The Hammons Family

A Study of a West Virginia Family's Traditions

Edited by Carl Fleischhauer and Alan Jabbour

Based on fieldwork by Dwight Diller, Alan Jabbour, and Carl Fleischhauer

AFS L65-L66
Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center
Library of Congress, Washington

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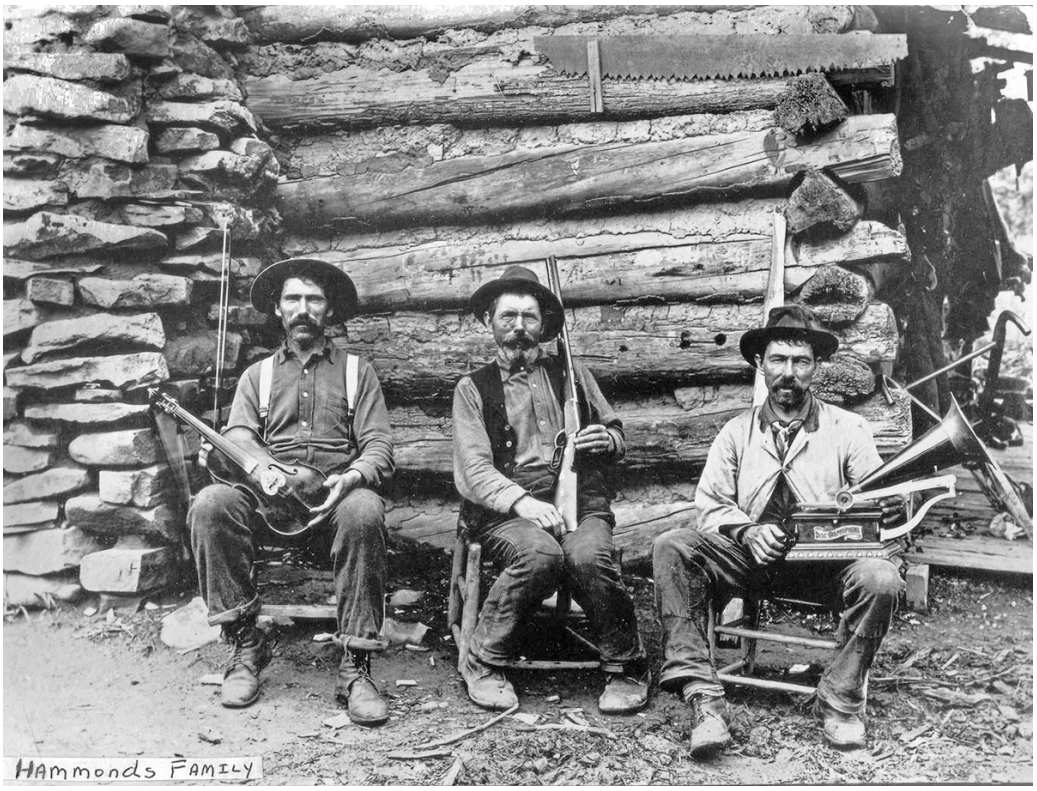
This is the 2018 online version of the booklet for the Archive of Folk Culture sound recording AFS L65-L66, published in 1973. This edition of the booklet was designed and assembled by Carl Fleischhauer.

The publication generally retains its 1973 voice. Bibliographical and discographical references have not been updated. An editorial review in 1997 adjusted the text to eliminate inconsistencies. Three items have been changed: the name of the fiddling uncle of Burl, Maggie, and Sherman is now spelled as it was pronounced, and as Edden Hammons himself spelled it; the title "Old Sledge" is identified as the name of a 19th-century card game; and an important minstrel-era publication of "Sandy Boys" is cited. Several photographs created or discovered after 1973 have been added. The Archive of Folk Song is referred to as the Archive of Folk Culture, its name since 1981.

Maggie Hammons Parker passed away on July 26, 1987; Sherman Hammons, on September 3, 1988; and Burl Hammons, on January 2, 1993.

The cover photograph depicts brothers Pete, Paris, and Neal (Cornelius) Hammons. The torn print on the cover is from the Hammons family's own collection, copied in 1972. In 2018, the Center obtained a digital version of an undamaged version of the same photograph, reproduced below. Meanwhile, information provided by Robert Cooper in 1980 identifies the photographer who made the 6x8-inch glass negative as Bob "Captain" Colebank of Sutton, West Virginia. Cooper quotes O.L. "Hink" Holcomb of Sutton as reporting that Colebank and Lory A. Holcomb were avid deer hunters who often sought out the Hammonses as hunting guides. Hink Holcomb said that, for this photograph, either Colebank or Lory Holcomb brought a phonograph and recordings of fiddle music with them to the Williams River and the phonograph was included in this picture.



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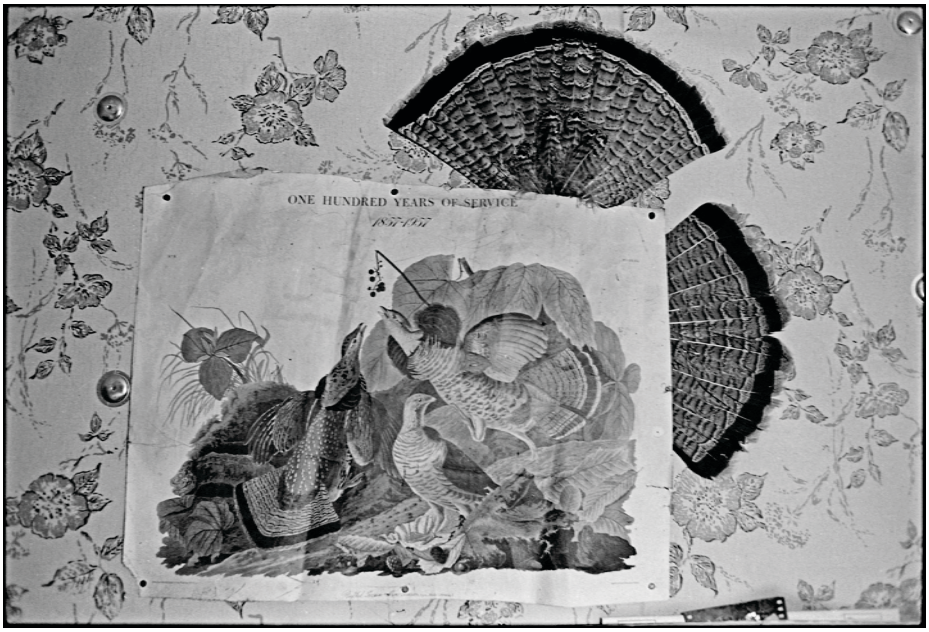
Introduction



Ruffed grouse in an Audubon reprint and a pair of grouse tails commemorate woodland hunting at the Hammons home in Stillwell, near Marlinton.

Carl Fleischhauer and I first became acquainted with the Hammons family in 1970. Since then we have visited them regularly, though not as often as we should like, and at some point in our acquaintance it dawned upon us that a full-length study of the family which brought together recordings, print, and photography, and which combined music, lore, oral history, documentary historical research, and general cultural reflections, offered us the best means at our disposal for conveying publicly something of the profound impact the family has had upon us. The Hammonses, who likewise bear a profound respect for the traditions which nurtured them, have encouraged and assisted us at every stage of the project. We should like to express here our gratitude to them for all they have given us.

The study of the history and traditions of a single family, though rarely pursued in American folklore research, has proved exceptionally stimulating. The family unit is important anywhere, but in the case of the Hammonses it weighs even more heavily in the balance with community influences, for the family has been migratory since its arrival upon the early frontier some 175 years ago, rarely staying in one place for even a generation. Following the trail of the family over several generations could not be accomplished exclusively through documentary sources, so we have meshed documentary evidence with the family's own oral history. The oral stories and the printed documents complemented each other nicely, enabling us both to determine many facts of the family's peregrinations and to understand better the present generation's view of the past and its significance.

The close study of the history of one family has dramatically affected my previous notions of the general pattern and flow of culture in the upper South since colonial times. My newer notions are by no means conclusive, for we know remarkably little about these matters; but they are worth setting down now, if only to prod students of demography and cultural history into pursuing them more thoroughly.

First, around the Hammons family history, as one pores over the census records and other documents, arises a broader picture of a definable culture area within the more amorphous "Appalachians," more or less encompassing central and southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and perhaps the far southwestern counties of Virginia. The area is fairly uniform topographically, consisting largely of the sloping plateau running west from the Allegheny Front, broken up everywhere into precipitous hills and narrow hollows by the creeks and rivers winding their way toward the Ohio River basin. Studies in dialectology and (to a lesser extent) folklore tentatively confirm the essential homogeneity of the region. The settlement patterns for the area suggest the possibility that the dominant early influences came not only from the "Scotch-Irish," or "Ulster Scots," that many cultural historians

cite in discussing Appalachian immigration, but from already fully established American stock from the Virginia and North Carolina Piedmont, moving up into eastern Kentucky and West Virginia.

Second, I have come to perceive the Appalachian settlers as roughly divided into two broad classes which, despite a great amount of interinfluence over the generations, remain distinguishable from the time of the initial settlement down to the present day. One group of settlers sought out (or had the means to afford) tracts of land in the broader river valleys, in order to farm not only for sustenance but often for commerce. Allied with them are the merchants and other townspeople in the valley towns. Another group of settlers sought out the upland hollows and woodlands, gaining their sustenance from hunting, gathering, and simple gardening and animal husbandry, entering the cash economy only marginally through the occasional piecemeal sale of pelts, logs, and ginseng. Since the second group cultivated a woodlands lifestyle rather than a settled agricultural style rooted in ownership of farmable soil, they tended to be migratory within the general region that fostered the woods life. The Hammons family is an example of the latter group. If separate cultures, rather than a single homogeneous Appalachian culture, are indeed a historical fact, then any study of demographic patterns must be refined enough to cover such possibilities as that the woods life culture was predominantly Southern American and the farm life culture predominantly Scotch-lrish and German.

If this admittedly speculative sketch of the cultural development of the early Southern frontier has any substance, it raises some important questions about the early cultural roots of settlers like the Hammons family. The assumption of most previous studies of the music and lore of the area is that they were shaped by a direct infusion from the British Isles in the later 18th century, principally by way of the Scotch-lrish, and then modified over the years by contact with people from other cultural groups and with the mainstream of American popular culture. But if the Southern Piedmont were an important source of Appalachian settlers, we should have to modify the model to account for the early influence of an already developed Piedmont culture of the 18th century. Such a culture—it must unfortunately remain largely

Brothers and sisters Burl Hammons, Sherman Hammons, Maggie Hammons Parker, and Ruie Hammons at Burl, Maggie, and Ruie's home in Stillwell, near Marlinton, 1972.

hypothetical in the absence of serious investigation—would have roots not in the late 18th-century British culture which we know a fair amount about but in early 18th-century British folk cultures, with in all likelihood an additional current of influence from Africa by way of the slaves. A succession of later cultural influences from the British Isles and elsewhere in America would of course adapt and modify the early patterns, making a cultural reconstruction harder. To take folk music as an instance of the problem, there is a fair amount of published music of folk origin dating from late 18th-century Great Britain, but very little from earlier periods. The published record affords tentative evidence of a veritable revolution in British folk music during the later 18th century—especially in instrumental folk music. It may be a mistake, then, to compare Southern fiddling with what we know of British fiddling under the assumption that all differences are American departures from the older tradition. There remains the possibility that, at the same time that a late 18th-century revolution was creating the modern British instrumental styles, a parallel but somewhat separate creative flowering was taking place in the Piedmont and Appalachian South, generating a repertory and style that was carried westward everywhere along the Southern frontier.

Thus the history of the Hammons family, which at first seemed a little unusual to us, may indeed be one of the classic patterns for settlement of the Allegheny frontier. Only careful study of frontier demography will tell with any certainty, and we profoundly hope that such studies as this will galvanize others into pursuing these intricate and extremely important problems of American cultural diffusion.

The account of the family history identifies as "West Virginia" all locations within the state's present boundaries, though they were actually part of Virginia until 1863.

The bibliographical and discographical notes to the items on the discs are not comprehensive, except where available information is limited or has not been previously published. Ballads in particular have been frequently cross-listed in previous publications, whereas instrumental tunes have rarely been given careful annotations. I have seen or heard every item listed.

The recordings were mastered by John Howell of the Library's Recording Laboratory. Except where noted, the photographs are by Carl Fleischhauer. A number of people have assisted us on the project. We are grateful to Dwight Diller for providing not only some of the recordings included here but also most of the additional recorded interviews used in compiling the family history, and for offering helpful suggestions; to Robert F. Munn, Director of Libraries at West Virginia University, for assistance in the documentary research; to Elizabeth Weil for assistance in the transcriptions; to Guthrie T. Meade for information about related commercial hillbilly recordings; to the staffs of the Archive of Folk Culture and the Library's Publications Office for their assistance at every stage of the publication; and to William H. Smock, Thomas Brown, Avis Moore, and many others who helped the project along at various stages.

The tape recordings of the Hammons family from which these longplaying discs are drawn are in the collections of the Archive of Folk Culture. Additional recordings of the family and other musical members of their community have been published on a commercially available longplaying record, *Shaking Down the Acorns* (Rounder Records 0018).

— *Alan Jabbour*

A History of the Hammons Family

By Carl Fleischhauer

Before the Civil War

Six of the 10 children of Paris Hammons and his wife, born Lottie Roberts, live in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. Just before the Civil War, Paris as a child accompanied his family in a move from the Kentucky-West Virginia border to the wilderness of east-central West Virginia. After a short stay in northern Nicholas County, Paris and his father settled on the Williams River in Webster and Pocahontas Counties, where Paris's death in 1926 coincided with the final destruction of the forest in the logging boom that had begun in 1880. His biography and a family history live in the stories his children tell today.

Although the Hammonses do not do so, the stories can be arranged in a more or less chronological series portraying events from the time of the migration from Kentucky to the present day. The earliest story, however, which describes an escape from a threatened Indian attack, precedes and does not directly connect with the chronological period. It is told here by Paris's daughter, Maggie Hammons Parker, with comments from her brother Burl. She says she learned it from her mother and is uncertain where or when the events described took place, although Burl mentions a Kentucky place name, "Whitley." Usually Maggie says the story is about her great-grandfather Hammons, but occasionally she attaches it to great-grandfather Roberts. Despite these uncertainties, it is the starting point for the family history, and its vagueness reinforces the sense of origins the family associates with it. In other tellings Maggie has said that the Hammons boy in the story was named Edwin.

> *Maggie Hammons Parker:* I'll just tell it to you the way I heard it. Great-grandfather I guess he was. At the time that it was, and they lived there, and there was just two families of the white people lived there. And all the others that lived there was Indians.
>
> *Dwight Diller:* Where was—
>
> *Maggie:* It was, ah—they had to cross, it was, they called it the Indian Nation, that's where they said it was at, the Indian Nation.
>
> *Burl Hammons:* You want to know where it was at? It was a place they called Whitley.
>
> *Maggie:* Where?
>
> *Burl:* Whitley.

Paris and Lottie Hammons and granddaughter Ellie Shelton. Composite image from the family's collection; photographers and dates unknown.

Maggie: Whitley?

Burl: Yeah....

Maggie: Anyhow, there was just the two, the two families of the white people that lived there and all the others was Indians, and they lived right close to a bunch of 'em; and so they was an old Indian, he always come every day. They said after he got acquainted with 'em, he'd come every day and talk with 'em and they liked that old Indian. And they liked the others.

They seemed like they was awful good people and good to 'em. And they had a little boy, he'd come, and so my, my great-granddaddy he had a—a boy just about the same age or size, and he'd come and he'd play with him. And he had a little whistle, the little boy did, and he said he could just call up all kinds of birds with that whistle. And he had a bow and arrow and they said he never missed a shot. And he'd take that boy and go out and get a whole string of birds and he strung 'em up on a string, and he'd bring 'em in and they had a fireplace and he'd just rake a place out in the fireplace and lay all of them birds right in there, feathers and all, and roast 'em. Roast 'em in there and then take and pick the meat off of the bones and they'd sit there, him and that little boy would, and eat that, eat them birds. So when he had him out, why they didn't know it, but he had him—he could just swim any way he wanted to—he learnt that little boy of grandpaw's to swim. He could swim any way, dive or anything. They had him trained, that little Indian did.

And so, well, that old man he'd come every day and he'd talk with 'em and they'd tell big tales and jokes, and they liked that old man. And so, after a while, one of the Indians come, he told him, he said, "I had a dream last night." And he said, "Always when we dream anything, our dreams has to come true. He said, "Now that's the way it goes with us. When we dream anything, the dream has to come true." So he had a gun, he had a gun, a awful nice gun, he wouldn't have took nothing for the gun, he said. And he told him he dreamt about owning that gun, that's what he told him, he dreamt about owning that gun. And so he couldn't do a thing but let him have it, let him take the gun. He was afraid not to, I guess. But anyhow, he took the gun. Well, it pretty nigh killed him because he'd taken that gun and he didn't know what kind of a plan to fall on to get his gun back.

Finally at last passed on right smart about a couple of weeks or more, and he said he got up and told 'em, he said, "I had a dream last night," he said, "I dreamt I owned my gun back and one of the ponies." He said to 'em at home, he said, "I'm a-going to tell 'em this morning," he said. So he went, and he went over, he told 'em that he'd had a dream that night, and he said, "I dreamt about owning my gun back and one of your ponies." He studied a while, he said, before he said ary thing. At last he said, "Take it, paleface, but dream no more." And he took the gun and the pony.

And then, he said, a few days after, why that old Indian got to coming and he wouldn't talk. He wouldn't talk, he said, to 'em, he didn't have nothing to say and they knowed there was something wrong with him. He wouldn't say nothing at— Finally at last they went to asking him to tell 'em and finally at last he told 'em. He said, "If you people knowed what I did," he said, "you wouldn't be here." He told 'em, he said, "If they find it out," he said, "they'll kill me sure, as sure as they find it out." Of course they promised him to not tell it at all, and he told 'em they was going to come to kill 'em. Get rid of 'em a-waiting there. They was going to kill 'em, the Indian was. He didn't know to do nothing, only to go to the other family and told 'em. And they just put what they could get on their ponies, they just gathered up and put on their ponies all they could ge—what they could put on 'em and, uh, and started. And they rode and rode and they heard the Indians a-hollering and they followed 'em till they come to that big river—now they said it was the Newcon River, now that's all I can tell you, that's what they told me it was. And that's as far as they come when they come to—to Newcon River, why they swum it, the horses did, and they got away from 'em, and that's the way they got away now from the Indians.

And he said that when they got—come back they didn't even know it but that little boy could swim any way he wanted to swim, that little Indian boy had learnt him how to swim, dive, and everything. They didn't know, and he could shoot a bow and arrow too. Yessir, and that bo—he lived to be, oh he was an old man I reckon. And, uh, he got drownded, yessir, he got drownded.

There is no doubt that the Hammonses' ancestors came from Great Britain and lived elsewhere in America before they arrived on the frontier, but the topic evokes little or no interest from them. The story of the escape explains how the family came to be. Their view tends toward the extreme presented once by Maggie's sister Ruie, when she jestingly said, "I'm sure the Hammonses was over

here when the Indians first came." Burl sometimes speculates that, since they were the only whites in an area "thick with Indians," the family probably has Indian blood.

Maggie and Burl agree that the family came to West Virginia from Kentucky, but only Burl specifically associates the escape story and the earliest years of the family's Kentucky residence with "Whitley." He and his brother Sherman believe that the river crossed in the escape would have been the Ohio, disagreeing with Maggie's memory of a river called "Newcon." All agree, however, that the family's last Kentucky residence was along the Big Sandy River and Tug Fork. The Tug Fork-Big Sandy River system forms the border between Kentucky and West Virginia. Maggie and Burl recall hearing that their father and his sister Dice were born in Kentucky and brought to east-central West Virginia before the Civil War.

The family's move into the Alleghenies is explained in different ways. Burl once simply said that after the escape from the Indians the family came to "this country." Maggie ascribes the move to unspecified "troubles and hard times," sometimes associated with the Civil War. The only narrative set on Big Sandy—a story about a murderous fight that sounds like a family feud—may provide a clue to the move. This telling is Maggie's, with interjections by her cousin James Hammons.

"Crooked Neck" John Hammons, ca. 1856. Family members report that John Hammons participated in the Tug Fork fight described in the text, where he was struck by a piece of wood and his head "listed" to one side ever after. John was Paris Hammons's uncle. Photograph courtesy of Leonard and Ethel O'Brien, Gerry Milnes, and the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, West Virginia.

Maggie: They had some awful times in Kentucky when they lived there. You're blamed right they did. They floated their logs out, right down Big Sandy River, that's where they floated their logs. They got into one of the awfullest fights right there on Big Sandy. Well, now my daddy was just a small boy, you see, when they come here, but they was, I don't know how many my uncles they was, and my grandpaw, my grandpaw, and he said every time they'd take, they had to shove 'em off the bank, you see, and follow 'em, follow 'em down and keep 'em shoved off when they'd come a tide in the river. And he said they went, somebody's in there, and they'd go down to the boats, they'd follow the logs, and they'd go down to the boats, you see, to see if they was any of 'em lodged into the banks. And after they'd cleared the middle of the water, the river, they'd get boats in. And, he said, they got to shooting their lights out. That they'd take big torches—

James Hammons: And some of 'em got killed, of course, you know.

Maggie: I know it, they did. And he, they got to shooting their lights out. And they was Uncle John, Uncle Pete, Uncle Dick, my grandpaw, Lord I don't know how many more, they was even more with 'em, besides they was. And, he said, now they told 'em, said, "The very next time we go down and the lights, and they go to shooting at the lights, we'll go right to the bank to 'em."

James: Now where was it Maggie, that they, now, let's see now, dragging this feller and—

Maggie: And so he said they went, they went a time or two, but then after a while they went, and they went, and they went to shooting their lights out, he said. By gosh, they just landed their boats and went out.

James: Now it was a tough time.

Maggie: And there was a big bunch of 'em out on the bank, and into it they went. Now, he said, they was blood and everything else there, he said. And old Uncle John cut one man pretty near plumb right in two.

Numbers indicate the movements of the family from the late 18th to the 20th centuries.

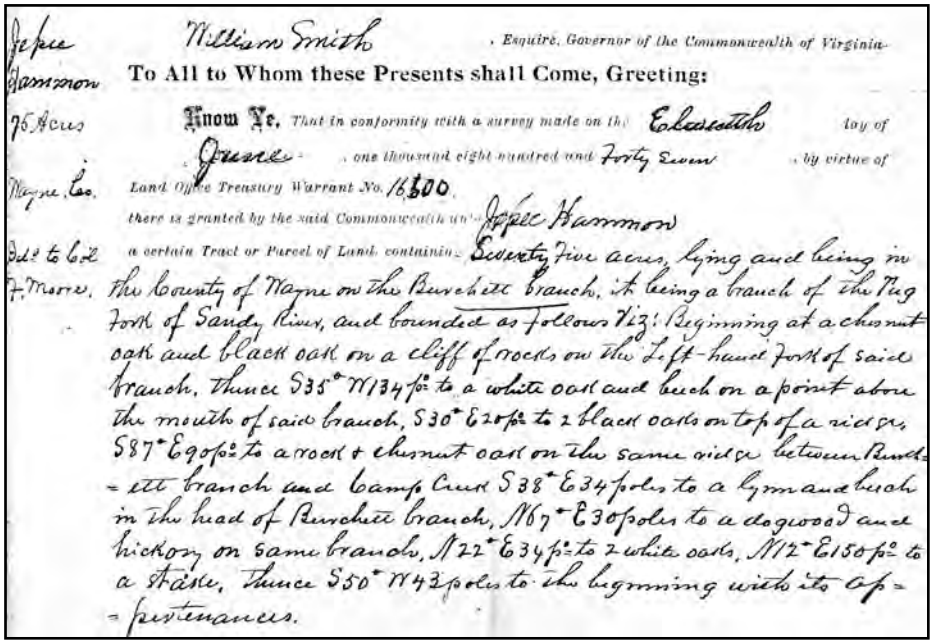
Paris's ancestry can be traced with certainty only to his great-grandfather Edwin Hammons. Clues from tax lists, petitions, and birthplaces listed in later census reports indicate that Edwin may have been born around 1777 in Pittsylvania County, Va. His son Jesse, Paris's grandfather, may have been born in Hawkins County, Tenn., around 1802. The 1820 census for Knox County, Ky., lists Edwin as the head of a household with four sons. By 1830 Jesse and two other sons had begun families of their own; Jesse Jr., Paris's father, was born in Knox County in 1833. Either county lines were redrawn or the family moved soon after, for the 1840 census shows Edwin Sr. and Jesse Sr. living in Whitley County.

The tradition that the family lived in Kentucky until the move to east-central West Virginia and that Paris was born before the move appears to be an oversimplification. Jesse Sr. moved with his family to Tug Fork about 1847, but took up residence on the West Virginia shore. Within a decade Jesse Jr. had married and moved up along Tug Fork to Wyoming County, where Paris and his sister Dice were born. At that time a section of Wyoming County lay along Tug Fork, and the family's residence was within a few miles of the river and the Kentucky border. Jesse Hammons, Sr., is listed in both the Wyoming and Webster County censuses for 1860, suggesting that the family moved to east-central West Virginia that year.

James: That's what it was I started to tell you, and his head was a-bobbing up, dragging—cut him so bad.

Maggie: He cut him right in two and grandpaw got him off of him. But gosh, he said they had the awfullest time you'd ever seen in your life, but that was the last time ever was the lights shot out.

The broad outline of the family history is corroborated by the public record, which adds a few details and contradicts others. The Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia censuses name family members in every decade from 1820 to 1880. Virginia made land grants to Paris's grandfather in Wayne County in 1848 and to his father and uncle in Wyoming County in 1858. Contemporary newspapers and county records occasionally list family members.



Jesse Hammon

75 Acres

Wayne Co.

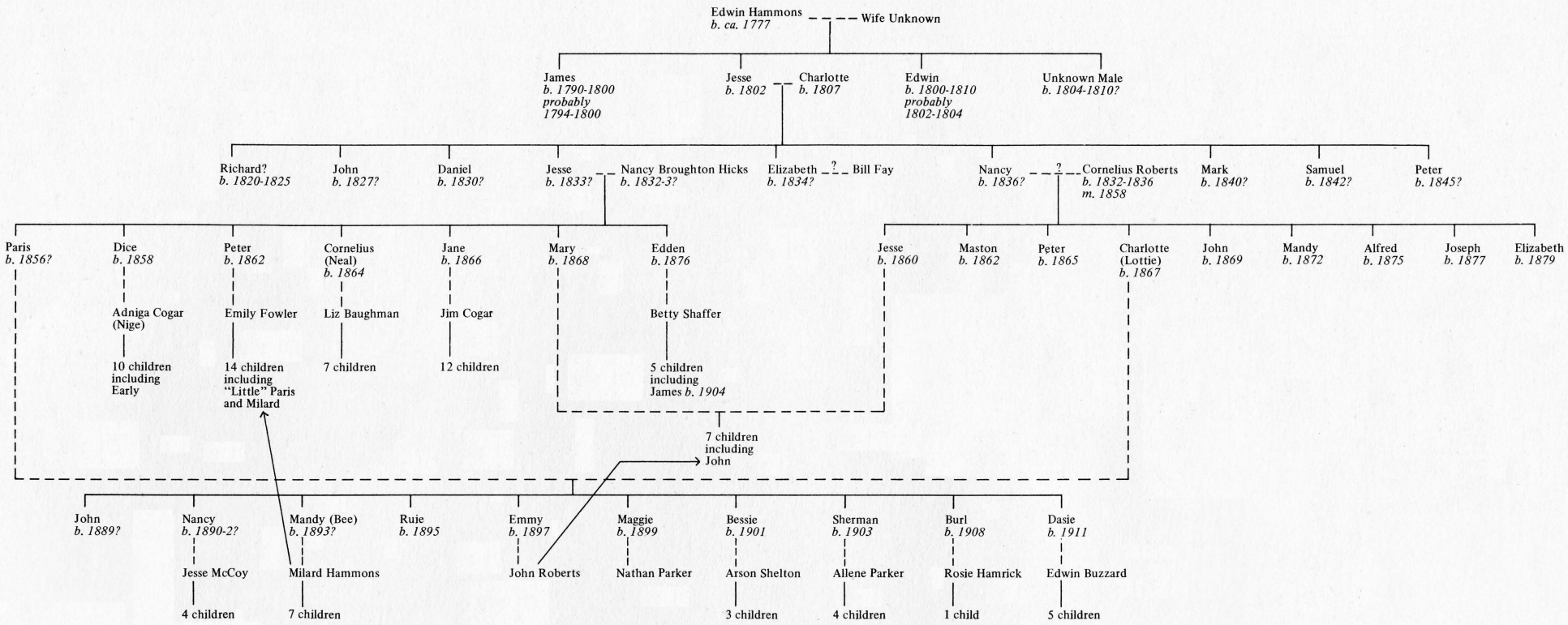
Jesse Hammon

William Smith, Esquire, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia

To All to Whom these Presents shall Come, Greeting:

Know Ye, That in conformity with a survey made on the Eleventh day of June one thousand eight hundred and Forty Seven by virtue of Land Office Treasury Warrant No. 16600 there is granted by the said Commonwealth unto Jesse Hammon a certain Tract or Parcel of Land containing Seventy Five acres, lying and being in the County of Wayne on the Burchett branch, it being a branch of the Tug Fork of Sandy River, and bounded as follows Viz: Beginning at a chesnut oak and black oak on a cliff of rocks on the Left-hand fork of said branch, thence S35° W134 pcs to a white oak and beech on a point above the mouth of said branch, S30° E20 pcs to 2 black oaks on top of a ridge, S87° E90 pcs to a rock & chesnut oak on the same ridge between Burchett branch and Camp Creek S38° E34 poles to a lyn and beech in the head of Burchett branch, N67° E30 poles to a dogwood and hickory on same branch, N22° E34 pcs to 2 white oaks, N12° E150 pcs to a stake, thence S50° W42 poles to the beginning with its appurtenances.

Deed for 75 acres to Jesse Hammons on Burchett Branch in the southern portion of Wayne County, Virginia, 1847. Wayne County became part of West Virginia when that state was formed in 1863.



Family tree. Dotted lines indicate marriages. Arrows indicate same person. Numbers of children, in some cases, include stillborn and children who died young.

The Civil War Period

Webster County, W.Va., was created in 1860 from parts of neighboring counties because poor roads and great distances made travel to county seats diffficult. Although there had been settlement in West Virginia since the mid-18th century, primarily along the major rivers, remote mountain areas were still sparsely settled a hundred years later. In 1870 only 1,700 persons lived in Webster County's 550 square miles. The 950 square miles of Pocahontas County to the east, containing much of the long-settled Greenbrier River, had about 4,000 people in 1870, while Nicholas County to the southwest had a population of about 4,500. The seat of Webster County has been known variously as Fort Lick, Webster Court House, Addison, and Webster Springs. For Paris's children, their father and grandfather's final settlement on the Williams River is more important, but Burl recalls that his great-grandfather first came to Webster Springs, then moved to Poplar Creek, a branch of the Birch River in northern Nicholas County.

Burl: It was just a wilderness, all this whole country. Come—that was my great-grandfather. They co—moved over here next to Webster Springs.

Well, now you know whether it wasn't scarce or not, the powder and stuff wasn't scarce or not now? Now when they'd kill—or shoot at a deer, they'd wait till the deer got behind—between them and a tree and then shoot the deer and the bullet would go in the tr—and then cut the bullet out, and you know it wasn't scarce or not, now that's the way they lived.

And they said that the animals was so thick over there next to that Point Mountain, you know, where that spring is, that salt spring? It's a—well, there's a salt spring there, right close, there, to that salt—and they said of a night that you couldn't sleep for the animals a-coming off there to that spring, elks and deer and all kinds of animals. They said that ever you could hear all kinds of noises that you ever wanted to hear a-coming off of that hill. They said that they'd come off that hill fighting and bellering and everything else, coming off there to that spring, you know that salt water, they'd drink that—eat that—salt. And she said that they'd put in all night till just before daylight and then she said they'd start back on the mountain.

The Civil War period was a difficult time in the southern Appalachians, partly due to conscription and battles involving regular troops, but primarily because a condition approximating guerilla war prevailed. Although nominally Union, West Virginia's old ties to the South were strong, and a majority of the soldiers from Pocahontas and Webster Counties fought with the Confederacy. Neighbors turned against one another, and bands of marauders and bushwhackers moved through the area "foraging."

Items were often either taken by bushwhackers or simply unobtainable. Maggie remembers hearing that the family smoked moss or beech leaves and chewed wahoo bark instead of tobacco. For the most part, the Hammonses hid out.

Burl: They'd say if you could escape from that war, they'd say if you could escape and keep hid from 'em, why it, it, they couldn't—they wouldn't have no way to get you or nothing, if you could keep hid from 'em. That was the only way they had of escaping, you know; they just went and they just took 'em, they didn't register 'em or nothing, they just took 'em now, just wherever they found you and if you was old enough—course if you was a young feller, now he, they didn't take boys or nothing like that, it had to be men. And they just, just took 'em. That all they—there wasn't no registering, no hunting, they just took 'em right on with 'em.

Dwight: Both sides?

Burl: Yes sir, that's the way they done. Now when they took 'em to Camp Chase, wherever that was at, I don't know, that feller said it was in Ohio somewhere, they took 'em in there, prisoners, they pretty near starved 'em to death, boy, they couldn't, they pretty near starved 'em to death now, when they got 'em there. Yes sir.

Stories about the Civil War remain fresh today. Maggie tells about friends or neighbors who were captured or had their farms destroyed, and Burl tells about his grandfather's narrow escape from some unidentified soldiers.

Burl: Grandpaw, you know, he knowed all that country. He was a feller knowed all the mountain country ever—anywhere. And these here fellers, these fellers got him to go with 'em. They were going to take him off and kill him.

Dwight: Your grandpaw?

Burl: Yeah.

Maggie: That's the way they done it.

Burl: The captain was with 'em, he, they went on and went on—he was showing 'em the road, the route, to go. And he went about, oh, five or six miles, and the captain looked back at him and he told him, he said, asked him if he was a good

hunter. He told him yes, he didn't do too bad. Well, he said now, he said he heard a turkey a-gobbling down below the route and he winked at grandpaw, he said, "You go kill that turkey and we'll wait here." See, he was wanting him to get away, you know, from these fellers, he knowed they was a-going to kill him. He winked at him, and when he winked at him he just, he got started, he said he never paid no attention to a turkey nor nothing, away he went. Got back home, he just went home, he told 'em, them fellers, well you see they was waiting there, wanting to kill' him, the captain knowed what they was a-wanting to do with him and they got him way out there. And they killed a lot of fellers that way. . . .

Dwight: Who was this now?

Burl: This here was them Yankees; the Rebels and the Yankees, ary one. Gosh, it didn't make no difference to them. Yeah, either one, if they just come along and if they seen you had a herd of cattle or something that they wanted to eat, they just killed it and, right there, and better not open your mouth, cause they'd kill you. They knowed not to say a thing to 'em, cause they just killed their meat right there, they skinned it out and ate all they wanted, and maybe take what they could pack with 'em. You know they—and just go right on.

Yes, them fellers, boys, they was kind of mean. Course they was starving anyhow, some of 'em. Well boys, you couldn't much blame 'em, could you now? Now, tell the truth. Them fellers, big herds of cattle, you couldn't much blame 'em. They had to get 'em something to eat.

Although the generation living today recalls that their great-grandfather lived out his life in Nicholas County, a memory confirmed by the 1880 census, a stay there by their grandfather has been forgotten. The 1870 census names Jesse Hammons, Jr., as a property owner with a family that included 14-year-old Paris. Their move to, or back to, the Williams River may have occurred in 1881; a list of Webster County land transactions in the Nicholas County Chronicle for October 6, 1881, includes a deed for 50 acres on the Williams recorded by Jesse Hammons.

Although Maggie and Burl say they never heard about their grandfather Hammons's stays in Wyoming and Nicholas Counties, they remember hearing about an identical movement on the part of their grandfather Roberts. Census records bear out Maggie's recollection that Cornelius Roberts came "from Wyoming" and lived "on Poplar and Birch." He had been a neighbor of the Hammonses in Wyoming County in 1860 and in Nicholas County in 1870 and 1880. The latter census shows him as the father of nine children, including 13-year-old Lottie, Paris' future wife.

At left: Paris's father Jesse Hammons, and three unidentified men. Family collection; photographer, place, and date unknown.

A possibility is suggested by a Wyoming County marriage recorded in 1858 between "C. Roberts" and "Nancy Hamons." Dates and ages in census reports confirm that this marriage could have wed Cornelius Roberts and the younger Jesse Hammons's sister. If so, the later marriage of Paris and Lottie would have united cousins.

Living in the Wilderness

Much of central and southern West Virginia is typified by mine tipples, acid creeks, and hills scarred by strip mines, but the section of the state lying along the eastern border with Virginia is characterized by deep valleys winding between forested, mine-free, 4,000-foot mountains. Logging and the extensive fires that followed the loggers denuded these mountains between 1880 and 1930, but wilderness greeted the Hammonses when they first reached east-central West Virginia. The upper reaches of the Williams River were not timbered until after the First World War, and Paris and his family lived in dense virgin forest until the decade of his death.

As Burl puts it, life in the wilderness was "no play job."

> *Burl:* Now they had it pretty tough, boys, but I reckon they enjoyed their lives just as good as—a lot better nor some of the people do these days, now, I'll tell you that. They didn't have nothing much to worry about only just about something to eat and something to wear, that's the only thing they had to worry about.

Paris and his brother-in-law Jess Roberts were close friends and often accompanied one another on hunting and fishing trips. Sherman began to recount the story of one of these trips by generalizing about the life the two men led.

Jesse Roberts. Family collection; photographer and date unknown.

> *Sherman Hammons:* My dad and my uncle, they lived on this river, now. So they done a lot of camping out then in them days, you know, and panthers, they was lots of 'em, now, in this country then. So, that's about all them old-timers done was to sang and fish and trap. Now that's mostly, uh, the way they made their living was to trap and hunt and fish.

Meat for the table consisted of game and fish supplemented by pork from hogs raised at home. Vegetables from the garden were dried, pickled, or canned for winter. Corn provided feed for livestock and could be prepared for cooking without a mill. Maggie remembers making corn meal by grating dried corn on a "gritter," a flattened piece of tin with nail holes punched through it fastened to a plank. Cash to buy coffee, sugar, and other necessities came from the sale of pelts of animals trapped in winter, logs floated down the river in spring, and ginseng gathered in summer. Ginseng, or "sang," is a native North American herb harvested for its root and exported to Asia, where it is believed to have medicinal and stimulant powers.

Customs and traditions guided tasks like construction of buildings, planting, and the manufacture of items ranging from soap to medicine. Traditions and the close observation of natural phenomena were used to forecast weather and the coming season's climate and crops. The following conversation mentions a few of these traditions, one of which refers to "Old Christmas." England's adoption of the Gregorian

calendar in 1752 meant an 11-day shift in dates from the old Julian year. Some people continued to celebrate Christmas on the old day by moving the holiday to January 5, although confusion of this date with Epiphany may account for the Hammonses' tradition that Old Christmas falls 12 days after December 25.

Burl: That's a pretty good sign. It's a dog star they call it—and it goes away, it goes. It, whenever that, it comes in along about the start of July, most of the time, and it lasts maybe 40 days?

Maggie: Yes.

Burl: Forty days, that dog star lasts now. . . .

Maggie: Yes, it's 40 days, yes, 40 days is the dog days. Yes sir.

Burl: And there's one day they used to claim if it rained on that day the chestnuts, when the chestnuts were in bloom or something, that there would be no chestnuts. And by gosh now you could watch it up and it would, it was thataway, now.

Maggie: Well now what day was it?

Burl: I don't know, I can't remember nothing what—what it was. It was something or another about the chestnuts.

Maggie: Well, they claim if the house drips on Old Christmas—not the first Christmas, Old Christmas, that they'll be a good fruit year, plenty of fruit and mast and everything.

Dwight Diller: If—if what now?

Maggie: The house drips. If she's warm enough for your house to drip.

Dwight: Oh.

Maggie: Yes sir, on Old Christmas.

Dwight: What's that? What day's that now?

Maggie: Well now, it's just 12 days from New Christmas, that's the first Christmas, you know, that they all keep. And after they come in 12 days is what they call Old Christmas, Old Christmas . . . .

Burl: Well now you take notice in the fall of the year, now I want you to pay attention to this, if you're out in the woods or anything. Course around town or something you never hear nothing like that. Now if you're in the woods and, in the fall of the year, and you hear a pheasant a-drumming, you see if they don't be a storm before the next day. Now you see if they don't, you see if they don't be a—you see if it don't rain or snow before the end, the end of the next day, sometime the next day. I've listened in the fall of the year—now in the spring you can't tell much about 'em because it's mating time of 'em and they just drum anytime. But you just pay attention in the fall of the year now, and you hear a pheasant a-drumming in the fall of the year and see—

Maggie: Yes, the animals know . . . . Now if we could tell as good as the animals and birds and stuff we'd know when they was a-coming, a bad storm and everything. They know.

Burl is fond of reminiscences about the "good old days" of his grandfather's time. Here he tells how the early settlers got around in the woods and describes his grandfather's logging activity. Logs were skidded to the river behind teams of horses; to make them slide easier, the bark was peeled off and the tree was often skidded in the ice and snow of winter. At the river the logs were held until spring "tides" made it possible to float them to the mill. If the spring floods were insufficient, or at other times of the year, "splash dams" were built. When the gates of these temporary wooden dams were opened, the impounded water and logs rushed downstream.

Burl: They made 'em out of deer sk—dressed deer hide. That's the way they made their shoes and moccasins, now, they made 'em out of deer hide, dressed deer hides. And they, they could go through the woods with them things and you couldn't even hear one of 'em a-walking, leaves nor nothing, just go slipping through the woods just like a, like some kind of animal or something.

Now boys, how ever they knowed these mountains I'll never know. All ba—all this— Now there was no paths nor they was nothing now to go by. Now they, you, just had to go—now they knowed the country and they'd just—they'd just take out and just go, maybe, maybe they'd travel for a day or two, like going a-hunting, maybe two or three days they'd just go out, two or three of 'em just take out through the mountains and didn't know where. And, uh, they knowed all the rivers, where they'd go in at, where they headed in, that's the way they'd travel, by the rivers and stuff, by the creeks. You see, they knowed—well, they—where a creek, you see, where they turned over a mountain, they knowed them creeks would go into another river somewhere, and they had 'em all named. Now see if you'd go over and—from Williams River you see, you—they knowed they'd either, they'd go into Middle Fork or Cranberry, one, if it was way down they'd go into the Middle Fork—and just over the mountains that's the way they traveled, by them creeks. They knowed where they come in at. So now that's the way them fellers lived. Of course they had cows now and stuff, they had a cow from home cause that's the only way

Logging on the Williams River. Saul McNeill, Urey Bennett, Lonnie Snyder, unknown. Family collection; photographer and date unknown.

they had to make their living boys, now there's no other way of making a living now.

Eventually at last they, they got to building these splash dams and they was a company come in there and went to buying—ah—these poplar timber. And down here in the Little Fork, Grandpaw Hammons, he took a job in there, a-getting that poplar timber out. Well, they had a, they—well, they had a horse or two but then they, they peeled that poplar. They peeled it and then run it off down to the, to the creek, run it, get it down to the creek. And then they'd get a whole big jam of logs in there and then turn that dam loose. And then they'd go and they'd take 'em to the, went to the mill. And that's how they got 'em to the mill.

The early settlers' use of waterways and other terrain features as a geographical guide is still reflected in the Hammonses' speech. They say Sherman's farm is "on Dave's Run," a hunt took place "near the head of Cherry," or that Paris's home had been "at Little Laurel," referring to the mouth of Little Laurel Creek on the Williams River. Although these reminiscences touch upon the old ways of life, stories from Paris's day provide a richer portrayal. They treat such subjects as exceptional occurrences during fishing and hunting trips, mysterious or supernatural events, and odd neighbors or successful practical jokes. Many are told in similar versions by Maggie, Sherman, and Burl, but occasionally versions differ significantly. The narratives are almost always connected to the family through the involvement of a family member, neighbor, or friend.

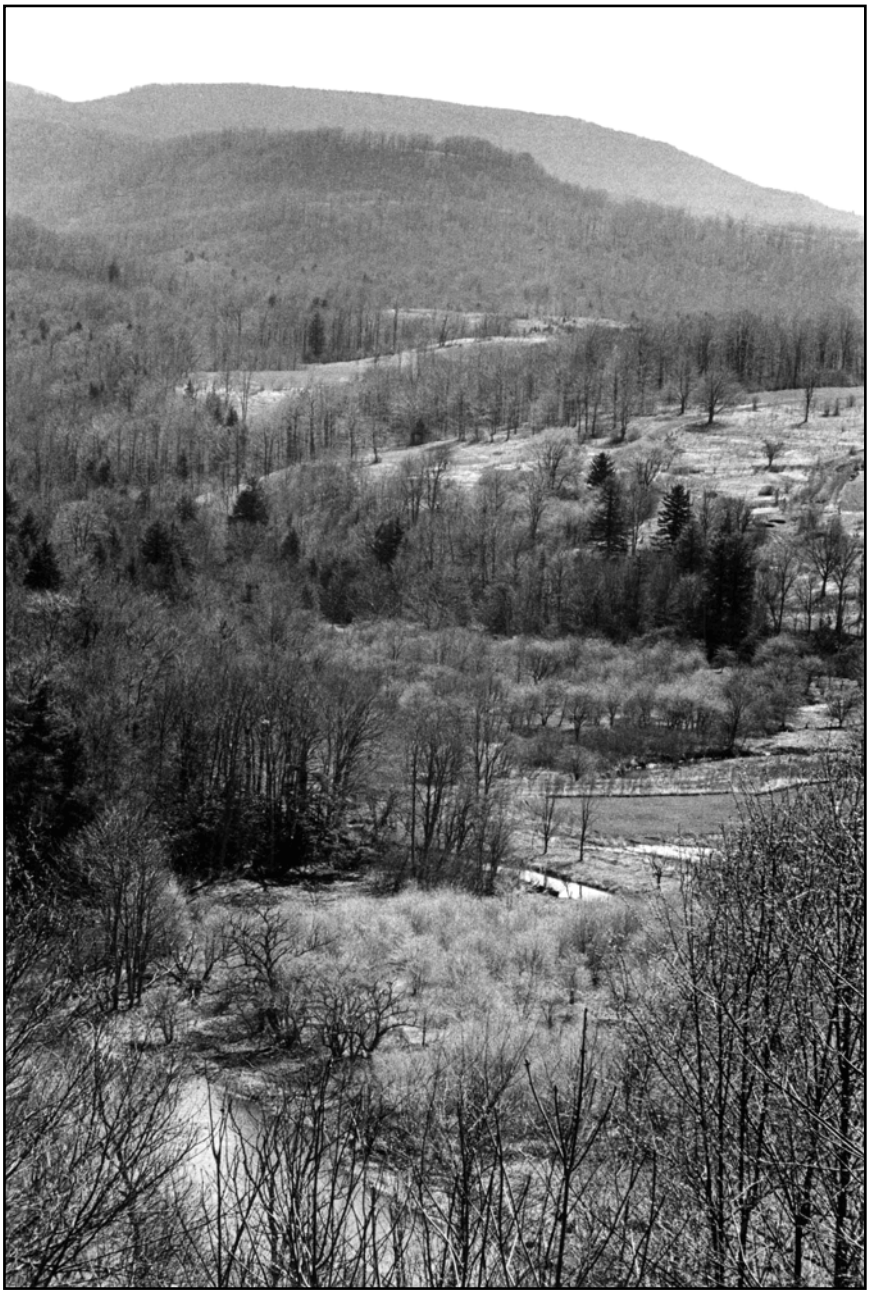
Maggie tells several funny stories involving Paris's uncle Bill Fay, who claimed to have a witch's power. The comic element is heightened by the way the tellers mimic voices and accents. Members of the Hammons family who appear in ghost and witch stories take a skeptical attitude toward the supernatural.

Maggie: Well, you see he claimed he, he could do any kind of witchery work. Yes sir, he said he could do any kind of witchery work. And by jiminy, he had a lot of people fooled, they claimed if you believed in him, why he could do it, if you believed it now. Really believed it. But there's some of 'em wouldn't believe it you see, and he couldn't do a thing about it, the ones that wouldn't believe. So it come on, he said, that after while his cows was witched. They commenced giving ropy milk. His cows did, he had a bunch of cows, he had sheep, oh he was getting along good. And his cows was a-giving ropy milk. So my daddy went

over there every once in a while, he married his aunt you see. My grandpaw's sister, he married. And he went over there and he said, "Well," he said, "my cows is witched." He said, "What?" He said, he said he was just a boy, just yo—young, my daddy said he was, and he said, "My cows is witched," he said. And he asked him what was wrong with 'em. He said, "They're giving ropy milk. By God," he said, "that has to be taken off of them, too," he said. "Why, Mr. Fay," he said, or "Uncle Bill," he said, "that's something they eaten." "If that ain't the craziest damn talk," he said, "ever I heard tell of," he said. "I know what it is," he said. "They're witched. Now I'm going to take," he said, "that off 'em." So he said, "I don't know what, don't know how you're going to take it off," he said. "You turn 'em another way and then see," he said, "if they don't quit, quit eating them weeds, and they'll quit giving that milk," he said. "They'll quit giving it," he said. "I'll be goddamned if I turn 'em no other way," he said. "I know what's wrong with 'em."

Well, so he said he went back home. He'd just go over there once in a while and stay, and stay a night or two, and went back over, he said, he had—he always cleared him out a big piece of ground and he said he went back over and the old man had a big—a lot of logs all around and a big brush heap piled up. He said, he said to her, he was out a-working, he said, uh, he said, "What is Uncle Bill aiming to do, Aunt Betts?" "Oh honey," she said, "he's a-going to take that witch off of his cows." "A-going to do what?" he said. "Oh," she said, "he's a-going to take that witchery," she said, "off of his cows." "Well," he said, "how's he going to take it off thataway?" "Why," she said, "he's a-going to burn up one of them calves." "You mean," he said, "he's going to burn one of them up?" "Oh yes," she said, "you can't tell him nothing," she said, "he won't believe no other way." "Well," he said, "that old man's crazy. That's what wrong with him." "Well," she said, "you can't make, you can't make your Uncle Bill," she said, "believe nothing else."

And so at last he come in for his dinner. "Ay, I'm glad you've come," he said. "Good. By God," he said,."you're the feller I've been a-looking for." And he reckoned, he said, "Why did you want me to come today?" "I've got a job," he said, "for you to do." He said, "You have?" "Yessir," he said, "I've got a job I want you to help me do." He said, "What kind of a job is it?" "By God," he said, "I'm a-taking the witch off of my cows today," he said. "I want you," he said, "to go out there after dinner



Looking across the Williams River valley at the mouth of Little Laurel Creek, 1972.

with me," he said. "I'm going to burn one of them calves." "A-going to do what?" he said. He said, "I'm a-going to burn one of them calves up." "Why Uncle Bill," he said, "don't do such stuff as that." He said, "Why Lord God, I wouldn't do that for all the cows you've got." "By God, I will," he said. "I can't use that milk and I'm a-wanting that milk," he said, "I'll use it." Now he said he—"I want you to help me," he said, "throw that calf in the fire." He said, "I'll be damned if I'll help you throw no calf in the fire. No sir." "You won't do it?" "No sir," he said, "I won't help do that." "Well," he said, after he—he said, "You can do as you damn please." He said, "I will." After he eats his dinner, said—

Now he said he was much of a man now. He said he was a stout and a much of a man, and he went out there and he piled logs up. And he said he had some a-laying there a-ready. He'd already skidded in and was, had 'em there a-ready. And he said it was a big brush heap and he went out there and set that afire now, it had laid there, that brush had, till it got dried out, you see, when he piled it. Anyhow, and he picked up, a-ca—went and catched one of them big calves, he said it was big calf, too, and how he done it he said he didn't know, how he done it; and he said he throwed that calf—he throwed that calf, he said, right into that blaze of fire, and then piled them logs on it till it couldn't get out, burnt that calf up alive. He said he turned and run. Why, he said, he wouldn't see anything burnt thataway for nothing. He said he sure done her. "Oh, Aunt Betts," he said, "the old devil will get that man," he said, "for ju—killing stuff like that, burning it up alive." "Oh honey," she said, "you can't tell your Uncle Bill nothing." "'I know," he said, "you can't. He can learn something, though."

Well, so he said he stayed around there, he couldn't hardly get away from 'em. They wanted him to stay all night. But he didn't stay. And he stayed around there with 'em, he went back home that evening. In a few days he went back and asked him, he said, "Did you get the witchery taken off, off of your cows?" "Yes, by God," he said, "I got her burnt off." He said, "When that calf burnt up, when that calf burnt up," he said, "that took her off," he said. That's what he done, he said, "I burnt her right off." He said, "That was all the way," he said, "I could get her off her," he said, "was to burn that calf." And he said, "I couldn't have burnt that calf for every cow you had, and everything else you've got." "By God, I will," he said, "I'm different from you." He said it took the witchery off.

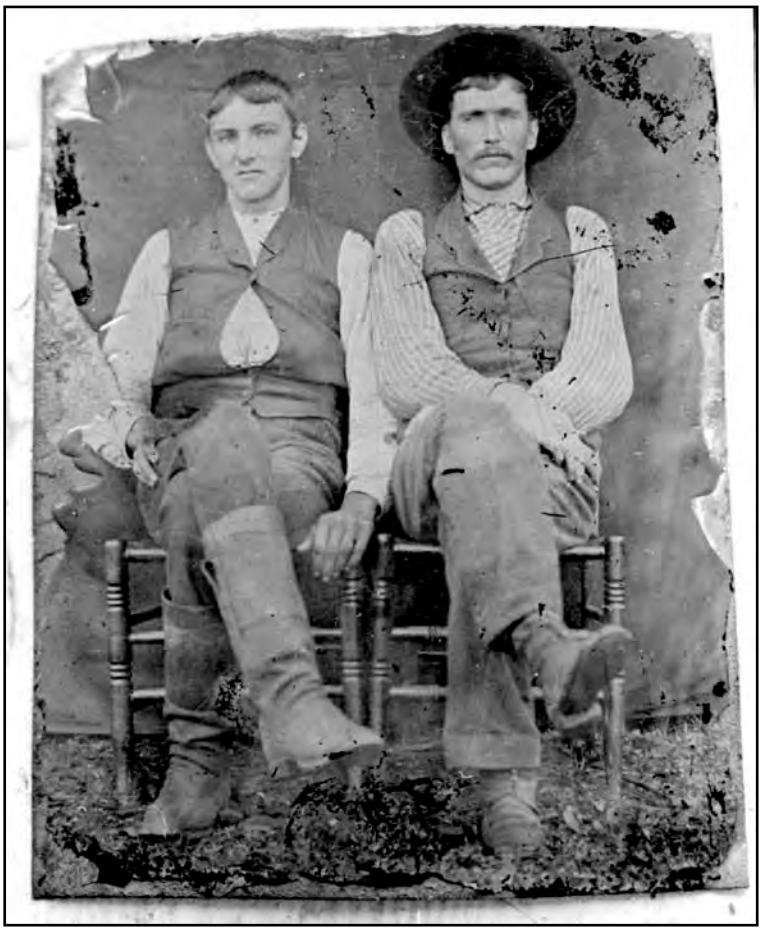
Maggie says Fay claimed "he could witch 'em so hard he could pop their eyeballs out." The stories about him, however, usually concern the removal of spells. The next one relates how, after casting the spell, Fay helped Bob Clevenger remove it again. Like Paris in the last narrative, Jess Hammons takes a skeptical stand. But the tone of the story edges closer to belief, for its detailed denouement shows how successful Fay's remedy had been.

This telling omits one important detail. For Clevenger to remove the spell, he had to form a cross from two pubic hairs. Maggie's delicacy prevented her from saying this when she told the story, but later conversations with her and Burl revealed the source of the hairs.

> *Maggie:* He said he witched one old man, an old man by the name of Bob Clevenger. I have an idea that most of 'em around here knowed Bob Clevenger, the old people. And he witched him till he couldn't kill a thing. His gun wouldn't shoot, and he had a good gun, now, he said it was no, if—you see, they used those old mountain rifles, that's the kind of guns they all had, they couldn't get no other kind. And he said he witched him and that gun just cracked like a popgun. Yessir, just cracked like a popgun and everything he seen, didn't make any difference, when he was a-hunting, was a-flying. He'd just get after a deer and just track it a little ways and he said it'd just raise and fly from one side of the hill—he said it was his eye, he told him what it was that made it look thataway to him, it was his eye. So he was wi—he was, he said he couldn't, oh, he said he was in the awfullest fix ever was. He couldn't kill nothing, it was no use for him to hunt nor nothing. And he didn't know how—he could just, he couldn't kill nothing, couldn't see nothing right nor nothing. Tracking, he said, he'd go look at the deer tracks, now, and right there was its track in the snow, when there was snow on it, but it just looked to him like it was just raise and go flying. And when he'd go shoot, it would just—his gun would just pop like a popgun and he said just—the bullet just come out at the, uh, muzzle and never do a thing or nothing.
>
> So he went, he first come to grandpaw, to Grandpaw Hammons, then he said, "I'll eat hell, Uncle Jess"—I'll just tell you the way he talked now, what they told me—he said, "I'll eat hell," he said, "Uncle Jess," he said, "if I ain't witched and witched bad." "Now, Bob," he said. He said, "I told you to quit believing in stuff like that." "I'll eat hell," he said, "if I can kill a thing, Uncle Jess," he said. "And if you nee—" Now he said, "Don't

you name a witch to me, that's a thing I don't believe in nor don't fool with in no way, and that's that witchery," he said. "I don't believe in stuff like that." "I'll eat hell," he said, "Uncle Jess, it's the truth, I'm witched," he said. "You know that good gun I've got," and he said, "You've shot it—?" "Yes." "Well now," he said, "it just cracked like a popgun," he said. "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what to do," grandpaw said. He said, "You take your gun and you go over to Uncle Bill." They called him Uncle Bill. He said, "You go over to Uncle Bill," he said, "he'll fix you up," he said. "He'll fix you up," he said, he says, "for he claims he can," and he said, "you go over to him."

So he said the old man went back home and he took the gun and he went. And it was a right smart ways for him to walk but he went. He went ov— "Just as I expected," he says. "Just as I expected," the old man said to him as he went in, "I've been a-looking for you for two or three days." "I'll eat hell," he said, "Uncle Bill, if I ain't witched and witched bad." He said he just laughed, the old man, Bill, did when he told him that. "I come over," he said, "to see if you could do anything about it." "Why didn't you go to old Uncle Jess?" He said, "I did go to him." "Why, it's been him, why it's been him." "No," he said, "it ain't him," he said, "he said he didn't fool with stuff nor didn't believe in stuff like that." Then he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I've got a young mare, a good one, just as a good a one as ever was rode," he said, "and I'll give her to you if you, if you can take that witch off of me," he said. "I'll give you," he said, "that young mare." He said, "I'll be goddamned if you'll give me that young mare, I won't have her," he said. But he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said, "I can take it off of you," he said, "if you'll do what I'll tell you to," he said. "I can take it off of you." "Well, I'll eat hell," he said, "if I don't do her." "Now," he said, "I'll take her off if you'll do her." He said, "I will."



Alfred Roberts and Jesse Hammons. Family collection; photographer, place, and date unknown.

And so he told him what to do. He took— But I ain't going to tell you what he told him to do—but, anyhow, he told him—I'll tell you some of it—he told him to take and, the muzzle of his gun, and to get him a couple of hairs, and he said, but—just as quick, he said, it'll draw right there just like lodestone. "All you have to do, just take two hairs," he said, "and make a cross right across the muzzle of the gun," he said. "It'll stick, you needn't be a bit afraid of it not sticking," he said. "It'll draw it and it'll stick and then put a cross right across it, and," he said, "the first thing you see running, standing, flying, or sitting," he said, "you shoot at it." And then he said, "That'll fix you." "Well, I'll eat hell," he said, "if I don't give you that mare," he said. He said, "No, you won't give me nothing. By God," he said, "you won't give me nothing. But," he said, "do what I tell you."

Well so the old man did, the next morning, he stayed all night with him. And he started back home, he had a long ways to travel and they was a snow on, and he said he hadn't went but just a little ways till he struck a deer's track. Right plumb

fresh, it was in the soft snow, he said he struck the deer's track and he just took the track. And he said he just tracked it right on to where he had to cross over the top of a little point, right on top of the ridge, and he said he looked and seen the deer a-feeding. And under some pine. And he said the deer jerked its head and seen him, just as quick as he popped over the top, the deer—he said he knowed the deer seen him. And he said it just fetched two jumps and just raised like it was going to fly, just raised right up, and he said as it raised he shot. And he said the gun cracked the prettiest and clearest that he ever seen. And he said the deer just went right on and he said he seen it go right down. And he said he went on up and there was the deer's track. And he said there was blood, said he knowed he hit him, said he just tracked it right on down the hill just a little ways and looked and there lay the deer dead. Said he'd killed the deer. There it lay dead. And he said that from then on he could just kill anything that he wanted to. He said that that took the spell off him.

Burl and Sherman tell a story about a hunting trip during which Paris and others in the party encountered a "yayho." It is the only yayho story the Hammonses tell. Though it does not include a description of the creature, Sherman says it was a hairy, manlike beast, a description similar to that given in accounts of "Bigfoot" in the American West and other manlike creatures around the world. Details omitted from this telling include Paris's estimate that a yayho could jump 25 to 30 feet and Sherman's assertion that the animal was named for its cry.

Paris Hammons, photographed at Cal Gay's studio in Marlinton during the 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Byrnside Ballard.

Burl: They called—they, he said, they said it was a yayho but I don't know what it was, now they didn't either, just to tell the truth about it. Well, it was my dad and a feller they called Wilburn Baldwin, and, uh, and my father's dad, they always, they'd go over here on the head of Cherry—that's what they call the Fallen Timbers down the Cherry River—they, they'd go over there and bear hunt in the fall. And, so, they went over there to bear hunt and they, they—after while, they stayed for two or three days, just took 'em enough grub to do 'em two or three days and, well, they run out of grub and there's plenty of bears there, and, well, they thought they'd, this feller thought that they'd send him and he'd go to Hillsboro and get some grub, enough to do 'em a couple or three more days. He told 'em he'd go.

Well, he started and he told 'em now the next day, the next evening, at dark, in the night sometime, he'd be back and told 'em to meet him now. Well, they told him they would. Well he went, he st—away he went. And I think they'd killed, they killed a bear that day while he was gone. Well, that evening it got to get late when he was supposed to be back the next day. He was supposed to be back and it commenced to getting late. And they had, you know, they didn't have no lamps and lanterns and stuff, they just had rich pine, they'd split 'em up a big lot of rich pine so they could make a light so they could see when they went to meet him.

So after dark, just got to getting dark and they was getting ready to go and they ki—they heard heard something a-hollering. And they went to answering it. And it, and it got to getting closter and they thought it was him, you know. And them old fellers, you couldn't hardly fool them on any thing, any kind of animals now. They pretty near

knowed, now— Now Uncle Pete, I think he was yeah, he was with 'em, Uncle Pete Hammons, he said, "Now, boys," he said, "that ain't no body a-hollering," he said, "that's something else," he said.

And it kept getting closter and closter and now, he said—

Dwight: It was getting what?

Burl: It was coming closter, to 'em. He said, "Now, that ain't no body a-hollering." So, they got the light and they started. Course they took the guns with 'em and they started to—to meet him. And after while they heard this feller a-hollering just as far as they could hear him holler, they heard him a-hollering. And course they answered him. And they got there, they got to him at last and he told 'em, he dropped, uh, he'd dropped everything he had and he had a gun with him, but he'd dropped it and clim a tree. He said there was something just ready to catch him, he said. It jumped two or three times at him, some big thing, he said, he didn't know what it was. And he was up in that tree when they found him and—

The next day, I believe it was, my dad said, they was a muddy place in the pass that the animals and stuff had, he said, a-traveling. And he said he was coming out through there, they'd been a-hunting back there, and he said he was a-coming out through there and he said there was that thing's track. And he said it looked just like a man's track, just exactly only, he said, it—he seen it looked like it had hair in the bottom of its foot and, he said, it run back kind of at the heel, he said, it run back sharp, but he said you couldn't tell it from a man's track. And he covered it up with a piece of bark. And so when they come in, he told 'em he, 'bout seeing that thing's track out there in the— "Why," his dad said—of course he'd killed kinds of bears and stuff, and—he said, "Why," his dad said, "it's nothing but a bear been walking on its hind feet," he said "it's what that's been. Why," he said, "there ain't no such thing as tracked—" "Now," he said, "it ain't a bear's track, I'll tell you that, now," he said: "That I can tell you." "Ah," he said, "It's a bear, bound to be, ain't nothing else make a track like that."

And he said that they went out and looked at it, at that track, and they said no, it wasn't a bear's track. They said they didn't know what it was, then they just named it a yayho, now, that's what they called it, a yayho, of course they couldn't live in that country at that time, could they now, a thing like that, you know that, could they?

And they said it made a track—and my dad said that he kept it covered up there, he said, till they, till they went to come back in, and he said them old fellers looked at it and they said they never seen a track like that. They didn't know what it was. And he said it was as big as a man's track. But he said alright but the heel, he said, he said it ran right back right sharp, he said, back next to the heel it run right sharp, kindly sharp back at the heel, he said. And he said it made a track just exactly like a man's track. Now you know, boys, there couldn't have been nobody in that country way back in there now, barefoot, well gosh, miles and miles and miles in that, back in the head of that Cherry River.

Compared to other wild animals the panther, or mountain lion, behaved strangely when it encountered men. Panthers seemed unafraid and even showed feline curiosity as they followed hunters during the day and approached the warmth of their campfires at night. None of the stories about panthers reports an attack that resulted in an injury. Maggie, Burl, and Sherman never tire of retelling a particular panther story concerning a fishing trip made by Paris and Jess Roberts. Maggie prefaced this telling by saying she had been to the campsite where the events took place.

Maggie: Why, they started out 'n—a-going fishing and hunting, and so, uh, and he, they thought it was the old dog a-following them. They had a big yellow dog and, and Uncle Jess said, "I have a notion to shoot that thing." They seen it. And he said, No, don't shoot my dog," he said, "I wouldn't take nothing for that dog." And so they went on a piece further and he said he commenced thinking and he said, "That ain't that dog." He said, "Jess, that ain't that dog," he said, "he never did do that." And now he said, "I could have killed it," he said, "if you'd have let me." And he said, "I knowed it but I thought it was the dog a-starting to follow us," he said.

And so, he said, they went on and that thing just followed 'em right on and they went to the river and they catched 'em—went to the Middle Fork, they caught 'em a big mess of fish. You could just catch plenty of 'em anywhere. And they caught 'em a big mess of fish and went on to the camp. And they was a rock right out in front of the camp, oh it was a great big old rock and it had a hollow place right down in the top of it. And they put their fish, salted their fish right down in the top of that rock. But still yet they could hear that noise ever once in a while. "Why," he said, "it ain't a thing but that panther," he said.

And there was a big pine log a-rotted up right on top of the cliff, and it fell right down over the—right down over the cliff, and the roots was hung up on top of it. And he said they fixed their supper and fried 'em some fish and they made 'em some coffee and put 'em—now he said, "We'll have to get enough wood to do us all night," he said. "We'll have to sit up all night now," he said. "That thing'll catch us." "I don't reckon—" "Yes," he said, "it will."

And they got 'em up some wood, every bit they could get, it was late in the evening but they got up plenty of wood to keep 'em a fire, a light so they could see. And he said after they eat their supper and stuff they was a-sitting there a-talking and they heard it a-coming down off of the pine log, heard the bark a-pouring there, he said, "That's it and it'll come right—" and just as they moved they heard it go right back, right back up the log, just crash crash, he said, and the bark a-falling off of the log. Well so, he said, there they was and they sat there and they talked and they sat there and kept a fire.

"Well," he said, "which," he said, "do you want to sleep, in the fore part of the night or the last part?" And my daddy said, "I'll sleep in the fore part of the night, I never could sleep in the last part." "All right," Uncle Jess said, he said, "you go, you lay down and go to sleep," he said, "and I'll sit here and watch." "Now," he said, "you'll want to keep your eyes open when we get still, because," he said—there was a cave right back in the rock, oh you could see just a big place from—just a-coming in like that door. And they was—where they laid was back here. And he said, he said, "I'll watch." So, he said, he laid down, just in a minute, my daddy said, he was asleep.

And he said, along away in the night, he didn't know what time it was, but he said, something woke him. And he said as quick as it woke him, he said, he just—the fire was all burnt out, only just some of the ends of the sticks was yet a-burning. And he said, just as he woke up, why he looked and the first thing he seen—and the fire was a-shining in that thing's eyes. And he said it wasn't, now the way he said, it wasn't any further from here to that stove from Uncle Jess' head. Just ready to come slip, coming right through that place, coming right in on 'em. And he said when he reached over and got his gun it was a-laying right by the side of him, just as quick as he moved, just as quick as he moved his arm and got the gun that panther went to heading, that was the last he seed of it. But he sat there and waited and waited and waited, never did come back, its eyes didn't.

So he got out and punched the fire and he said, "You better get up, Jess," he said. "You was just about to get panther-ketched." He said, "What?" He said, "He just pretty nigh had you when I woke up," he said. And he said, "I don't know what made me fall over there and go to sleep. I can't understand," he said, "what made me do that." And he said his gun was a-laying right across him, him just fell right over there asleep. Punched up the fire—now he said, "He come pretty near to getting you, if I hadn't've woke up," he said, "he'd have got you."

They got the fire punched up and right there they sat up the rest of the night. And the next morning, he said, just as it started to break daylight, he hollered right on top of the cliff, he—he hollered and the next time they heard him he was away back further and they heard him till he went plumb out of hearing. "Now," Unde Jess said, "as quick as we can get something to eat," he said, "I'm a-leaving this place." He said, "I'm a-leaving it." And he said, "It'll not come back," he said, "it'll not come back tonight." "Oh yes." "No sir," he said, "it'll not come back."

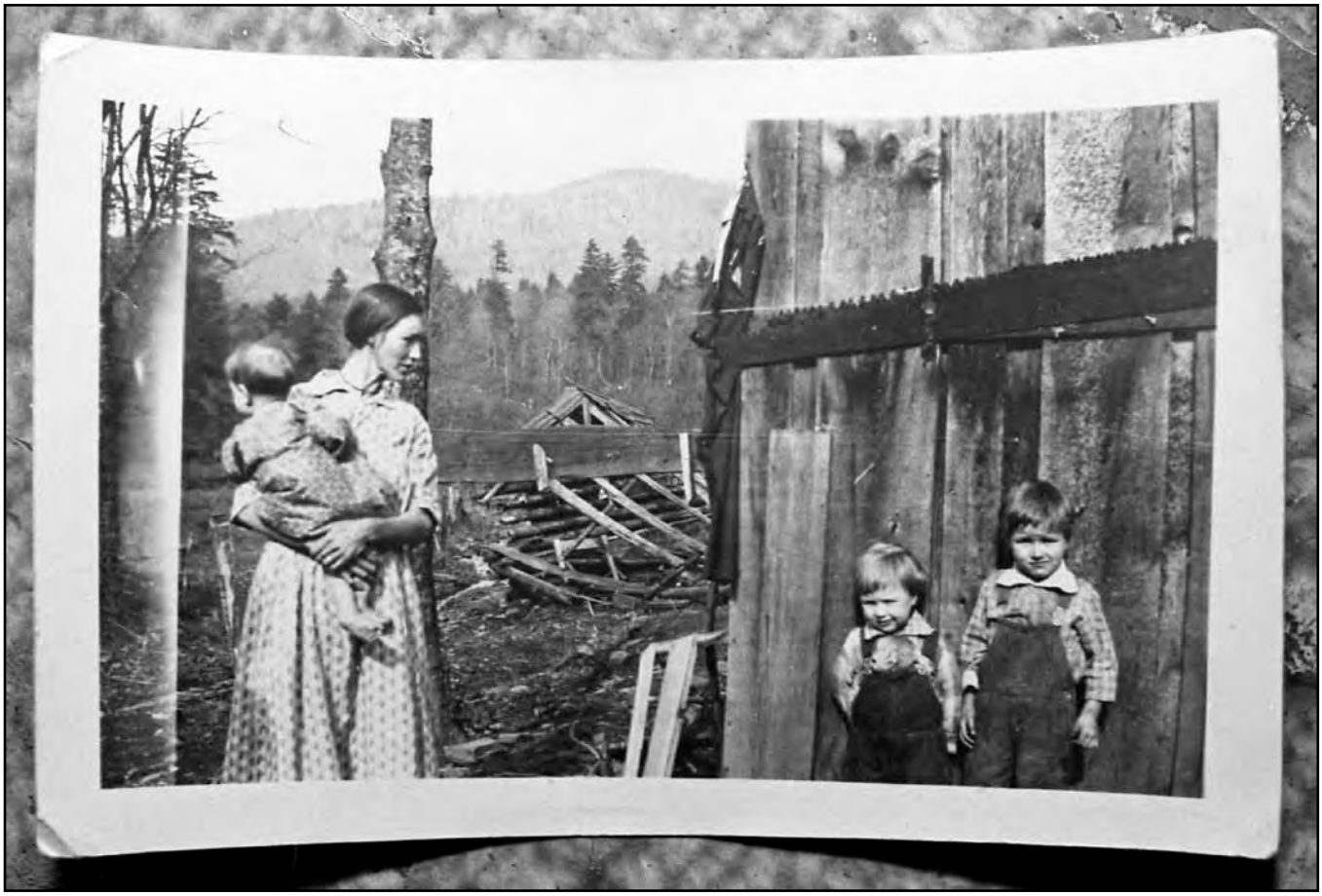
But they left the camp, went down to the creek and catched 'em a—a load of fish and went back in. They aimed to stay two or three nights. Jess wouldn't stay.

According to wildlife biologist Robert Smith in an article in the Morgantown, W. Va., Sunday Dominion-Post (May 9, 1971), the last panther killed in the state was shot in 1887 on Tea Creek, a tributary of the Williams River. Although Smith doubts its reliability, Roy Clarkson in his "Vascular Flora of the Monongahela National Forest" (p. 28) reports a sighting of a panther's tracks in 1936 near the Cranberry River. These reports indicate that the last refuge of the panther in the state, and possibly in the southern Appalachians, was near the Hammonses' home. In the conversation that follows, Burl shows his familiarity with stories of the panther's coloration and habits, though he himself has never seen one. The wild pigeon to which he refers is the extinct passenger pigeon.

Burl: Well, back in them days, they, gosh, they—no telling what all kind of animal was in the woods, they was nobody lived, why, miles and miles there wouldn't be nobody lived. It was just a kind of wilderness.

Dwight: You know they said, they say now there wasn't such a thing as panthers back in there, but they was—

Burl: There was panthers. Yes sir. Now they was panthers, yes sir. I don't know but what they ain't



Mandy "Bee" Hammons and her children. Family collection; photographer and date unknown.

some of them fellers on Birch River living yet that, that maybe had seen some of them panthers. Them Robertses, some of them old Robertses, now I figure they know something about them. Yes, they was plenty of panthers in them days. And they disappeared just like—now they was plenty of wild pigeons, now you show me any of them in these days. you don't hear of none or see none nowhere, do you?

Dwight: Can you remember 'em?

Burl: No, I can't. But they said they was plumb thick. When they was a good beech mast, they said, they was just plumb thick, they just come, just droves and droves of 'em. And you could just kill 'em and they said they was the best things to eat that you ever seen. Said, they just got plumb fat on that beech mast, now you don't hear of them anymore.

Dwight: No.

Burl: And the panthers disappeared just like, now, they did, just the first thing you know they wasn't none.

Dwight: What color was they then?

Burl: Them pigeons?

Dwight: Pa—no, panthers that was back in there.

Burl: Well, now, they-uh, they changed color just when the deer did. Now they was—in the summertime they was a red-looking color. Now I've seen their hides, panther hide, now they're difference in other states, but they was—in this country they was red. Yessir, pretty near the color of a red fox. They had a great long tail and about that far of it just as black as it could be.

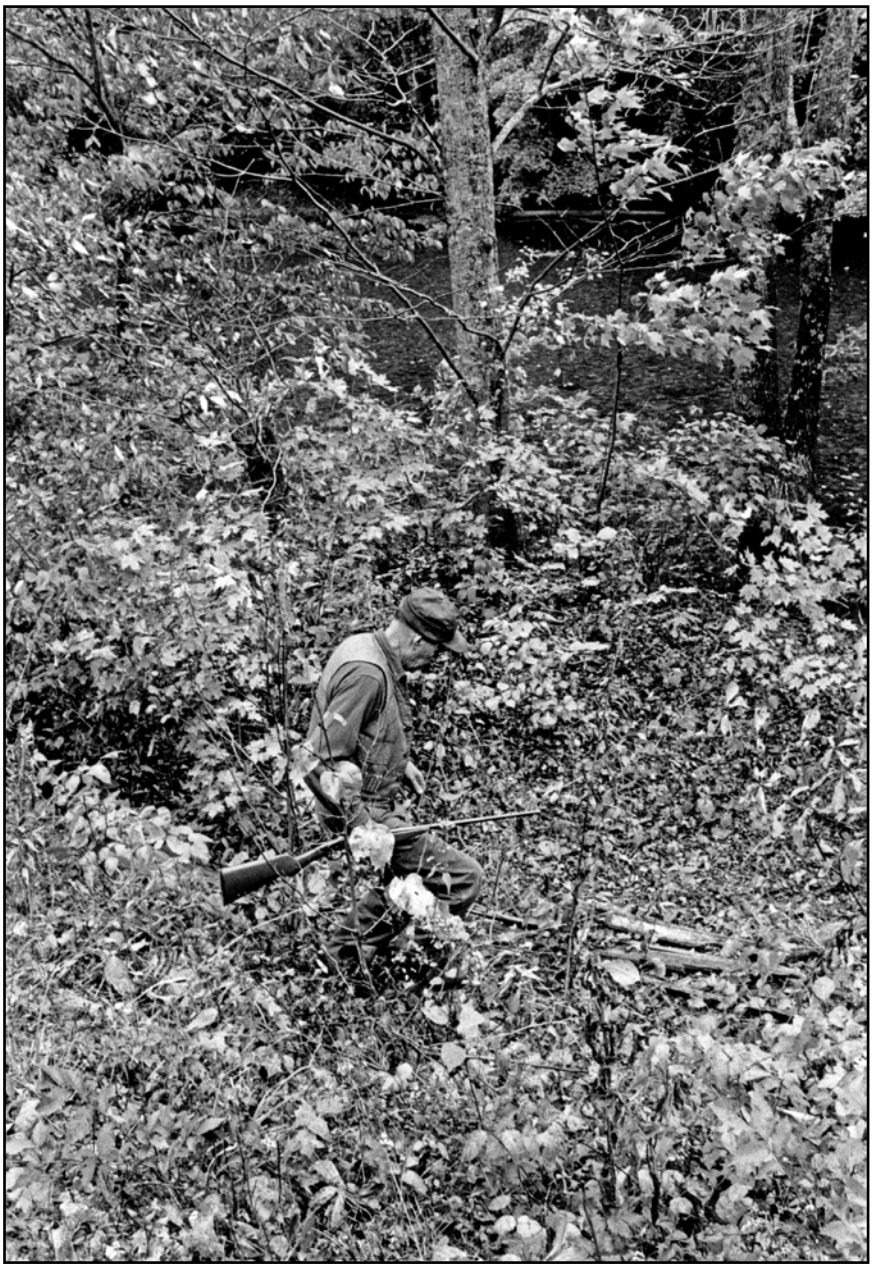
Dwight: On the end?

Burl: Yes sir.

Dwight: And you have seen the hides?

Burl: Yes sir, I've seen the hides, they was right red, just pretty near the color of a red fox. Now in the—that is, in the summertime. Now they changed color when the deer did, now they changed, too. Now you know a deer's red in the summertime. You know when they're in—June, I believe it's in June, ain't it, they're red-looking, ain't they, when they shed off? Well now, a

panther's the same color; now in the fall, they turn a kind of a grayish looking color, kinda just—pretty near the color of a deer. . . . Now they was panthers, boys, back in there, back in them days, but you hardly ever seen one. Now I'm telling you now, you didn't see 'em just every time you went out. But they'd follow after you. Yessir, they'd follow you all day long and probably you'd never know, maybe, if there wasn't no snow, you'd never know they was a-following you, cause you'd never hear one or nothing, it just slipped like a cat, along just—just after you, fooling around after you. And they'd get right dose to you sometimes, now right close to you. But you'd never see 'em, hardly ever see one.



Burl Hammons hunting, 1970. Photograph by Dwight Diller.

The Music

Just as the Hammonses think of the family's origins in connection with the frontier and the story of the escape from the Indians, they see the frontier as the place where their music was created.

Burl: Yes sir, they made all them old tunes—them old pieces, they made up—

Maggie: Now they made 'em up and named 'em.

James: And made words to 'em.

Burl: Yeah, they originated away back down there in Kentucky, from where they was borned and raised, a batch of 'em, they made a lot of them tunes and brought 'em here to this country. Now there's where all—

James: Yes sir.

Burl: —the better part of all of 'em originated from, if you want to know the truth.

James: Big Sandy River—Catlettsburg—down in Kentucky.

Burl: Yes sir. In Kentucky and down around there.

James: Brought 'em all up and into this country.

Dwight: Well.

Burl: Yes sir, now. There's where they originated from—all them old tunes that you hear.

James: Oh, yes sir. That "Stony Point," and it's got—

Burl: Made 'em up and—and played 'em, you see.

James: Yeah.

According to Maggie, other songs were written in West Virginia.

Maggie: "The Lonesome Pines" was made right over here on Cherry. Yessir.

Carl Fleischhauer: "The Lonesome Pines"?

Maggie: Yessir, it was made right over there, and there was plenty of 'em made right over there, on Cherry, on the north fork of Cherry.

Dwight: "Jay Legg" was made over there.

Maggie: Yes, yessir, that's where that man was killed, right over there, and they made that song. And they's another one killed up here on—on Cheat Mountain, Joker Jess, and they made the song on him.

The Hammonses' musical repertory consists of several hundred songs and instrumental pieces. The songs include a variety of ballads, Iyric songs, play-party songs, children's songs, hymns, and humorous songs. Some of the instrumental pieces have not turned up elsewhere. Paris's children had their earliest musical experiences at home. Burl's story of how he learned to play on his father's fiddle is told in similar versions by musicians throughout the South.

Burl: I'll tell you how I learnt to play the violin. He had one, he always kept one, and he wouldn't let us kids have his gun or his violin and we knowed not to bother it none. And he wouldn't hardly ever pick it up, you know, and so I'd catch him gone and I'd slip—Mom wouldn't tell it on me, though, and she'd tell me, she'd say, "You better not fool with that." But I'd slip and get it and fool with it, you know, kept on fooling and after while I could start a few tunes.

Well, it passed on and I kept on fooling with it, you know, and after while, one day, he got, now he hardly ever played any of it, but he'd, if he did it'd be of a night when he'd be a-sitting around, he'd get it and he'd play us a few—we'd get him to get it, you know, and so I kept on begging him to get the fiddie, I was wanting to—I said, "Why don't you let me play once with it?" "Why," he said, "you know you can't play," he said. He said, "You can't—" And I said, "Let me try it." And he just, turned up, he said, "You've had my—," he said, "you've had my fiddle out and in there—" He said, "You've had, ain't you? A-playing with it, ain't you?" I said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I have." He said, "I knowed you had."

Although he started at home, Burl got much of his repertory and playing style from relatives who lived along the Williams. He learned several fiddle pieces from his uncles Pete and Neal Hammons, and he credits Pete's son "Little" Paris with teaching him the downstroke banjo style he calls "thumping," known elsewhere as "knocking," "clawhammer," or "frailing." More fiddle tunes came from his uncle Nige Cogar, and finger-picking styles on the banjo came from Nige's son Early. Burl's uncle Edden Hammons, described in more detail below, was famous throughout east-central West Virginia for his fiddling; he too influenced Burl's playing.

Maggie got most of her songs from relatives. Many were learned from the previous generation, but a substantial portion of her repertory came from her cousins, who often got together for evenings of singing. The cousins mentioned in the following dialogue are Halley Hammons, daughter of her uncle Neal, and John and Joe Roberts, sons of Jesse and Mary Hammons Roberts.

James and Edden Hammons. Edden was Paris's brother; his son James often accompanied him on banjo and guitar. Family collection; photographer, place, and date unknown.

Recording Burl Hammons at his home at Stillwell, 1972.

Carl: Some of the songs you learned from an uncle, or your father?

Maggie: Yes—there was a lot of 'em I learnt from him. He was pretty bad to sing.

Carl: Your dad?

Maggie: Yessir. He'd always generally get up of a morning, he got up awful early and he'd always, he always would be in a good humor and he'd get up and, and sing them, and sing them songs. He'd tend to the children. . . .

And I had some uncles just the same way, knew a lot of them songs. Now I had some people, I tell you, who—that sung a lot. I had a cousin that I'll tell you, she could sing, there ain't no use to talk, she was a good singer. She lives in Ohio somewhere. She's older nor I am, a whole lot older nor I. They used to live on Cranberry and then she learnt a lot of them songs, you see, she learnt that one about, uh—now wait and I'll tell you the one—she learnt that one and she learnt that "Missouri Girl," she learnt that one right over there and this "Jay Legg," she learnt that song right over there, she could learn most—

Carl: Did you learn those from your cousin?

Maggie: Huh? Yes, some of 'em I did. And then I had another cousin, he was always a-singing, two of 'em, two of 'em, by gosh, they could sing good. They knew any kind of a—I had one that he could just hear somebody sing anything or read anything off, and he could just memorize that and tell it right off of the book, if he'd just look at that book, and read that, or sing a song just the same way. And they'd sing too. You could go to stay all night with them and they'd sing all—put in all night a-singing. That's what they wanted to do, now that's the way, that's the way I got part of the songs.

Family members attended fiddlers' conventions to socialize and learn new pieces.

Maggie: Oh, they'd go to contests, they'd get a bunch of 'em together and go to contests and play.

I've heard 'em talk about that lots of times; they would go to places and have music, just like you-all now. They had 'em, a bunch of 'em.

Carl: This is your dad, and your uncles?

Maggie: Yeah, yes sir. Yessir, I've heard 'em talk about it. You see they learnt a lot of s—they learnt a lot of pieces to play when they'd go to them places; they'd be other people, you see, could play and it was new to them. And then when they'd hear a new tune, why, then they'd want to learn that.

Paris's children remember that their uncle Edden, who died in the fifties, won more contests than anyone else in the family. Musicians in the area still talk about him, and evidence of his reputation can be found in print. Despite discrepancies of age and date, Edden was probably the inspiration for a story in Sampson Miller's *Annals of Webster County* (p. 252-253). An older fiddler leaves in disgust when nine-year-old "Eddin Hammons" captivates the audience of a Fourth of July celebration away from him. Edden and his father were probably also the inspiration for Douglas MacNeill's fictional short story "That Hammons Boy," found in the former Pocahontas County school superintendent's book *The Last Forest* (p. 38-44). A boy called Elam Hammons, whose father is described as a ginseng gatherer in the Gauley Mountains, develops from a novice fiddler into a lauded concert violinist.

None of the Hammonses played professionally, even though some family members may have won or earned a little money for their music. In a conversation following a rendition of "The Lonesome Pines", Maggie described one occasion when she received money for singing.

Dwight: That was the piece that you used to get five dollars paid—uh, they used to pay you five dollars to sing, wasn't it?

Maggie: Yessir. Yessir. That one, and I'll tell you another one: the one they call "Loving Sadie."

Dwight: "Loving Sadie"?

Maggie: Ever time—yessir—

Dwight: They'd come and get you or something, wasn't it?

Maggie: Why no. Why we'd be'a-picking berries—

Dwight: Yeah, I say they'd come and—

Maggie: Yes. They—we'd be a-picking berries, and you see they was people camped all everwheres a-picking—berrypickers—picking berries, and they happened to hear me a-singing that song—I was always a-singing. And they heard me a-singing that song. I sung it for I don't know how, five dollars a song; five dollars for ever time I sung it.

Dwight: Is that right?

Maggie: Yessir. That's the truth. But I could sing good then.

Although earning money for performing was the exception rather than the rule, the Hammonses' ability to entertain gave them great local popularity.

Edden Hammons. From the collection of Edden's son Smith Hammons; photographer, place, and date unknown.

At the Richardson's fishing camp near the Williams River. At left: C.J. Richardson and Maggie Hammons; above: Paris Hammons and Ed Richardson. Family collection, photographer and date unknown.

Burl remembers nights when 15 to 20 guests ate and stayed after supper to hear Paris spin tales and play. Two Marlinton merchants, C. J. and Ed Richardson, frequently invited Paris on fishing trips where the entertainments at camp sometimes involved even the construction of a dance platform. Lottie never went, although she had no objection to music, but Maggie, Daisy, Burl, and some of the other children sometimes went and performed.

> *Maggie:* There used to come fishers to go fish and my daddy always went with 'em—C. J. Richardson from down here and all from Charleston and way yonder and everyplace—and by gosh they'd have us come down there and they'd have a big tent up and have us come down there and play the banjo. Some of them could play it too and we'd have the darndest time, and sing. Yes sir, they'd come, women and men—everyone liked him. If they went anywheres they all wanted him to go with them, to fish with 'em. He could hoot like a owl or anything. Yes sir, he could do her.

The most common context for instrumental music was a dance in someone's home.

> *Maggie:* Well, you see they used to have dances. They'd go and have dances and people didn't care a bit around—the neighbors wouldn't—they'd clean out a room and everything fixed for 'em to come to their house and have a dance. That's the truth. Have music there, have good—have a fiddle and banjo, that's what they played on. They never played on, they never, you never, you hardly ever did see anybody a-playing on a guitar, back then. No sir, it was a banjo and a—a banjo and a fiddle, that's what they used. Now I'll tell you some of them could play the darn—it ain't no use to talk nothing about it.

The family had a phonograph with recordings of cowboy songs, banjo and fiddle pieces, and several Edison discs by Ada Jones, who is remembered by Maggie for her rendition of a song called "Jungle Moon." Some of the songs on early records and radio appealed to them, and they learned a few of them.

Family Life and the Logging Period

The Williams River rises in Pocahontas County and flows into Webster, where it is joined by the waters of Little Fork and Middle Fork at the Three Forks, emptying eventually into the Gauley River. Both Paris and his father settled on the Williams in Webster County and moved upriver into Pocahontas County when the first tracts of timber were being cut. The following excerpt from an article by Andrew Price in the *Pocahontas Times* (July 5, 1906) draws a sympathetic picture of Jesse and his sons Neal and Edden shortly after they moved upriver.

> In West Virginia, the fur (far) Mountains are the ones that rise to majestic heights and are clothed in the sombre hues of the spruce. Some idea of this wilderness can be obtained from the experience of Jesse Hammonds, a patriarchal hunter and trapper living in this forest.
>
> When the war clouds began to lower on his house in the fifties, Hammonds refugeed from Kentucky, seeking a safe retreat, and settled on Williams River, and for thirteen years not a stranger darkened his door. The great Civil War was fought without his knowing anything about it. The county Webster, in which he lived, formed an Independent government, neither recognizing the North nor the South, and elected a governor, and is still referred to in State conventions as the "Independent State of Webster."
>
> Old Jesse raised a large family of sons, who took to the woods and lived the life of the Indian. Their wives and children raised a little corn, but the men pride themselves on the fact that they never worked and never will. They know the woods thoroughly and are the best of hunters and fishers, dig ginseng and find bee trees. They are a thorn in the flesh of the sportsmen, for they kill to sell, and last year when the headwaters of Williams River showed good results from the planting of a hundred thousand Government trout, they spent the summer fishing for these small trout to sell to the lumber camps. They owe their immunity to the fact that they have held possession of the lands of a big land company and know the corner trees and would be invaluable were its titles ever attacked.
>
> Like the Indians the Hammonds of Bug Run have been forced on until they are now located in the fringe of woods in the south side of the tract and can go no farther.
>
> I one time saw Neal Hammonds kill a deer. We were walking down the river from our camp at the mouth of Tea Creek deer hunting. Just as we reached the stand at the Big Island a fawn jumped

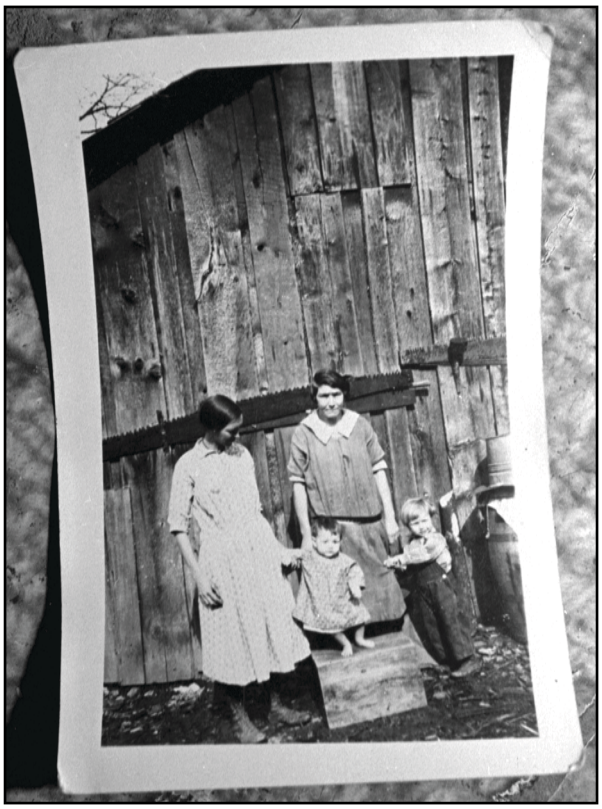
Three Forks, the confluence of the Williams (left) with the already joined waters of the Middle and Little Forks, 1972.

into the river in a panic of fear, fleeing from its step-father, no doubt, and once on the other side the little fellow hit the runway as fair as if a pack of hounds were after it. I took no action, but Neal threw his rifle into position and shot the top of the fawn's head off as it ran. It fell dead and proved to be an unusually large buck fawn.

The Hammonds are not educated, except in woods lore. They may know that there are such accomplishments as reading or writing, but these they have never hankered after. Yet one of the boys, Edn, is a great musician. His artistic temperament has made more or less a dreamer of him and detracted from his ability as bear hunter. He takes to the calmer joys of fishing and "sang" digging, and he repudiates the idea that his name is Edwin or possibly Edmund, and gravely informs you that his name is simply "Edn, an' nothin' elst."

Edn's first attempt in music was with a fiddle made from a gourd. He progressed and he secured a store bought fiddle and there is no disputing the fact that he can draw exquisite harmonies from this. He has composed several melodies and has given them names, the most notable one being called "Hannah Gatting fish!" He explained the music to me one time and I must confess that it seemed as real to me as any high grade composition. I recorded it, one day when Edn came to my house on a blank wax gramaphone disc and have reproduced it often since, down to the resounding patting of the violinist's foot on the floor. A man from Pittsburg told me it was very fine and expressive, and that he believed it to be an entirely new and original piece of music.

Like his father, Paris made his earliest Williams River residence near the Three Forks. His first six children, John, Nancy, Bee, Ruie, Emmy, and Maggie, were born in a log house there. John died as a child, and after Maggie's birth in 1899 the family moved to "the old Taylor place." During the two or three years Paris worked as a farm hand there, Bessie and Sherman were born in the "box house" the family occupied. Paris next moved to the vicinity of his father's new home near the mouth of Little Laurel Creek on the Williams in Pocahontas County. The family first lived in a log house and later built a box house where Dasie and Burl were born.



Sisters Mandy "Bee" and Maggie Hammons and Bee's children. Family collection; photographer and date unknown.

The children have happy memories of their childhood at Little Laurel. An ample garden was surrounded by shade trees, hay meadows stood a little distance up the hillside, and a grove of pine trees offered the livestock relief from insects and summer's heat. Like earlier generations, the family supplemented meat raised at home with fish and game. As Burl says, "You had to grow your living." Maggie remembers having both china and tin plates and saving the signature trade mark from Arbuckle coffee packages to send in for silverware. The family grew and cured tobacco; Maggie tells how she and her sister Emmy started using it.

Maggie: My daddy chewed tobacco and smoked, too, and mother she never used no snuff, she never used no snuff, she smoked though, now that's all she done, just smoked. But my daddy used tobacco and smoked too. And Emmy would find his tobacco, he didn't know it, but he, he said he knowed she was slipping it out. She'd find his tobacco and she got to slipping it out and giving it to me. She gave me the the first chew I got, I got so sick on it I couldn't hardly stand it, boys. Now it's a bad sick.

Dwight: Yeah, I know it is.

Maggie: Yessir, it's bad sick. But she just kept right on, and then I used to just smoke. I used to be I didn't use none, just smoked was all I done.

Dwight: What, roll your cigarettes?

Maggie: No, I never smoked cigarettes, or got—I smoked a pipe.

Dwight: You did?

Maggie: Yes sir. I smoked a pipe. I'd rather have the pipe nor anything else. That's right.

Dwight: Did you all grow your own tobacco?

Maggie: He raised his own tobacco, only just sometimes he'd, he'd buy some. Buy plug tobacco to use. But he always raised tobacco, every year.

Dwight: Sherman says you'd make, kind of make a syrup out of it and then stick it under two logs— he called it E-twist or something like that.

Maggie: Yes, picnic or E-twist. They called it E-twist. And he'd just flatten it out, you see, when they'd make that syrup and put on it. Put right on the tobacco and they just put a weight on it, and they twist it up and then put a weight on it. By gosh that'd just be good and sweet all through, it'd go plumb through it.

Dwight: Well, it'd be sweet?

Maggie: Yes, be good. Did you ever twist tobacco?

Dwight: No, I don't know anything about it.

Maggie: No, I don't expect you ever seed none grow. Have you ever seen any grow?

Dwight: Just a little bit.

Maggie: Well, now—Now it's hard to raise, I mean to tell you, it's something to do at it all the time. Yessir, they'd have to keep all the suckers pinched off it, all them suckers it'll suck 'er out, you see, when they—and top it, and when they get ready to cut it, before they cut it, spread it right down through the stem. Well, it'll go up that high and have big leaves on it. And spread it right down through the stem, plumb down to the ground and then, then take where they cut it off below that split and then take and put it in the—the tobacco shed. And put that in there and put it up right close together, till it starts to yellow, and then they take it off when it starts to cure, turn red, and hand it. Take it off of the stem and tie it up in bunches, tie it up in bunches like that and then hang it back up again, then when it gets right red, it'll turn right red, just cure out so pretty, and then you can take it out and stem it and twist it up.

Sisters Bessie and Maggie Hammons on Tea Creek, ca. 1921. Family collection, photographer unknown.

Many of the family stories portray the relationship between Paris and his children. He is a skeptic in the face of the unexplained or supernatural, a source of music and stories, and a teacher of woodcraft. Maggie remembers how he entertained the children by quizzing them with riddles, which he would pose once and refuse to repeat. The following story incidentally reveals that the children did household chores, and that Paris took care to teach safe gun handling.

Maggie: And we had to go, I know it was a mile it was a good mile if not further nor that. And he told us—it was along in the spring of the year, early in the spring of the year—he said, "Just milk your cows and leave 'em, and just take 'em some feed and just leave 'em out there," he said. "No use to drive 'em in," he said. "Just leave 'em right out there."

And so we went, of course we had bells on the cows. We could hear 'em, it was a long ways, and we went—there was three of us went. Me and Bessie and—I forgot whether it was Sherman or whether it was, uh, my other sister, but I think it was my other sister that went with 'us. Anyhow, there was three of us and we went on and we went to the cows. We got there to 'em and we had a big pine patch to go through. And right up a hill. And we got to the cows, and we just poured their feed out, ah but I heard something holler. We thought it was a owl, you see there were so many owls. Plenty of hoot owls. And it hollered right close to us, and it hollered awful strange, and Bessie said,

"What was that?" I said, "I don't know, it was—a owl, I reckon."

And we just p'—we was in a hurry anyhow as we got back to the house. We just poured the feed out and went to milking the cows. And just as we got settled and started to milk, by gosh, it fetched a holler right at us and then I knowed that wasn't no owl. I said, "Get away from here, it's a wolf a-going to ketch us," and we started running. Now, you talk about somebody a-running, we never stopped, with buckets and all, and we never m—we never got to the house till the cows overtook us and passed us. Yessir, they passed us. They had left their feed. They passed us, right on our way.

And he wanted to know what in the devil that meant, what'd—a-bringing the cows in for. And we told him. We told him what it was. And he said—we told him how it hollered and everything, and he said, "Yes, that's what it was." He said, "Now the next time you go after the cows," he said—he got to going then hisself. He got to going with u—"And next time you go," he said, "you can take the gun with you." He was awful careful about us and the gun. He said, "And one of you pack the shells and the other'n the gun." And then he said, "When anything hollers and gets close to you thataway," he said, "you can shoot. But," he said, "don't load the gun without you hear something a-coming right close to you," he said. "Don't pack it loaded."

The Hammonses' life changed during the 1920s. The children were coming of age, and timbering was eliminating the last forest tracts on the Williams. Then in 1926 Paris died. The October 7 Pocahontas Times reported his death in an obituary that incorrectly identified his parents.

Paris Hammonds died very suddenly on Williams River Tuesday morning Oct. 4, 1936 [sic]. He had gone with Paul H. Price, the geologist, to look up a coal bank, on Black Mountain. He fell by the road when a few hundred yards from his house, and was dead in a few minutes. Mr. Hammonds was 72 years old. As a small boy his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Hammonds, brought him from Kentucky. He grew up in the Black Forest, and he was a famous woodsman and hunter. He is survived by a large family of children. On Tuesday his body was placed in the graveyard, on the Shearer place.

The logging period in West Virginia lasted from 1880 to 1930. This boom time ended the isolation of the Allegheny back-country, destroyed the wilderness, and moved the economy another step from self-subsistence toward labor and wages. Towns sprang up where forests were being cut, only to move 50 miles when the last trees were felled. Camps housing a hundred men or more were scattered through the part of the woods being logged, while separate camps were built for the Italian laborers who did the most difficult work, like cutting railway grades in the mountainsides.

The Campbell Lumber Company began working along the Williams around the turn of the century and was joined after the First World War by the Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company. The Cherry River company built a boom town at the Three Forks in 1921 (described in a souvenir newspaper called "Sheriff Given's Railway Special," dated March 6, 1970). At its height the town had 75 houses, railway shops, a three-room school, boarding houses, a big store, a church, and a dentist's office. A shuttle on the railroad provided daily transportation to nearby towns. In 1936 the town moved to Jerryville on the Gauley River; today only indentations marking old foundations and railway grades remain.

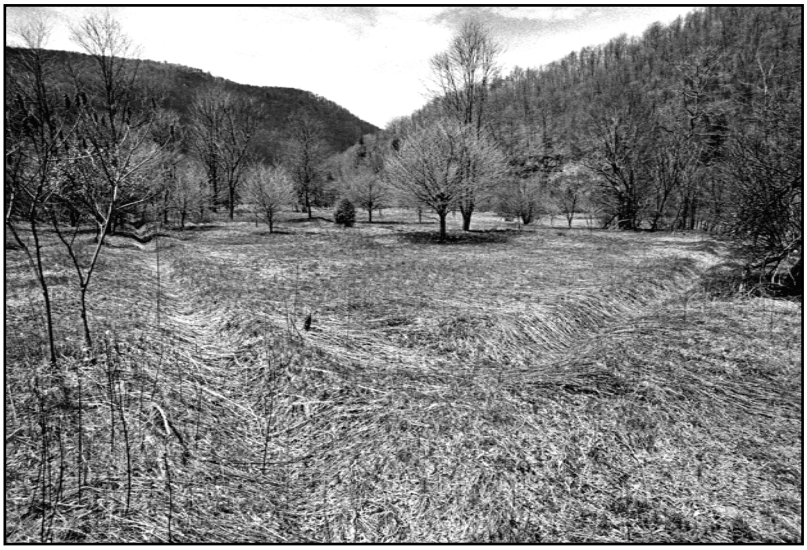
Wider socialization during the logging period gave the Hammonses contact with a variety of musical styles and genres. Burl used to hang around a barber shop near a railroad yard on Tea Creek where music was often played. He, Sherman, and Edden's son James used to visit a black railroad worker named Lacey Grafton, who lived on a stretch of the Williams called the "dead-waters" because it lacked the rapids prevalent elsewhere. Burl learned a fiddle tune he calls "The Darky's Dream" from Grafton, and James learned "Blues Tapioca" on guitar. Burl recalls that Grafton picked the guitar in a three-finger style and says they used to play as a duet at dances.

During the first years of logging on the Williams, Burl and Sherman were too young to work in the woods, but the family was already economically tied to lumbering activities.

Ruie Hammons: See, them camps was a-coming up and there was work anywhere, we had work all over town. You could sell anything you could raise and we didn't have to use no fertilizer. Me and Maggie raised some of the awfullest gardens ever you've seen. And the beans would grow, so—we didn't have no other kind, only tender beans and we had all kind. And we'd plant a patch in the bottom and they'd run till they'd just tear the corn, just have it laying, you could just walk, and just, and they was half of 'em would be down on the ground. And you could just set down and right just in a little spot not as big as this house and pick maybe two of the biggest top-sacks full, pick two or three sacks full just in a little while. I raised pole beans as was that long, I stuck them, laid them in by the—and daddy'd go for 'em—that was before the beetlers ever come. We didn't have no

bean beetlers then, not when we lived along the river. And he'd go through and cut 'em off of the corn, some of 'em where they'd run from one row to another and hitch to the corn and pull it together and—And that made 'em have many, that many more vines, they'd just sprout out like a tree, vines all over everything.

Well, they'd say now, they'd even fetch the train. They'd pick us up or anything, Campbell's would. They'd stop the train and all we had to do was take the beans or anything we had to sell to the railroad, the supply train would take it, or the log train either, take it to them stores. And they was always a-wanting beans and stuff; we sold beans and we sold tomatoes, we sold cucumbers, we sold roasting ears, we sold enough to keep us. We just was always, us young-uns would work, you know, we was raised to it, none of us never shirked out of nothing, picking berries nor nothing. We worked for each and we had—and Burl and the Italians, he fooled with the Italians more than he did with the rest of 'em, a-raising chickens. And he wasn't any bigger of us nor, well he wasn't very big, he wasn't, just a little thing like, just a junior, kind of. And whenever he got big enough, why, they had him a-working on the section.



The Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company logging town at Three Forks circa 1922-24, and the same location in 1972. This town stood from 1921 to 1936, moving to the nearby Gauley River after all of the harvestable timber on this stretch of the William had been cut. The photograph at top was donated by Richard Criss to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University, and is reproduced with their permission.

And they was a-fetching the railroad right up around, and mind you there was a big cliff, they had to go right through it, the grade, and we lived right down in the bottom and under that. We was so afraid they'd throw them rocks when they was a-blasting. And the boss, he'd come there every once in a while, he was a big man but you could understand him, he could talk pretty plain. They called him Big Jim. And he told us we needn't a-be afraid, that nary a rock ever hit the house. He was a-doing the blasting. He said, "Hell,' he said, he said, "didn't like you all," he said, "we could just blow you all to hell," he said, "you," he said, "with them rocks and things. But," he said, "nary one will hit your house," he said. "We won't." And they wasn't. It'd throw stumps, lofts, and everything else high, and they wasn't a one ever that I know of hit the house.

We wasn't very far above—er, below it. And the other railroad a-coming on the other side of the river. They was two railroads. And we was afraid,

kind of, Italians. And you'd hear 'em a-coming just like a gang of geese for Burl to set 'em across the river, but Burl—we had a boat, half of 'em worked across the river, and then some on the other side, them Italians, you know they fetched their grade, and they—and Burl would set 'em across the river in the boat, it'd be, it'd take him for pretty nigh a half an hour to get across backwards and forwards a-setting 'em. He'd fill the boat full and take a load and then come back. Well, it's a wonder he hadn't got drownded. And they got, they kind of learnt Burl's name, "Boo-ee." They'd send Burl to the store.

The Hammonses are nostalgic for older ways of life, and a theme of deterioration in the quality of life is often present in Maggie and Burl's reminiscences. Maggie simply says, "It's the people have changed," and doesn't specify a time when changes took place, but the logging period and the coming of the railroads heralded modern times in their section of the Alleghenies. In the following dialogue she and Burl contrast the old custom of holding a wake with contemporary funerals.

Maggie: You see it used to be whenever, whenever any of their people died or anything like that, they kept 'em at their home, yessir they kept 'em at their home. Well, the people would come in all around from everywheres and sit up with you and have pretty singing and everything. All night, now.

Burl: All night.

Maggie: Yessir. And they'd change around, maybe one bunch would come one night and the next night another one would come. If you kept it two or three nights, well, whoever, ever how long you'd keep 'em, people'd come in and stay right there with you.

Dwight: Is that right?

Burl: Yes sir, be darned if you—that's the way they done it.

Maggie: Yes sir, that's right. Bring you in stuff, bring you in stuff and try to cheer you up and show you, and do everything that they could for you.

Three Hammons sisters with an automobile rigged by a lumber company to travel on the logging railroad. Family collection, photograph, place, and date unknown.

Burl: Says, they'd come along, you had a patch of corn to hoe, maybe they was—

Maggie: Yes sir.

Burl: —one or two of you hoeing corn, why they'd just jump in and help you hoe her out. Maybe stay two or three days with you and help you—now that's the way people'd do.

Maggie: Yes sir, that's the way they'd do.

Burl: Go and help one another if they needed it.

Maggie: Now that's what they'd call a wake, that they'd sit up all night, they never took 'em to no funeral home. Why no, their people just, whenever anyone died thataway, they just, they kept 'em right at their own home. That's the truth.

Burl: Course they couldn't keep 'em over one day—

Maggie: No, they wouldn't keep 'em over just about two nights, I've knowed 'em to—

Burl: Yes, and if it was cold weather—

Maggie: Yes, and if it was cold weather keep 'em longer'n that. But if it was warm weather you couldn't keep 'em.

Burl: Yes, if it was warm weather they couldn't keep 'em over just one or two—

Maggie: One or two nights is as long as they could keep 'em, but they'd come right in there and stay with you. Now it's got so, a funeral, it ain't a bit more going to a funeral nor it is a-going out yonder to nothing. It's the truth.

The theme of deteriorating mores is also present in Maggie and Burl's comparison of church meetings remembered from childhood with services today. Both this and the last exchange are typical of many of Maggie and Burl's discussions in the way they move from the past to the present with each speaker reinforcing the other. Some of the dialogue was actually simultaneous.

Maggie: They'd show you a good time when you went. Everybody was good to you.

Burl: Yes sir. Then they'd, they'd all gather up and throw in, and they'd have big dinners and stuff, they'd take it out up there and put in all day, with church and stuff.

Maggie: Yessir, have picnic, fix tables and stuff.

Burl: Yes, it was thataway.

Maggie: Yessir, bring all kinds of stuff, have dinners on the ground. They'd have prayer meeting, maybe now on Sunday, they'd be prayer meeting before noon and then after noon—uh, or singing, they'd either have prayer meeting and singing. And then, uh, then you'd go out after noon

Grandmother and mother Lottie Roberts Hammons seated with grandchildren; adults in back are Lottie's children Maggie and Burl Hammons. Family collection; photographer, place, and date unknown.

Dwight: Did you all have a church you went to out there, on—when you was little?

Burl: You want to know how they had church? To be—course they had church, but it, it was about four miles away.

Maggie: Yes sir.

Burl: They'd come, preachers, and they'd go up that Williams River, they'd be more people there at one time, they'd be more people up that Williams River and they couldn't get in, on just walking or horse or buggies, wagons, and stuff. They'd be more people at—at one meeting there than you'd see, than you'd see a—at these churches pretty near in a week.

Maggie: Yessir.

Burl: Now that's a fact now, they would. They'd be, maybe they'd be one hundred—two hundred people at a time.

the most—pretty near every Sunday and have a big dinner on the ground.

Burl: Now you can go to church these days, if you go to one of these big high class churches, and you got something to say about, well, if, if you ain't got just on exactly the right kind of clothes or this, that, and the other, somebody'd a-whispering about it, and this, that, and the other. Now people, I'm going to tell you something, they can't live right a-doing that way. Now nobody needs to tell me, cause I've read the Bible too much, they needn't try it, cause they can't.

Dwight: That's why I don't go to church, cause I don't like that.

Maggie: I'm like you are, the church anymore, it ain't no more like going to church nor going nowhere.

Burl: If you get in somebody's seat and you—

maybe you're a stranger there, maybe you don't know nothing about it, well, "You've got in my pew." This, that, and the other and that stuff. You get in there—

Maggie: Why it ain't a bit more like daylight 'n dark. Meeting ain't a bit more like it used to be nor daylight is dark, not a bit.

Burl: No sir.

The thirties began with an extensive forest fire on Tea Creek that Maggie remembers as darkening the skies for days. At about this time her mother fell ill, possibly with tuberculosis, and a doctor's advice to avoid living in a moist place led the remaining family members to move up the mountainside from the Little Laurel bottom. Lottie died in 1936, about the time the loggers finished their work along the Williams.

Before the First World War legislation had been passed creating both the National Park System and the National Forests. Beginning in 1918, as the Allegheny forests were logged, sections were purchased for the Monongahela National Forest. Burl's story about the visit by the representative of an unspecified government and the "head man" of the Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company probably relates to acquisition of forest lands by the United States government.

Burl: The government told, see, everybody had to move off and then these, Ben Roberts told 'em, he come up and told us, he said, "Now, I've turned all the land—" But he said, now I'll tell you what he said, that was the head man, the very head man of the Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company, what he said, he told this government man that was with him, Howard, a feller by the name of Howard, he said, "Now," he said, "if there's any possibly way," he said, "you can let these people stay here, cause," he said, "they lived here all their life, and," he said, "they took care of the timber and everything else," he said. "If there's any possible way," he said, "that you can let 'em live, you just let 'em live here," he said. "They never destroyed no timber, they took care of the timber and everything and so—"

And of course after my mother died then, I didn't want to live there any more.

Like many outsiders, Nathan Parker was drawn to West Virginia by the ready availability of jobs during the logging period. Originally from North Carolina, he was a leverman (operator) on a steam skidder and in this skilled capacity earned more than an ordinary logger. Just as the railroad replaced the river for transporting logs to the mill, the skidder replaced the team for moving logs out of the woods. Nathan and Maggie were married during a visit to his home in 1930, when they made a side trip across the state line into Georgia to have the ceremony performed. Maggie was Nathan's second wife, and they had no children but raised the three children from Nathan's first marriage. Allene, one of the three, eventually married Maggie's brother Sherman, and Lawrence, one of Nathan's sons, married Maggie's niece Edith Buzzard.

Maggie and Nathan moved to northeastern Ohio in the forties, when Nathan found work in the woods there. After a few years, at Maggie's insistence, they came back to West Virginia.

Two sisters and their husbands. Seated: Nathan Parker and Edwin Buzzard. Standing: Maggie Hammons Parker and Dasie Hammons Buzzard. Family collection, date unknown. The furniture and background indicate that the photograph was made at Cal Gay's studio in Marlinton.

Carl: Where all did you live [in Ohio]?

Maggie: Let me just see now, let me just study a little bit. l lived at—close there to Willoughby and I lived at Northfield and I lived at Mentor, Mentor, Ohio. Three places.

Carl: Which one was the worst or were they all bad?

Maggie: No.

STATE OF GEORGIA

Marriage Certificate

RABUN COUNTY

This Certifies that Mr. Nathen Parker

Miss Maggie Hammon

WERE UNITED IN THE HOLY BONDS OF MATRIMONY

Nell Smith Ordinary Rabun Co.

On the 26 day of Aug, in the year of our Lord 1930

as appears of record in my office in Marriage Record, book F

page #26. This 26th day of Aug 1930

Nell Smith

W. VA. STATE I. O. O. F. HOME, ELKINS, W. VA.

Marriage certificate for Nathan Parker and Maggie Hammons, Rabun County, Georgia, 1930. From the family collection.

Carl: Was some of it okay, up there?

Maggie: Yeah. I liked it at Northfield better nor ary place I lived out there. Yessir.

Carl: Wby did you finally come back then?

Maggie: Yeah, yeah. I come back. I just took a notion to come, I—I just got tired of staying up there and didn't like it. It was too level. It was. It was too level a country, I like for—mountains. And I come back. He didn't want to come but I come anyhow.

Carl: Well, I wondered whether you were bothered by being close to the cities and things up there?

Maggie: No, no. People never bothered me none up, there, that's right, they never, I never had no trouble with the people, I did—

Carl: Just kind of missed the mountains?

Maggie: Yes sir, I just some way or another didn't like a level country. I didn't like it, just got tired of it and didn't like it and wanted to come back.

Carl: Well it would be hard not to want to come back down here, it's awful pretty.

Maggie: That's right. Yeah, you see you always want to go back to where you was raised and born, yes sir, you will, no matter where you might go, places that you like right well and be satisfied for a while, but after while you want to come back home. That's the way, now, it goes.

After her marriage, Maggie stopped playing and singing. Paris' death and the breakup of the family were factors, and Nathan was not interested in music. Finally the arrival of the radio and phonograph brought new music that caused some of Maggie's neighbors and friends to lose interest in the older forms.

Carl: You spent a long period when you didn't play much. . . . Did the younger people, didn't want to hear the old songs?

Maggie: That's one reason. Well, you see, hardly ever back there, they never paid no attention much to none of them old songs, only just older people, older people wanted to hear 'em, but the young generation, they didn't seem like they cared much about it.

Carl: Like, uh, what would they listen—is that, uh, I mean, that was all about the time that the first radios came in, right?

Maggie: That's right, that's right. You see after the radios come out and, and those—this other stuff, why then they all took to that, you see.

Carl: And listened to radio music and didn't care too much about what you—

Maggie: That's right, that's right. You hardly ever heard anybody a-singing much after them, after they started, after the radios.

Carl: Have you learned any songs from the radio?

Maggie: Oh, yeah. I've learned some songs off the radio.

Dwight: Maggie, which songs are the best ones? The ones on the radio or the old pieces, just in your opinion, which do you like the best?

Maggie: Well, I like the old ones the best, some of 'em anyway. I think they have the prettier tunes to them. Now there's some on the radio that's good. Yessir, especially when they first come out.

Burl recalls that he stopped playing in 1930 or 1931. The same factors that influenced Maggie to stop affected him, as well as the added distractions of regular jobs. In the first half of the decade he "shot" dynamite on the logging railroad, then worked as a cook in the Civilian Conservation Corps. The "CC's"

built roads and reseeded forests in the area, trying to undo the damage done by heavy timbering.

Burl married Rosie Hamrick, from Braxton County, and she tried in vain to encourage Burl to keep playing.

> *Burl:* When I got married I just quit fooling with the music and, uh, my wife liked the music though, she liked it, she tried to get me to play—I told her, well—I just quit. And I did, for just about 30 years. I probably would have learned to play pretty good if I'd just a-kept on there.

After the "CC's," Burl raised poultry on a farm on Knapp's Creek between Marlinton and Huntersville. He liked it there but Rosie wanted to live in Richwood, Nicholas County, so they packed their belongings on a friend's logging truck and moved. Rosie worked as a waitress in Richwood while Burl and another man started a grocery store. Burl bought a house with seven acres of land, and when the store failed he made his living raising chickens and vegetables and minding the children of working neighbors.

In the sixties Burl and Rosie moved to a house owned by her brother-in-law John Judy at Stillwell, just south of Marlinton. He worked in Marlinton, including a stint as a janitor at a theater, but soon started running a service station in Huntersville. Although the station produced sufficient income, Burl says taxes and paperwork were "running me plumb crazy" and that it was impossible to hire reliable help. He says, "It was going to kill me if I stayed there." Then in the latter half of the decade Rosie died, and Burl's widowed sister Emmy Roberts moved in with him.

After Maggie and Nathan returned from Ohio, Nathan fed and tended cattle on Wiley Warner's farm near the Williams River. Next they operated a tavern near Stamping Creek at the foot of Kennison Mountain, but Nathan disliked this work. Then they bought an 18-acre farm very near some of Sherman's property on the Williams. Ruie lived with Maggie and Nathan there, and after Nathan died the two sisters stayed alone. The hard winters, with snow that sometimes blocked the road to town for days, finally forced them to join Emmy and Burl in Stillwell.

Sherman Hammons owns a farm on Dave's Run of the Williams where he raises sheep and lives in the summer. In the winter, when he cannot reach his house, he, Allene, and their two grandchildren live in Maggie's house nearby. Like Paris, Sherman is well known locally for his story-telling ability. In a story not unlike Paris' hunting narratives, he describes a recent encounter with a bear during a search for ginseng. He preceded this telling by recalling his father's advice never to run from a bear.

> *Sherman:* I never seen the like of bear sign in all my life, and never paid a bit of attention to it and I sanged, I begin to get kind of tired, never found a bunch, and I set down in a beech patch and I smoked a cigarette. And I got up and, you know, sang don't grow much in beech, that's one place I can't find the sang. And after a while I didn't know whichaway to go, whether to go around the hill or up the hill, or—so . . . I think to myself I'll go on straight around; I knowed every tree cause I'd sanged her enough, I knowed it, and I went on around, oh, I must've went 200 yards out of the beech thicket and looked right down the holler

Sherman Hammons with his grandchildren Kay and Lee Hammons at Sherman's home near the Williams River. Self-timer photograph by fieldworker Carl Fleischhauer (at right) during a 1974 recording session.

and there was a big log laid up, right straight up and down the holler. I looked down and I seen two pods of berries. And the sang growed in patches of 'em, and I said to myself, by George, I found a patch now, maybe, and I went down there and there was four bunches. So I dug 'em and I decided I'd go on up the holler. If I find a bunch of sang I'll circle it, you know, I just sang everywhere. And I went to the upper end of the log and that snow had come, and hung snow and broke timber down, and there's hobbarods and vines all, and I decided I'd just go back down to where I dug the sang, go straight around again and I went to where I dug the sang, I heard something. I stopped there and I heard something a-coming. I heard it was a deer a-coming, and, and I had a little sang stick about that long I shoved—I think it's down here at Joe's yet, I think he's kept it—and I heard they's a-coming right at me. And they was right close to me, and boys, them cherries, you—that's what they was eating, them cherries. You could just rake 'em up. And when it come out, out walked a bear.

It was just about as far from here to the edge of the road out there from me when it walked up. I never paid no attention to it, I was standing there, yet I never moved. And it never scared me nor nothing, for I wasn't scared of 'em at all. And by George it just walked on out to the edge of the bank and started right down over at me. It didn't know I was there. I could tell, you see I can tell when an animal winds me or sees me. Started right down—and it got about as close as here to that pine tree to me and I just said to myself, "Well, I'll just not let you walk over the top of me, I'll just scare the hell out of you." And I just throwed my hands up and came and barked like a dog, boys; that thing was a quick as, uh, any cat that I ever seen in my life. 'Fore you could snap your fingers she whirled, just whirled you know, and I thought she was going to run and she fetched a snort just exactly like a hog, and when she snorted, they was two of them cubs, I'll bet you they went 10 feet on that sugar tree. Now they jumped that far on it and right on up into it and to the top and the other one clim a beech. They was three of 'em.

I set there, I just talked to her like I talk to you, I said, "Come on down here," I said to her. She reared on her hind feet, just opened her mouth and here she come and there I stood. And she kept a-coming and I seen she was going to come on to me and I made up my mind as she come, well she didn't have but just from—it was steep boys, to me—I just made up my mind now, by God, whenever you get down here and you make any

Sherman Hammons at the end of a successful bear hunt. Family collection, date, place, and photographer unknown.

kind of attempt, I'm going to break this club over your head and then I'm a-going to run. That's what I had in my mind, it was my only chance, you see. She just kept a-walking right up to me and the mouth open, it was as red in them t—in there, head, her, uh, ears was laid right back, you couldn't tell she had a ear, and I didn't, uh— And she walked up as close from here to this foot to me. Her head was right agin my feet. She looked me right up in the eye, even her eyes was red she was so mad. She just looked at me, I thought but I never batted my eye. Just stood there. Had the club, though, ready. She just started backward and backed right up that steep bank now, and up to where them two cubs had clim the tree and right there she stopped. And she never took her eye off me now. She was watching me and I just eased one—come pretty nigh to falling—uh, I just eased one foot over the log and hit the ground. And pretty steep on the other side, and, ah, I took backwards to, right back and into them beech trees, I went right out of her sight. I'll be goddamned, when I got out of her sight you didn't know that there was one man there that could travel. There wasn't a log in there but what I jumped.

The Hammons home at Stillwell, 1972.

The Present

By 1969 Maggie, Burl, Ruie, and Emmy were all living in the house at Stillwell. The living room, kitchen, and two bedrooms of the small house are sometimes shared with Sherman's son Roy, their teenage grandnephews Nathan and Jerry Parker, and Kenny "Dock" Hoke, a teenage boy whose relationship is approximately that of an adopted son. Two sheds, an outhouse, and a small garden stand nearby, and there is a spring just outside the back door. Toward the end of summer the spring sometimes runs dry, and the Hammonses get water from an artesian well a few hundred yards away. Both the kitchen stove and a heating stove in the living room burn wood, and although Maggie says chopping wood is her favorite chore, the task usually falls to one of the boys. The house has electricity and the kitchen is equipped with a refrigerator. Social security payments to the three sisters provide the family's main source of income.

This was the household that Dwight Diller approached in May 1969. Dwight is an agriculture student at West Virginia University who grew up in Pocahontas County. After his 1967 release from the Navy, he became interested in traditional music and made friends with Sherman Hammons, who sent him to meet Maggie and Burl. Dwight began to visit regularly and to bring around other enthusiasts of traditional music. Burl and Maggie both credit these visits with rekindling their interest in music.

Between July 1969 and July 1970 Dwight made extensive tape recordings at Burl's and Sherman's homes. He recorded a variety of narratives and conversations as well as music; most of the stories in this history have been transcribed from these tapes. The other traditional music enthusiasts who visited the Hammonses include members of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band, whose LP record (Rounder 0010) contains tunes learned from Burl. Two students from Boston University have made a short film about Marlinton area musicians which features the Hammonses. Beginning in 1970, Burl, Maggie, and Sherman have performed at Marlinton's annual Pioneer Days celebration and at a few nearby fiddlers' conventions. Dwight has organized several informal get-togethers where local musicians and their friends congregate with interested outsiders for an evening or two of music. Six or eight tape recorders may be in use at a get-together, and one or two are often in evidence when visitors come to Burl's house. Maggie

Burl Hammons and Dwight Diller at Burl's home in Stillwell, 1970.

sometimes jokes about the hundreds of photographs that have been taken.

The context for the Hammonses' music and stories has changed. Fiddle tunes are performed at Pioneer Days instead of home dances, and city visitors listen to stories and reminiscences as readily as family members. In this new setting, the family is again recalling long forgotten songs and tales.

Maggie: It was for a long time, you see, I never had banjo at all, I never had no banjo at home, and then, then after I'd married we didn't have no— Now he didn't care much about music, my husband didn't, he didn't care but very little about it, but he never said anything about it. But he didn't care too much about the music and I didn't have nary banjo, I didn't have no banjo to play on and you see you get plumb out of practice when you don't—yes sir, you get plumb out of practice a-playing on it.

Carl: Do you reckon you kept singing, though? I mean, like while you worked?

Maggie: Yes, yes, every once in a while I'd sing, of course you see I didn't sing as much, I didn't sing as much, where when I was home I sung all the time. Even if I'd go a-cow-hunting, we always had cows, and always when I'd go cow-hunting out thataway to get wood or anything, I'd go sing. I just wanted to do it and that's the—and I'd just sing. I could sing good then, now. I could just raise my voice as high as I wanted. Yessir.

Carl: Well, you know so many songs. It's amazing that you can remember—

Maggie: That's right, you're right. And now some of 'em comes to me, some. Now I ain't sung none of 'em to you what I do know. But they just come back to me once in a while now, the songs, back, that I used to sing.

Carl: And you, 30 or 40 years later, you remember all the words?

Maggie: Yessir. There's some of them songs, there's some of them songs that I haven't sung for, Lord it's hard to tell how long it's been since I sung some of 'em. But they just, just like that they come back.

Stimulated by our study of the family, Maggie composed a song she calls "A Life's History" in the spring of 1973, as the project neared completion. She asked Alan Jabbour and me to record it, and after she sang it she remarked that it was a song no one would have heard before.

A LIFE'S HISTORY
by Maggie Hammons Parker

Come all you people and listen to me,
A story I will tell you of a life's history,
It's been so long I forgot, you see,
That's why I'm telling you a life's history.

The winters was long and the winters was bad,
It took everthing that a poor person had,
We had a bad time and it's good time, you know,
But everthing I'm telling you I know it is so.

We had a good daddy and a mother, too,
They always tried to teach us and tell us what to do,
We tried to obey them and do all we could,
We even helped our daddy get in the wood.

One day he looked at us and said,
"Children, we are going to have to have a sled";
He gathered up the pieees and done all he said,
And it wasn't very long till he'd made us a sled.

Then to the woods it's we did go,
Going up the road through the ice and the snow,
We loaded up our sled ever stick that we could,
And it wasn't very long till we had a pile of wood.

Then on the weekends 'd come and say,
"Girls, get ready, we're going to have a play";
So we'd dance all night, yes, we'd dance and we'd sing,
Boy, I can tell you they would make the banjos ring.

Then on Sundays to church we'd go,
To meet all of our people and our friends that we knowed,
They was so fine, yes, they'd treat us so fine,
Boy, we made it going there and back all right.

All of our old friends is passed and gone,
Really I hate to sing it in this song,
But the years has passed and the days come on,
That's the reason I studied up and made of this song.

It was ten miles or more to a little country store,
We had to go to it, now that was for sure,
It took us all day and a part of a night,
Boy, we made it going there and back all right.

Now as I've told you this, you see,
I'm trying now to tell you a life's history,
You can put it on a tape and a record, you see,
Then you can tell of my life's history.

Maggie at the house she owned near the Williams River, where Sherman lived, 1970. Photograph by Dwight Diller.

TAPE SOURCES FOR QUOTATIONS IN THE HAMMONS FAMILY HISTORY

Some of the tape sources in this list are in the collections of the Archive of Folk Culture; they are listed with the "AFS" prefix. The remainder, which are in private hands, are listed by the organizational systems of the owners.

1. Indian Nation. Recorded by Dwight Diller, c. July 1969. Tape B.
2. Fight on Sandy. Diller, c. Oct. 1969. Tape E.
3. Webster wilderness. Diller, c. Jan.-Apr. 1970. Tape J.
4. Civil War recruiting. Diller, c. Jan.-Apr. 1970. Tape J.
5. Grandfather escapes soldiers. Diller, c. Jan.-Apr. 1970. Tape J.
6. Burl on wilderness life. Diller, c. Jan.-Apr. 1970. Tape J.
7. Sherman on wilderness life. Diller, c. July 1969. Tape B.
8. Dog star, Old Christmas. Diller, c. July 1969. Tape B.
9. Shoes, travel, splashdams. Diller, c. Jan.-Apr. 1970. Tape J.
10. Bill Fay—witched cows. Diller, c. Feb.-Mar. 1970. Tape 0.
11. Bill Fay—witched gun. Diller, c. Apr. 1970. Tape D.
12. Yayho story. Diller, c. Oct. 1969. Tape C.
13. Panther story. Diller, c. July 19G9. Tape B.
14. Burl on panthers and pigeons. Diller, c. Oct 1969. Tape C.
15. Old music from Kentucky. Diller, c. Jan.-Apr. 1970. Tape J.
16. Songs from W. Va. Carl Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15,553.
17. How Burl learned fiddle. Fleischhauer, July 27, 1970. Tape G-27-2.
18. Songs learned from relatives. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31. 1971. AFS 15,553.
19. Fiddle contests. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15,552.
20. Maggie singing for five dollars. Fleischhauer and Diller. Nov. 8, 1970.
21. Music at fishing camps. Diller, c. July 1969. Tape F.
22. Dances in homes. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15,552.
23. Tobacco. Diller, c. July 1969. Tape B.
24. Wolf story. Fleischhauer and Diller, Nov. 8, 1970. 15,537 A3.
25. Ruie on logging days. Diller, c. June 1970. Tape A.
26. Wakes. Diller, c. July 1969. Tape B.
27. Church meetings. Diller, c. July 1969. Tape B.
28. Government lands. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15,552.
29. Maggie in Ohio. Fleischhauer, July 1, 1972. AFS 15,561.
30. Music and the radio. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15,552.
31. Burl stops playing. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15,552.
32. Sherman and the bear. Diller, c. Dec. 1969. Tape L.
33. Maggie on singing. Fleischhauer and Diller, Oct. 31, 1971. AFS 15 552.
34. "A Life's History." Alan Jabbour and Fleischhauer, Apr. 21, 1973. AFS 15.566 A2.

Maggie at the grocery: dried beans, snuff, and evaporated milk, 1973.

The Recordings

By Alan Jabbour

Full information on the printed works and long-playing recordings cited in the notes is supplied in the bibliography-discography at the end of the pamphlet. The AFS accession number is given for those recordings in the collections of the Archive of Folk Culture; the last name in an AFS entry is the name of the collector. The following abbreviations are used in the variant lists and bibliography-discography:

bjo	banjo
fdl	fiddle (violin)
gtr	guitar
hca	harmonica
mand	mandolin
pcn	percussion
vcl	vocal

1. OLD SLEDGE

Burl Hammons, fiddle, April 25, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,731 A4.

Burl learned "Old Sledge" from his uncle Edden Hammons. Artley's thesis on "The West Virginia Country Fiddler" (1955), which is virtually the only printed source of central West Virginia fiddle tunes, includes a transcription of the tune played by Emory Bailey of Gilmer County. The Archive of Folk Culture contains two recordings of the tune, by Emory Bailey and by Thomas Dillon of Webster County. Evidently it was once well-known thoughout central West Virginia, but it has not turned up elsewhere. The three available sets are dramatically different in several respects, though they are variants of the same root tune. Burl does not know what "sledge" means. Artley mentions that fiddlers explained the title as a reference to an old fiddler or a horse. The word actually means "sled" or "sleigh," but "Old Sledge" is the name of a card game popular in 19th Century America.

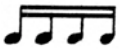
For this tune and several others, Burl tunes his fiddle D-A-E-A (high string to low string). This is one of many *scordatura* tunings popular among older fiddlers in central West Virginia. The art of retuning the fiddle for greater ease of playing or variety of timbre was popular among European violinists in the 17th and 18th centuries—hence the Italian term *scordatura* ("discording") used by musicologists. It survives today in a few pockets of folk instrumental tradition, most notably in the American South, where three or four tunings are still widely used and a few older musicians know as many as eight or ten. The banjo and, to an extent, the guitar have been subject to the same retuning inclinations in Southern folk music.

Careful attention to Burl's rendition of "Old Sledge" will reveal the genius of discord tunings. The D-A-E-A tuning is used for tunes in the key of D

Burl Hammons, 1970.

which feature the notes D and A prominently. The upper octave D is played in unison with the third finger and the open string for emphasis; the A below it is treated the same way. The lower strain is fingered with the patterns used for the key of C in standard tuning. Both strains in Burl's version end on A (the fifth degree), which falls conveniently and

resoundingly on an open string. In short, his particular version of the tune exploits the special tuning so fully that one can hardly imagine it played in any other tuning.

Burl's rendition is otherwise typical of many of his pieces. The notes tend to group in pairs with the first longer than the second—a widespread stylistic trait in Southern folk music. Transcription could render these as rather than  , but in fact the alternating long and short notes are not a mathematical perception so much as a by-product of musical pulse (with corresponding lengthening) on every eighth-note unit. In this pulse there are remarkable points of similarity with the dominant rhythms of American speech. The bowing patterns are fairly simple, featuring frequent use of alternating slurred and separately stroked pairs: . There is an occasional syncopation, using a classical Southern pattern, at the beginning of the high strain using a pair of dotted eighth notes: , a classic Southern pattern. As the other tunes in this record set show, Burl has a number of basic bowing patterns that inform all his renditions and give them, more than any other stylistic traits, their characteristic personal quality. These bowing patterns can fairly be called the soul of oldtime fiddling.

VARIANTS

Printed

1. Artley (1955), p. 34. Emory Bailey, fdl, Shock, Gilmer County, W.Va. See below, item 2.

Recorded

1. AFS 11,302 A11. Thomas Dillon, fdl, from Webster County, W.Va., recorded at Library of Congress, 1956, R. Korson-R. Carneal. Tuned D-A-E-A.
2. AFS 14,087 A6, A43. Emory Bailey, fdl, Shock, Gilmer County, W.Va., early 1950s, Malvin Artley. A6 is a dub of A43. Tuned D-A-E-A.

2. CAMP CHASE

Burl Hammons, narration and fiddle, April 23, 1972, receorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,723 A4.

"Camp Chase" is a splendid example of what often happened in the immigration of a British tune to the American frontier. Camp Chase, in the vicinity of Columbus, Ohio, was used during the Civil War to imprison captured Confederate soldiers. The story of Sol Carpenter's feat of fiddling his way to freedom is now widely circulated throughout central West Virginia, and the tune has spread with the story. Tune and story together help perpetuate Sol Carpenter's memory and musical influence in the region (see Folk Promotions recording matrix 11567-8).

Though Sol Carpenter may have adapted the tune—some versions of the story tell that he added or changed notes in his zeal to get out of Camp Chase—he did not make it up. It appears under other titles throughout the South, most frequently under the title "George Booker." From its distribution from Virginia to Arkansas and its association with Camp Chase it would be a safe guess that the tune has been in circulation since at least the early 19th century. The presumption is verified by the appearance of the tune, titled "George Booker," in *Virginia Reels* (Baltimore, ca. 1839), a small but valuable collection of traditional instrumental tunes arranged for piano by George P. Knauff, a music master then living in Farmville, Va.

Retracing the paths of cultural diffusion a step farther, the earliest known sets of the tune were published in Scotland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They are in strathspey form and are usually called "The Marquis of Huntly's Farewell." Some American sets of "George Booker" maintain the early Scottish form of the tune in all essential features, including the basic melodic line and the "circular" form which avoids the tonic at the end of each strain in order to connect the strains in a continuous melodic flow. Other American sets modify the tune, however, along the lines of characteristic regional or American melodic preferences. The central West Virginia "Camp Chase" group is characterized by introduction of additional beats and measures (a widespread trait in the area, fostered by the persistence of solo performance in the region), the institution of a final tonic for both strains, and the often drastic reshaping of the melodic line in the lower strain. Indeed, if one were to place Burl's "Camp Chase" beside an 18th-century Scottish set of "The Marquis of Huntly's Farewell" without the intermediary versions of the tune for a guide, it would be hard to see the resemblance in the high strain and impossible in the low strain.

Burl's version of "Camp Chase" is somewhat more elaborate than his "Old Sledge," including some complicated bowing patterns and grace-notes. His fiddle is tuned E-A-E-A, a common tuning for the key of A. He originally heard the "Camp Chase" tune and story from Edden Hammons. But when I first visited him in 1970, he had not played the tune for many years and did not remember it to his own satisfaction. Soon after, Dwight Diller visited him with a tape copy of Emory Bailey's version of the tune, recorded

in the 1950s by Malvin Artley. He heard the tape a number of times and was apparently influenced by it during the period that he was restoring "Camp Chase" to his active repertory. Thus his current version, influenced by both his uncle and a central West Virginia fiddler he never knew but with whom he could feel an immediate artistic empathy, is a paridigm of the cultural currents set into motion by the recent involvement of young college students with older traditional musicians.

VARIANTS

Printed

1. "The Marquis of Huntly's Fareweil," Marshall (c. 1781), p. 1.
2. "The Marquis of Huntley's Farewell," Gow (c. 1795), p. 13.
3. "Marquis of Huntly's Farewell," Davie (c. 1825), p. 13.
4. George Booker: A Virginia Reel," Knauff (c. 1839), no. 3, p. 2.
5. "Highland's of Scotland," Coes (1876), p. 52-53.
6. "Marquis of Huntley's Strathspey," White (1880), no. 62.
7. "The Marquis of Huntly's Farewell," Stewart-Robertson (1884), p. 12.
8. "Keeper Hill," O'Neill (1903), no. 1481; (1907), no. 709.
9. "Old Yaller Houn'," Ford (1940), p. 61. From old Tennessee tradition, according to account on p. 180-181. Distant but probably kin.
10. "Camp Chase," Artley (1955), p. 27. Emory Bailey, fdl, Shock, W.Va. Tuned E-A-E-A. Includes story on p. 26.

Recorded

1. "George Boker," 78 rec. (Vocalion 14919). Uncle Am Stuart, fdl, from Morristown, Tenn., 1925. Reissued on Vocalion 5053, Brunswick 1006, Silvertone 3051. Stuart was born in 1853.
2. "Camp Chase," 33 rec. *Old-Time Songs and Tunes from Clay County, W.Va.* (Folk Promotions mtx. 11567-11568). David Frank ("French") Carpenter, fdl, Ivydale, W.Va., 1964. Tuned E-A-E-A. With narration. French Carpenter was the grandson of Sol Carpenter.
3. "George Booker," AFS S314 Bl-B2. Lon Jordan, fdl, Farmington, Ark., 194l, Randolph. Tuned E-A-E-A.
4. "George Booker," AFS 13,033 B27. Henry Reed, fdl, Glen Lyn, Va., 1966, Jabbour.
5. "Georgia Town," AFS 13,704 A14. Dr. Frank White, fdl, Ivydale, W.Va., 1967, Jabbour. Tuned E-A-E-A.
6. "Camp Chase," AFS 14,087 A2, A42. Emory Bailey, fdl, Shock, W.Va., early 1950's, Artley. A2 is a dub of A42. Tuned E-A-E-A. With narration.

This Sol Carpenter, they called him Devil Sol. And he was in the—he was in the army camp, I—it was Camp Chase, I believe it's in Ohio, somewhere out in O—in that part of the country; and he was a—the captain come in one morning and he told those boys, he said that "The best fiddler," he said, "that's in this camp, I'm a-gonna set him free." And, uh, Sol said there was some awful good fiddlers in there. And so he thought he'd play that "Camp Chase." And, he said that he—he put parts in it, he said, that he didn't think was in it, but he said he wanted to get out of there so bad. And, he said after he played, said those other fellows played, and he told, he said—told Sol to play that tune again, he said. And he said he tried to play it just the best he could; and he said, "Well, Sol, you're free."

3. THREE FORKS OF CHEAT

Burl Hammons, fiddle, April 25, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,731 A6.

The most southerly sources of the Cheat River system lie in northern Pocahontas County; from there they flow generally northward toward where the river joins the Monongahela just across the Pennsylvania border. Burl learned this tune from his uncle Peter Hammons. The tune is one of many, not only in the Hammons family tradition but in Southern fiddle repertory in general, that celebrate waterways in their titles. They are a reminder of the importance of rivers and creeks to the life of the early frontier, where waterways were both the favored locations for settlement and the natural avenues for travel.

The settlers of the Southern frontier saw the world as a network of waterways, and the tune titles reflect it, just as a later generation of tune titles includes an imaginative celebration of roads and trains. The Hammonses and their neighbors still use creeks and rivers for their geographical orientation, rather than roads, and they speak almost reverentially of the imaginative accomplishment of the early settlers in naming the creeks and mountains of the region.

"Three Forks of Cheat" is played with the fiddle tuned C-sharp-A-E-A, a widespread tuning for tunes in the key of A that feature C-sharp as a principal note in the upper strain.

4. THE YANKEE AND MARCUM

Burl Hammons, narration, April 24, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,724 A2.

I have not encountered this story elsewhere; even within the Hammons family, Sherman tells a different version that substitutes their grandfather for Marcum and omits the final death episode. The motifs out of which the story is constructed are easily encountered, however. Witch stories of all sorts are current in the Hammons family repertory and throughout the region. Male witches are mentioned at least as often as female witches, perhaps more. The formula of climbing a mountain and shooting a gun at the sun to gain magical powers is particularly characteristic of the Allegheny region; several variations of the formula have been published from eastern Kentucky, which culturally is closely tied with central and southern West Virginia. The region seems to generate witching stories focusing upon guns and hunting more often than European and American tradition in general—probably a reflection of the crucial importance of the gun and the art of hunting to the woods life of the region.

Burl's story is a good sample of his story-telling style—and, to a great extent, the style of the whole family. The pace of the story's progress is leisurely, whether the words come fast or slow; the tellers are fond of repetition for rhetorical emphasis and pacing; the telling style frequently uses fragmented phrases instead of complete sentences, conveying a sequence of images rolling rhythmically by; and there is a good deal of dialogue. The tellings tend to dwell upon dialogues that represent a conflict between characters, even if it is a simple difference of opinion; typical is the seesaw discussion between the Yankee and Marcum about whether the deer that left the track was too far away. This preoccupation seems to me to be rooted in the deep fear of and fascination with personal conflicts in the culture. Elaborate efforts are made in normal conversation to seek out points of agreement and avoid argument and individual assertion; the presumption is that harmonious relationships with other people require considerable effort. The ceremonious establishment of social harmony is regarded as important to stave off dangerous conflicts of individual personalities.

The phrase "he said" is particularly noticeable as a stylistic feature. It serves partly as a rhetorical period giving a certain characteristic cadence to the family narratives. In addition, it often functions as a stylistic reminder that the narrative is to be taken not as a fanciful creation of the teller but as an accurate report of information passed along from the telling of another. There are hardly any stories of acknowledged fantasy in the family tradition; the essential narrative style is founded upon the presumption that narrative is a medium for fact. On the other hand, there is a reluctance to be pinned into an absolute commitment to personal belief in a story; what the teller asserts is the force of tradition rather than the force of his personal beliefs. These qualities of the narratives in the Hammons family tradition make it impossible to distinguish "tales," "legends," or other narrative genres on the basis of such criteria as belief or disbelief of the teller.

Following is a listing of motifs in Thompson and Baughman for the purposes of cross-reference: D1721.1 Magic power from devil; D1777 Magic results from power of thought; D2074 Attracting by magic; D2074.1 Animals magically called; D2197 Magic dominance over animals; G224.4 Person sells soul to devil in exchange for witch powers; G278 Death of witch; G303.9.1 The devil as a builder; G303.9.1.3 Devil as builder of mill; M211 Man sells soul to devil; M211.2 Man sells soul to devil in return for devil's building house (barn, etc.).

The following works contain interesting comparative material.

1. Briggs, Legends, I, p. 115. Man sells soul to devil, makes animal screech at death.
2. Roberts, *South from Hell-for-Sartin*, p. 192 (no. 100a). Witch story, including similar description of becoming a witch from eastern Ky.
3. Roberts, *Up Cutshin and Down Greasy*, p. 88-89. Similar description of becoming a witch, from eastern Ky.
4. Thomas, *Kentucky Superstitions*, p. 6-7, belief in witches in eastern Ky.; p. 277-283 (no 3773-3839), witch beliefs, mostly eastern Ky., including no. 3773-3775, how to become a witch.
5. "Witch Stories," 33 rec. *Aunt Molly Jackson* (Rounder 1002). A similar narrative on how to become a witch, from eastern Ky.

> They was a, a, a, a Marcum, a feller by the name of Marcum, and they was a Yankee there, ah, he come—they didn't know where he'd come from, this feller did, and—and he, this feller got talking about building a mill, you know, a grist mill, and he told him he could build one. And he got this feller, this stranger to build his mill for him, he told him he'd just hire him to build the mill for him. And he went to work at the mill.
>
> And it—it kindly got scarce, you know, directly, uh, meat, you know, they killed the bigger part of their meat, and so, he asked this feller, he said, uh, to Marcum he said, "Why don't you get out," he said, "and," he said, "and kill us a —a deer?" he said. "Well," Marcum said, uh, "that's kindy hard," he said, "but," he said, "probably I can kill one," he said. And Marcum went out and hunted that day and he never killed nary none. "Why," he said, "if you've seen any

sign," he said, "I can kill a deer." And "Well," he said, "they're plenty of sign," he said, "I just didn't happen to see ary one." And he said, "Well, I'll go with you in the morning."

And he said they took out, and he said they didn't go but a little piece till here'd went a deer. And he said he looked the track and he said—told him, he said, "Now that deer's a long ways from here," he said. "But," he said, "I think," he said, "we can kill it." "Oh," Marcum said, "it ain't no use to track that deer, follow after that deer, just no telling how far it is," said "it's no use to follow after it," he said. "Well," he said, "I believe we can kill it," he said. And he said—told Marcum, the Yankee did, he said, "Just," he said, "just get up there," he said, "and sit down." "Oh," Marcum said, "it ain't no use to set here," he says, "no telling where;" he says, "that deer is, they ain't no use to set here," he said. And "Well," he said, "now— No," he said, "we—we might kill that deer." And "No," he said, "ain't no use." And he—and he said, "Sit down there." And Marcum just sat down, just setting there, and he said he got right down over the track, this fellow did, ca'— And he said, he said, "Don't you speak," he told him, he said, "Don't you speak," he said. And Marcum said he just set there a little while, he said he thought that was one of the biggest, craziest men setting there over that deer track. And he said he set there right smart while, he said. And after a while he said he heard something a-coming the way the deer'd went, he said he heared something a-coming. And he said he looked, he said directly and he saw that deer a-coming, he said it was just a-coming, and he said its hair was all buzzed up and its tongue was out of its mouth, he said, that far, just like it had run to death. And he said he just set there, he said, and he—and he said the deer just, he said, come up in about, oh, he said 20 steps to him, and he said, he said, "Well all right now, kill it." And he just took the gun and killed it. "And how—," he said. "Now," he said, "I can't eat a bite of that deer myself," said, "you can eat all you want," he said, "I won't eat a bite of it." "Well," he said, "I don't know why." "Well," he said, "I won't. But," he said, "that deer's just as good as any deer."

"Well," he said, "now I'll tell you one thing," said, "if you'll tell me how you done that," he said, "I'll just give you anything that I ever seen," he said—I think he had two or three cows that he said he'd give him, a cow or something—"just give you anything if you just tell me." "Now," he said, "it ain't no use to tell me," he said, "I don't want n' anything. But," he said, "it wouldn't be no use for me to tell you because," he said, "you wouldn't do it if I'd tell you." "Oh yes," he said, "I will," he said, "I'd do anything just if I can just do a thing like that." "Now, well now," he said, "it wouldn't be no use, uh, to tell you because," he said, he—"you would not do it if I'd tell you." "Oh yes," he said, "I will," and he just kept on tell— And he said, "Besides, if I'd tell you," he said, "you'd aim to kill me, and," he said, "that you'll not do; I can tell you before it." "No I won't," he said, "now you know a friend like you," he said, uh— "Yes," he said, "but," he said, "I—it ain't no use to tell you."

Then he just kept on. "All right," he said, "I'll tell you." He said, "You go up on that high mountain, and," he said, "when the—when you see the sun," he said, "a-getting up of a morn, just as it's hit the hill," he said, "you shoot at that sunball, nine mornings. And," he said, "the ninth morning there'll be a drop of blood on your gun barrel. And," he said, "you take a piece of paper and," he said, "and cut a little place on your arm, and write it on it how long you want to be sold to the devil and give it to him when he comes to get it." "All right," he said, he'd do that.

And he'd go ever morning up there and—and the ninth morning, he said, when he shot that time, he said he looked onto the gun barrel and there was a drop of blood. And he just cut a little place on his arm and writ I think it was a year, uh, he wanted, just— And he said the gun never quit roaring; he said the gun never quit roaring, he said it just kept on roaring, he said the longer the worse, and the longer the worse, and after a while he said the whole earth just seemed like it got to jarring with him just up and down. And he said directly he looked a-coming through the treetops, and he said there come some kind of a thing that they was balls of fire coming out of its mouth. And he just dropped and away he went to the house and told 'em what he'd seen and all about this. He told them all about it and he said, "I'm a-going down to kill the Yankee just as quick as I can go down. Man telling me such stuff as that, I'm a-going down to kill him." They tried to beg him not to go. "Yes sir, I'm a-going down," he said, "to kill the Yankee." And he just took his gun and started down where he was a-working on the mill and the Yankee seen him a-coming. He knowed just exactly what he'd done.

And "Well," he said, "I've come to kill you." He said, "Just as I expected. But," he said, "you ain't a—yet." And he just—the Yankee just

picked up his gun, and just took and shot him, and they said that he just jumped up and just crowed like a rooster and just fell over dead; the Yankee just quit and they never did hear tell of him no more, he just quit right there and got—went right on. They was no way they could get trace of him. Uh, they had no phones, they had no way to trace him in the— That was the last of him, never heared tell of him again.

5. SUGAR GROVE BLUES

Burl Hammons, fiddle; April 25, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,729 A2.

Burl made up this tune himself. Our conversation about it throws some light upon the occasion of its composition:

Alan: What was the name of that again?
Burl: "The Sugar Grove Blues."
Alan: That's the name you gave it?
Burl: Yeah. That's the name I gave it.
Alan: How did you make it up? How did you go about making up—
Burl: Well, I just got to thinking one day maybe I could make one up, and just started off, played a little bit of it, and kindly just studied it out and just played it.
Alan: That's a good tune. I like it. Do you have any idea what—what, uh, suggested it in your mind?
Burl: Well, I'll tell you what's kinda suggested it in my mind. There was—there was a fellow played a tune that he—he just played a little part in it, and I didn't get to hear the rest of it—just played just a, just a little bit of it, and I didn't—it went off the radio—didn't, I didn't get to hear it, and I just think to myself, "I'll just fix the rest of that and just play it."
Alan: So you did?
Burl: Yeah, and I did.
Alan: Yeah, that's good. I like that.

There is no way to prove it, but it seems likely to me that the tune Burl heard over the radio was "Gray Eagle," a tune well known among country fiddlers in the South and often played on record and radio in recent years. Burl does not play the tune—it does not appear to have been current among older fiddlers in his area—but he can hardly have escaped hearing it at some time or other, and hearing a tune can leave an impression even when it does not register consciously. Neither of the strains in his "Sugar Grove Blues" is a close match to the more or less standard modern "Gray Eagle," but both bear a general resemblance. The high strain also bears a

Alan Jabbour and Burl Hammons at a recording session at Burl's home in Stillwell, 1973. The recorder is a Nagra III; the microphone stand is positioned on a foam rubber pad to dampen the sound of Burl's foot patting.

resemblance to "Walking in the Parlor," which Burl does know and which is probably another scion of the original "Gray Eagle" melody. The title refers to a grove of sugar maples ("sugars") Burl remembers on nearby Stony Creek. The "blues" tag reflects the permeating influence of blues (in titles like this, even when the tunes are not in the usual blues forms) on 20th-century Appalachian music.

Some Southern instrumental musicians may have the knack of creating new tunes through studied composition; but for most, in the relative absence of models for systematic, conscious composition, making up new tunes seems to follow one of two models. The first is dream composition, reported in British-American folk tradition since Caedmon, who according to Bede's account became the first composer of Christian songs in English by means of a nocturnal revelation. Magoun's excellent article on the poem Caedmon's Hymn dwells upon the psychological underpinnings of such revelations but stresses the particular problem of Caedmon's prior mental block against singing, thus leaving the impression that such sleeping revelations are connected with extraordinary psychological upheavals. In fact, they are reported as a widespread and quite normal means of composition free of the restraints of consciousness, not only in British-American tradition but in many cultures around the world. I have personally known a number of fiddlers who say they dreamt tunes in this manner and waked up still remembering the tune, adding it to their repertory by getting out their fiddle and playing it through to fix it in their memory.

The second method of composition is closer to what Burl describes for "Sugar Grove Blues." It is used when the musician is awake, but subconscious creation still plays a large part in its workings. A fiddler will simply "diddle" or "fool around" on the instrument when he is alone, usually beginning with a fragment that is on his mind. The exercise of the instrument over musical phrases and patterns long since assimilated into the musician's art serves a purpose akin to a reverie, freeing the mind for more or less subliminal organization of musical ideas. Burl's composition may have been more conscious than this, but it was probably closer to this model than to systematic composition.

SELECTED VARIANTS OF "GRAY EAGLE"
Printed

1. "The Miller of Drone," Astor (ca. 1807), p. 1.
2. "Grey Eagle Hornpipe," Winner (1864), p. 20.
3. "Grey Eagle Hornpipe," Winner (1866), p. 55.
4. "Grey Eagle," Coes (1876), p. 58.
5. "Grey Eagle—Hornpipe," Harding (1891), p. 21.
6. "Gray Eagle," Fillmore (1927), p. 34.
7. "Grey Eagle Hornpipe," Jigs and Reels (1937), p. 24.
8. "Grey Eagle," Ford (1940), p. 86.

Recorded (representative selection)

1. "Arkansas Travelers," 78 rec. (Vocalion 15192, Vocalion 5081). Uncle Dave Macon, bjo; Sid Harkreader, fdl, 1925. Medley.
2. "Gray Eagle," 78 rec. (Gennett 6130, Champion 15315, Silvertone 8183, Supertone 9170). Taylor's Kentucky Boys; Marion Underwood, bjo; Jim Booker, fdl, 1927. Reissued on Traditional Country Classics (Historical HLP 8003).
3. "Grey Eagle," 78 rec. (Columbia 20560, set H-8); reissued on 33 rec. (Columbia HL 9010). *Roy Acuff & His Smoky Mountain Boys*; Tommy Magness, fdl, 1949.
4. "Grey Eagle," 78 rec. (Mercury 6112). Georgia Slim, fdl, late 1940s. From Texas.
5. "Grey Eagle," 33 rec. *Texas Hoedown* (County 703). Bartow Riley, fdl, c. 1965.
6. "Grey Eagle," 33 rec. *Traditional Music* (Kanawha 307). W. Franklin George, bjo, c. 1967.

6. TURKEY IN THE STRAW

Burl Hammons, narration and fiddle, April 25, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,732 A7 and l4,733 Al.

Burl says that his own set of "Turkey in the Straw" is not as good as the set he heard the skeleton play; nevertheless, it is one of the most interesting I have come across. It is more elaborate than most renditions, with a few rather intricate bowing patterns and left-hand ornamentations scattered throughout. The high strain is quite unusual in its omission of the fourth degree (C) and its leap to the high B in the third phrase. Burl tunes his fiddle in standard tuning (E-A-D-G), which is customary for tunes in the key of G.

I have not encountered this story elsewhere. But the association of fiddling with supernatural forces and creatures, including the devil, is old in Euro-American civilization. American lore about the devil and the fiddle is very common; see Halpert's 1943 essay on the subject. Baughman lists motif G303.25.23 The devil and music.

A history of "Turkey in the Straw" and related tunes, with a lengthy list of variants, is included in the booklet accompanying the Library of Congress LP recording *American Fiddle Tunes* (AFS L62), p. 27-30.

> Well, I was—where we lived, we lived down on the Williams River, when the—when I saw this thing, and so— And we always went to bed pretty early, my dad did, and—about eight, nine o'clock we always went to bed—and I laid down and I,

didn't seem like I could go to sleep. And I laid there a while and just directly I heared the click, open come the door, and in walked this skeleton of a man. And he was the tallest man, Lord, I've—he was really tall, a-must've been six or seven feet tall or looked like that.

And he had—I noticed he had a fiddle in his hand when he walked in; and he walked about the middle of the floor where I was a-sleeping. And he took off on that "Turkey in the Straw," and boys I never had heared nothing played like that in my life. And I shut my eyes to keep from looking at the skeleton of a man, but I was still listening at that tune. And, when I opened my eyes, he'd—I waited till he finished the tune before I opened my eyes, but he—when he finished it he was still a-standing but he just turned and walked to the door, and just "click" open come the door, and out he went.

And the next morning I was a-telling my dad about that. "Ah," he said, "that's a bunch of foolishness. Quit—" he said, "that was only just a dream or something you had," he said. "Quit thinking of such stuff as that." "No," I said, "it was the truth." I said, I said I wished I could've played "Turkey in the Straw," heared somebody else play "Turkey in the Straw" like that. "Ah," he said, "that's foolishness."

And I never told no more about it, but I can still re—mind that—whatever it was, I don't know whether it was a dream or not, but I tell you I can still mind about it. A six or seven y—a fellow only six or seven year old and still can mind that just as well it was the day, you know it's bound to be pretty plain, now wa—or he couldn't've minded that.

7. THE ROUTE

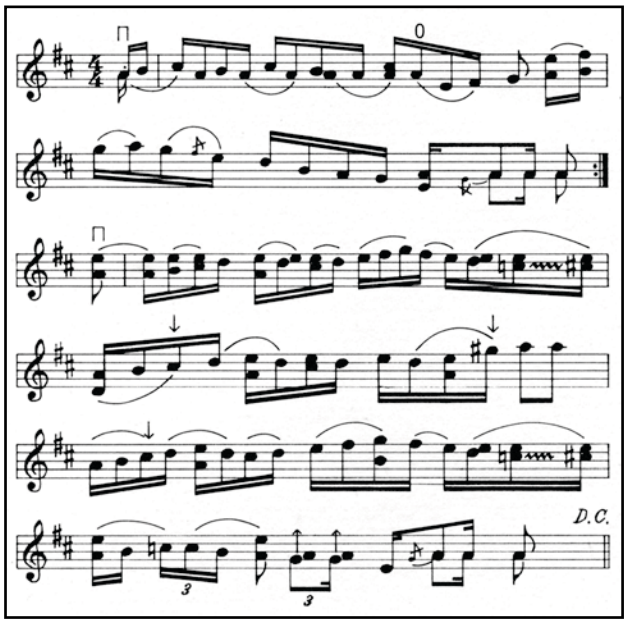
Burl Hammons, fiddle, April 25, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,730 Al.

From its known modern distribution this tune seems to have spread across the Southern frontier in the early 19th century. Knauff included it in his *Virginia Reels* (c. 1839), and isolated 20th-century instances of it have cropped up from West Virginia to Texas and Missouri (see Morris, no. 23 "Missippi [*sic*] Sawyer"; Hamblen, p. 39 "Jolly Blacksmith"). The West Virginia sets I have encountered are called "The Route" and are associated with some bawdy verses. Burl learned his set from his uncle Edden.

Burl plays the tune in either standard tuning or E-A-D-A; the latter would affect only the timbre, since the tune does not use the lowest-pitched string. It is one of the tunes that feature his elaborate style. The following rough transcription of the fourth time through the tune on the recording should make more visible the complicated bowing patterns. Especially notable is the way syncopations at the very heart of the music of the American South are not simply superimposed but actually built into the bowing patterns. The pattern which divides eight sixteenths into groups of 3-3-2, is fundamental here and in the bowing of other fiddlers throughout the South. Such patterns have some precedent in British tradition, but I have come to believe that they coalesced as fundamental stylistic components in the Southern Piedmont and the Appalachians as part of the British and African cultural syncretism in the early South. Syncopated patterns subsequently seeped from Southern folk music into American popular music from the 1840s on, and they are at the root of the world-wide phenomenon of "American music" in this century.

Smith Hammons holds a portrait of his father Edden Hammons, 1972.

THE ROUTE



VARIANTS
Printed
1. "Colonel Crocket: A Virginia Reel," Knauff (c. 1839), no. 3, p. 3.
2. "Missippi [sic] Sawyer," Morris (1927), no. 23. 2d and 3d strains only.
3. "Jolly Blacksmith (She Wouldn't come at all)," Hamblen (n.d.), p. 39. From Va.-Ind. tradition.

Recorded
1. "The Gal on the Log," 78 rec. (Victor 19699). Capt. M. J. Bonner, fdl, 1925. From Dallas, Tex.
2. "Jenny on the Railroad," 78 rec. (Vocalion 5297). Carter Brothers and Son, 1928. From northern Miss.
3. "The Route," AFS 13,033 B29. Henry Reed, fdl, Glen Lyn, Va., 1966, Jabbour.
4. "The Route," AFS 13,033 B30. Henry Reed, fdl, Glen Lyn, Va., 1966, Jabbour. Another version, as his uncle played it.

8. FINE TIMES AT OUR HOUSE

Burl Hammons, fiddle, April 25, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,729 A5.

This tune has turned up infrequently around the country, but its wide distribution shows it to be an old and once widely known fiddle tune. Burl learned it from his uncle Neal Hammons. The high strain sometimes appears with other older American tunes, but the low strain is the characteristic "Fine Times at Our House" strain. The focus upon the low strain and relegation of the high strain to secondary musical function (to the point of being filler at times) is more characteristic of British than American tradition; American tunes more often place the musical focus upon the high strain and use the low strain for filler. But "Fine Times at Our House" has not yet turned up outside of American tradition.

Burl tunes the fiddle E-A-D-A here. This tuning serves both for tunes in the key of D and for tunes in A which use the lower D as an important note. "Fine Times" is in the latter category; note the unison double-stop D that concludes the second phrase of the low strain. Burl's rendition also contains the added beats which are a central West Virginia hallmark. Particularly characteristic is the way he arrests the progress of the tune during the third phrase of the first strain, dwelling for an extra beat upon the high E with a unison double-stop.

VARIANTS
Printed
1. Morris (1927), p. 3. From Mo.
2. Wilkinson (1942), p. 10. J. H. Chisholm, fdl, Greenwood, Va., before 1936.
3. Bayard (1944), no. 76. Irvin Yaugher, Jr., Mt. Independence, Pa., 1943.

Recorded
1. 33 rec. *Fine Times at Our House* (Folkways FS 3809). John Summers, fdl, Marion, Ind., 1964. High strain different.

9. JIMMY JOHNSON

Burl Hammons, fiddle, Maggie Hammons Parker, beating sticks, April 24, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,728 A1.

Under a variety of titles this tune has turned up regularly in the repertories of older fiddlers across the upper South, particularly in Virginia and West Virginia. An Oklahoma set shows it to be even more widespread. The tune usually consists of three parts, descending from high to low range; but sets with two or four parts have turned up. Burl learned "Jimmy Johnson Pass the Jug Around the Hill" (the fuller title) from his cousin Paris Hammons, uncle Pete's son, who played it on banjo.

The device of beating straws on a fiddle's strings while someone else plays it has been documented throughout the South but rarely elsewhere. The beater ordinarily uses two straws, sticks, or knitting needles and beats on the lower strings while the fiddler plays on the upper. Sometimes the beater switches to the upper strings when the melody moves to the lower; and sometimes melody and percussion are on the same strings, though it is not easy to draw a bow smoothly on a string vibrating from percussion. I have seen and recorded one interesting variation in technique, where the beater uses only one straw, holding it in the middle

with one hand. The forefinger of the other hand is held above and in front of the grip-point on the straw, and the thumb of the other hand is below and behind. When the other hand is moved up and down, each stroke drives the straw down onto the string.

Maggie beats with two sticks, in the style her uncle Neal taught her. She sometimes varies her beating pattern by introducing triplets. The tune is in the key of A and is played with the fiddle tuned E-A-E-A, which is usually preferred for beating because the open strings correspond with the first and fifth degrees of the scale, and because the fiddle is very resonant in this tuning.

Beating straws and monophonic duets (with some heterophony) are the only forms of ensemble playing in the older Hammons family tradition. A sense of ensemble seems to be a fairly recent development in many parts of West Virginia; perhaps it drifted in gradually over the last hundred years, reaching certain areas and certain musical genres at different times. The acquisition of a feeling for ensemble probably moved into the region on three musical fronts: ensemble part-singing in the gospel style for sacred music; instrumental accompaniment by the singer for his solo singing, sacred or secular; and instrumental ensemble in secular string bands. The Hammons family is musically quite conservative in this respect, and it can be fairly said that the varieties of ensemble music that have been sweeping the upper South during this century have had a negligible effect upon their essential musical style.

Beating sticks: Maggie Hammons Parker and Burl Hammons, 1973.

Theirs is the old British-American unaccompanied solo style of music-making, tempered only occasionally by such ensemble devices as beating straws.

VARIANTS

Printed

1. "Give the Fiddler a Dram," Thede (1967), p. 53. G. Blevins, fdl, Bryan County, Okla. Tuned E-A-E-A. Two strains.
2. "Old Jimmy Johnson," Boette (1971), p. 60. Tom Kiser, bjo and vcl, Kiser, W.Va., 1969, collected by Michael E. Bush.

Recorded

1. "Johnny, Bring the Jug around the Hill," 78 rec. (Brunswick 331). Kessinger Brothers, Clark Kessinger, fdl, 1929. From Charleston, W.Va.
2. "John Brown's Dream," 78 rec (Gennett 6220; Silvertone 5183). DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters, Ben Jarrell, fdl, 1927. From Surry County, N.C.
3. "Little Rabbit," 78 rec. (Crown 3172). Crockett's Kentucky Mountaineers.
4. "I Am Gonna Marry That Pretty Little Girl," unissued 78 rec. (Gennett mtx. GE 14018). The Virginia Mountain Boomers, 1928. Issued on 33 rec. Early Country Music (Historical BC-2433-1).
5. "John Brown's Dream," 33 rec. *Instrumental Musie of the Southern Appalachians* (Tradition TLP 1007) . Hobart Smith, fdl, Saltville, Va., 1956. See also item 10.
6. "Pretty Little Miss," 33 rec. *Clawhammer Banjo* (County 701). Fred Cockerham, bjo, Low Gap, N.C., 1964.
7. "Old Jimmy Johnson," 33 rec. *Old-Time Music from Calhoun Co., W.Va.* (Folk Promotions 41942) . Roscoe Parsons, fdl, Phoeba Parsons, beating sticks, c. 1966. Tuned E-A-E-A.
8. "John Brown's Dream," 33 rec. *Down to the Cider Mill* (County 713). Tommy Jarrell, fdl, Fred Cockerham, bjo, Surry County, N.C., ca. 1968. Fiddle tuned E-A-E-A. Tommy Jarrell is son of Ben Jarrell (item 2).
9. "Old Hen She Cackled," AFS 1572 B3. W. M. Stepp, fdl, Mrs. Mae Puckett, gtr, Salyersville, Ky., 1937, A. Lomax-E. Lomax. Tuned E-A-E-A.
10. "John Brown's Dream," AFS 6723 B3. Hobart Smith, fdl, L. Smith, gtr, Saltville, Va., 1942, A. Lomax.
11. "Paddy on the Turnpike," AFS 13,033 B16. Henry Reed, fdl, Glen Lyn, Va., 1966, Jabbour.
12. "Paddy on the Turnpike," AFS 13,705 Al7. Dr. Frank White, fdl, Ivydale, W.Va., 1967, Jabbour.
13. "Jimmy Johnson Bring the Jug around the Hill," AFS 13,705 B18. Dr. Frank White, fdl, Ivydale, W.Va., 1967, Jabbour. Tuned E-A-E-A.
14. "Old Jimmy Johnson," AFS 13,709 B9. Lee Triplett, fdl, Winston Ward, gtr, Clay County, W.Va., recorded in Glenville, W.Va., 1968, Jabbour.
15. "Paddy on the Turnpike," AFS 13,709 B24. Lee Triplett, fdl, Winston Ward, gtr, Clay County, W.Va., recorded in Glenville. W.Va., 1968. Jabbour.

10. PARSONS' ROCK

Maggie Hammons Parker, narration, with comments by Burl Hammons and Alan Jabbour, April 23, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,722 A5.

Parsons' Rock along the Williams River near where the Hammonses grew up takes its name from the Parsons family who lived under it for a period. Maggie's story is a fine example of the hundreds of humorous anecdotes the Hammonses tell about neighbors past and present. The assumed vocal postures and dialect are a frequent part of their storytelling. John Parsons' "intull" was evidently the old dialect pronunciation for "until" but has become stylized into a nonsensical catch-phrase. The lofty and ceremonious tone of voice they often use to represent the generation before them must reflect the regard with which they viewed that generation and the authority invested in it. The discussion of how the Parsonses got their food, which encases the owl story, is typical of the Hammonses' habit of pondering inexplicable phenomena, whether natural or apparently supernatural. A great number of their stories are narrative efforts to comprehend the ultimately incomprehensible workings of the world. Local anecdotes of this sort are so imbued with the lifestyle of the family in earlier days that the records seemed incomplete without them.

Maggie: Well sir, I often think and I often study how that old man lived down there in that Parsons' Rock that long, where he got anything to eat.

Alan: Who was that?

Maggie: The old man Parsons—John Parsons. I don't know how he lived, he had a family there. I don't know how many children he had when he lived there under that rock.

Alan: He lived under a rock?

Maggie: Yes, sir.

Alan: What—?

Maggie: I don't know how long he lived— now it's a way below Tea Creek, back up against the mountain on the other side of the river.

Burl: It's there below Ken's Creek.

Maggie: Yes, up on the hill there.

Burl: And, the—now I don't just exactly know where the rock is now, I been there, I know—

Maggie: I've been there and camped in under it.

Burl: But it's right just down below Ken's Creek, between Ken's Creek, I think, and the Big Slip.

Maggie: Yes, I think that's where it's at.

Burl: Right up on the hill.

Maggie: But I know it's across the river, on the other side. And how they ever lived—and they didn't even know it. The girls didn't that was big enough to remember, they didn't evenly know it.

Alan: Hm.

Maggie: Why he couldn't have killed nothing much for, for cause he didn't have no ammunition to—

Burl: Well, you know he had to eat something, now you know—

Maggie: Well now you know it, Burl, where did he get his stuff at to eat?

Burl: Well now you know very well they eat something—

Maggie: But you know they eat something in that.

Alan: Well, how did he come to live down there?

Maggie: I don't know. Why he just lived anywheres.

Burl: That's the one that eat the hootowl.

Alan: What was his name?

Maggie: John Parsons.

Burl: That's the one that eat the hootowl.

Maggie: That's the one that eat the owl that was bad sick. And Uncle Pete was a-going—going hunting, and he said he thought he'd heared the old man John was sick and he thought he'd stop and see him. And he stopped and the old woman was there, I don't know how many children he had then. He asked her how the old man John was. "Oh," she said, "he's in bed." She said, "He can't, can't get up nor nothing." "Well, what ails him?" "Well," she said, "I don't know."

So he went in. The old man was a-laying there and he asked, "What ails you, Mr. Parsons?" He told him, he was bad sick. "Now," he said, "if I —" "Well", he said, "I— What could I do for you?" "Well," he said, "I don't know as you could do anything," he said, "without it was to kill me a owl." "Kill you a owl?" "Yes," he said, "kill me a —" "Well, I will be damned if I don't reckon I can kill you a owl, for they're thick," and they was plenty of 'em. "Well," he said, "if I had a owl it'd cure me intull." And he said, "Well, I can see—a owl cure a man that's sick?" "Why yes," he said, "they can't be beat, they'll cure you of any kind of disease." "Well, I can kill you a owl," he said, "if that's all that ails you."

And so he went on, by gosh, and he killed the owl. And he swore it wouldn't've weighed two ounces. When he come back he— "Now here's that owl," he said, "and I will be damned if it'll weigh two ounces," he said. He said, "Well now that's," he said, "what I've been a-wanting is the owl." "Well now, here it is," he said. And so the old woman got it picked just as quick as she g— could. And Pete stayed a while and went on. "I'll be back to see you," he said, "to see how the owl and you's a-gettin along." "Well," he said, "intull I'll be up. I'll be up," he said, "when I eat that owl." "Well, they might be enough," he said, "for you a few bites, it can't be much," he said, "for it won't weigh two ounces," he said.

And so Pete went on, he went on home and told 'em about stopping there and killing the old man a owl. Well, they'd never heared of that. So in a few days he just took it on hisself, of course he was a-hunting, and back went Pete. Along by—and by gosh when he got back the old man was up, a-going around, yes he was up. "Well, I'm glad to see you, Peter, intull," he said, "I'm glad." "What did the owl do to you?" he said. "Why," he said, "it cured me, I got right up," he said, "as soon as I eat that owl." "Well now, that's the first time," he said, "that ever I heared of that," he said, "a man a-eating a owl and it a-curing him," he said. "Well intull," he said, "it cured me, Peter," he said, "maybe you can kill me another," he said, and I don't know how many owls that Pete killed for that old man.

Alan: But they actually lived under the rock?

Maggie: Yes sir.

Alan: What, is it like an overhanging rock?

Maggie: No, it just comes out and makes a big— just a clift, and just comes out and makes a big shelter. And they cut something, I don't know, some kind of poles or something and sided it in on each side thataway, and had to build their fire right in front, front of it. Well, what did they cook?

Burl: I don't know.

11. IN SCOTLAND TOWN

Maggie Hammons Parker, vocal, October 23, 1970, recorded by Carl Fleischhauer and Dwight Diller. AFS 15,529 A16.

Maggie Hammons Parker, Burl Hammons, and Alan Jabbour, conversation, September 21, 1970, recorded by Alan Jabbour. AFS 14,265 A9.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first instance of this ballad in the United States, except along the upper New England coast. It is an old British ballad, based upon a story that occurs in medieval romances (see Child 17, "Hind Horn"). Nearly all known versions have been taken down in Scotland and along the northeast coast of Canada and the United States. Maggie's version is not remarkably different from the central modern tradition of the ballad, in both the British Isles and the New World. She learned it from her cousin Paris, who is reputed to have picked it up "on Cranberry."

Maggie has been lionized a bit about this song; visitors with some knowledge of ballad tradition keep making much of it, perhaps to her annoyance, for they tend to emphasize British origins, while she is a firm believer in the creativity of the early American frontier. Though the Hammonses may admit to the theoretical possibility of British origin for their family and their traditions, their imaginative view of the past focuses upon frontier origins, and they react to the British notion without interest. This is the context of her comments here, recorded at the conclusion of another rendition of the song.

Her objection to the song, as she says, is not because of the story, which strikes her as believable, but because the tune seems unsatisfactory. Almost certainly her dissatisfaction stems from the fact that the tune is really half of a tune. The usual tune for the ballad is the "Bird Song" tune (see Bronson, Traditional Tunes, I, p. 254-264), a normal four-phrase tune widely circulated throughout British-American tradition. Maggie's tune is the last two phrases of the usual tune, fitted to the couplet form of the ballad. Though truncated tunes can be musically acceptable, the brevity and the resultant repetitiveness probably bothered her. Oddly, the shortened two-phrase tune makes a neat fit for a ballad set in rhyming couplets, and there was a time when ballad scholars speculated that rhymed couplets were the original poetical medium for the ballad. A version like Maggie's would be grist for the mill of that argument, were it not for the fact that the tune can be shown to be a truncated form of a normal four-phrase tune rather than a survival of an "antique" two-phrase tune. On the matter of couplet ballads and tunes, see Bronson, The Ballad as Song, p. 43-44.

IN SCOTLAND TOWN

In Scotland town where l was borned
A lady gave to me a ring.

"Now if this ring proves bright and fair
You know that l have proved true, my dear.

And if this ring proves old and worn
You knew that your true love is with some other one."

So he went on board and away sailed he,
He sailed and he sailed to some foreign country.

He looked at his ring and his ring was worn,
He knew that his true love was with some other one.

So he went on board and back sailed he,
He sailed and he sailed to his own country.

One morning as l was riding along
I met with a poor old beggar man.

"Old man, old man, old man I pray.
What news have you got for me today?"

"Sad news, sad news to you I'll say,
For tomorrow is your true love's wedding day."

"So you can take my riding seat,
The beggar's rig I will put on."

"The riding seat ain't fit for me,
Nor the beggar's rig ain't fit for thee."

Oh whether it be right or whether it be wrong,
The beggar's rig he did put on.

So he begged from the rich, he begged from the poor,
He begged from the high to the lowest of 'em all.

Then he went on in an old man's 'ray
Till he came to the steps of yonders gay.

When the bride came trippling down the stairs,
Rings on her finger and gold in her hair,

And a glass of wine d'all in her hand
To gave to the poor old beggar man.

He taked her glass and drinked the wine
And in that glass he placed a ring.

"Oh where did you get it from sea or land,
Or did you steal it from a drownded man's hand?"

"Oh neither did I get it from sea or land,
Or neither did I steal it from a drownded man's hand.

You gave it to me on our courting day,
Now l'll give it back to you on your wedding day."

Off of her finger the ring she pulled.
And off of her hair the gold did fall.

And between the kitchen and the hall
The beggar's rig he did let fall.

His gold a-showing out more fair than 'em all,
He was the fairest of the young men was in that hall.

"l'll follow my true love wherever he may go,
If l have to beg my food from door to door."

Maggie: Now you got that one.

Alan: Oh, that's a good song.

Burl: Yes, it is.

Maggie: They claim that's a good one; I don't like it too well.

Alan: Don't you?

Maggie: No sir, I don't. I never did care much about the tune to it, now.

Alan: Oh, you don't?

Maggie: It's a true song, I have an idea. See, she knew the ring, just as quick as he dropped it in the glass—

Alan: Yeah.

Maggie: —when he drank the wine, and—and he dropped the ring in it, and then she knew the ring. And she knowed he'd either got from a drownded—she thought the man had got drownded—

Burl: Yeah, she thought he'd—

Alan: Yeah.

Maggie: And he'd stoled it from a drownded man's hand. Why yes, that—now a song like that's kindly true.

12. LITTLE OMIE

Maggie Hammons Parker, vocal, September 20, 1970, recorded by Alan Jabbour. AFS 14,263 A6.

The murder of Naomi Wise, apparently by her lover John Lewis, occurred in Randolph County, N.C., in 1808. A ballad on the subject arose in this period, probably in the North Carolina Piedmont, and spread to points west (see Brown, II, p. 690-698, for a rather full account with references). Modern field recordings and commercial recordings show that by the 20th century it was known throughout the South and occasionally elsewhere (see Laws F4). Its verses vary considerably among versions, but they are all clearly related textually. The song usually uses a highly characteristic tune beginning on the upper dominant and ranging down to its conclusion on the lower dominant. A few variants have also turned up with the tune to "How

Maggie Hammons Parker listens to playback of her voice. On the sofa in the background: Alan Jabbour, Burl Hammons, and Ruie Hammons, 1973.

Firm a Foundation." Another ballad on the murder of Naomi Wise, with entirely different text and tune, was composed by Carson Robinson and has been given considerable circulation on commercial hillbilly records since the 1920s.

Maggie's is in most respects a characteristic text of the song, with a few unusual traits. Her tune, however, is unique among versions that I have heard. Versions issued on commercial records by Roscoe Holcomb (Folkways FA 2368) and Doc Watson (Vanguard VRS 9152) also use a "minor" scale, but they are both clear cases of shifting the perceived tonic to the final note (perceived as the dominant in most sets), with the ensuing modifications of the tune. Maggie's tune, on the other hand, is structured quite differently but bears certain tantalizing resemblances in phrasing to the usual tune. Her singing here is a fine example of the old *a capella* singing style she employs for most of her traditional ballads—rubato, reaching to the high range of her voice, stately in pace, and with a highly developed system of ornamentation. "Little Omie," like many of the older songs in her repertory, comes from John and Joe Roberts, sons of her father's brother-in-law and close friend Jesse Roberts.

LITTLE OMIE

"You promised you'd meet me
At Adams's spring
And bring me some money
And other fine things."

"No money, no money,
Let this be thy case,
We will go and get married,
It'll be no disgrace.

"Just get on behind me
And away we will ride,
Till we came to yon city
Where I'll make you my bride."

She got on behind him
And away they did ride,
Till they came to the river
Where waters falls wide.

"Little Omie, little Omie,
I'll tell you my mind,
My mind is to drown you
And leave you behind."

"Go pity, go pity,
Go pity," cried she.
"No pity, no pity,
No pity have I."

He beat her, he choked her
Till she scarcely could stand,
Then he threw her in the river
Below the milldam.

Little Omie were missing,
Nowheres could be found,
Her friends and relation
All gathered around.

Her mother kept a-crying
Till at length I heard her say,
"Jimmy Lewis has killed her,
He's now run away."

He's up on Deep River
As I understand,
They've got him in prison
For killing a man.

They've got him in prison
Bound down to the ground,
He has made his confession,
He's got it wrote down.

"You can kill me or hang me,
For I am the man
That drownded little Omie
Below the milldam."

13. YOUNG HENERLY

Maggie Hammons Parker, vocal, October 23, 1970, recorded by Carl Fleischhauer and Dwight Diller. AFS 15,530 A1.

Maggie's version of this traditional ballad (Child 68) comes from John Roberts. The modern corpus of versions of the ballad is generally limited to Scotland and the southern United States, with the most published versions coming from the southern Appalachians. Bronson's *Traditional Tunes* (II, p. 60-82) gathers together 43 versions with tunes. Maggie's tune is closely related to three already published from Appalachian Virginia and North Carolina (Bronson, *Traditional Tunes*, p. 71-72, no. 20-22). The tune is also occasionally used for another traditional ballad (Child 4); see Bronson, *Traditional Tunes*, p. 48, 66, no. 19, 63-64. The tune is notable for its great compass—a twelfth in this variant. Maggie's rendition is especially distinguished, even in comparison with her other ballad performances, by a slow and stately pace and a profusion of melodic ornamentation.

YOUNG HENERLY

"Come in, come down, Young Henerly,
And stay all night with me;
The very best lodging that I can afford
Will be much better for thee."

"I won't came in, I shan't came in,
Nor stay all night with you,
For I have a girl in the merry green land,
I love her much better than you."

She leant herself against the fence
And kisses gave him three.
"That girl you love in the merry green land
She ain't no better than me."
So she took him by the lily white hand,
The other by the feet,
She plunged him into the deep blue well
That was more than one hundred feet.

"Lie there, lie there, Young Henerly,
Till the flesh rots off of your bones;
That girl you love in the merry green land
Will be waiting for your return.

"Fly down, fly down, you pretty parrot bird,
And set on my right knee;
Your cage shall be out of the best of gold
And your doors out of ivory."

"I won't fly down, I shan't fly down,
Nor stay all night with you,
For a girl that'll murder her old true love
Will murder a bird like me."

"It's if I had my bow and arrow,
He—and my string,
I'd shoot a dart through your tender heart,
No longer your note would sing."

"Now if you had your bow and arrow,
He—and your string,
I'd fly away to the merry green land,
And I'd tell 'em what I had seen."

14. MUDDY ROADS

Sherman Hammons, five-string banjo, February 12, 1972, recorded by Carl Fleischhauer and Dwight Diller. AFS 15,557 A7.

Sherman learned "Muddy Roads" from Maston Roberts, one of Jesse Roberts's sons. The tune has turned up in the repertories of older fiddlers and banjoists throughout West Virginia, usually called "Salt River," probably after the river that flows through Kentucky into the Ohio River. Sherman himself knows another version of the tune by the name "Salt River." The tune is usually played in the key of A with a lowered seventh in the scale. It bears a resemblance to certain old British-American tunes and may be derived from one of them, but it has its own regional flair. A version of the tune, retitled "Salt Creek," has been popular as a bluegrass instrumental since Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys recorded it. Monroe apparently got it from banjoist Bill Keith, who learned it from another bluegrass musician, Don Stover. Stover in turn learned it as an oldtime banjo tune from his mother and J. V. Williams in Raleigh County, W.Va.

This is Sherman's characteristic style on the five-string banjo. The right-hand stroke, which he calls "thumping," is the old downstroke style of the upper South, variously referred to as "knocking," "frailing," "clawhammer," "rapping," and other terms suggesting the technique of striking rather than picking the strings. The short drone string is struck with the thumb on the fourth (and occasionally second) of each group of four sixteenths, adding the high syncopated drone which is a hallmark of the style. Little is known about the origin of this style, but there is a smattering of evidence that, like the banjo itself, it came originally from black musicians in the Virginia and North Carolina Piedmont, whence it spread southwestward into the Appalachians and beyond. The history of the various finger-picking and plectrum banjo styles is equally obscure.

Sherman here tunes his banjo a-E-A-C-sharp-E (drone string shown in lower case, then low to high strings noted in capitals).

VARIANTS

Recorded

1. "Salt River," 78 rec. (Vocalion 5381, Melotone 12272 Polk 9086). Kessinger Brothers, fdl and gtr, 1929. From Charleston, W.Va. Reissued on 33 rec. *Old-Time Fiddle Classics Vol. 2* (County 527).
2. "The Pateroller Song," 33 rec. *Instrumental Music of the Southern Appalachians* (Tradition TLP 1007), Hobart Smith, bjo, 1956. Low strain only vaguely similar to usual strain.
3. "Salt Creek," 45 rec. (Decca 31596). Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys (leads by Bill Keith, bjo, Kenny Baker, fdl, Bill Monroe, mand), 1963.
4. "Salt River," 33 rec. *The Legend of Clark Kessinger* (Folk Promotions FP 828), reissued as *Clark Kessinger, Fiddler* (Folkways FA 2336). Clark Kessinger, fdl, c. 1965.
5. "Franklin County Special," 33 rec., untitled (Rebel

R1473). Franklin County Boys, mid-1960s.

6. "Salt River," 33 rec. *Traditional Music* (Kanawha 307). W. Franklin George, bjo, c. 1967.
7. "Salt River," 33 rec. *West Virginia Coal Miner's Blues* (Old Homestead 90011). Don Stover, bjo, 1972.
8. "Salt River," AFS 13,035 A36. Henry Reed, fdl, Glen Lyn, Va., 1966, Jabbour.
9. "Salt River," AFS 13,704 A25. Sam Conner, fdl, near Copper Hill, Va., 1967, Jabbour.
10. "Salt River," AFS 13,704 A2. Dr. Frank White, fdl Ivydale, W.Va., 1967, Jabbour.
11. "Salt River," AFS 13,704 B10. Dr. Frank White, fdl Ivydale, W.Va., 1967, Jabbour.
12. "Salt River," AFS 13,709 A9. Oscar Wright, bjo, Princeton, W.Va., 1968, Jabbour.
13. "Old Wooden Leg," AFS 13,709 A27. Lee Triplett, fdl, Winston Ward, gtr, from Clay County, W.Va., recorded at Glenville, W.Va., 1968, Jabbour. With recited snatch. The title and verse connect it to the "Gilderoy" tune, which it indeed resembles in the low strain.

Sherman: Now I might miss it for because I can't double down there on it, I f—get it balled up, but I'll do the best I can.

15. BRINGING BACK THE SHEEP

Sherman Hammons, narration, February 12, 1972, recorded by Carl Fleischhauer and Dwight Diller. AFS 15,555 Al.

This is a good example of a species of narration the Hammonses like to employ—"the expedition genre," it might well be called, since the narration covers the entire outing rather than isolating a single episode. The humorous account of Sherman's first encounter with airplanes is of course the highlight, but other colorful episodes are not slighted. These anecdotal firsthand narratives are of all the family stories perhaps the most evocative of the woodslife they knew. The popularity of the expedition as a larger narrative unit of course reflects the fundamental importance of hunting trips and other expeditions to their way of life.

Sherman's story casts him in a role he elsewhere likes to portray: the impressionable youth ready to believe in supernatural causes, placed against the foil of his skeptical father. His fear of the airplanes may be compared with the devil-like creature flying through the air in Burl's story of "The Yankee and Marcum," and to his brief story about "The Panther in the Sky" (Rounder 0018 A3) . Paris's skeptical role also appears in stories transcribed in the family history included in this study and in the tale "The Haunted Wagon" (Rounder 0018 B3).

Sherman: Well, there's an old fellow lived up the hollow, he lived up the hollow where Nathan used to live; so he lost three sheep. And me and Maggie, and I believe it was Ruie—well, he got my dad to go down to Three Forks to get 'em. There wasn't no road, no timber never been cut nor nothing. Went on down to the river, what they call the bark—the Lick Branch, and they had—they used to have years ago a bark camp there, you know, a hunting camp. Well, fished along down there and catched—you could just catch all the fish you wanted. And my dad said, he said, uh, "Let's go over to the bark camp," he said, "and stay all night." And I said, "Okay," I said, "we'll go."

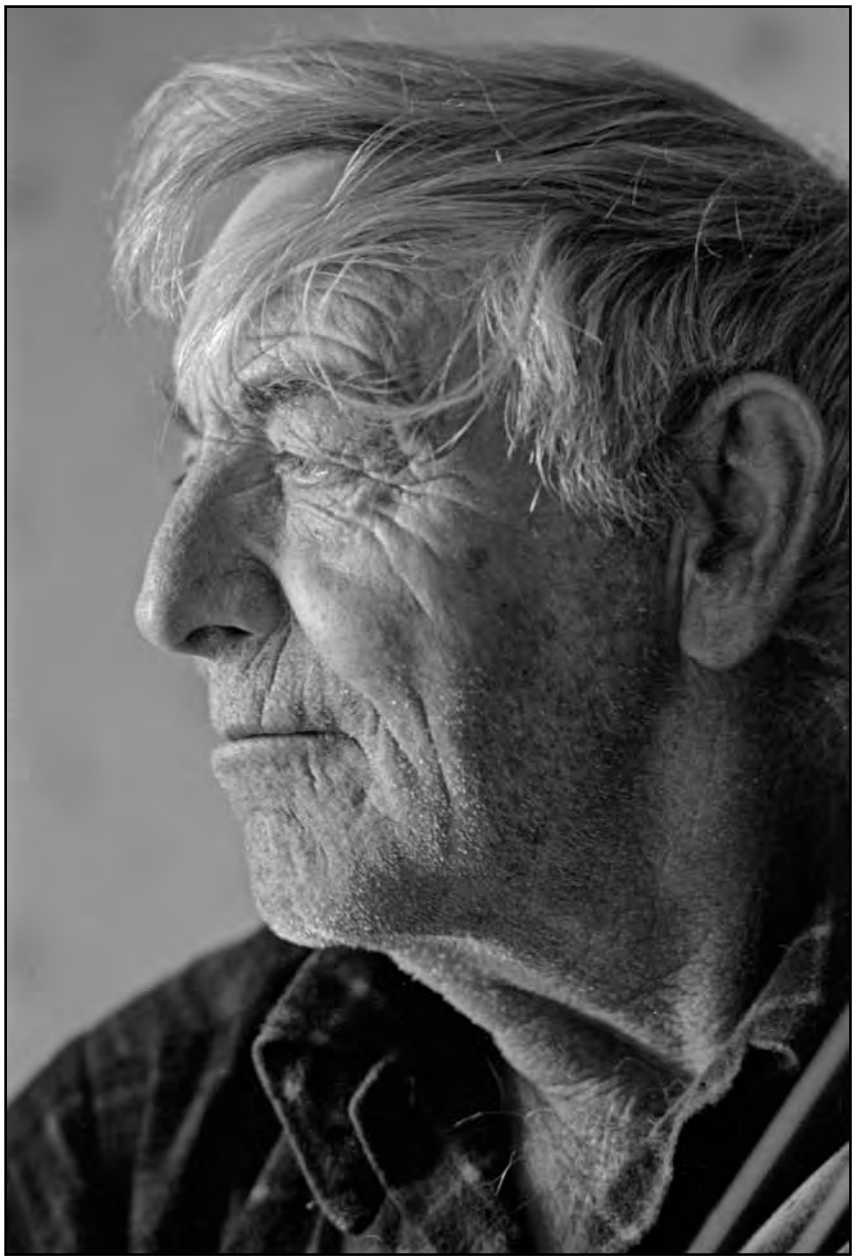
Went over there and they wasn't no camp. It'd been burned or tore down, I think—I don't know who had burnt it. And we had to wade the river; it was on this side and the path went on yon side. Went over, and there was a big hemlock log, and I noticed along that log, that where the—it was just all scuffled up, and I said, "Look where the dang grouse has been here scuffling." So we got on that log, all of us did, to wring our socks out, we'd waded the river, and—We was a-gonna stay there all night, you know, there wasn't no camp nor nothing, just lay out in the open—so, uh, got our shoes off, I don't think my dad had got only one off, and out come a rattlesnake, that I'll bet you it was that long and as big as my arm; now I'll be danged if they wasn't some jumping around now for a while. My dad was so 'fraid of them, that that—he was a lot 'fraider nor I was. Oh, it just pretty nigh—plumb put him crazy to see one. And there's someone had set an old fishpole up there, it was as long as from here to the door; and he got that fishpole and killed that.

And he went right out in the river bed, where the rocks, now, just clear rocks, them—you know how it'll wash 'em up; and right there's where he built the fire. I said, "I'll be danged if I believe—" but I could sleep anywhere, I didn't get cold nor nothing. I said, "I'll be danged," I said, "if—if she ain't a-going to be tough sledding out here." "You'll not get me back out there," he said, "in that—in that brush," he said, "nowhere." So we built us a fire. So we fared very well; l didn't care where I stayed.

Went on, and next night we stayed at Jake's. And Howard said to me, said, "Sherman," he said, "I've got a mule," and he said, "now it's a dandy," he said, "it's the best; well," he said, "if I can slip

off," he said, "and go to the lower end of the bottom," he said, "and we can find it," he said, "we both can ride it." Went down there and catched that mule, you know how stubborn a mule is. Now finally Howard got it started, you know, and I thought that was the awfullest thing that ever was. Finally, I reckon Jake was a-watching; he come 'bout halfway down the bottom—"Boys, I'll tell you I ain't a-gonna have my mule run, now." So Howard minded him, by George, he was afraid of him; we got off of the mule.

They had'a big Airedale dog, he'd eat you up. And we slept upstairs—uh, me and I don't know how many was there. And they had the bunks made right down in the floor, that's where they slept, he kept lots of hunters, you know. So, by George, just as it would be, I had to get up, and I said to myself, "How in the hell am I ever gonna get up past that damned Airedale dog." But anyhow I like never got out of the house, but I—finally I got out, and slipped right easy, and the dog didn't hear me come back in. Next morning we catched them sheep, and coupled 'em together, tied 'em all, you see, you couldn't drive three sheep, you know, they'd run plumb off. Cut us a rope, I think we put two ropes in the middle for two people to feed.



Sherman Hammons, 1972.

After we got them sheep on the road, why—on the path, a little path went—they went pretty good. And, so, we come on and come on—of course they had to give the sheep their sun, it's a wonder they hadn't a-give out. And I said to my dad, the sheep was a-following that path pretty good, they couldn't get out on account of we had 'em coupled together, and I said to my dad, I said, uh, uh, "I'll just"—I said, "I believe I'm a-gonna sang up a little while"—that was in below the Big Slick— I said, "I believe I'll go up here and dig me a bunch of sang." I went up there and right in that laurel, now, they wasn't a week, I begin to find several bunches of sang. Course they was lots of sang then, and I liked to find it.

And I was—I didn't get so awfully far from the path, after a while I heared something a-coming, and me right there by myself. And I began—after a while it began to seem like it was jumping me up and down, of course I was scared, you know. And I hit her off, I run to the the path, and I heared it was coming right down through the middle of the river, and me just a-looking and glaring, you know; after a while my teeth got to chattering. I knowed it was the Devil and me a-looking everwhere and couldn't find it, couldn't see that thing at all.

And, so I got scared so bad I couldn't run, just tell you the truth, I just nervous all over, you know, like a kid was the first thing, first time he ever knowed such a thing as that. And after a while I just happened to turn my head, and they looked about the size of—of hawks. And I heared that sound was right there, and I said think to myself, "What in the hell was that? What is that?" And it kindly made me feel better; and I said, "Two devils a-flying in the—"

And I hit her. Now they'll—by George, I could run and was long winded. And I overtook 'em before they got to the—below Tea Creek there at the ford, at the crossing. And I said, "Tell me what in the Devil and Tom Walker was that?" I said. "Why," my dad said to me, said, "do you not know?"—ah, them was the first ones he ever saw, them was the first ones—he said, "Do you know what that was?" And I said, "No. Hell, I reckon it was two devils is all I know." "Why," he said, "them there wasn't devils, them was a airships," he said.

Well, we come on—we wasn't very far from the crossing—come on up there, you know, and you can't hardly get a sheep in the river. And it was—it was up a right smart. It swum the sheep, and we had to take 'em over to the other side, and that wood got fetched in and they couldn't carry it, you know, we had—they shook theirselves, like a dog, a sheep'll do that, you know. So, come on, brung 'em on in home. I think he give my dad ten dollars for it.

16. THE SANDY BOYS

Burl Hammons, five-string banjo, November 7, 1970, recorded by Carl Fleischhauer and Dwight Diller. AFS 15,536 A3.

Burl learned this tune from his father's fiddle playing. He can also play it on the fiddle, though it is not in his customary repertory. Maggie sings a lively Iyric song, "Sandy Girls," to much the same tune. A minstrel stage version, called "Sandy Boy," was published in *Phil. Rice's Correct Method for the Banjo* (1858). It is one of those tunes so often met with in the South that sound somewhat like other tunes but cannot be genetically linked to anything with certainty. Compare it, for example, with the tune usually called "June Apple" that is played in the region around Mt. Airy, N.C.-Galax, Va. Fiddle tunes are susceptible to the same habits of variation which obscure kinship, but it is especially common with banjo tunes of this sort, which tend in transmission to reduce the melodic line to its bare essentials, then re-elaborate the tune along new lines. Students of American folk music have come to take such dramatic melodic variation for granted, but it does not occur everywhere in British-American tradition; instrumental music in the American North and Midwest seems to place more stress upon "accurate" learning of tunes, and modern Irish fiddlers can be quite meticulous about learning a piece note for note. On the other hand, Afro-American folk music is even freer in variation working off elemental tune patterns. White Southern instrumental music seems to fall somewhere between, attaching considerable importance to the detail as well as the basic pattern of a tune but allowing a good deal of leeway for variation within one man's rendition and reformulation in transmission from person to person.

The banjo is tuned a-E-A-C-sharp-E.

VARIANTS

Printed

1. "Sandy Boy," *Phil. Rice's Correct Method for the Banjo: With or Without a Master*. Boston: Oliver Ditson and Co., 1858.

17. WILSON'S CLOG

Burl Hammons, five-string banjo, August 5, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 15,084 A1.

This tune is played in one of the picking styles on banjo that Burl learned from his cousin Early Cogar shortly after the First World War. The banjo is tuned a-D-A-D-E. Burl picks this tune three-finger style (thumb and first two fingers); he plays others with only the thumb and index finger. The history of these two- and three-finger picking styles is not clear, but they were widely disseminated throughout the upper South and elsewhere by the early 20th century. The western Piedmont of North Carolina has been for some time a major focal point for picking styles—I have heard older white banjoists from that area describe it as the oldtime white style and call "knocking" a black style—and from Charlie Poole on hillbilly records in the 1920s through Earl Scruggs in 1940s bluegrass the western Piedmont has persistently developed and extended its older picking styles. Scruggs's particular contribution was to build into the three-finger banjo picking style the fundamental syncopated patterns of Southern folk music, thus giving the banjo a new lease on life in the contemporary bluegrass style.

Though it cannot be proved, modern internal evidence points to the middle or later 19th century for the origin of Southern two- and three-finger picking styles. The tunes preferred in these styles, to judge from the field recordings of this century, were either

song tunes or instrumental tunes of the clog and schottische variety. In the former, the picking style enabled the banjoist to play arpeggiated chords behind the melody; in the latter, the melodies themselves tended to be arpeggiated. In American instrumental tradition this sense of arpeggiation and implied chordal patterns can be fairly certainly dated from the 19th century. It first turns up in the 4/4 hornpipes of the early 19th century and becomes more pronounced with the clogs and schottisches of a generation later. Allowing for a little cultural lag in Southern rural traditions, the last half of the 19th century is a likely period for the rapid spread of these musical ideas and the concomitant banjo picking styles throughout the South.

Burl's tune is not the usual "Wilson's Clog" of published collections and Northern tradition (a tune resembling the British-American "Harvest Home Hornpipe"), but another tune cut from the clog and schottische patterns, which has turned up here and there throughout North America. Burl learned it from Tom Christian, who used to play it on guitar in a barbershop at Tea Creek where local men gathered to make music in the early part of this century.

VARIANTS

Printed

1. "Clog in C Major," Messer, *Original Old Tyme Music* (1942), p. 23. Canadian.
2. "Nightingale Clog." *Ryan's Mammoth Collection* (1883), p. 231; One Thousand (1940), p. 117. Only first strain related.

Recorded

1. "Schottisch Time," 33 rec. *Dock Boggs Volume 2* (Folkways FA2392). Dock Boggs, bjo, near Wise, Va., 1964. A one-strain tune resembling the low strain of Burl's tune.
2. "Schottisch," 33 rec. *Norman Whistler* (Repeat RS 300-4). Norman Whistler, fdl, c. 1968.
3. "German Waltz," AFS 1538 B3. Bev Baker, fdl, Hazard, Ky., 1937, A. Lomax-E. Lomax.
4. "Schottische," AFS 13,034 B33. Henry Reed, fdl, Glen Lyn, Va., 1966, Jabbour.

18. SUGAR BABE

Burl Hammons, five-string banjo, August 5, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 15,084 Al0.

Burl learned this tune from Arthur McFadden, who worked for Campbell's Lumber Company. Like his brother Sherman, he tunes the banjo e-E-A-B-D for it, but Sherman's version (published on Rounder 0018) differs slightly from Burl's, and both banjo versions differ considerably from Sherman's song version. It often happens that a song and an instrumental rendition of the same tune go separate ways, even when they are in the repertory of the same musician: for the musician does not derive one version from the other but learns each as a separate musical entity.

The tune and song are in that class that might be dubbed "rounder" songs—cultivated especially by young men, carefree and assertive in spirit, often risque, and in the Appalachian South associated in the early part of this century with the five-string banjo. Afro-American influence shows up frequently in the "rounder" songs, and it is possible that "Sugar Babe" itself has Afro-American connections. Like others of the class, the verses dramatize confrontation with and abandonment of a woman.

VARlANTS

Recorded

1. "Sugar Baby," 78 rec. (Brunswick 118). Dock Boggs, bjo and vcl, 1927. From southwestern Va.
2. "Red Rocking Chair," 78 rec. (Victor 21-0145). Charlie Monroe and His Kentucky Pardners, 1949. Reissued on 33 rec. *Early Rural String Bands* (RCA Victor LPV-552).
3. "Sugar Baby," 33 rec. *Dock Boggs Volume 2* (Folkways FA 2392). Dock Boggs, bjo and vcl, near Wise, Va., 1964.
4. "Sugar Babe," 33 rec. *Shaking Down the Acorns* (Rounder 0018). Sherman Hammons, bjo and vcl, 1972.

19. WE'RE MARCHING AROUND THE LEVEES

Maggie Hammons Parker, vocal and narration, with comments by Alan Jabbour and Ruie Hammons, September 20, 1970, recorded by Alan Jabbour. AFS 14,263 A2-3.

The play-party (usually called simply a "play" by its traditional participants) once flourished throughout the country as a genre lying stylistically more or less midway between children's games and instrumental dance music. Generally the participants were youths, but older adults have been known to take part. The genre often involves unaccompanied singing which sets the tempo for and usually describes allusively a group dance. The play-party was developed partly because of religious opposition to instrumental music and the often rowdy accompanying adult dances, but it of course had positive virtues to sustain it. The Hammons family have neither religious nor social scruples about dances. They have apparently added some "plays" to their repertory simply because they came into contact with them and enjoyed them.

"We're Marching Around the Levees" (often called "Go in and out the Window") has had a vigorous

and widespread history in the United States as a children's game and play-party. Maggie's is the standard tune in this country. Her description of the play is corroborated by descriptions published elsewhere; despite the confusion over the term "reel" in our dialogue, it seems to have been executed in a circle. It remains close in most respects to its British antecedent, "Round and Round the Village," though the tune is more characteristic of American tradition.

Maggie's discussion of the dance "Grapevine Twist" immediately after talking about "We're Marching Around the Levees" shows the generic blur between "play" and "dance." Here and elsewhere the Hammonses are not given to careful analytical distinctions among types and genres. Furthermore, they habitually seek out points of agreement in conversation, since conversation is regarded as a means of achieving fellowship more than a forum for asserting oneself. Thus, the visitor who seeks to clarify terms, as I did with the term "reel," can be trapped into obtaining ratifications of his own notions.

Following are a few published versions of "We're Marching Round the Levees," containing many additional references for those interested in pursuing its history: Newell (1903), p. 128-129; Gomme, Il (1898), p. 122-143 (British versions); Wolford (1959), p. 171-172, 281-282; Brown (1952-62), I, p. 119-122, III, p. 108-109, V, p. 55; McLendon (1944), p. 207.

WE'RE MARCHING AROUND THE LEVEES

We're marching around the levees,
We're marching around the level,
We're marching around the level,
For to show we've gained the day.

Stand forth and face your lover, (3)
To show you've gained the day:

l'm a-making my love to show you, (3)
For to show you've gained the day.

Oh kneel because you love her, (3)
To show you've gained the day.

Rise up and kiss your lover, (3)
For to show you've gained the day.

Maggie: Now that's another one you—

Alan: Yeah.

Maggie: —that you play—

Ruie: Well, that's just a—well, that's in a reel you play.

Maggie: Why, of course it is, in a play.

Ruie: Why yes.

Maggie: I know it is.

Alan: Did you form in a reel?

Maggie: Yes sir.

Alan: Uh-huh. Two lines?

Maggie: And put one right— Yes sir; and go around, the whole circle around 'em. And then who whichever one you choose in you stand forth, "stand forth and face your lover." And then, uh, then whenever you—she goes in there and stays with you, and then when she goes out, when you go she stays in, and then you go out. And then

Maggie Hammons Parker, 1972.

you say it right over again. Yeah. And then you take a handkerchief and measure, thisaway and thataway.

But now boys, I've went to some funny ones. You take that "Grape Vine Twist"—it's a good one, I be durned if it ain't; I called it for 'em went to a play down to a—it wasn't a play, it was to a—a last day of school.

Ruie: The Railroad Day?

Maggie: Yeah, they, uh, had a play down there that—or, or a big dinner on the ground the last day of school. I be durned if I didn't put 'em through the reel, now, they had the best time they said that they ever did. Never had, teachers and all. I showed 'em a good time. I could call the figures and put 'em through it; they laughed till they cried over me and the "Grape Vine Twist."

Alan: Well, is the "Grape Vine Twist" a play or a regular dance?

Maggie: Yes sir, it's a play.

Alan: What are the words to it?

Maggie: Huh?

Alan: What are—?

Maggie: You just hardly—you call the fiddlers to it.

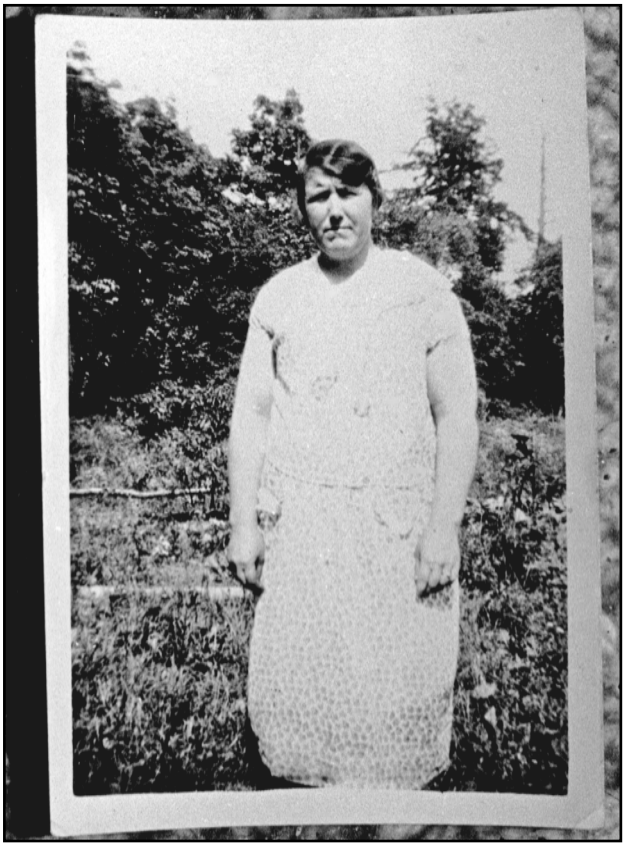
Alan: Oh, I see.

Maggie: Yeah, you call the fiddlers—

Alan: Uh-huh.

Maggie: —to put 'em through that, and you take your partner and start going through, and you go around the whole circle. And when you get her called right, if everone'll go right, till af—after a while everone of 'em's a-going around. And then, when if you get it called right, you can just holler "Circle eight and we'll all come straight," and you'll everone just come right back right straight right the way you started.

It's a good one. I could put 'em through 'em then.



Ruie Hammons. Above, from the family collection, photographer, place, and date unknown. Below, playing cat's cradle at home in Stilllwell, 1973.

20. RIDDLES

Maggie Hammons Parker, narration, with comments by Burl Hammons and Alan Jabbour, April 23, 1972, recorded by Alan Jabbour and Carl Fleischhauer. AFS 14,722 A3.

This excerpt from a riddling session unfortunately lacks the spontaneity of the session which Maggie put some visitors through the day before, when—as often happens—the tape recorder was unavailable. But it was well worth including both because of the lack of recorded riddles and because of the interesting discussion that followed. Riddling in the family is associated primarily with their father Paris; most of their riddles came from him. An additional source was a verse-book the family came by when Maggie was young. The family repertory is dominated by "true riddles" (see Taylor's definitions in *Brown Collection*, I, p. 28G); but at least two "neck-riddles" collected elsewhere in the South are in the family tradition. Verse is far and away the dominant medium. Compare the description of

riddling in the Couch family from eastern Kentucky, in Roberts, *Up Cutshin and Down Greasy*, p. 100-103, 138-140.

Riddles are a genre where the Hammons family tradition shows persistent cultural connections with the South, including the coastal and Piedmont regions of Virginia and the Carolinas. The apparent connection may be in part a result of more assiduous collecting in these regions than elsewhere in the United States, but it is one of the many folkloristic links which, combined with the facts of the family history and my speculations in the *Introduction* about the general settlement patterns of the region, have led me to insist upon their cultural ties with the Old South instead of treating them as a separate "Appalachian" culture. For parallels to the riddles included on the record, see Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition*, no. 805 (jug of wine), no. 539-543 (rooster), no. 1329 (gun), no. 1309 (watch), no. 1570 (rainbow), no. 1295 (greenbrier), no. 1391 (blackberry; cf. also no. 1561).

Maggie's discussion on the record following the riddles is a fascinating glimpse into the art of riddling as practiced by her father. Her final remarks show an important parallel between his riddling and tale-telling techniques. Both reflect a family technique for instructing the younger generation in an art—or indeed, for education in general. The accounts of how the family learned music (see family history) suggest the same technique. Underlying the technique, it seems to me, is the feeling of the older generation that one learns most effectively when one actively seizes the knowledge instead of being a passive recipient of an effort to teach. The family has not cultivated analytical teaching methods; they prefer models and examples to precepts in learning and teaching. This is a matter of degree, of course; the most systematically schooled conservatory violinist still learns a great part of what he knows by keen observation and subconscious assimilation. But it is quite characteristic of the Hammons family to learn, say, a fiddle tune quite accurately simply by listening very closely. Sherman has told me that he thinks, though lessons may be good, the best way to learn fiddle tunes is to "just pick it up." To an extent, this approach to learning characterizes Southern folk tradition generally. Thus the reports of "how I learned the fiddle" show a remarkable similarity throughout the South, bespeaking a carefully nurtured ritualistic pattern for learning which children evidently become aware of at a fairly early age. The "model" or "example" system has many obvious advantages: it encourages active learning, with the dazzling feats of mental alertness that often accompany it; by placing the burden of passing along knowledge upon the learner, it puts a premium upon the acquisition of something withheld; it allows learning to be paced according to the needs of each individual; and it reduces the tensions caused by the youthful fear of being constantly measured against adult achievements. A comparable approach to learning has been observed in other folk cultures; see for example Albert Lord's description of how a Serbian youth learns the oral epic style, in *A Singer of Tales*. A closer study of habits of learning would provide, I believe, valuable insights into the inner forces shaping the expressive features of various folk genres.

Maggie: Maybe some of 'em'll come to me and I'll tell you.

As I went across the London Bridge
I saw my sister Ann;
I cut off her head and sucked the blood
And left her body stand.

Alan: Oh, that's—

Maggie: That was a jug of wine, they claim. And

As I went down to my grandaddy's hall
There I heard a man call;
His beard was flesh, his mouth was horn,
And such a brute was ever born.

Alan: And that's, that's a chicken, eh?

Maggie: Yes, that was a rooster.

Alan: A rooster?

Maggie: Yes. And

As round as a ring and as deep as a spring
And it's killed many a pretty little things.

That was a gun. And

As round as a apple and as busy as a bee
And the prettiest little thing that ever I seen.

That was a watch.

Alan: Watch?

Maggie: That's a watch.

Alan: What is it again?

Maggie:

As round as a apple and as busy as a bee
And the prettiest little thing that ever I seen.

Burl: Did you tell him that one about

The red the yellow the delible green—

Maggie: Yes.

Red the yellow the delible green,
The king can tell it as quick as the queen;
The man in the moon come tell me this soon,
Come tell me this riddle tomorrow at noon.

That's a rainbow.

Burl: And what is that one about

Crooked as a rainbow and teeth like a cat,
You can guess all night and can't guess that.

Maggie: Yes—Yes,

As crooked as a rainbow and teeth like a cat,
You can guess all night but you can't guess that.

Alan: Now, let me see. Help me out, Paul.

Maggie:

As crooked as a rainbow and has teeth like a cat,
You can guess all night but you can't guess that.

Alan: I think you're right.

Maggie: Well now that's a greenbrier.

Alan: What, a green—

Maggie: Yes sir. That's a greenbrier. Well,

As white as snow and snow it ain't,
And as green as grass and grass it ain't,
And as red as blood and blood it ain't,
And as black as ink and ink it ain't.

Now that's something you eat. Now that's a blackberry. You see, when it blooms, the bloom's white; and then it gets green, and then red, and then black.

Well you know I can't help when I can't remember. They just come to me oncet in a while, it's been so durn long since I—that's been years ago when—back when I was just a little girl; and we had them— that verse book. Now these other ones, most of these other ones I've told you, why,

Midday meal, 1972. Clockwise from right: brothers and sisters Emmy Roberts, Ruie Hammons, Maggie Hammons Parker, and Burl Hammons. Opposite, facing camera: grandnephew Nathan Parker.

uh, my daddy said 'em; the most of 'em that I've saved, I told you [?].

Alan: What—How would he do 'em? Would he just sit down and do a bunch of 'em, or—?

Maggie: Why no. He'd just be a-sitting talking, just—maybe we'd be, a-going—just be a-going along with him, and he'd just up and say something like that. He'd keep on, he wouldn't hardly ever say it twice for us.

Alan: You had to listen good?

Maggie: Yes sir. Now that's the way he was, and just the same way by telling us any kind of tales. He'd tell us; he'd tell us things thataway and we loved to hear 'em. Well then, we couldn't hardly ever get him to tell it to us again; just [?], just once in a while he would. That's the way now he was.

21. MERCIAN TITTERY-ARY-A

Maggie Hammons Parker, vocal and narration, September 20, 1970, recorded by Alan Jabbour. AFS 14,262 A7.

This is a humorous British ballad which has found America congenial (see Laws Q2). Versions have been collected throughout the South and occasionally elsewhere. For other West Virginia versions in print, see Cox, p. 464; Gainer, no. 35, reprinted in Boette, p. 63; and Musick, (1957), p. 348-349, 355-356, from John Rittenhouse, Mannington, W.Va., a version quite close to Maggie's in both text and tune. Maggie learned the song from John Roberts.

The tune is used for other traditional songs and instrumental pieces, and Bayard has charted its relationship to a widespread older British air ("Two Representative Tune Families," p. 17-33). Following are some tune references close to Maggie's tune and not cited by Bayard.

TUNE VARIANTS

Printed

1. "The Dark Girl Dressed in Blue. Country Dance," Westrop (18—), no. 41.
2. "Disappointed Coquette," Howe, Musician's Omnibus, II (1863), p. 100.
3. "The Dark Gir1 Dressed in Blue," O'Neill (1903), no. 403.
4. "The Wife of Kelso (The Wily Auld Carle)," Doerflinger (1951), p. 280-281. "Duke" Neilson, vcl, New Brunswick, Canada.
5. "Tell My Mother," Brown, V (1962), p. 488-489. Jewell Robbins, vcl, Pekin, N.C., 1921-22. High strain similar.

Recorded

1. "Over the Waterfall," AFS 13,703 A8. Henry Reed, fdl Glen Lyn, Va., 1967, Jabbour. This is quite close to the printed instrumental tunes listed above (items 1-3). The title also hints at a possible connection with the ballad Maggie sings.
2. "Over the Waterfall," 33 rec. *The Hollow Rock String Band* (Kanawha 311). Alan Jabbour, fdl, 1967. After I learned this tune from Henry Reed (see preceding item) the string band I played with began playing the tune and included it on an LP we made. Other young enthusiasts of oldtime music picked it up, and it has been recorded by a few groups. I have even recorded it from Earl Hafler, an older fiddler in Pennsylvania, whose fourthhand source was Henry Reed, by way of me—testimony to the currents that continue to spread old tunes around. Mr. Hafler learned it from his son, who picked it up from friends of mine at the oldtime fiddlers' convention at Galax, Va.

MERCIAN TITTERY-ARY-A

There lived a lady gay, sir,
The truth to you I'll tell;
She loved her husband dearly
But another man twicet as well.
Mercian tittery-ary-ary-ary,
Mercian tittery-ary-a.

Well she went to the doctor
To see what she could find;
"Anything at all, sir,
To put this old man blind." [Chorus]

Well she got two dozen marrow bones
And made him suck 'em all;
"Now," said the old man,
"I cannot see at all. [Chorus]

"Here I'm sick and here I'm blind
And here I cannot stay;
I would go and drown myself
If I could find the way." [Chorus]

"If here you sick, if here you blind,
If here you cannot stay,
If you want to drownd yourself
I'll go and show you the way." [Chorus]

She took him by the hand, sir,
And led him to the stream;
"Now if you want me drownded
You've got to shove me in." [Chorus]

She stepped a step upon the bank
And fetched a sudden spring;

The old man throwed out one of his legs
And she went tumbling in. [Chorus]

Such hollering, such screaming,
Such murdering cried she;
"And now," said the old man,
"I'm blind and cannot see." [Chorus]

And being tender hearted,
Afraid that she might swim,
He went and cut him a longer pole
And pushed her further in. [Chorus]

Oh here is five children
And nary one is mine;
I wish that every country man
Would come and get his own. [Chorus]

Maggie: Now how do you like that one?

Alan: Oh, that's great.

Maggie: That's funny.

Alan: What do you call it?

Maggie: "Mercian tittery-ary-a."

22. JAY LEGG

Maggie Hammons Parker, narration and vocal, with comments by Dwight Diller, November 8, 1970, recorded by Carl Fleischhauer and Dwight Diller.

Maggie learned "Jay Legg" from her cousin Halley, a daughter of her uncle Neal Hammons. Jay Legg was shot and killed by his wife Sarah Ann on Elk River in northern Clay County, W.Va., February 10, 1904. The case caused something of a sensation in the area, partly because the slayer was a woman and partly because of the alleged circumstances. Sarah Ann Legg's trial in April 1905 involved not only the charge of murder but the allegations and insinuations that she was unfaithful, that she plotted the murder, and that another party or parties were involved. Though she pleaded that the shooting was accidental, and though there were no reliable witnesses of the deed, she was convicted; but the conviction was overturned on appeal because of errors in the conduct of the trial. I have not been able to discover what happened to Sarah Ann Legg afterward.

The ballad, which is known here and there over a large portion of central West Virginia, focuses upon many of the same details that highlighted the trial. For example, the following segment of the trial—an examination of Jay Legg's mother, who had come on the scene just after the shooting, by Mr. Horan, lawyer for the defendant—deals with an apparently notorious detail of the story, that a four-year-old child of the Leggs watched the killing and plaintively asked his mother why she had shot his father.

Q. When the little child said to her mother—what did you say the little child said to her mother about killing Jay?

A. The little boy?

Q. The little boy?

A. He went to her and says: "What made you kill Jay?" and she said she done it accidentally, and he said, "You said you would kill him. and you did."

Q. The conversation at the fire place between the little boy and the mother, what did the little boy say at the fire place about his mother killing Jay?

A. He asked her what made her kill poor Jay", and she said she done it accidentally, and he said, "You said you would kill him and you did."

Q. What did she say to that?

A. She said the gun went off.

The ballad may have been composed around 1904 or 1905, for it is quite close in detail to the trial proceedings. But it need not have been inspired by the trial, for the year that had elapsed since the murder was quite sufficient for local people to sort out the main outline of the story as an orally circulated narrative. Though the period soon after the event is the most likely for composition of the song, it could of course have been composed at any later date. Lee Hammons of Marlinton reports that a man named Charlie Rattigan (the spelling is uncertain), who was an employee of the Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company, claimed to have composed the song. It is in the "Come-all-ye" style common in northern lumbering songs but less common farther south. A number of lumbering songs characteristic of northern tradition have turned up in central West Virginia; Maggie herself sings several, including one other ballad describing a local lumberman's death, "Joker Jess." They are living memorials of the heyday of lumbering in central West Virginia around the turn of the century, with the new patterns of cultural flux that the era brought to the region.

VARIANTS (see Laws dF 55)

Printed

1. "Elk River Boys," Musick (1957), p. 350, 356. Contributed by Mrs. T. B. Henderson, Flemington, W.Va.
2. "The Murder of Jay Legg" Bush (1970), p. 51-54. Text from Irene Cook, Gay, Jackson County, W.Va.; tune from Laurie Boggs Drake, Ivydale, Clay County, W.Va.

Recorded

1. "The Murder of Jay Legg," unissued 78 rec. (Gennett 15932). Cecil Vaughn, 1929. No copy is

known to exist but I list the item as a likely *terminus ad quem* for composition of the ballad, as well as for its interest as evidence that Cecil Vaughn was from W. Va.

2. "Ballad of Jay Legg," 33 rec. *Old-Time Music from Calhoun County, W.Va.* (Folk Promotions 41942). General Custer Nicholas, vcl and bjo, c. 1965.

Dwight Diller: Where was Jay from, you have any idea?

Maggie: Jay Legg?

Dwight: Yeah.

Maggie: No, I don't know; it you'd asked the old man you might've found out—the old man Hammons. I don't where he—now I don't know where he was from, but you see—the old man said he knowed his wife.

Dwight: Yeah, he said he square-danced at the house, didn't he?

Maggie: Yes.

Dwight: That was on Cranberry. But, uh—

Maggie: Yes. And he said, you see, he was a—he was a—helped taking them logs out when they took 'em out of the Williams's River, when they had that dam in there. Helped floating them—You see they called him a river boy.

Dwight: Yeah.

Maggie: Yeah. Yeah, they helped taking them—helped a-floating them logs out. Right there—

Dwight: Down there at that splash dam at the deadwater.

Maggie: Yes sir. Yes sir. That's what he worked on. And he said— They didn't know for sure, you see, heared him tell us, he didn't know for sure—[extraneous talk]—whether they, uh—they never could find out just for sure whether it was him, or that man or his wife killed him; and, uh, and he knowed the man that made this song.

Dwight: Old man Hammons knows him?

Maggie: Yeah, he knowed the man that—for he told us his name there, the one that made the song on it. He said he could just make a song on anything.

Dwight: Oh, I bet I heard him talk about him.

Maggie: And now that's exactly what he told us.

Maggie Hammons Parker from a family photograph, date unknown. The furniture and background indicate that the photograph was made at Cal Gay's studio in Marlinton and Maggie's outfit suggests that this photograph was made on the same studio visit as the portrait of the two couples reproduced on page 36.

Dwight: You want to sing it for us—try to sing it for us again?

Maggie: Well I'll sing it the best I can, but boys I can't do much good a-singing it.

Dwight: Listen a minute, Ruie.

JAY LEGG

Come all you true brave river boys,
Some shocking tales to tell;
We've lost one of our river boys,
And the one that we love so well.

Poor Jay went out one cold Friday morning,
Those hotters they came in,
They fixed up a plot to kill poor Jay
Just as soon as he came in.

Poor Jay came in that cold Friday evening,
He was tired and hungry too;
He didn't have time to set down and rest
Till a bullet pierced him through.

His little boy stood by his side,
As mournfully did say,
Unto his mommy he did ask,
"What made you kill poor Jay?"

"It was a accident," she said,
And she did not seem to care;
She thought her own state's evidence
Would surely bring her clear.

They had a curtains a-hanging by
Which hung close by the cot,
And with his own Winchester gun
He received this fatal shot.

Poor Jay lies down in his cold life's blood
As the last breath passed away;
And "God in heaven," he did ask,
"Have mercy on poor Jay."

Poor Jay now's a-sleeping in his new cold tomb,
His trouble all is done;
Poor Sarah she's setting in the Clay County jail
And her trouble just begun.

23. WHEN THIS WORLD COMES TO AN END

Maggie Hammons Parker, narration and vocal, March 21, 1971, recorded by Alan Jabbour. AFS 14,463 A7.

Maggie does not have many religious songs in her repertory, at least in comparison with the great extent of her secular repertory. But her experiences with revivals taught her some lovely gospel hymns of the sort that sprang up on the 19th-century frontier. This one is striking both for its melody and for its evocation of the millenial signs and wonders that have always fascinated the Hammonses.

Jackson prints a set of the hymn, using the same tune (*Another Sheaf of White Spirituals*, no. 21), and quotes Bayard's comment that the song and tune are current in southwestern Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia. Bayard relates the tune to a Welsh air.

Maggie: Then them preachers come away from yonder, they was two women, come to preach, and they put up a tent. They put up a tent, and they had a big tent meeting there. Then they sung—then they sung one about "When the World Comes to an End." I went to their meeting, went and heared 'em. They was pretty good preachers; oh, yes, it was a woman and they claimed that—that one of 'em was old-like and the other one was a girl, and they said that was that old woman's girl. She wasn't too old. But she could preach pretty good. They'd h—they'd hauled that—they held that meeting there for a long time. Yes sir. And then she sung that one about—she explained it all, you see—

Alan: About the world coming to an end? How does it go?

Maggie: Yes sir. Yes sir. What all you see the signs and wonders, signs and wonders you see, she sung it in the song.

Alan: Oh, is that right? Do you know it?

Maggie: I—it used to be I knowed it. But I don't know whether I could sing it or not.

WHEN THIS WORLD COMES TO AN END

I believe in being ready,
I believe in a-being ready,
I believe in being ready,
When this world comes to an end.

Oh, sinners do get ready,
Oh, sinners do get ready,
Oh, sinners do get ready,
For the times are a-drewing near.

Oh, there'll be signs and wonders,
Yes, there'll be signs and wonders,
Oh, there'll be signs and wonders,
When this world is to an end.

Oh, the sun she will be darkened,
Yes, the sun she will be darkened,

Oh, the sun she will be darkened,
When this world is to an end.

Oh, the moon she will be a-bleeding,
Yes, the moon she will be bleeding,
Oh, the moon she will be bleeding,
When this world is to an end.

I believe in a-being ready,
I believe in being ready,
I believe in being ready,
When this world is to an end.

Oh, the stars they'll all be a-falling,
Yes, the stars will all be falling,
Oh, the stars will all be falling,
When this world is to an end.

Oh, sisters do get ready,
Oh, sisters do get ready,
Oh, sisters do get ready,
For the times is a-drewing near.

Oh, fathers do get ready,
Yes, fathers do get ready,
Oh, fathers do get ready,
When this world is to an end.

Oh, mothers do get ready,
Yes, mothers do get ready,
Oh, mothers do get ready,
For the times is a-drewing near.

For there'll be them signs and wonders,
Yes, there'll be them signs and wonders,
There will be them signs and wonders,
When this world comes to an end.

BIBLIOGRAPHY-DISCOGRAPHY

The following bibliography-discography consists of three parts. The first is a list of works that were of assistance in preparing the history of the Hammons family. The second is a list of printed works cited in the discussions of the recorded examples. And the third is a list, alphabetized by label and numerically within each label, of the published long-playing records cited in discussing the recorded examples. Mention should also be made of a film on the Hammonses and other residents of the area *Fine Times at Our House*, produced at Boston University by Maureen McCue and Lois Tupper, 1972 (16mm, color, sound, 28 min.). Fuller bibliographies listing available printed works on North American fiddling, the banjo, the ballad, and American folklore (selected major works) are available upon request from the Archive of Folk Culture, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

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Maggie Hammons Parker, right, with her niece Edith Buzzard Parker and Edith's daughter Tauna, on the road near Maggie's home at Stillwell, 1973.