

JACK O' DIAMONDS

Flyright-Matchbox Library of Congress Series

Inset for Volume Six (SDM 265)

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1934 field recordings from Texas

Few black folk musicians born before 1910 were exclusively blues performers. Most can be described as songsters¹ and the breadth of their repertoires should not be judged solely by those who made commercial recordings prior to World War II. Unlike record companies, the Archive of Folk Song was as much concerned with collecting ballads, spirituals and work songs as with blues, and their recordings therefore provide a wider cross-section of the pre-war black artist's repertoire than commercial ones from the same period.

Pete Harris is the odd man out on this album in the sense that he was not recorded in prison. He is an excellent songster whose repertoire consists of a fascinating mixture of blues, ballads, spirituals, dance tunes, cowboy songs and reels.² Unfortunately all we know of his biography is contained in a brief announcement (by John A. Lomax) following the performance of Alabama Bound. 'This record, and several others, was made by Pete Harris of Richmond, Texas who has worked all his life on the ranch of John M. Moore of the same town. Pete is thirty three years old, the grandson of a pure African and is not able to read or to write.' Harris was therefore born either in 1900 or 1901 making him only three or four years younger than Blind Lemon Jefferson and of the same generation as Skip James, Son House and Blind Willie McTell.

Pete's recording Square Dance Calls consists mainly of dance instructions of the kind to be heard at any oldtime country hoedown 'Ooh promenade and circle right. Eight hands up and circle right. Swing low. Fast cornering' and is infectious in its gaiety. Liza Jane is used as a framework to hang the calls on and it is worth noting that this oldtime song is performed as a dance tune by Scott Dunbar (Ahura-Mazda (Lp) AMS SDS - 1).³

He Rambled is a version of The Derby Ram an English folk song of great age which crossed the Atlantic and entered both white and black folk traditions in North America.⁴ An adaptation of this ballad (by Bob Cole (as 'Will Handy') and James Weldon Johnson)⁵ became the New Orleans jazz standard Oh Didn't He Ramble⁶ and has been played at funerals there since the early years of this century, the chorus having special significance at such ceremonies. Texts of the song appear in early collections of white country music⁷ and it was collected from black musicians, in Alabama in 1915-16⁸ and by Gates Thomas in Texas as early as 1888.⁹ Thomas was unaware of its British origin and accepted his informants' explanation that the song had originated in the Colorado River area around La Grange. Interestingly this is only about 75 miles west of Richmond where Pete Harris was recorded. In Thomas's text there is only one verse similar to one in the Harris recording. The Lomaxes, in their collection Our Singing Country,¹⁰ offer a chorus and no fewer than nineteen verses of The Ram of Darby. This is of course a composite (as were most of their published song texts) and is drawn from several Archive of Folk Song recordings made in the 1920s. There were at least eight by white artists (including two by Bascom Lamar Lunsford) plus Pete Harris's and two others by blacks.¹¹ Four of the verses the Lomaxes quote are approximately the same as four used by Harris.

Harris seems to have had quite an extensive repertoire of folk ballads. For instance The Buffalo Skinners (Laws B 10)¹² is a vintage cowboy ballad which originally derived from a 19th century logging song.¹³ He does not however appear to have been completely familiar with the lyrics, and sounds less assured here than on most of his other recordings. There have always been black cowboys, and black songsters of half-a-century ago not infrequently learned cowboy songs, a notable example being Leadbelly

1. The term 'songster' is not simply one coined by folklorists. Mance Lipscomb calls himself a songster and other black musicians, such as the late J. D. Short, have referred to oldtime country artists in this way. Charlie Patton (born c. 1887) although sometimes styled as 'The Father of Delta Blues' can also be considered a songster.
2. It should be noted that non-blues performances have been grouped together on side A and more strictly blues selections on side B. For the sake of continuity the songs of each artist are discussed together.
3. Leadbelly's Dance Calls (AFS 4469 B 2), issued on Elektra (Lp) EKL 301/302, is a related performance.
4. The Old Tup or Derby Ram was originally one of the characters in a Christmas ceremony performed in Derbyshire and South-West Yorkshire and from this grew the song about the Derby Ram and its prodigious attributes. Reginald Nettel, A Social History Of Traditional Song (formerly Sing A Song Of England), London, Adams & Dart, 1969, (1954) pp. 32-34.
5. Paul Oliver, Screening The Blues, London, Cassell, 1968, pp. 193 - 194 and Guy B. Johnson, 'Double Meaning In The Popular Negro Blues', Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 22, 1927-28, reprinted in Alan Dundes, ed., Mother Wit From The Laughing Barrel, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. 265.
6. Jelly Roll Morton made a definitive recording for Bluebird (B-10429).
7. Cecil Sharp published three versions which he collected from whites in the U. S. A., texts of which are in the current edition of his collection English Folk-Songs From The Southern Appalachians (Maud Karpeles, ed.), London, Oxford University Press, 1966 (1932), pp. 184-187. White oldtime recordings include He Rambled by Charlie Poole (Columbia 15407-D) and Didn't He Ramble by Fiddlin' John Carson (Okeh 45569).
8. Newman Ivey White, American Negro Folk Songs, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1928, pp. 201-202.
9. Gates Thomas, 'South Texas Negro Work-Songs: Collected And Uncollected', in J. Frank Dobie, ed., Rainbow In The Morning, Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, No. 5, 1926, pp. 157-159.
10. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, Our Singing Country, New York, Macmillan, 1941, pp. 104-107.
11. Didn't He Ramble (AFS 1331 B 1) by Blind Jesse Harris, 1937 and Didn't He Ramble (AFS 2671 B 2) by Willie 'Little Life' Johnson, 1939.
12. G. Malcom Laws Jnr., Native American Balladry, (Philadelphia, American Folklore Society, 1950).
13. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, Folk Song U. S. A., New York, Duell Sloan & Pearce, 1947, p. 382. A full text of the song, including verses that Harris uses, is on pp. 174-175 and there are notes on pp. 159-160. John A. Lomax first published this song in his 1910 collection Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads (New York, Sturgis & Walton, pp. 158-161) and recorded it for the Archive of Folk Song on two occasions (AFS 2705 A and AFS 2088 B 1).

with his engaging Out On The Western Plains.¹⁴

Blind Lemon's Song, like Smith Casey's Two White Horses Standin' In Line (see Volume 5 in this series, SDM 264) is a slide-guitar accompanied variant of the piece Blind Lemon Jefferson made famous as See That My Grave Is Kept Clean.¹⁵ Although having some of the qualities of a spiritual, this is really a secular song of the same genre as the Dying Crapshooter's Blues. Lightnin' Hopkins has kept the song alive in Texas with several post-war recordings (notably the superb version on Folkways (Lp) FS 3822) and it has also been recorded by artists from other states.¹⁶ Pete's version is basically similar to Lemon's with its use of the 'coffin sound', 'church bell tone' and 'mighty long lane' verses. The wording however has distinctive touches, such as the line (not found in either of the Jefferson recordings) 'Put a rose at my head and a rose at my feet' which completes the 'one kind favour' verse and the phrase 'toes get cold' in the 'cypress grove' verse (Lemon sings 'hands get cold'). In a letter to the series editor, Dan Patterson sheds some light on elements of Blind Lemon's See That My Grave Is Kept Clean. He traces the silver spade/golden chain imagery back through Old Blue¹⁸ and the 19th century sea-shanty Stormalong to the old British song Who Killed Cock Robin? Patterson suggests a Biblical origin for the 'two white horses' verse and refers to its inclusion in two North Carolina spirituals.¹⁹ He also points out that Odum and Johnson's book Negro Workaday Songs²⁰ contains a song entitled Dig My Grave With A Silver Spade (p. 129) and a spiritual Angels Lookin' At Me (p. 198) which both use the silver spade/golden chain motif.

Apart from its textual interest Blind Lemon's Song is notable for Harris's superb slide-guitar playing. He also displays his command of this instrumental technique on Is You Mad At Me? a two verse recitative blues, the beautiful Carrie which uses a similar melody, Standing On The Border and Jack O' Diamonds. The masterly slide-guitar playing of such as Harris, Smith Casey (see SDM 264), Black Ace and Mance Lipscomb, gives the lie to statements, made in sleeve notes to several Yazoo albums (L-1004, L-1032, L-1046), that Texas blues musicians were unfamiliar with this technique.

Walter Roland is generally credited with the origination of the very popular Red Cross Store Blues.²¹ He recorded his Red Cross Blues (Nos. 1 & 2 - Banner 32822 & 33121) for ARC in July 1933 and a day later his guitar-playing partner Sonny Scott also recorded a version (Vocalion 25012). In fact Lucille Bogan had recorded the theme (Red Cross Man, Banner 33072) just two masters before Roland at the same session (he plays piano behind her vocal) but it was probably Roland's popular first version that inspired Pete Harris to record the song (The Red Cross Store) less than a year later, for the lyrics he uses are virtually the same as Roland's.

Alabama Bound is central to a complex of songs of considerable age which also includes Don't Ease Me In, Don't Leave Me Here,²² Elder Greene Blues,²³ Ol' Elder Brown's (In Town),²⁴ Jimmy Bell (In Town)²⁵ and I'm Goin' To Walk Your Log.²⁶ Alabama Bound itself was collected in Texas probably before World War I²⁷ and in Tennessee in 1915-16,²⁸ Don't Leave Me Here is of similar vintage, an early Texas version being quoted in a Texas Folklore Society pamphlet by W.H. Thomas.²⁹ Papa Charlie Jackson's 1925 recording of I'm Alabama Bound (Paramount 12289), which includes a verse about Elder Green, is almost certainly the earliest commercial recording of the theme. In their field notes the Lomaxes quote seven verses of Alabama Bound from Pete Harris but only two were in fact recorded, one of which varies somewhat from the transcribed version. Fortunately one of his three Elder Green verses is on the record. Leadbelly learned a rather different Alabama Bound around 1912 (incorporating elements of On The

14. In 1908 John A. Lomax collected Home On The Range from a black barman (formerly a trail cook) in San Antonio, Texas. John A. Lomax, Adventures Of A Ballad Hunter, New York, Macmillan, 1947, pp. 61-64.
15. Jefferson's two Paramount recordings of this song (12585, recorded in 1927, and 12609, recorded in 1928) provide the definitive renditions on which most later versions are based but the song may predate these. For full lyric transcriptions see, Bob Groom, ed., Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blues World Booklet, No. 3, Knutsford, 1970, p. 12 and p. 14.
16. The Two Poor Boys (Joe Evans and Arthur McClain) recorded Two White Horses In A Line for ARC in 1931 (Oriole 8081), Tom Dutton recorded the song (with Robert Pete Williams on guitar) in 1959 (LFS (Lp) A-6), Eugene Rhodes made a version closely modelled on Jefferson's in 1962 (Folk-Legacy (Lp) FSA-12). Son House states he used the melody for his (Mississippi County Farm Blues (Paramount 13096) and uses it for his 1942 recording for the Archive of Folk Song (AFS 6608 A 1). - In 1965 he recorded the original See That My Grave Is Kept Clean lyrics, although this song has strangely been mistitled (Mississippi County Farm Blues on both Roots (Lp) SL - 501 and Blue Goose (Lp) 2016. Furry Lewis has recorded two versions of See That My Grave Is Kept Clean, one in 1967 (Arhoolie (Lp) 1041) and the other in 1968 (Matchbox (Lp) SDR 190).
18. Furry Lewis uses the 'golden chain' line in his Old Dog Blue, Bluesville (Lp) 1036.
19. Drinking Of The Wine (unpublished) and a text in Vol. 3 of The Frank C. Brown Collection Of North Carolina Folklore, Durham, 1952, p. 129.
20. Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, Negro Workaday Songs, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1926.
21. Later recordings include those by Frank James (New Red Cross Blues, Bluebird B-6824), Sonny Boy Williamson (Welfare Store Blues, Bluebird B-8610), Leadbelly (Red Cross Store Blues, Bluebird B-8709, and several Archive of Folk Song recordings) and Forrest City Joe (Red Cross Store, Atlantic (Lp) 1352).
22. Recordings of these were made by Henry Thomas (Vocalion 1197 and Vocalion 1443) and are discussed by Mack McCormick in 'Henry Thomas: Our Deepest Look At The Roots', notes to Henry Thomas 'Ragtime Texas', Herwin (Lp) 209, Glen Cove, 1974, p. 7 and p. 9.
23. Charlie Patton recorded this title (Paramount 12972) and there is a transcription in John Fahey, Charlie Patton, London, Studio Vista, 1970, pp. 84-85. Elder Green's In Town was recorded by Blind Lemon Jefferson for Okeh but this remains unissued. A transcript however has been published, Samuel Charters, The Bluesman, New York, Oak, 1967, pp. 179-181. Ella Green by Alf 'Dad' Valentine was recorded for the Archive of Folk Song in 1939. In the Archive's Checklist (infra notes 43) this has been retitled Alabama Bound (AFS 2673 A 1).
24. John W. Work, American Negro Songs, New York, Howell Soskin & Co., 1940, p. 241.
25. Recorded by Cat-Iron, Folkways (Lp) FA-2389.
26. Recorded by Baby Doo (Leonard Caston), Decca 7773, and Cat-Iron, Folkways (Lp) FA- 2389.
27. A text collected by Gates Thomas (in J. Frank Dobie, ed., op. cit., p. 177) contains references to Elder Green and Waco, Texas. Thomas perceptively comments that 'Alabama Bound' refers to a 'psychic state rather than a place'.
28. Five versions. White, op. cit., pp. 306-308.
29. W.H. Thomas, Some Current Folk-Songs Of The Negro And Their Economic Interpretation, Texas Folklore Society, 1912, p. 12, Reprinted in J. Frank Dobie, ed., op. cit., p. 202.

Road Again) and recorded it on a number of occasions, starting with a version for the Archive of Folk Song in 1935 (AFS 49 B) and including a 1940 commercial recording (Victor 27268). Jelly Roll Morton is also associated³⁰ with the song which he recorded for the Archive in 1938 (AFS 1638 A, B).³¹

There is a whole genus of jailhouse blues with a key verse that begins 'Thirty days in jail with my back turned to the wall', or variations thereon. Bessie Smith recorded her classic Jail-House Blues for Columbia (A 4001) in September 1923, Sam Collins's The Jail House Blues was his first recording (Gennett 6167, April 1927) and Ida Cox's final recording for Paramount (12965), made in October 1929, was her Jail House Blues. Leadbelly adapted the theme for his Thirty Days In The Workhouse, which he recorded for the Archive of Folk Song in 1935 (AFS 53 B). In his article 'Double Meaning In The Popular Negro Blues' Guy B. Johnson quotes the following lines, which are also sung by Pete Harris on this record (Thirty Days In Jail) 'Thirty days in jail, with my back turned to the wall. Look here Mr. Jailer, put another gal in my stall' and explains that this stanza from an old folk song had a basis in the custom which some jailers followed of locking black men and women in the same cell.³²

The lyrics of Carrie are fairly conventional - 'Carrie, Carrie baby, hear your man callin' you. Low down fireman, dirty engineer. Took my baby away, left me standin' here' - but these are only part of a total sound which makes this Pete Harris performance one of the finest blues recordings ever made for the Archive of Folk Song. Pete's slide-guitar playing, similar to that of Smith Casey (see SDM 264) on several of his records, is breathtaking in its richness.

Standing On The Border, again with slide-guitar, comprises only a single verse:

Standing on the border, baby, drinkin' out of the water trough,
Standing on the border, baby, drinkin' out of the water trough,
You ought to have been there, honey, Uncle Sam payin' his soldiers off.

This is similar to a verse in Blind Lemon Jefferson's Dry Southern Blues (Paramount 12347) which runs:

Wild women on the border, drinkin' out of the water trough,
Wild women on the border, drinkin' out of the water trough,
I wish Uncle Sam would hurry up and pay these soldiers off.

There were probably many more blues about World War I and its aftermath than the few that found their way onto record.³³

In their notes to the Pete Harris session the Lomaxes give the full lyrics to a ballad entitled Mollie and Pete's recording of this, albeit with the first and last verses missing and the lines in somewhat different order, is on AFS 89 B 3. At some stage it was retitled Jack And Betsy by the Archive (although Harris sings about Jack and Mollie) perhaps because this is the usual title of this song. Mollie almost certainly has roots in a British ballad with its 18th century phraseology 'I'm feared you may undo me' whilst the use of the 'hallelu' motif and the Calvary references add mock sanctified overtones.

Jack O' Diamonds is a gambling song of great antiquity and is usually said to describe the card game Monte. There is a text in W. H. Thomas's pamphlet which runs 'Jack o' Diamonds is a hard card to roll'³⁴ Traditionally Jack O' Diamonds has been sung to slide-guitar accompaniment and on his 1926 recording (Jack O' Diamond Blues, Paramount 12373)³⁵ Blind Lemon Jefferson plays his guitar, with a knife or bottleneck, in Open D tuning. The vocal lines are drawn out in a way reminiscent of a field holler, suggesting that the song was originally performed acapella.³⁶ A few weeks before Jefferson's recording was made, Texas-born Sippie Wallace had recorded her Jack O' Diamonds Blues (Okeh 8328) but this has very different lyrics and melody. Two separate recordings were made of Pete Harris's Jack O' Diamonds, the second including a verse not in the first version. Both have a 'payday' line but are otherwise closer to Blind Lemon's version than the Archive's recording by Smith Casey (see SDM 264). Another Archive recording of this song was made by James 'Iron Head' Baker at Sugarland, Texas in 1934 (AFS 202 B 2). There are surprisingly few post-war Texas recordings of Jack O' Diamonds, the most notable being the version by Mance Lipscomb (Arhoolie (Lp) 1001).³⁷

Apart from the twelve songs he recorded, Harris is known to have performed at least another half-dozen for the Lomaxes (presumably not put onto disc) which appear as partial texts in their 1934 field notes and shed further light on his repertoire.

There are two religious songs The Titanic and Jesus Went On Man Bond. Many songs have been written about the Titanic disaster of 1912, some recorded examples being Rabbit Brown's Sinking Of The Titanic (Victor 35840), Blind Willie Johnson's God Moves On The Water (Columbia 14520-D) and William Versey Smith's When The Great Ship Went Down (Paramount 12505). The text collected from Harris is similar to the Johnson recording:

In the year of 1912 the Titanic went down,
Many souls went to judgement crying,
'Nearer my God to thee'.

Refrain:

God moved on the water,
God moved on the water,
God moved on the water,
He moved a powerful hand.

30. Morton claimed to have written Alabama Bound in Mobile, Alabama in 1905. Alan Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll, New York, Duell Sloan & Pearce, 1950, p. 121.
31. Other recordings of Alabama Bound for the Archive of Folk Song include a 1933 cylinder by Willy 'Bubba' Grimes, and discs by 'Bowlegs' (AFS 1863 B 3) and an unknown convict (AFS 1864 A 1) - both made in 1933 - plus Uncle Rich Brown's 1937 rendition (AFS 1334 A 2).
32. Johnson in Dundes, ed., op. cit., p. 265. A similar verse is in I Don't Mind Bein' In Jail, quoted by Odum and Johnson, op. cit., p. 77.
33. Several texts are quoted in, John Jacob Niles, Singing Soldiers, New York, Charles Scribners, 1927.
34. Here the song refers to the playing of dice. W. H. Thomas, op. cit., p. 11.
35. Lomax and Lomax, Our Singing Country, op. cit., pp. 303-305.
36. The Lomaxes took down a text of Jack O' Diamonds from prisoners at the Darrington State Farm, Texas (1933-34) and noted that this was 'another of the field songs "Satiddy E'nin' Songs" as the prisoners call them when they are slow and mournful like the blues'. A related song is Diamond Joe collected from Mississippi blacks in 1909, by a Mr Turner, and published by E. C. Perrow, 'Songs And Rhymes From The South, 6, Songs Connected With Drinking And Gambling', Journal Of American Folklore, Vol. 28, No. 108, April-June, 1915, p. 133. Bruce Jackson prints black Texas prisoners' recollections of a card playing convict and a sadistic prison captain at Darrington State Farm who were both known as Jack O' Diamonds. Bruce Jackson, ed., Wake Up Dead Man: Afro-American Worksongs from Texas Prisons, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 12-13.
37. Lightin' Hopkins also recorded an unissued version in Houston, Texas in 1959 and Thomas Shaw (a Texan by birth) recently recorded a version at a San Diego State Folk Festival Advent (Lp) 2804. Non Texas recordings include those by Jesse Thomas from Shreveport, Louisiana (Specialty 419), Brother John Sellers (Vanguard (Lp) VRS 9036), Jim Bunkley from Georgia (Rounder (Lp) 2001), and Lum Guffin from Tennessee (Flyright (Lp) 503). The Percy Randolph recording under this title (Folk-Lyric (Lp) 107) is a different but related song.

4 The lyrics for Pete's Jesus Went On Man Bond however are unrelated to Johnson's two recordings of You Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond (Columbia 14504-D and Columbia 14530-D)³⁸ and it is a pity that Harris's rendition did not get onto disc as his text is an interesting one:

Jesus went on man bond,
Jesus went on man bond,
Came all the way from heaven down here,
To go on man bond.

When Christ came down, he opened the books of the seven seals,
And that's where he wrote his name,
Jesus went on man bond,
Jesus went on man bond,
Came all the way from heaven down here,
To go on man bond.

He promised the cruel Juris (Jews) for four thousand years,
He'd stay on man bond,
Jesus went on man bond,
Jesus went on man bond,
Came all the way from heaven down here,
To go on man bond.

Three miscellaneous verses are quoted from reels that Harris performed. The first comes from a very old song which many people know from the Sam Chatman version I Have To Paint My Face (Arhoolie (Lp) 1005). Harris sang:

God made a nigger,
Made him in the night,
Made him in a hurry,
Forgot to paint him white.

A bitter verse which reflects the atmosphere of racial discrimination common to most Southern states in those days. The second is a variation of a stanza most familiar from its use by Jelly Roll Morton in the jazz classic I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say, which is known to have a folk origin. It is interesting to see its usage by a Texas songster:

Nasty butt, stinkin' butt,
Take it away,
Thought I heard Mr Amos say:
'Nasty butt, funky butt,
Take it away.'

The third fragment is from what the Lomaxes describe as 'a corrupt set of Partyo, Partyo' (a generic name for salacious and 'unprintable' party songs) and it resembles a verse in Leadbelly's Whoa Back Buck. Harris sang:

Gwine take Sal to the nickel sto',
Gwine dress Sal in caliquo.

Several verses of Uncle Bud, described by the Lomaxes as a 'notorious lewd song' were collected from Pete Harris. In Texas this bawdy song was usually aimed at 'Uncle' Bud Russell, the scourge of the Brazos Bottoms, who appears in numerous Texas blues. It was however widely known throughout the South without, of course, this extra connotation.

Uncle Bud got corn in the crib that's never been shucked,
Uncle Bud got gals that never been touched (sic).³⁹
Uncle Bud, Uncle Bud,
Uncle Bud, Uncle Bud, Uncle Bud.

Uncle Bud is a man like this,
If he cain' get a woman, he'll take his fis'.

If you want to be a man, a man in full,
Let your balls hang down like a jersey bull.

Uncle Bud got a buckskin belly and a brass ass hole,
Uncle Bud!

Prisoner No. 57473 at Huntsville bore the alias 'Track Horse', presumably as a tribute to his endurance. Track Horse's true name was Augustus (or Augusta) Haggerty⁴⁰ and he was born in Houston, Texas on 25 October 1907. He was apparently first imprisoned sometime in the 1920s as the prison records show he was discharged on 23 June 1929 but his freedom was short-lived as he was back in the state penitentiary when the Lomaxes visited it in 1934. He was finally discharged on 22 February 1935.

Haggerty made twenty-seven vocal recordings for the Archive of Folk Song, four of which are included in this album. Three have guitar accompaniment, which certainly on one title and probably on all three, is by fellow prisoner Jack Johnson. In addition the Lomaxes took down from Track Horse some verses related to the ancient bawdy ballad Our Goodman:

'Oh, my wife, oh, my wife won't you please listen to me,
O! lady whose mule is that tied up at my gate-post, where my mule used to be?'

'You blind fool, you blind fool, your blind and cannot see,
That's nothin' but a milk cow my mother sent to me.'

'I've rode many miles and I'll ride many mo',
I've never seen a milk cow with a saddle on befo'.'

The music and texts to two of Haggerty's recordings have been published in Our Singing Country - Mamma, Mamma (p. 355), which he sings unaccompanied (AFS 210 A 2), and a work-song Godamighty Drag (p. 398), sung with a group of prisoners (AFS 182 B 2). The introduction to the latter transcript begins: 'His nickname was "Track Horse" and he's dead now (1940). His body was a thick wedge of strength that could tie a rainbow round his shoulder (ie. the shimmering arc of the whirling axe) all day under the hot broiling sun, he had the voice of a lead man for both work songs and spirituals.' Track Horse's vocals certainly live up to this description. In I First Met You Mama, 1929 his woman is 'built like a Chrysler, ways like a Model T-Ford'. The last verse runs:

Drinkin' plenty sody water, keep my nature down,
Drinkin' plenty sody water, keep my nature down,
Say you know when I get started, it's hell all over town.

Haggerty also recorded an unaccompanied version of this song, When I First Met You, 1929 (AFS 212 A 2).

38. Columbia 14504-D is titled You'll Need Somebody On Your Bond but this is the same song as on 14530-D.

39. The Lomaxes have censored their manuscript at this point.

40. Or Hagarty, the prison records contain both versions of both names.

I Feel That Old Woman Is A Jinx To Me contains such vintage verses from the prison blues tradition as:

Then they tell me Louisiana is a murderers' home,⁴¹
Might be a cemetery but I'm going fore long.

The last verse again celebrates the man who haunts Texas prison songs, 'Uncle' Bud Russell.

Police Special apparently recounts the events that led to Track Horse's imprisonment in April 1929. It seems odd that after a shooting affray he was free again in June of that year and if the lyrics are factual then it may be that the prison records are in error. In the last verse he sings 'Track Horse from Louisiana' which along with his recording Louisiana Blues (AFS 222 B 1) and the Angola ('murderers' home') reference, suggests that he may also have lived in that state.

Hattie Green figures in a variety of related Texas country blues. Haggerty's version is of particular interest in that it predates the first commercial recording of this song by Joe Pullum (made in 1936, Bluebird B-6426). Although Pullum's lyrics are different from Haggerty's both stem from the same theme. Hattie Green was apparently the owner of a whorehouse where, in Victoria Spivey's words 'all the races could get together'.⁴²

Jack Johnson, also known as 'Black Jack' was, according to prison records, born on 25 December 1877 and came from Hearne, Texas. How long he had been in Huntsville when the Lomaxes recorded him is uncertain but the records show that he was discharged on 20 February 1936. His guitar playing on It Was Early One Morning has some affinities with that of Gene Campbell and Carl Davis. One verse refers to his prison situation:

If I ever get lucky, baby, woman and duck this law,
Lord, if I get lucky, baby, and duck this law,
Say, I won't be guilty, baby, of this crime no more.

The single recording made by a convict who went by the name of 'Little Brother' is the only one here that has been issued previously (see discographical notes on sleeve) and it should be noted that the Archive's Checklist⁴³ shows the title of this song as Up And Down Building (The) K. C. Line. Aurally however it is the 'Mobile and K. C. line' which Little Brother sings about in his first verse. This is of considerable interest for during the latter part of the 19th century a railroad called the Mobile and K. C. line was started but never completed.⁴⁴ Possibly a verse about this railroad entered blues tradition, perhaps via a work song, and has been preserved on record by its inclusion in Little Brother's blues.⁴⁵ Two other railroads are mentioned in the piece, the Santa Fe (verse four) and the Rock Island (verse seven). The second verse is yet another about 'Mister Bud Russell', who Little Brother says 'wants a thousand men' (a newspaper report on Russell's retirement states he delivered no less than 115,000 prisoners to the Texas prison system)! In verse three the line 'Lord, ain't you tired of rollin' for the big hat man' is a reference to the prison guard and similar sentiments are expressed in the Texas recording I Ain't Gonna Roll For The Big Hat Man No More by Joel Hopkins (Heritage (lp)1001). 'I been prayin' Our Father, Lord, Thy kingdom come' in verse five appears in recordings by two other Texans, Texas Alexander (Justice Blues, Vocalion 02856) and Wright Holmes (Alley Special Milton 5221).

A problem surrounds the identity of Little Brother. The Texas Department of Correction have supplied a 'convict biography' for one Wesley Scott who had this nickname. The Little Brother entry in the Checklist states that Up And Down Building (The) K. C. Line was recorded at Huntsville in 1934; Scott however was discharged from there on 5 April 1933. The record might have been made the previous year but the Lomaxes were refused admission to Huntsville in 1933 and so did not record there that year.⁴⁶ If it was made in Huntsville, and this does not seem to be in doubt, then it must have been in 1934. Notwithstanding, Scott's biography may still be applicable and is therefore given. He was born in Victoria, Texas (the biggest town between Houston and Corpus Christi) on 11 March 1904. His mother's name is given as Plumber Scott and his father's as Hildy Scott (perhaps these have been reversed). His wife's name was Melvina and he had two brothers and two sisters all but one of whom lived in Victoria. His last job is given as chauffeur to one Ed Picken. He had a previous conviction for the theft of a turkey, for which he was fined in 1926, and he entered the state penitentiary on 20 August 1928 to serve a term of two to eight years for an unspecified crime.

How Homer Roberson, convict 70409 at Huntsville, acquired the nickname 'Tricky Sam' we do not know and the only biographical information we have is that he was born in the city of San Antonio, Texas on 25 January 1890 and at the time of his discharge, on 1 October 1947, his wife Janie Roberson was resident at 440 Hedges Street in San Antonio. What is evident however is that Tricky Sam was one of the finest songsters at Huntsville in 1934. He recorded two distinct versions of Stavin' Chain⁴⁷ and a long Ella Speed. Additionally the field notes show he performed Frankie And Albert and a country blues Fare Thee, Oh Babe⁴⁸ for the Lomaxes.

Stavin' Chain (A Study In A Folk-Hero) is the subject of a limited edition booklet written and published by Richard A. Noblett (London, 1969). This traces the history of songs about Stavin' Chain from a fragment collected by Gates Thomas, around 1920 in the Fayette County area of Texas,⁴⁹ up to an unexpurgated recording made by Mance Lipscomb in 1960.⁵⁰ Tricky Sam is only the second

41. Both the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and the Parchman Prison Farm, Mississippi have been wryly described as murderers' homes.
42. Tony Russell, 'Talking Blues', Jazz Monthly, No. 191, January, 1971, p. 24. Austin, Texas disc-jockey and pianist 'Dr. Hep Cat' (Lavenda Durst) recorded two versions of Hattie Green in 1949 (Uptown 201, and Peacock 1509) and two other Texas pianists recorded it in the 1960s, Buster Pickens (Heritage (Lp) 1008) and Robert Shaw (Almanac (Lp) 10, Arhoolie (Lp) 1010). The tune is also used by Lightin' Hopkins for his Abilene (Aladdin 3096) but this song makes no reference to Hattie Green.
43. Check List Of Recorded Songs In The English Language In The Archive Of American Folk Song To July, 1940, Washington, D. C., The Library of Congress, Music Division, 1942.
44. A history of this venture is given in 'So Many Birds Of Carrion: The Memphis Road', a chapter in, Charles Nelson Glabb, Kansas City And The Railroads, Madison, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962, pp. 193-214.
45. Leroy Carr however refers to 'the Mobile and K. C. Line' as a working railroad in his Alabama Woman Blues (Vocalion 1549).
46. John A. Lomax, op. cit., p. 115.
47. Lomax and Lomax, Our Singing Country, op. cit., pp. 305-307 has a version of Stavin' Chain attributed to Tricky Sam but there are a number of differences between this, Sam's recordings, and a text attributed to Sam and one of his friends in the Lomaxes' field notes.
48. The Lomaxes note that the tune for Fare Thee, Oh Babe is the same as for Fare Thee Well, Babe printed in, John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, American Ballads And Folk Songs, New York, Macmillan, 1934, pp. 204-205.
49. The Bullin' Mr Stavin' Chain, quoted by Gates Thomas in, J. Frank Dobie, ed., op. cit., p. 179.
50. The Unexpurgated Folk Songs Of Men, Raglan (Lp) 51. Other recordings of the song include those by Johnny Temple (Decca 7532), Jazz Gillum (Bluebird B-7986), Zu Zu Bollin (Torch 6912) and J. D. Short (Delmark (Lp) DL-609).

person known to have recorded Stavin' Chair, the first being Wilson Jones who recorded it for the Lomaxes at Lafayette, Louisiana in July 1934 (AFS 94 B 2). Sam changes the usual chorus 'You can't make it down like Stavin' Chain' to 'I'm making it down, baby, like Stavin' Chain'; a small but significant alteration, for 'Stavin' Chain is dead and gone. Left me here to carry his good work on'.

Ella Speed (Laws, I 6)⁵¹ is one of the best known black Texas folk ballads but relatively few versions have been recorded and few of these are commercial ones. Leadbelly recorded it three times for the Archive of Folk Song (AFS 54 A, B; AFS 120 B 2; AFS 125 B) and once for Capitol in 1944 (Capitol (Lp) H 369). Wallace Chaires and Sylvester Jones recorded a version for the Archive in 1939 (see SDM 264) and Finious 'Flatfoot' Rockmore recorded one in 1940 (AFS 3990 A 1, at Lufkin, Texas). John A Lomax believed the version he obtained from Rockmore was older than that obtained from Leadbelly.⁵² An early printed reference to the song is in The American Songbag by Carl Sandburg (New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927, pp. 28-29). Here it is titled Alice B but the song is definitely the familiar ballad about Bill Martin and Ella Speed.⁵³ An interesting aside which highlights the complex process of oral transmission is the story of how the song reached Sandburg. Apparently he acquired it from the son of a lawyer in Rochester, New York state, who had learned it from a friend from New Orleans, Louisiana, while the two were riding on top of a box car heading for Constantinople (of all places!) with the American Relief Expedition. The friend had been taught the song by a hobo in New Orleans who had himself learned it a few days earlier in Memphis from a black, newly arrived there from Galveston, Texas! No wonder names and places get changed around. This little story is also instructive in that it places the origin of the song in Texas and indeed Leadbelly was firmly convinced that Bill Martin had shot down Ella Speed in the streets of Dallas not long before his arrival in that city.⁵⁴ The fourth verse of Tricky Sam's recording, beginning 'Bring out your rubber-tyred hearse and your rubber-tyred hack' is a floating one which crops up in a number of different ballads, notably Frankie And Albert⁵⁵ and Delia. Tricky Sam also uses this verse in the text of Frankie And Albert which the Lomaxes took down from him. There is further overlap in that he similarly uses the verse about people getting news in St. Louis in both songs and that usually Frankie and Bill Martin both use a Colt 41. Oddly the field note text of Tricky Sam's Ella Speed omits both the 'rubber-tyred hearse, rubber-tyred hack' and 'St. Louis' verses. It is in fact so different from the recorded version that one wonders if Tricky Sam sang Ella Speed for the Lomaxes on more than one occasion and that the text they noted down is a composite.

The accent in this collection is on blues and ballads. Except that the selection would have been more representative if it had included work songs and the like, this set (and its companion album SDM 264) offers the most rewarding sample of pre-war black Texas music yet to be made available on long playing record. There is much here that is new to hear, enjoy and research and artists like Pete Harris, Track Horse Haggerty and Tricky Sam must in future be accorded a place amongst the elite of recorded pre-war black folk music performers.

Bob Groom (c) 1976

51. Laws, op. cit.

52. Rockmore was taught Ella Speed when 'a boy in kneepants' by 'Cakewalk' a Dallas black.

53. The series editor points out that Alice B and Ella Speed are phonetically similar and that the change in names may well be a result of the oral transmission process.

54. In his notes to Arhoolie (Lp) 1001, Mance Lipscomb, Texas Sharecropper And Songster (Berkely, 1960, p. 5) Mack McCormick refers to his attempt to locate details of the actual crime and it would be interesting to know if he ever received a reply to his letter to the Dallas County Clerk.

55. Examples include Frankie quoted by W. H. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 12-13, version A of Frankie And Albert (collected from Texas sources in 1909) in Lomax and Lomax, American Ballads and Folk Songs, op cit., pp. 103-105, and Archive of Folk Song recordings by John French (see Volume 3 in this series, SDM 257) and Booker T. Sapps (see Volume 4 in this series, SDM 258).

Recording supervised by John Avery Lomax and Alan Lomax for the Archive of (American) Folk Song, the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

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