

# FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

January 1979

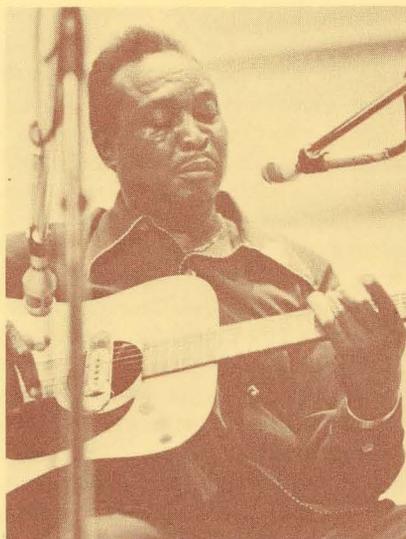
Volume II, Number 1

## ARCHIVE CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

On November 16 the Archive of Folk Song began its second half-century with a day devoted to spirited reflection on the fifty years just past. Scholars, performers, and friends of the Archive from around the country and abroad attended a symposium devoted to aspects of the Archive's past, present, and future.

In the first session, "The Founding of the Archive," Debora Kodish explored the personal and intellectual relationship between Robert Winslow Gordon, the first archivist, and Carl Engel, Chief of the Library's Music Division to whom Gordon reported. Archie Green then examined the broader milieu in which the Archive was born by reflecting upon the intellectual influence of Harvard professor Barrett Wendell in the early years of the century.

The second session focused upon "The Archive as a Generator of Knowledge." Alan Lomax recalled his experiences and experiments in cultural documentation and stimulation through fieldwork during the era when he and his father, John A. Lomax, directed the Archive. Herbert Halpert provided an account of WPA activities



David "Honeyboy" Edwards

connected with the Archive in which he had a part.

In the third session, entitled "Presenting, Interpreting, and Disseminating Folk Culture to the Nation," Alan Lomax discussed the role of the Archive during his tenure in documentary radio programming, oral history, and the "revival" of national interest in folk music and folk culture. Sterling Brown then recalled his participation in 1940 in a program at the Library of Congress celebrating the 75th anni-

*Continued page 6*

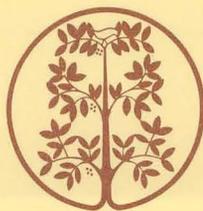
## TENNESSEE-TOMBIGBEE FOLKLIFE STUDY

Published materials ranging from books to films will result from a two-year folklife project directed by the American Folklife Center along a 135-mile stretch of the Tombigbee River in northeastern Mississippi and west-central Alabama. Fieldwork for the survey of traditional life and work will begin in the summer of 1979.

This section of the river is part of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, one of the major public works projects of the 20th century, and presently under construction by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Folklife Center will direct the study under terms of an agreement with the Atlanta office of the Interagency Archeological Services, part of the Department of the Interior's Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service, acting on behalf of the Mobile and Nashville Districts of the Corps of Engineers. The study is being carried out under provisions of Public Law 93-291, Preservation of Historic and Archeological Data, which provides for the preservation of cultural data in areas impacted by federal construction projects.

Aspects of folklife to be docu-

*Continued page 3*



## FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

a publication of the  
*American Folklife Center*  
at the  
*Library of Congress*

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Readers of *Folklife Center News* will by now have observed that the American Folklife Center places considerable emphasis upon documentary fieldwork. Though the Center's undertakings range from coordinative activities with other governmental agencies to symposia, concerts, exhibits, and publications, field research remains an integral part of the Center's mission. By "integral" I do not mean simply "important." In the panoply of endeavors open to students of folklore and folklife—from documentary fieldwork through archiving, library research, publication, dissemination, and various kinds of public programs—fieldwork may be said to be a very foundation of our knowledge, the

source and stimulus of our thoughts and actions involving folklife.

The integration of fieldwork into the program of the Folklife Center has a number of virtues and benefits. It ensures that the Center stays in touch with the fundamental pulse of its field. It extends the impact of the Center outside Washington, D.C., to the states and localities of the Nation. It enables the Center to complement its policy preachment with viable model projects which both lend authority to the preachment and provide patterns for emulation. And it stimulates the professional field of folklore by providing fieldwork opportunities for folklorists and by experimenting with fieldwork techniques.

But as I sat through the symposium on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Archive of Folk Song, these abstract arguments paled beside the argument of history. There is a sense in which all the Center's fieldwork experiments are but natural extensions of the pioneering fieldwork carried out by the Archive of Folk Song. The Archive long ago foreshadowed many of the Center's current initiatives. The Center has been experimenting with the effective use of new technology in folklife documentation; so did Robert W. Gordon, John A. Lomax, and Alan Lomax. The Center has stressed photographic documentation to complement sound recording; Gordon was devoted to documentary still photography, and Alan Lomax experimented with motion picture film. The Center has paid special attention to team fieldwork; Alan Lomax worked with scholars from Fisk University on a team project in Coahoma County, Mississippi, and made field forays with a team from the Library's Recording Laboratory.

Viewed from the vantage point of history, then, the American Folklife Center, even as it charts new directions in its program, continues to respond to institutional precedents established within the Library of Congress earlier

in this century. Fieldwork in American folklife is appropriate to the Library of Congress not only because of the official mandate and the administrative mechanisms of the institution, but because the history of the Archive within the Library of Congress has established an institutional predilection for folk cultural documentation through fieldwork.

The predilection of the institution in turn rests upon a foundation of public perception by the citizens to whom the institution belongs. It is somehow stirring to feel this democratic mandate when talking to people around

*Continued page 8*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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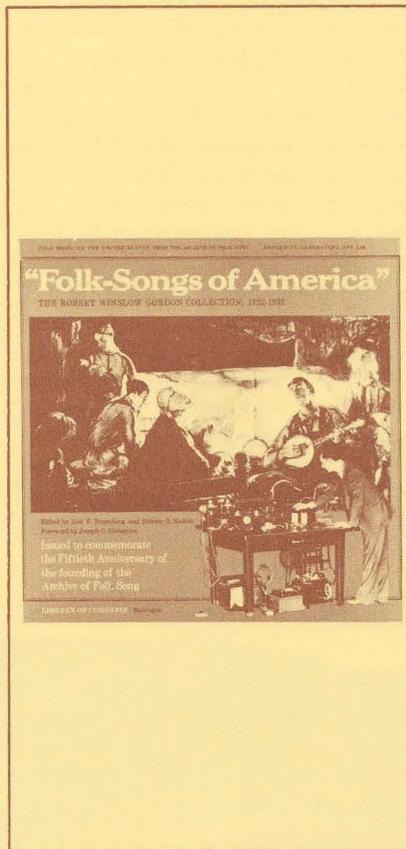
## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ISSUES LP COMMEMORATING ARCHIVE OF FOLK SONG 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The Library of Congress has issued the 68th LP in its series of folk music recordings from the Archive of Folk Song. First announced on November 16 at a symposium marking the Archive's 50th Anniversary, this recording commemorates the anniversary and honors its founder, Robert Winslow Gordon. Edited by Debora G. Kodish and Neil V. Rosenberg, the new release is numbered AFS L68 and is entitled "Folk-Songs of America": *The Robert Winslow Gordon Collection, 1922-1932*.

In 1928, Robert W. Gordon became the first head of the Library of Congress' Archive of American Folk Song. Mr. Gordon's active career as a folklorist began in 1917 and ended during the depression in 1933 when the donations which had sustained his position were terminated. Gordon (1888-1961) pioneered folksong documentation at a time when the subject was appreciated by only a handful of specialists and aficionados. Carrying a heavy cylinder machine, he traveled to the San Francisco waterfront, the Appalachian mountains, and the Georgia coast in order to record the diverse singing traditions of this country. He also experimented with aluminum disc and magnetic wire recording devices, making a pioneering journey to Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky with disc equipment in the winter of 1931-32.

Between 1922 and 1932 Gordon recorded a thousand cylinders and discs, a selection of which are heard on this LP. There are examples of sea shanties, ballads, spirituals, children's songs, and fiddle tunes. One noteworthy selection features Ben Harney singing his own composition of 1894, "The Wagon," considered to be the first ragtime song ever written.

To accompany the record its editors have prepared a 29-page illustrated booklet that provides a foreword by



Joseph C. Hickerson, current head of the Archive, a biography of Gordon, and annotations of the selections heard on the recording.

AFS L68, "Folk-Songs of America", is priced at \$10.00. Advance payment, including shipping charges, is required for all mail orders. Postage charges are 50 cents for mailing in the U.S. or Canada, \$1.90 for shipping abroad, and \$5.00 for airmail to Europe. Checks or money orders should be payable in U.S. dollars to "Recording Laboratory, Library of Congress" and mailed to Recording Laboratory, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. Copies may also be obtained in person at the sales desk in the Library of Congress Building, 10 First Street, S.E., Washington, D.C.

## PUBLICATIONS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

Brochure—general information on the American Folklife Center. Available upon request.

Coe, Linda, ed. *Folklife and the Federal Government: Activities, Resources, Funds and Services*. Publications of the American Folklife Center, no. 1. 147 pp; \$2.75. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Order by stock no. S/N030-000-00091-9. Remittance must accompany order.

Fleischhauer, Carl, and Marshall, Howard W., eds. *Sketches of South Georgia Folklife*. Publications of the American Folklife Center, no. 2. Washington, D.C.: Information Office, Library of Congress, 1977. 32-page photo essay; \$2. Georgia residents should purchase copies from the Arts Experiment Station, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Tifton, Georgia 31794.

Greeting cards—original paper-cut designs by Magdalena Gilinsky, a traditional Polish folk artist. Packages of 12 cards and envelopes, three of each design—\$3.50. Colors: red, purple, orange, and blue. Order from Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. Price includes postage. Orders must be prepaid.

### *Tombigeo from page 1*

mented and mapped during project fieldwork will include folk architecture, farm layout, crafts, foodways, verbal expression and language, custom and belief, religious and secular music, seasonal events and festivals, and family and community social life. The Center will work with folklorists and other professional specialists to provide broad coverage of the region. Anyone who wishes to serve as a fieldworker on this project and whose resume is not already in the Center's file of potential workers, should send a

*Continued page 8*

## JOTTINGS FROM A NEVADA CATTLE DRIVE

Last summer in this space I reported on a visit to a Nevada line camp during the spring phase of the Paradise Valley Folklife Project. Since then we've been back to the Valley twice; once in summer to document putting up hay and again in the fall, when Suzi Jones and I accompanied Les Stewart and the Ninety-Six Ranch cowboys on the first of two October trail drives.

During this five-day roundup and trail drive, the seven cowboys (some of whom, in northern Nevada and south-eastern Oregon, call themselves "buckaroos") gathered about 2,000 Hereford cattle that had been grazing on native grasses in the sagebrush

during the warm months, and herded them down out of the Santa Rosa Mountains to the home ranch. There the cattle will be pastured and fed on baled hay during the winter, or weighed and shipped to market.

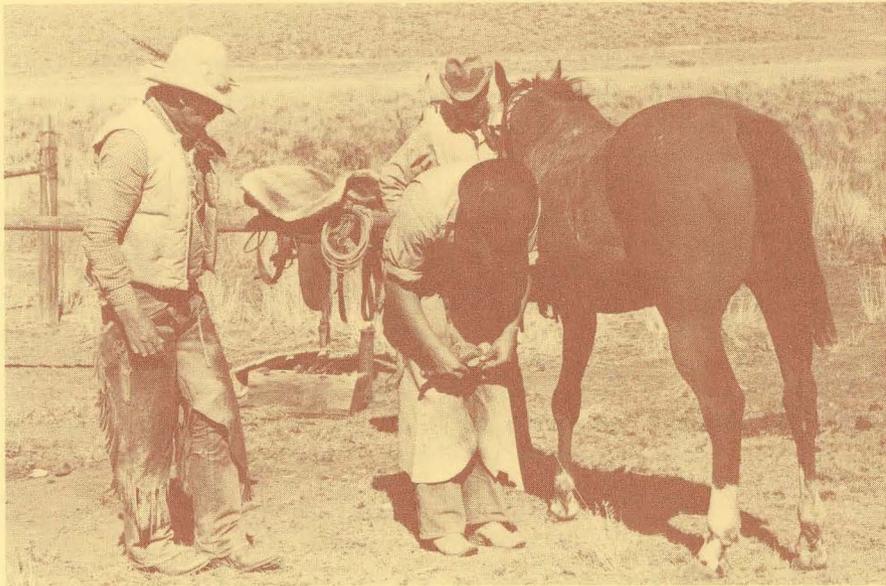
Workdays began before dawn. Although most of the men slept in tents or on the ground, the chill of the clear, cold nights was forgotten once inside the warm cabin, where Les Stewart cooked and served up his famous "buckaroo breakfasts." While Les, his son Fred, Bob Humphrey, Chuck Wheellock, Theodore Brown, John DeHaan, and brothers Tex and Clale Northrup gathered and pushed the scattered herd steadily through the landscape, the extra horses in the "caviata," bedrolls, gear, and supplies

were moved from one "buckaroo camp" to the next. After a hot dinner at noontime, the cowboys enjoyed a break inside the cabins. At the end of each day, while the cattle settled down for the night in the fenced "fields" (pastures) at the camps, there were chores to be done, like keeping all horses properly shod and looked after. The drive moved from Cold Springs camp around to Black Ridge camp and down into Hardscrabble on Martin Creek, where the last day was spent moving the big herd on into Paradise Valley.

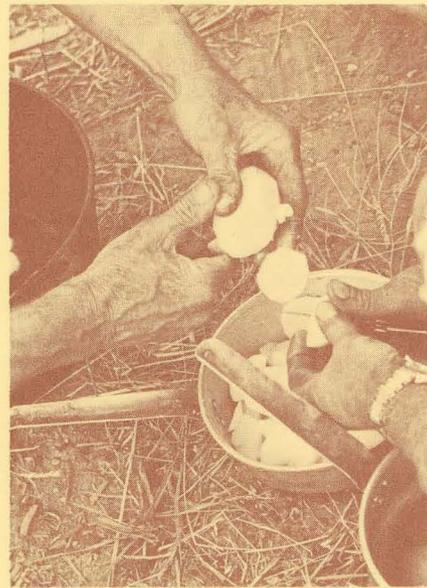
The project documents traditional life and work through the seasons and we are now planning to look at ranch work in late winter, which will complete our fieldwork. —Rusty Marshall



*Les Stewart moving herd into "field" at Cold Springs camp (photo by Suzi Jones).*



*Chuck Wheellock and Fred Stewart, foreground, and Bob Humphrey at Cold Springs.*



*Les Stewart and Bob Humphrey at Hardscrabble.*



*Clae Northrup, John DeHaan, Fred Stewart, and Chuck Wheellock at Hardscrabble camp (photo by Suzi Jones).*

*Anniversary from page 1*

versary of Emancipation—a program which included the live presentation of folk musicians on the stage of the Library's Coolidge Auditorium.

Charles Seeger began the fourth session, "The Archive as a Repository of Knowledge," with reflections on the bounds of our definition of the word "folk" and on the potential for indirect stimulation of the field through a national network of archives and scholars. Norm Cohen provided an outside researcher's perspective on the Archive as a research facility. James Porter lent an international perspective by commenting on the organization and facilities of European folk music archives. Joseph C. Hickerson, the Archive's Head, discussed the Archive's resources for the study of non-musical aspects of folk culture, and Gerald E. Parsons, Jr., the Archive's librarian, added remarks on the folk-

life resources of the Library as a whole. The fifth and final session was an open discussion of the future of the Archive, led by Folklife Center Board member Wayland D. Hand.

An unexpected highlight of the afternoon was the arrival of Congressman Frank Thompson of New Jersey, who joined the Board of the Center in awarding a certificate of appreciation to Archie Green for his efforts on behalf of the passage of the American Folklife Preservation Act which created the American Folklife Center.

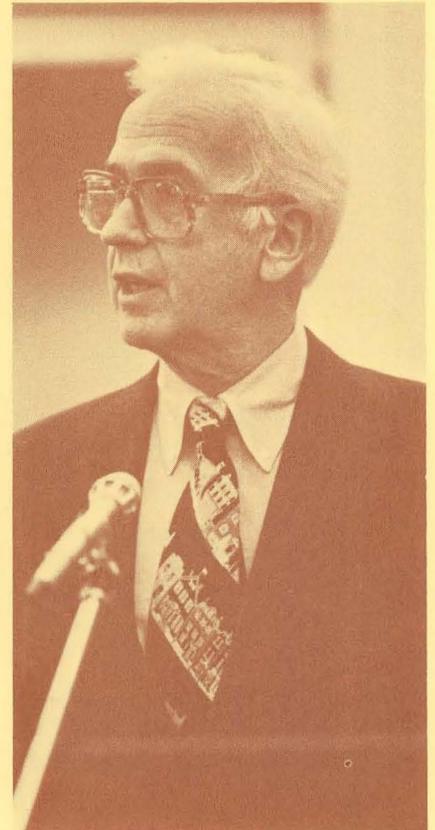
The evening concert began with a surprise appearance by Burl Ives, who shared reminiscences and reflections on the Archive. The first music of the evening was provided by Dee and Delta Hicks from Tennessee, who sang ballads and songs in the older traditional style interspersed with banjo pieces by Dee Hicks. They were joined on stage by Bobby Fulcher, who has

recorded Mr. and Mrs. Hicks for the Archive's collections. Following them came David "Honeyboy" Edwards, a blues singer and guitarist from Chicago who was recorded in Mississippi by Alan Lomax in 1942 for the Archive. The final performer was fiddler Benny Thomasson from Arlington, Texas, one of the originators of the modern "Texas" or "Western" style of fiddling. The concert was followed by a reception in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress.

Attendant to the day's celebration was the issuance of a commemorative LP of recordings by Robert W. Gordon, appearance of an article on Gordon by Debora Kodish in the Library's October 1978 *Quarterly Journal*, an exhibit on the Archive, establishment of an Archive gift fund, and publication of a special 16-page souvenir program brochure.



Archie Green was honored during the symposium for his efforts on behalf of the passage of the American Folklife Preservation Act. Archie Green holds the proclamation presented by the American Folklife Center's Board of Trustees. Left to right: Mrs. Rae Korson, Wayland Hand, Archie Green, David Voight, and Mrs. Raye Virginia Allen. Right: Congressman Frank Thompson of New Jersey joined in the tributes.





*The Archive's 50th Anniversary was an occasion to bring together those who have served as head of the Archive of Folk Song. Left to right: Alan Jabbour, Mrs. Rae Korson, Joseph C. Hickerson, and Alan Lomax. Right: Deborah Kodish discussed Robert Winslow Gordon, the first archivist. Below: Herbert Halpert addressed the 50th Anniversary Symposium at the Library of Congress.*



## BOARD MEETS IN VERMONT

At the invitation of the Woodstock Foundation, Inc., the American Folklife Center's Board of Trustees held its autumn meeting in Woodstock, Vermont, November 18, 19, and 20. Acting Chairman Raye Virginia Allen was formally elected Chairman for the remainder of the two-year term vacated by David Voight, who resigned in July. Edward B. Danson was elected Vice Chairman, succeeding Mrs. Allen.

In addition to discussing the Center's ongoing and future projects, the Board met with individuals involved in the preservation of folklife in Vermont. Scott Hastings of the Woodstock Foundation reported on the development of the Vermont Folklife Project and took the Trustees to visit a water-powered mill and a historic box factory. Ellen Lovell, executive director of the Vermont Council on the Arts, and state folklorist Jane Beck highlighted their activities in folklife throughout the state.



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### *Director's from page 2*

the country—to realize that it makes sense to them for the Library of Congress to sponsor documentary fieldwork, and that it gives them pride to say, "I recorded for the Library of Congress."

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### *Tombigee from page 3*

resume with a letter describing the specific interest to the director of the American Folklife Center.

*Emily and Benjamin Thresher own and operate Thresher's Mill, a water-powered mill in Barnet, Vermont. The Threshers and their mill will be featured in a documentary motion picture.*

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## THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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