an engineer, lawyer, and planter, has retired from a near-lifetime of farming in the Mississippi Delta.

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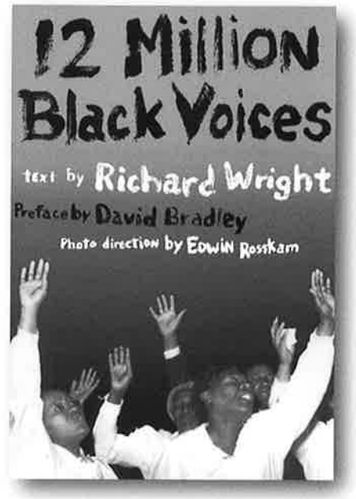
Reviews

REREADING A CLASSIC

12 Million Black Voices:

A Folk History of the Negro in the United States

12 MILLION BLACK VOICES: A FOLK HISTORY OF THE NEGRO IN THE UNITED STATES.
Richard Wright, with photo-direction by Edwin Rosskam.
New York: Viking Press, 1941.
A new edition has been published with a preface by David Bradley by Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000.



Richard Wright is best known for his fictional and autobiographical insights into the life of the individual in his classics *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945). His 1941 work, *12 Million Black Voices,* though often overlooked both by Wright scholars and by students of depression-era documentary works, contains intriguing insights into both the Mississippi native's perspective as a writer and the broader issue of the political implications of folk studies.

The book lacks the penetrating psychological insights into individual alienation that are so important in *Black Boy* and *Native Son.* And it has elicited few comparisons to depression-era documentary studies such as those by Charles Johnson, James Agee and Walker Evans, Hortense Powdermaker, or Zora Neale Hurston, perhaps because it offers no new documentary evidence. But we should read the book in part as Richard Wright's meditation on the concept of the African American folk. The title, subtitle, forward, and virtually every page announce the book as a discussion of the folk. Dramatically different from Wright's better known works, *12 Million Black Voices* consistently discusses what "we" do and think, and by "we," Wright meant the mass of African Americans with roots in the rural South. Dozens of Farm Security Administration photographs by Dorothea Lange, Marion Post, Russell Lee, Jack Delano and others do not merely illustrate the text; they dramatize it with the suggestion that 12 million people had shared similar experiences.

Most of the book discusses the lives of African Americans in the South. Wright describes and interprets Jim Crow segregation and violence against African Americans. In poetic language, he gives a searing description of the sharecropping system; "we plow, plant, chop, and pick the cotton, working always toward a dark, mercurial goal"(49). The "folk" responded by developing group ways of surviving. Readers who know the frustration Wright showed in *Black Boy* with older African Americans who learned to live with poverty and segregation may be surprised by the tender sympathy he shows for the language, religion, music, and family lives of sharecropping people. "We proceeded to build our language in inflections of voice, through tonal variety, by hurried speech, in honeyed drawls, by rolling our eyes, by flourishing our hands, by assigning to common, simple words new meanings, meanings which enabled us to speak of revolt in the actual presence of the Lords of the Land without their being aware" (40)!

Wright's portrayal of religion begins with the idea that "What we have not dared feel in the presence of the Lords of the Land, we now feel in church" (68), and continues with a transcribed sermon and four pages of respectful photographs. Family life, the subject of such harsh drama in some of Wright's best work, here appears as a beautiful form of folk creativity in the face of deprivation; "our delicate families are held together by love, sympathy, pity, and the goading knowledge that we must work together to make a crop" (60).

An intriguing feature of Wright's discussion of folk life is that he has little to say about African tradition. In his vision of the folk, enslaved and then freed people had to develop cultural lives on their own, with whatever energy and from whatever material they could find, without centuries of a shared background. Much in the tradition of Frederick Douglass, who in 1845 rejected the idea that folk music and religion showed that slaves were basically simple, happy people, Wright argued against people who "say that, because we possess this faculty of keeping alive this spark of happiness under adversity, we are children"(73). Instead, folklife came from "the courage and faith in simple living" that enabled people to endure—together—while imagining better days.

A devastating chapter entitled "Death on the City Pavements" details the economic and social problems faced by most African American migrants. Discrimination and oppression in housing, dreadful health conditions, and manipulation in work and politics met people who hoped northern migration could be a form of deliverance. Music, religion, and family life continued to offer strength in dramatically changed circumstances.

The delta land of the Mississippi River. Under this photograph, Richard Wright states, "Our lives are walled with cotton." (50) DOROTHEA LANGE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USF34-17606-C

The political goals of *12 Million Black Voices* are intriguing. Its Marxist philosophy is clear; Wright maps out how the "lords of the land," the "bosses of the buildings," and also white industrial workers all profited from ideas of African American inferiority. The depictions of folk culture as survival strategies are part of Wright's effort to overturn simplistic notions that African Americans wanted and deserved no better than what they received.

But the book goes beyond an indictment of racism. While it begins as an attempt to undo wrong impressions, addressing white Americans with the challenge that "we are not what we seem" (10), it ends with a plea for African Americans themselves to change. For things to change dramatically, he suggests, people need more than survival skills; they need inspiration to make dramatic breaks from tradition, including some of the traditions that had allowed them to stay sane and strong through their oppression.

Wright admired the ability of people to question the nature of their folk culture, even while they loved it. In discussing the music, he pondered, "But there are times when we doubt our songs; they are not enough to unify our fragile folk lives in this competitive world" (75). Doubting our songs meant being willing to change, especially understanding that children would have lives very different from those of their parents. In a passage that inverted the perspective on child-parent relations one sees in *Black Boy*, Wright wrote with both hope and despair, "Always our deepest love is toward those children of ours who turn their backs upon our way of life" (136). With respect for the folk forms of survival but a desire to do more than simply survive, Wright urged political activism that would go beyond the African American community and unite all working people. The concluding section, "Men in the Making," celebrates people who fought oppression, especially through interracial worker protest. By moving beyond the African American community, Wright believed "a few of us stepped forth and accepted within the confines of our personalities the death of our old folk lives, an acceptance of a death that enabled us to cross class and racial lines, a death that made us free" (144). The book ultimately walks a line between respecting a folk past of surviving oppression in communal and creative ways and calling for activism that would challenge that oppression.

Jitter-butting in a juke joint on Saturday afternoon. Clarkesdale, MS, 1939. Opposite this photograph, Wright states, "But there are times with doubt our songs." (74) MARION POST WOLCOTT, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USF34-52479-D.

TED OWNBY teaches History and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi.

Reviews of Recent Books

DELTA LAND.
Photographs by Maude Schuyler Clay.
Introduction by Lewis Nordan.
Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

For me, Maude Schuyler Clay's *Delta Land* evokes thirty-five years of memories spent traveling in and out of the Delta. While the images she captures with her camera took hundreds of years to create, they evoke memories as fresh as yesterday, like "Flooded Fields," where I once waded in the mud and ruined a pair of tennis shoes. When I see the broken rail on the "Tallahatchie Bridge," I recall leaning a .22 rifle on that same bridge, taking careful aim at an out-of-season mallard, then firing a pot shot that splashed ten feet away.

There are also more contemporary memories. Clay's church pictures, "Two Spired Church," "Field Church, and "Cotton Field Church" take me back to the afternoon I spent last summer at a five congregation, fifth Sunday singing at a small Black church near Tunica. The roof was raised! Clay's images, however, do not just capture memories of a misspent youth and hope of salvation. Many of them are as frightening as tomorrow. Cemetery pictures "Wire Gate," "Gone But Not Forgotten," "Abbie Bank and Cotton Field," and "Mound Cemetery" remind everyone that regardless of race, class, sex, or gender, we all have a debt to pay. Many of Clay's pictures are filled with that stark sense of reality, one that evokes personal images and stirs up deep feelings.

"Wooden House and Tree" brings back the same profound sense of loss I always feel when I look at an abandoned but still standing house. Instead of seeing "what is," I always hear "what was." "The Leaning Tower of Hit Spurr Plantation" evokes another strong memory from my boyhood days. I'm sure it is a Southern images we all share. I remember old men sitting on front porches of similar stores, telling stories and carving on

whittling sticks, occasionally playing guitars and banjos. While they played, old women bought big bags of flour and small cuts of unchoice meats, and children played out back. They eventually stopped their games long enough to look longingly at candy safely housed behind glass panes—too expensive for the change in their pockets. Surely that was what happened around this store. I feel it in Clay's pictures.

In his compelling introduction, Lewis Nordan mentions the "weird beauty of decay" (21), in Clay's work. While Clay's vision does seem to include that element, I see it more as a sense of unfulfilled promise than decay. "To the Memory of Emmett Till" shows us a dark place that led to a dark time, and the caption of Till's "endlessly dreaming of what could have been" (9) certainly represents the most compelling unfulfilled promise—a life cut short for speaking a few words that violated the Delta social code. Till's fate, while a historical tragedy, can also be seen as a metaphor for today; the cotton gin fan tied around his neck weighed him down, the same way the Delta is weighed down; critical resources misspent maintaining an illusion of the past (powerfully suggested in "Riverside Elevator") at the expense of the present. While this leaves me with a sense of loss, it also offers a tremendous sense of promise, much like a pregnant woman who is waiting for her time to pass until her child is born; Clay's work, which chronicles the historically difficult, and inordinately long pregnancy of the Delta, also offers a tremendous sense of hope. By sharing such a clear vision of what was, she allows for the possibilities of what can be—some day.

These pictures also show a strong sense of thematic development. Strong, sexually suggestive water images appear throughout the text. "Gorge Behind the Buford Road," "Hopson Bayou," "Tallahatchie River," "Friendship Canal," and, particularly, "Cassidy Bayou," suggest a power of creation, generation after generation, that has brought us where we are now.

At the same time, however, there is a competing theme of the power of the land to outlast and eventually overcome humanity. These images are found throughout the book. "Kudzu House Spring" and "Vine House" show a period of transition, demonstrating that any structure built by man will eventually be overcome by the explosive growth in the Delta. "Abandoned Gas Pump" and "Super Boron" leave us with the idea that traditional commerce never really caught on here. "Bledsoe Swamp," "Primordial Swamp" and "Swamp" show the final outcome of the process of decay Nordan chronicles in his essay. But I believe it goes beyond decay into reclamation; these pictures show that nothing built by man can withstand the power of nature to reclaim what was taken away when Clay's ancestors stepped off the boat in the 1840s. Her pictures, and each succeeding flood, show that the Mississippi Delta, where nature rules, will, if it wishes, eventually reclaim the land.

These themes lead to the eventual statement Clay makes with the animals and people we see in the book. As Nordan remarks, there are many dogs romping playfully, even joyfully throughout these pages. In addition to the dogs, there are also geese, pigs, horses, and people. A woman and child cross the street in "Lewis Kellum Grocery," and Clay's own child, in "Sophia Maude McMullen Clay," steps bravely into the world she has inherited. I think these fleeting glimpses make a powerful statement about the Mississippi Delta: it is a strange and wonderful, even magical places that will suit only a few people, most of whom were born to the land, and, like the land, they, like the place they inhabit, are filled with paradoxes and contradictions.

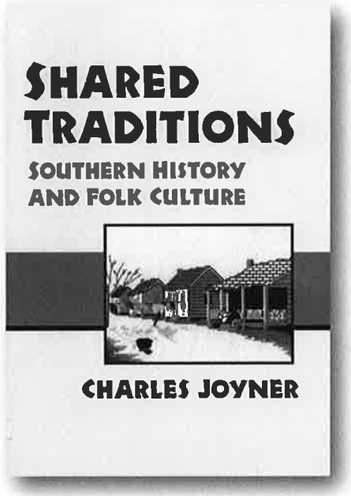
Maude Schuyler Clay is one of those people; she is a photographer of the first rank—her composition is flawless and her use of light and mood are impeccable. The resulting work, like that of all great artists, evokes and suggests as much as it shows or tells. She has an innate understanding of both time and place that allows her to stand with two feet on solid ground, which is no easy task in the Delta.

RANDALL NORRIS first came to the Mississippi Delta in 1969 to attend a friend's wedding. A writer and humanities scholar, he teaches creative writing at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois.

SHARED TRADITIONS: SOUTHERN HISTORY AND FOLK CULTURE.
Charles Joyner. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Charles Joyner, best known for his award-winning study, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (University of Illinois Press, 1984), holds two doctorates—one in history from the University of South Carolina, the other in folklore and folklife from the University of Pennsylvania. Now, he combines his long-standing interests in both fields in this collection of his essays that examine "the relationship between history and culture" (ix). The sixteen essays cover a broad range of topics, including antebellum slavery, John Brown's execution, a South Carolina Jewish community, and jazz, blues, and country music. Other essays consider the Appalachian dulcimer, a South Carolina lowcountry ghost story, the civil rights movement, and Gullah speech and other Sea Islands folk traditions. More than half of the essays have appeared before, many of them in edited collections on Southern history and culture, but all of them except "'Guilty of Holiest Crime': The Passion of John Brown" have been revised for inclusion in this volume.

The essays in *Shared Traditions* are divided into five thematic sections. The book opens with an introductory essay that discusses the importance of folk culture and surveys several of its major forms in the South. Two sections of the book, "The Old South" and "The New South," illustrate the relevance of folk culture to understanding Southern history, while a third section, "Folklore and History: A Dialogue," demonstrates how history contributes to understanding folk culture. "Three Historiographical Essays" critiques significant studies by three scholars: David Potter's seminal "The Enigma of the South" (1961); David Hackett Fischer's controversial *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford University Press, 1989), and, oddly for a collection about the South, Henry Glassie's *Passing the Time in*



Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). The forward-looking fifth section, "The Future of Folk Culture," examines the impact of resort hotels and tourism on the centuries-old African American folk culture of the South Carolina Sea Islands. Although widely diverse in content, the essays in the volume are unified by the central theme that Southern folk culture has evolved out of the "cultural integration" (149) of Native Americans, European settlers, and African slaves. And, despite his unfortunately brief discussion of Native American culture, Joyner presents a compelling argument for the importance of shared cultural traditions in the development of Southern folklife. "Out of the convergence of African and European traditions, so different and yet so alike, emerged a new southern folk culture," he writes, "a folk culture with both an African and a European heritage yet as different from either as water is from hydrogen and oxygen" (24).

Shared Traditions is informed by a thorough knowledge and deep understanding of Southern history and folklore, and owes a considerable intellectual debt to scholars such as Potter, C. Vann Woodward, and Victor Turner. But Southern historians and folklorists will be disappointed to find little in the book that is new, original, or innovative, either in content or approach. One of the essays, "'In His Hands': The World of the Plantation Slaves," for example, is nothing more than a brief overview of some recent scholarship on antebellum slavery. And Bill Malone, for one, has previously written of the multicultural heritage of jazz, blues, and country music. Readers may also regret the excessive repetition that characterizes much of the book's argument, especially its frequent recycling of quotations by other historians and folklorists. Others may find the book's illustrations of pen-and-ink sketches and needlework, done by Joyner himself, too self-indulgent.

Yet, *Shared Traditions* offers a competent, generally well-written, and broadly framed account of the relation of history and folk culture in the South. Not intended to be a definitive study, the book demonstrates how folk culture offers "insights into the history of men

and women previously ignored by mainstream historical scholarship" (2-3) and why "folklorists need history to help them understand the process of change in folk culture" ({emphasis in original}, 271-272). While far from ground-breaking, *Shared Traditions* has an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the South that folklorists and historians in the field of Southern studies will appreciate.

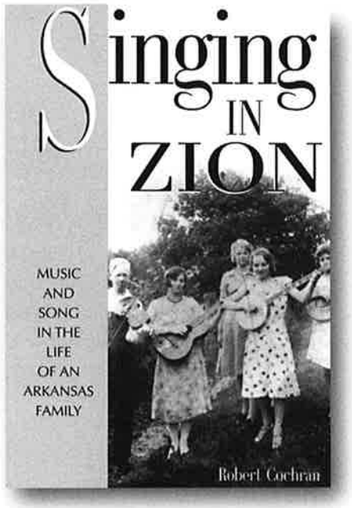
PATRICK HUBER teaches History at Central Missouri State University.

SINGING IN ZION: MUSIC AND SONG IN THE LIFE OF AN ARKANSAS FAMILY.
Robert Cochran. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999.

Singing in Zion is folklorist Robert Cochran's lively exploration of one family's intimate encounter with music. Cochran, Director of the Center for Arkansas and Regional Studies and Professor of English at the University of Arkansas, wrote this intriguing book after he was invited into the musical world of the Gilbert family by his 1989 folklore student, Phydella Hogan, a native of Zion, a small community seven miles from Fayetteville.

"We sing a lot of these songs you've been playing and lecturing about," (xiii) she said, offering up a notebook filled with a personal collection of 225 popular, folk, and gospel songs she and her two sisters—Alma (Billie) Allen and Helen Fultz—had for over thirty years been performing and collecting. The Gilbert sisters had begun the "songbook" in 1959 as a gift to hand down to their children and grandchildren.

The presentation of the songbook proved to be a beginning, a "demonstration of trust" (27) and a door onto a Gilbert family drama. Almost thirty years earlier, Mary Celestia Parler (married to Ozark folklorist Vance Randolph—the subject of an earlier study by Cochran), had organized concerts featuring regional folk singers, one of whom was Phydella Hogan. Between 1960 and 1961, Parler recorded Hogan on three occasions,



and, unbeknownst to Cochran, deposited the audiotapes and field notes at the University of Arkansas's Mullins Library.

Here, then, was the material of any folklorist's dream: for Cochran, the beginning of a ten-year journey studying the oral and musical traditions of a family whose "life is set to song" (1) within a community where the Gilbert family's "music was regarded as...a prized possession" (26). No dispassionate study, *Singing in Zion* resonates through an inventive, comprehensive approach, the text itself reminds of a musical composition, complete with an author's prelude and coda. Photographs, a family tree, and a cultural map of one sister's recollections of Zion builds a multi-layered understanding of place.

In Appendix A, which comprises more than half the text, the song lyrics appear in the order in which they are discussed. After each entry—many with musical scores—the reader finds notes written by the sisters as they compiled their songbook, sometimes over several sittings, and across three decades. About "My Horses Ain't Hungry," Billie Allen writes, "I 'listen' and in my mind I can see Mama or Dad...and I know exactly how they sound. I mean the way their voices went up and down, how the old-time tunes wavered, they had a kind of quaver you know...." (112). Complementing the sisters' personal reflections are the author's interpretive annotations utilizing historical and musical sources. "Dirty Faced Brat," Cochran argues, has not been found in any other songbook or folk song collection.

Cochran presumes that not everyone will share his enthusiasm. "Nobody outside this community, I remind myself, cares at all about these people or the lives they made. But I do, and I am moved, a man of fifty with a boy's pleasure, lost in a work that is play at its best" (30). This comment may make some readers uncomfortable, but it is precisely Cochran's personal immersion that makes his study worth reading, for what we learn about this ethnographer opens us up to listening with our hearts as well as our minds. "Only deep interest, borderline obsession, attachment or animus or a mixture thereof," he confesses, "motivates long-term study" (9).

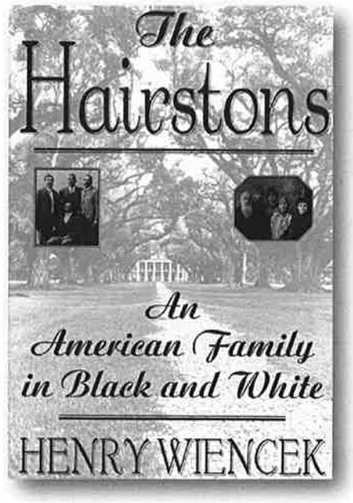
Singing in Zion is a rare study that reflects the author's willingness to trust in his subject, in the ever-evolving ethnographic process, and in his unerring respect and appreciation for Phydella Hogan and her sisters who, Cochran says, "made me feel like an honorary Gilbert" (28). One might wish the University of Arkansas Press were releasing an accompanying Gilbert Family compact disc. Until they do, grab a glass of sweet tea, settle down into your favorite reading chair, and enjoy.

SALLY GRAHAM taught ethnography and anthropology at Palau Community College and now works for CNN in Atlanta.

THE HAIRSTONS: AN AMERICAN FAMILY IN BLACK AND WHITE.
Henry Wiencek. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Perceptive writers from research, scholars, and journalists have for the last decade revealed the records behind the common-sense assumption that same-named European Americans and African Americans from antebellum plantation culture in many cases share the same ancestry. Henry Wiencek in his book *The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White* takes this work a step farther and documents with scrupulous archival and oral history research the tangled, twisted and tortured family tree of one such family, the Hairstons, of North Carolina, Virginia, and Mississippi.

Equally talented as an interpreter and a writer as he is a research scholar, Wiencek writes the narrative of his own search for knowledge of the Hairston family, weaves it with his own conjectures and inferences as they are proven or disproven, steadily judges the historical moral fibre of the United States as he exposes "the evil of slavery" and the near-slavery of subsequent sharecropper farming, Jim Crow law and custom, and the denial of the humanity of black people down through the 1960s. He tells the epic-like stories of the black and white families of the Hairstons, with honesty, clear-sightedness,



integrity and sometimes even a poetic beauty.

Throughout the Hairston saga, Wiencek draws biblical references to the Pharoah and the Hebrew slaves, familiar through white and black generations of Hairstons. The moral he draws from the families' tale is biblical, too, for he argues that though the black Hairstons know most tellingly the abuses of their forebears by the slaveowners and the stories of white parentage of many of them, they have forgiven and redeemed that past.

Wiencek ends the book as he begins it, featuring two Hairston men, one white and one black, at Cooleemee Plantation near the Yadkin River in North Carolina. Peter Wilson Hairston, the white current owner of the plantation mansion at Cooleemee, and Squire Hairston, a black man living nearby and descended from Cooleemee slaves. The white Hairston man is a judge, having practiced law in North Carolina after he and his wife inherited Cooleemee and out of family duty came from Baltimore to run it. Squire is the first name of the black Hairston man whose grandfather had been born a slave on Cooleemee Plantation and whose father had been a sharecropper there.

At their first meeting, Wiencek is startled that the white descendent of the slaveholder would invite the black son of slave offspring to his house and would shake hands with him cordially, obviously the two of them at peace with their conflictful history. Divided even by the pronunciation of their joint name, the black family using the spelling pronunciation and the whites using the Scottish "Harston," Judge Peter Hairston and Squire Hairston nevertheless acknowledged their shared plantation bond.

At the end of the book, Wiencek reports attending Squire Hairston's funeral and Judge Hairston, now ill and wheelchair-bound, breaks down sobbing during the service. Wiencek realizes the depth of love between the men, love generated by forgiveness of the black people of the sin of the white people's foreparents, not the undocumented probability, that each man had denied in fact, that they had a mutual grandfather.

Over his seven years' research between his first meeting with the two Hairston representatives and

Squire's funeral and in the more than 300 pages of his book's text, Wiencek attends family reunions of black Hairstons and follows leads to archives, libraries, and people. At one library, met with hostility, he learns quietly from an eavesdropper of the only existing copy of a Virginia "cohabitation register" mandated by post-Civil War law for legitimizing pre-war slave marriages, thus recording couples and their children, and discovers many Hairstons.

The snarled Hairston history gradually yields much: one white Hairston man drowned his mulatto child in a well rather than admitting paternity; another in Mississippi tried on his deathbed to leave all his property, including slaves, to his daughter Chrillis who had a black mother and the white family practiced subterfuge, keeping the mulatto daughter and all the others in slavery; some Hairston slave owners punished slaves simply to exert authority. There were many Hairstons—a black Union soldier; white Confederate ones; both whites and blacks suffering during Reconstruction, blacks beginning to prosper, many whites living on in poverty in plantation houses; a black Hairston World War II hero; a light-skinned black Hairston leader of school desegregation in the civil rights movement; a famous black Hairston entertainer.

Near the end of his search, Wiencek finds a picture of a light-skinned black Hairston Baptist preacher and believes he sees a family likeness with Cooleemee white male relatives' portraits, believes him to be a descendent of the lost Chrillis who had been bought by an earlier Peter and thus would be ancestor of both Judge Peter and Squire. Both men failed to see a family likeness.

In the end, the black Hairstons like the white Hairstons were drawn back to the plantation, they out of slavery like the Hebrews claimed their ancestral blood in the soil of the land. When Squire Hairston died, black Hairstons claimed their rightful place for their ashes to be scattered on the river that flows through their land. And Judge Hairston wept.

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THIRD ANNUAL

Southern Foodways

SYMPOSIUM

TRAVELIN' ON: SOUTHERN FOOD EN ROUTE

OCTOBER 20-22, 2000

The third annual Southern Foodways Symposium will be held October 20-22, 2000 on the campus of the University of Mississippi. This year's theme is "Travelin' On: Southern Food En Route," an examination of what happens when Southerners—and Southern foods—travel north, and west, and across the Atlantic.

As was the case with previous symposia, this event will provide an opportunity for cooks, chefs, food writers, and inquisitive eaters alike to come to a better understanding of Southern cuisine and, in turn, Southern culture. Lectures, to be held in Barnard Observatory, the restored antebellum headquarters of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, will be complemented by a series of informal lunches, served in the sylvan grove at the heart of the Ole Miss campus.

Featured foods will include "dueling gumbos" prepared by New Orleans restauranteur Leah Chase, Fritz Blank of Deux Cheminées in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Johnny Faulk of Grand Lake, Louisiana, bass player for the Grammy-nominated Cajun band the Hackberry Ramblers. Friday lunch will feature a sampling of more modern Southern fare from chef Neal Langerman of Georgia Brown's restaurant in Washington, D.C.

Evening events include author readings, regional food and drink tastings, a barbecue, a catfish dinner with appetizers from chefs Karen Carrier, Jimmy Kennedy, and Louis Osteen, and a street dance hosted by the Hackberry Ramblers. Festivities close with a dinner on the grounds.

Host for the event is the Southern Foodways Alliance at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Contributing sponsors include the American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts, Bottletree Bakery, City Grocery, Fat Possum Records, the Oxford Tourism Council, and Viking Range. Supporting sponsors are **Southern Comfort** and **The Catfish Institute**.

Registration will again be limited to 90 persons. Those planning to attend are advised to register early in order to secure a space.

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE
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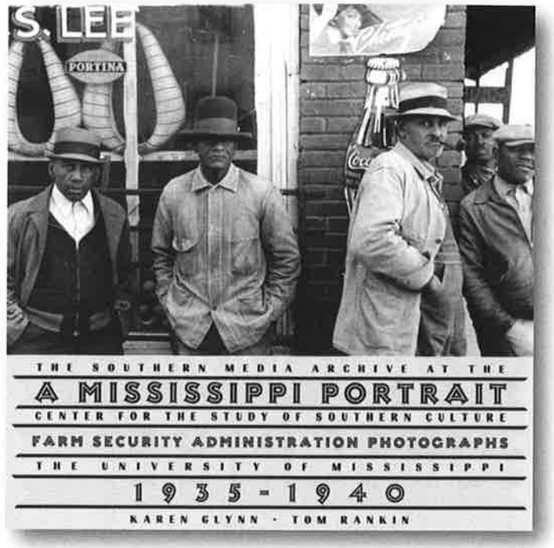
A MISSISSIPPI PORTRAIT:

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, 1935-1940

A CD-ROM BY KAREN GLYNN AND TOM RANKIN



A MISSISSIPPI PORTRAIT is a collection of 1230 photographs, assembled together for the first time, of Mississippi during the Great Depression. These black and white photographs were made in 31 counties by some of the best documentary photographers of the era, including Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange.

The photographs in ***A MISSISSIPPI PORTRAIT*** will be screened at a publication party at the Southern Culture Heritage Foundation in Vicksburg on Saturday, August 12. People familiar with the places in the photographs will describe the images and educators will present lesson plans that demonstrate the value of ***A MISSISSIPPI PORTRAIT*** in the classroom.

EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWERS:

Such a wonderful piece of work. It will be useful and important for political historians, social historians, art historians, and I can imagine, fiction writers.
PATTI CARR BLACK

...it is a wonderful resource that captures a critical moment in the transformation of southern agriculture.
WILLIAM GLASS,
Mississippi University for Women

...the format is very attractive and the possibilities for instructional use are many and varied.
DOROTHY SHAWHAN, Delta State University

This is a wonderful resource that can be used in a wide variety of contexts, in universities but also in cities and town all around the state.
DAVID CROSBY, Alcorn State University

This is one of the most important documents we have of Mississippi in the 1930s, right there alongside the great novels and memoirs and WPA murals...
JAY WATSON, University of Mississippi

EVENT DATE AND LOCATION:

A MISSISSIPPI PORTRAIT
PUBLICATION PARTY

Saturday,
August 12, 2000
1:30 - 5:00

Southern Culture
Heritage Foundation
1302 Adams Street
Vicksburg, MS 39180
601.631.2997

Parting Hand

Man with Homemade Jukebox, Sardis, MS, July 1999. PHOTO BY ADAM SHEMPER

From the back porch to the pulpit . . .

Mississippi Folklife, formerly the *Mississippi Folklore Register,* publishes articles, photographic essays and reviews about the diversity of folklife and culture in Mississippi and adjoining regions. To subscribe and join the Mississippi Folklore Society, please fill out this form and mail it to the address below.

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