

DEEP GAP, NORTH CAROLINA



Photo: R. YELLEN

DESIGN: J. SHAHN

THE WATSON FAMILY

DOG WATSON - ROSA LEE WATSON - ARNOLD WATSON - MRS. GENERAL D. WATSON —

GAIHER CARLTON - SOPHRONIE MILLER GREER

RECORDED BY

FOLKWAYS

EUGENE EARLE

RALPH RINZLER

PETER SIEGEL

FA 2366

THE WAT

SIDE I

EA 2366

- Band 1: GROUND HOG
- Band 2: EVERYDAY DIRT
- Band 3: BONAPARTE'S RETREAT
- Band 4: THE HOUSE CARPENTER
- Band 5: I'M TROUBLED
- Band 6: WHEN I DIE
- Band 7: THE TRAIN THAT CARRIED MY GIRL
FROM TOWN

FOLKWAYS

WATSON FAMILY

SIDE II

Band 1: DOWN THE ROAD
Band 2: THE LONE PILGRIM
Band 3: TEXAS GALES and BLACKBERRY RAG
Band 4: DARLING CORY
Band 5: YOUR LONG JOURNEY
(A. D. and Rosalee Watson)
Band 6: THE TRIPLET TRAGEDY (T. S. Miller)
Band 7: MUDDY ROADS
Band 8: THE LOST SOUL

Production Direction: Ralph Rinzler

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The Doc Watson Family

Recorded by Ralph Rinzler, Eugene W. Earle,
Archie Green, and Peter Siegel

Notes by D. K. Wilgus, assisted by Ralph
Rinzler and Eugene W. Earle

The seventh son of a family is often called "Doc" because he has special powers, usually curative but sometimes "devilish" (i. e. musical). Witness Doctor Howard Hopkins, the Kentucky folk performer featured for years on WLS and WJJD, Chicago. Arthel L. Watson was the sixth son in his family, and his nickname was given him by fellow musicians, by analogy with the companion of Sherlock Holmes. But he has power just the same. Some of his power-- or the record of it-- might well have been lost but for the recent development of a new audience for some varieties of American music.

Doc was born in Stoney Fork, North Carolina, March 23, 1923 -- the year marking the opening of a vast market for newer forms of Southern country music through the media of radio and phonograph records. Doc grew up in a musical family. His mother, Annie Watson, had a repertoire of 50-75 traditional secular songs, not to mention sacred music. His father, General Watson, picked banjo, and at least two of his brothers became traditional performers. His native area had no lack of accomplished musicians, many of whom were professional performers-- T. C. Ashley, G. B. Grayson, Doc Walsh, Garley Foster, the Hopkins brothers, et al. And he was by no means sheltered from the broader musical influences from recordings and radio. Yet the story of his early musical experience contains elements which by now seem clichés of the development of a folk performer.

Born blind, Doc eventually was sent to the State School for the Blind at Raleigh, N.C. His early years were spent in the protection of his family; yet he contributed his share of field work. When Doc was six or seven years old, his father traded Doc's uncle three days work at a sawmill for a phonograph and a supply of records (a few dixieland and ragtime items, but largely country music). The family's first radio was acquired in 1934. Doc's first banjo was homemade with a head of groundhog hide, too thick for good tone. The head was later replaced by the hide of his grandmother's old cat. Doc skinned the animal-- and his father completed the task for his eleven-year-old son. Having learned five-string banjo technique from his father, he turned to guitar at the age of thirteen. He borrowed an instrument and learned chords in one day--in reward for which virtuosity his father helped him buy his own instrument the next Saturday. Doc's introduction to the French harp cannot be recalled--he received one



for Christmas each year as far back as he can remember. He was tuning autoharps at age 23--but first played one May, 1961.

Doc grew up in the music tradition of his area and was exposed to the influences directed at his area by the developing commercial media. He was "exposed" to music at school, an influence which may have helped his musicianship, but seems to have had no strong effects. He listened to the recorded performances of Vernon Dalhart; he liked the type of song, but never imitated the style. He was more influenced by the records and broadcast performances of such artists as Buell Kazee, Frank Hutchison, David McCarn, Bill and Earl Bolick, Bill and Charlie Monroe. As has often been the case,



Doc Watson, guitar; a cousin on banjo; his father-in-law, Gaither Carlton, fiddle.

Photo by Dan Seeger

Lower left: Doc Watson. Photo by Dave Gahr

the "commercial" influences developed rather than destroyed his accomplishments as a traditional musician. As Doc points out, his family and friends knew a limited number of songs; recordings and radio increased their repertoire, widened their horizons. But of course, in the development of American culture, that condition was, as far as the majority of Southern folk were concerned, to be short lived.

Doc did not become a professional musician until he was thirty years old. By that time the taste of the audiences for which he played had changed and favored new musical hybrids. For seven years Doc played with groups in Johnson City, Bristol, Kingsport and Blowing Rock; he played what he describes as country-western standards and rock and roll--perhaps rockabilly best characterizes it. Doc is fortunately more broadminded than some members of his current audience. He recognizes that there are many types of music and is less disturbed about this part of his career than are some of his admirers.

One more element is necessary to account for the current Doc Watson. Doc had hardly thought of the old songs for years when the first hint of a new audience appeared in the person of Ralph Rinzler, whose successful efforts to reclaim the talents of Tom Ashley resulted in renewed activity among traditional musicians in the area. As Ralph and Eugene Earle began to record performances in 1960, Doc was stimulated to return to his neglected heritage. He joined Ashley, Clint Howard, and Fred Price to form a group for recording and for performances at concerts, festivals, and clubs--finding a city audience now ready to accept the country music he had grown up with. Doc unleashed an amazing versatility, creative and recreative, on various instruments and revealed a wide repertoire of traditional song.

Doc's performances with the Ashley-Watson band can be sampled on two previous recordings, Old-Time Music at Clarence Ashley's (Folkways FA 2355 and 2359). Doc has since appeared success-

- Microcards, Series A, No.
30. Lexington, Ky., 1959.
- RITCHIE,
GARLAND Jean Ritchie, A GARLAND
OF MOUNTAIN SONG. New
York, 1953.
- RITCHIE, SSB ----, THE SWAPPING SONG
BOOK, New York, 1952.
- SCARBOROUGH,
OT Dorothy Scarborough, ON
THE TRAIL OF NEGRO
FOLKSONGS. Cambridge,
Mass., 1925; reprinted
New York, 1963.
- SCARBOROUGH,
SC ----, A SONG CATCHER
IN THE SOUTHERN MOUN-
TAINS. New York, 1937.
- SHARP Cecil J. Sharp, ENGLISH
FOLK-SONGS FROM THE
SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS,
ed. Maud Karpeles. 2 vols.
Loddon, 1932
- SULZER Elmer G. Sulzer, TWENTY-
FIVE KENTUCKY MOUN-
TAIN BALLADS. Lexington,
Ky., 1936.
- THOMAS Jean Thomas, BALLAD
MAKIN' IN THE MOUNTAINS
OF KENTUCKY. New York,
1939.
- THOMPSON A PIONEER SONGSTER, ed.
Harold W. Thompson, asst.
by Edith E. Cutting. Ithaca,
N. Y., 1958.
- WVF WEST VIRGINIA FOLKLORE,
1950--
- WKFA Western Kentucky Folklore
Archive, University of
California, Los Angeles.
- WETMORE AND
BARTHOLOMEW Susannah Wetmore and
Marshall Bartholomew,
MOUNTAIN SONGS OF
NORTH CAROLINA. New
York, 1926.
- WHEELER Mary Wheeler, STEAMBOATIN'
DAYS. Baton Rouge, La., 1944.
- WHITE Newman Ivey White, AMERI-
CAN NEGRO FOLK-SONGS.
Cambridge, Mass., 1928.
- WILGUS D. K. Wilgus, "The White
Pilgrim: Song, Legend, and
Fact," SOUTHERN FOLKLORE
QUARTERLY, XIV (1950),
177-184.
- WILLIAMS Cratis D. Williams, BAL-
LADS AND SONGS. Thesis,
M.A. University of Kentucky,
1937.
- WYMAN AND
BROCKWAY Loraine Wyman and Howard
Brockway, LONESOME
TUNES. New York, 1916.

fully as a solo performer, and joined on memorable occasions with Bill Monroe to perform the old Monroe Brothers' repertoire.

This recording is but a sampling of the old time music of Doc, his family, and friends; but it manages to include a good deal. Doc's mother performs an ancient ballad, and a neighbor sings a local ballad of the death of her own husband. Doc performs songs and tunes learned from family tradition and from country records and radio shows. He is joined by the lilting fiddle of his father-in-law, Gaither Carlton and by the banjo, French harp, and voice of his brother Arnold. Doc performs with his wife Rosa Lee a newly-composed song in country tradition. And group hymns necessarily complete the sample.

This album does not display all the talents of Arthel Watson. It is, if anything, an understatement. But in its restraint it is representative of Doc Watson as a human being. Doc's memory, talent, and creativity are matched by a sensitivity to the meaning of his music and the culture which produced it. Having participated with him in "workshops" concerning traditional music, I suspect that his notes and comments on his music would be more enlightening and important than mine.



Rosa Lee Watson's father: Gaither Carlton. Photo by Dan Seeger

Side I, Band 1: GROUND HOG

Doc Watson, vocal and autoharp; Arnold Watson, banjo; Gaither Carlton, fiddle.

Shoulder up your gun and whistle up your dog, (bis)
Off to the woods fer to catch a groundhog.
Oh groundhog.

Run here Sally with a ten foot pole, (bis)
To twist this whistle pig out of his hole.

Here comes Sal with a snigger and a grin, (bis)
The ground hog gravy all over her chin.

Look at them fellers, they're a-goin' wild, (bis)
Eat that hog before he's cook or biled.

I dug down, but I didn't dig deep, (bis)
There laid a whistle pig fast asleep.

Now the meat's in the cupboard and the butter's
in the churn,
The meat's in the cupboard and the butter's in
the churn,
If that ain't groundhog I'll be durned.

Well you eat up the meat and you save the hide,
Eat up the meat and y'save the hide,
Make the best shoestrings that ever was tied.

Look at them fellers, they're about to fall, (bis)
Eat till their britches won't button at all.

Little piece of cornbread a-layin' on the shelf, (bis)
If you want any more you can sing it yourself.

Josiah H. Combs once wrote that "Groundhog rises to epic heights" (Lomax, ABFS, p. 271) and that "if it had transpired in the 'heroic age,' it should today perhaps be standing alongside 'The Battle of Otterburn'" (Folksay, II, p. 246). Yet when Combs indicated that it "belongs to an endless number of what may be termed fiddle and banjo songs" he left open the question of classifying these songs into lyric or epic, not to speak of the problem of the development of such songs.

Southern folk musicians were unaware of the scholarly distinction between ballads and other songs and consequently developed songs which do not fit the academic categories. I have called these songs "blues ballads," because a number of them use the style of repetition in the blues (usually AAB) and because they apply to narrative the subjective qualities of the blues. The blues ballad is essentially a style, as songs originally in another narrative form (e. g. "The Cruel Ships Carpenter," Laws P34) have been recomposed as blues ballads. The blues ballad ranges from lyrical, gapped narrative resembling older Anglo-Scottish balladry to kaleidoscopic images commenting on an implicit narrative.

"Ground Hog" is strictly an Appalachian song, rarely found even in the transplanted Appalachia of the Ozarks. But its protean nature challenges the analyst and historian. The form is normally an AABA stanza (as is Doc's), though it may be ABa or rarely AAAB and ABCa. The melody--usually of eight bars--characteristically repeats the shape of the first phrase a fifth higher. The refrain is usually "Ground hog," but may be "Law, man, law," "Sing-a-too-ri-addle-dinka-day," or similar nonsense syllables. The basic outline of the successful hunt for the hog or whistle pig doesn't vary, but the names of the principals are unstable--Jonah, Susan, Kate, Daddy, Ma, Sal, Max, Vester, Grace, Cloe, Berry, Jim, Sam, Joe. The song has been reported but once--and as a fragment--from Negro tradition, although stanzas in "Take Yo' Time" (Wheeler, p. 98) seem related. But there are a number of variants in Negro dialect, or with Negro characters. The song may well have been originally satiric rather than epic, but whether pointed at Negro or White frontier culture is difficult to determine. Arthur Palmer Hudson (Brown, III, 253) opines that the song apparently originated probably "in the early nineteenth or possibly in the later eighteenth century" and Alan Lomax suggests that it may have originally been a bear-hunting epic in Davy Crockett's time (Lomax, FSNA, p. 251). Early records of even the form of such songs are lacking, but evidence points to the late nineteenth century for the AAB form of many blues ballads. On the other hand, the form of "Ground Hog" is as analogous to that of "Froggie Went a-Courting" as to the AAB blues stanza.

Doc learned to pick the tune on the banjo from his cousin Willard Watson, but recalls these stanzas from the singing of his father. The fifth stanza is, of course, a commonplace finale.

References:

Brown, III, 253-5; V, 140-2
Folk-Say, II, 246-50
KFPM, II, No. 2
Lomax ABFS, pp. 271-6
Lomax, FSNA, p. 251
NCF, IV, 27.
NPMSS, I, No. 7, pp. 1-2
Ritchie, SSB, pp. 66-7
Roberts, Songs, No. 86
Wheeler, p. 98.
Williams, pp. 340-2
WVF, IX, 28
Wyman and Brockway, pp. 30-3

Discography:

AAFS: 14 recordings as "Groundhog."
Vester Jones, Folkways FS 3811
Land Norris, Okeh 40096
Frank Proffitt, Folkways FA 2360
Pete Seeger, Folkways FH 5003

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar.

John come home all in a wonder,
He rattled at the door just like thunder.
"Who is that?" Mr. Henley cried.
"'Tis my husband! You must hide!"

Then John sat down by the fireside a-weepin'
An' up that chimney he got to peepin'.
There he saw that poor old soul
Settin' up a-straddle of the potrack pole.

Then John built on a rousing fire
Just to suit his own desire.
His wife got out with a free good will,
"Don't do that, for the man you'll kill!"

Then John renched up and down he fetched him
Like a coon when a dog had ketched him.
He blacked his eyes and then did better:
He kicked him out right on his setter.

Then his wife she crawled in under the bed,
And he pulled her out by the hair of the head.
"And when I'm gone, remember then!"
He kicked her where the chinchies had been.

Now, the law went down and John went up.
He didn't have the chance of a yaller pup.
They sent him down to the old chain gang
For beatin' his wife, the dear little thing.

Well John didn't worry, John didn't cry,
But when he got back home he socked her in the
eye.
They took him right back to the old town jail,
But his wife got lonesome and she paid his bail.

Then the judge sent back, made him work so hard
He longed to be home in his own front yard.
They kept him there and wouldn't turn him loose.
I could tell you more about him, but there ain't
no use.

Although stories like this might well be as old as human societies, they are usually traced to twelfth-century France, to the humorous tales in octosyllabic verse called *fabliaux*. Among others, Chaucer and Boccaccio made good use of them, and Americans still tell versions of Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" and Boccaccio's yarn of the wife who hides her lover in a vat (Day 7, Story 2). A ballad form of another Boccaccio tale (Day 4, Story 10), "The Boatsmen and the Chest" (Laws Q8), is part of the American folksong repertoire. The universality of the situations of these tales makes them admirably suited for localization, and I found in western Kentucky a form of "The Boatsmen and the Chest" attached to a local worthy and attested as true.

"Every Day Dirt" seems just such a localized form of a widely known ballad, "Will the Weaver." Although the story is similar to those of many international *fabliaux*, it has been reported only as a ballad, first appearing in a Scottish chapbook of 1793. It has been collected from oral tradition in England and from Nova Scotia to Georgia in North America. In fuller forms of the ballad, the husband complains to his mother of the domineering character of a newly acquired wife. His mother tells him to return and take punitive action if his wife rebels against him. On the way home, the husband is informed by a neighbor that Will the Weaver is visiting his wife. After being thrashed by the irate husband, Will is beaten in some versions killed by his own wife.

Whether the original Will was an actual person or a generic figure satirizing village craftsmen will probably never be known. It may be signifi-

cant that in a similar ballad, "The Mayor and the Weaver" (Laws Q 10), it is the weaver who is cuckolded and has revenge of a sort. Nor may we ever identify the Mr. Henley of "Everyday Dirt," let alone determine if the Henley form was a local libel or a treatment of a actual event. But we do know now that the detailed conclusion of the ballad is fictitious.

This form of the ballad occurs in two hillbilly recordings. Doc learned it from the performance of David McCarn (Victor 40274, recorded 1930). It was also recorded by Bill Carlisle as "Jumpin' and Jerkin' Blues" in 1935. Archie Green made an excellent study of these recordings (plus a recording by Parker and Woolbright) in *Caravan*, August-September, 1959, and reached conclusions similar to those I have advanced. In the summer of 1961, Archie Green and Ed Kahn visited David McCarn at his home in Stanley, North Carolina. Among other things, they learned that McCarn had learned "Everyday Dirt" from his wife of the singing partner, Howard Long. Mrs. Long had learned the song from her father-in-law, Mance Long, who had apparently learned it from his mother. These performers did not view it as a local song and "Mr. Henley" remains unexplained. But McCarn recalls changing the ending of the ballad from the way he originally learned it because he felt that, despite the husband's justification, the woman would have her way. This information indicates at least that the source of Bill Carlisle's recorded version must have been ultimately the performance of McCarn.

Doc's performance is by no means a slavish duplication of the McCarn disc. The dramatic indication of the wife's voice is Doc's addition, and his apparent misunderstanding of the line "He kicked her where the kicking's best" may be somewhat of an improvement in the satire. Doc's further changes can be seen by comparison with the last two stanzas of McCarn's rendition:

When he got off, he went back to court,
His wife she got him for non-support.
John didn't worry, and John didn't cry,
But when he got close he socked her in the eye.

They took John back to the old town jail;
His wife she came and paid his bail.
It won't be long 'til he'll be loose.
I could tell you more 'bout him but there ain't no
use.

Although Doc uses the same style of accompaniment, his performance is superior.

References:

- Cazden, Part II, pp. 76-7
- Chappell, pp. 95-6
- Chase, pp. 184-5
- Green, *Caravan*, No. 18, pp. 14-23
- Davis, p. 158
- Hubbard, pp. 230-1
- JAF, LXIII, 265-6
- Laws, ABBB, Q 8, Q 9, Q 10
- NCF, IV, 23-4
- NPMSS, VII, No. 1
- Ritchie, Garland, pp. 42-3
- Scarborough, *SC*, 237-8, 418

Discography:

AAFS: 4 recordings as "Will the Weaver"; 3 as "Willy Weaver"; 1 as "Willdee Weaver."

Bill Carlisle, "Jumpin' and Jerkin' Blues,"
Vocalion 02984; Conqueror 8789; Banner,
Melotone, Oreole, Perfect, Romeo 70264.

Paul Clayton, "Will the Weaver," Elektra EKL
147.

David McCarn, Victor 40274.

The New Lost City Ramblers, Folkways FA 2397

Charlie Parker and Mack Woolbright, "Will the Weaver," Columbia 15694-D

Mike Seeger, "Will the Weaver," Folkways FA 2325.

Side I, Band 3: BONAPARTE'S RETREAT

Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar

The Emperor of France has left an enduring impression on Anglo-Irish folk music. Napoleon has been treated in ballads and shanties and has contributed to the confusing titles of instrumental performances. Unfortunately, a title does not always identify a tune, and more than one tune is called "Bonaparte's Retreat" or "Bonaparte Crossing the Alps." The tune performed here seems to be the one best known by the title in the United States. As a march tune it is well known in Ireland as "The Eagle's Whistle." It is also sometimes recast into a form of alternating slow and quick sections as an imitation of a male-female quarrel.

In 1949, Redd Stewart with Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys set a text to a version and created a country-western and pop hit by mid-1950.

Reference:

Bayard, No. 80, No. 87

Discography:

AAFS: 7 recordings as "Bonaparte's Retreat"; 2 as "Bonyparte's Retreat"; 1 as "Bonaparte's March"; 2 as "Bonaparte"; 3 as "Scolding Wife."

Anita Bryant, Columbia CL 2069/CS 8869

B. Butler, Decca 46209

Eddie Grant, Capitol 1158

A. A. Gray, Okah 40010

Pee Wee King and His Golden West Cowboys, Victor 21-0111; Victor 48-0114; HMV EA 3934.

Gene Krupa, Victor 20-3766; Victor 47-3766

Leon McAuliffe and His Western Swing Band, Columbia 20706; Columbia 2-446; Columbia HL 9016

Jean Ritchie, Collector Limited Edition 1201

Mike Seeger, Folkways FA 2325

Kay Starr, Capitol 936

Pete Steele, "The Scolding Wife," Folkways FS 3828

Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers, Columbia 15485-D

Charles Trent, Smash MGS 27002

Kitty Wells, Decca DL 8979

Side I, Band 4: THE HOUSE CARPENTER
(Child 243)

Mrs. Annie Watson, vocal; Gaither Carlton, fiddle.

"Well met, well met," said an old true love,
"Well met, well met," said he
"I'm just returning from the salt, salt sea,
And it's all for the love of thee.

"Come in, come in, my old true love,
And have a sit with me.
It's been three-fourths of a long, long year
Since together we have been."

"I can't come in and I can't sit down,
For I have but a moment's time.

They say you're married to a house carpenter
And your heart will never be mine.

"I could have married the king's daughter fair
And she would have married me.
But I forsaken her crowns of gold,
And it's all for the love of thee."

"Now will you forsaken your house carpenter
And go along with me.
I'll take you where the grass grows green
On the banks of Iteeree."

She pick-ed up her little babe
And kisses gave it three,
Saying, "Stay right here, my darling little babe,
And keep your papa company."

They had not been on ship two weeks,
I'm sure it was not three,
Till his true love began to weep and mourn,
And she wept most bitterly.

"Are you weeping for my silver and my gold?
Are you weeping for my store?
Or are you weeping for that house carpenter
Whose face you'll never see any more?"

"A curse, a curse," to the sailor she cried,
"A curse, a curse," she swore.
"You've robbed me of my sweet little babe
That I never shall see no more."

They had not been on board three weeks,
I am sure it was not four,
Until there came a leak in the ship,
And it sunk for to rise no more.

Agreeing with Child and later commentators that the ultimate source of this ballad is a London broadside licensed February 21, 1657, one can find in later forms a prime example of traditional improvement. The ballad has remained "A Warning for Married Women," but every later text is sharper than the original, which devoted seventeen of its thirty-two stanzas to the relation of how Jane Reynolds' fiancée was pressed to sea, how three years later she learned of his death, how she married a ship carpenter, and how four years later a spirit "like to a man" appeared at her window. But "tradition" did more than jettison this introduction. The temptation of the wife and the fact of her flight are in the seventeenth century print, but the subsequent events which form the major portion of later texts are represented only by

And so together away they went
From off the English shore
And since that time the woman-kind
Was never seen no more.

Whereupon the print continues with the lamentations and suicide of the husband. When the ballad reappears after a century--and again in cheap print--it is no longer a vulgar ballad, but recreated as a traditional ballad, a form it has never since lost.

With one exception (BESSNE, VI, 7-8), all American variants belong to "The House Carpenter" type and have lost the names of the principals--as have all British texts noted since the early nineteenth century. The ballad has been far more popular in North America than in Great Britain, to judge from the reports of collectors. Although frequent printing may account for the ballad's popularity, the reverse may well be true, particularly in view of the many small variations within the relatively stable forms. Alan Lomax's comments (FSNA, pp. 169-70) on the relation of such ballad themes to the fantasies of American pioneer women is well taken, particularly considering that this ballad has no ancient, international connections, but apparently developed with later

"patterns of conduct and feeling."

Mrs. Watson's variant, which she learned as a very young child, is a concise example of the most popular American type, in which the supernatural character of the lover is not even hinted at. "Iteeree" is of course from Italy, which is most likely the place name lying behind "sweet Tennessee," "sweet Willie," "Old sweet Calvary," "sweet relief," "Aloe Dee," "sweet Treelee," and other variations. Mrs. Watson sings in a beautiful objective style, with but a hint of ornamentation.

References:

Babb, No. 2
BFSSNE, VI, 7-8
Brown, II, 171-80; IV, 95-101
Child, IV, 360-9, 524
Childs, pp. 45-6
Cazden, pp. 82-3
Coffin, pp. 138-40
Dean-Smith, p. 80
Greig & Keith, p. 196
Hubbard, pp. 28-31
JAF, LXIV, 48-9; LXX, 340-1, 352
KFPM, II No. 2, pp. 8-7; No. 4, pp. 17-9
Kincaid, No. 2, p. 18
Lomax, FSNA, pp. 169-70
Niles, pp. 296-9
Owens, pp. 56-8
Raine, pp. 14-5
WKFA, No. 243

Discography:

AAFS: 41 recordings as "The House Carpenter";
1 as "The House Carpenter's Wife"; 1 as "Well
Met, My Old True Love"

Clarence Ashley, "The House Carpenter,"
Columbia 15654-D; Folkways FA 2951
Carolina Tar Heels, "Can't You Remember When
Your Heart Was Mine?" Victor 40219
Mrs. Texas Gladden, AAFS Album 1; AAFS L1;
Disc Album 737
Bradley Kincaid, Bluebird B-5255; Sunrise 3338
Joan O'Bryant, "The House Carpenter's Wife,"
Folkways FA 2338
Almeda Riddle, Prestige/International 25003
Jean Ritchie, Folkways FA 2301
Rosalie Sorrels, Folkways FH 5343
Mrs. Pete (Lillie) Steele, Folkways FS 3828

Side I, Band 5: I'M TROUBLED, I'M TROUBLED

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Arnold Watson,
vocal and French harp

A meeting is a pleasure and a parting is grief,
But a false-hearted lover is worse than a thief.

A thief can but rob you and take what you save,
But a false-hearted lover, take you to your grave.

CHORUS:

I'm troubled, I'm troubled, I'm troubled in mind,
If trouble don't kill me, Lord, I'll live a long time.

The grave will decay you and turn you to dust.
Ain't a girl in a million that a poor boy can trust.

They'll hug you they'll kiss you, they'll tell you
more lies

Than the cross ties on the railroad or the stars
in the sky.

(CHORUS)

I'm goin' to Georgia, I'm goin' to roam;
I'm goin' to Georgia to make it my home.

Gonna build me a cabin on the mountain so high,

Where the wild birds and turtledoves can hear
my sad cry.

(CHORUS)

Lyrics such as this are usually women's songs in the Appalachians, but, as unstable as the "false true-lovers" they complain of, they shift easily to the man's point of view. The study of a single lyric might not be a lifetime's work, but it would make a large doctoral dissertation, since such a study might well include almost the entire tradition, so interrelated are the songs. Singers often treat closely related items as distinct songs, but what distinguishes an individual song is difficult to determine. Despite textual relationship, distinction in tunes seems to separate "The Wagoner's Lad" from "Old Smokey" and "Old Smokey" from "The Inconstant Lover" (which seems to be Doc's song--though the decision may be arbitrary). On the other hand "I'm Troubled, I'm Troubled" is distinct from Riley Puckett's "I'm Going to Georgia" (Columbia 15374-D), though the latter is a worn-down set of the same tune and there is textual relationship.

Differences are both qualitative and quantitative. Perhaps one should not attempt to apply a classification alien to this sort of lyric, which is an extreme example of traditional composition. A folk composer works with traditional materials to "make" a song. His idiom of style and formulae may enable him to create an almost totally new song (text, not tune); or he may "make" his song by merely changing a few names. So out of the building blocks of tunes, images, stanzas may have been created innumerable lyrics--or, from another standpoint, a single multiform song.

At any rate, I have made no attempt to annotate "I'm Troubled" stanza by stanza. Not can I guarantee that all recordings with related titles are closely related to "I'm Troubled." (I might note that the following are NOT: Mrs. Emma Dusenbury, AAFS 3232 A1; Tenneva Ramblers, Victor 21645.)

Doc learned this song from the recording of the Blue Sky Boys (Bill and Earl Bolick) listed below.

Reference:

Brown, III, pp. 271-4; IV, 154-6 (But cf. III, 344-6; IV, 209)

Discography:

AAFS: 3 recordings as "I'm Going to Georgia (ey)"; 2 as "I'm Going Back to Georgia"; 2 as "I'm Troubled in Mind"; 1 as "Going to Georgy"; 1 as "I Once Loved a Young Man."

Blue Sky Boys, Bluebird B-6358; Montgomery Ward M-7016

Carolina Tar Heels, "I'm Going to Georgia,"
Columbia 20544-D

J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers, "I Once Loved a Young Man," Bluebird B-7659; Montgomery Ward M-7456.

Wade Mainer and Zeke Morris, "Going to Georgia,"
Bluebird B-6423; Montgomery Ward M-4719

Harry and Jeanie West, Esoteric ES 545

The Watson Family

Because I believe and have found salvation,
When I die, (bis) I'll live again.
That I may take part in the jubilation
When I die, (bis) I'll live again

CHORUS:

When I die, (bis), I'll live again (bis),
Hallelujah, I'll live again.
Because I'm forgiven, my soul will find heaven,
When I die, (bis) I'll live again (bis).

The fear of the grave is removed forever, etc.
My soul will rejoice by the crystal river, etc.

(CHORUS)

Because to the Lord I have made confession, etc.
For now on my soul there is no transgression, etc.

(CHORUS)

Doc says, "I can remember those hymns farther back than I can remember singing -- from the days when Mama used to carry me to church." And religious songs such as this and "The Lost Soul" (Side II, Band 7) were and are an integral part of Appalachian folk culture. They are related melodically and often textually to secular song, but are vastly important in themselves. The older tradition of religious music has received serious study by George Pullen Jackson and others, but the later "gospel" tradition is still an uncharted field, marked by a paucity of collectanea in folklore publications and a bulk of materials in hymnals that are widespread in many areas but almost unknown in research libraries. Yet one can find significant information in almost any Southern hymnal he peruses. The Watson family apparently sang these songs directly from a song book, but I have been unable to locate them in any source available to me, despite the conviction that I have met them before.

The harmonies and antiphonal style of performance are markedly characteristic and are probably the source of similar developments in the performance of secular song.

Side I, Band 7: THE TRAIN THAT CARRIED MY GIRL FROM TOWN

Doc Watson, guitar and vocal.

Where were you when the train left town?
I's standin' on the corner with my head hung down.
Hey that train, carried my girl from town,
He-ey, yeh, yeh, yeh.

I wish to the lord that train would wreck,
Kill the engineer and break the fireman's neck.
Hey that train done carried my girl from town,
etc.

Rations on the table, coffee's gettin' cold,
Some dirty rounder stole my jellyroll, etc.

There goes my girl, somebody bring her back,
'Cause she's got her hand in my money sack, etc.

Spoken: Ah she's rollin' on down the line now.

Ashes to ashes and dust to dust,
Lord show me the woman that a man can trust,
etc.

Spoken: Enough to make a man lonely. Oh yeh!

This is the way she sounded when she went outa hearin'.

This song entered the Watson Family repertoire from the Okeh recording of the white country performer, Frank Hutchinson. Although Doc was certainly aware of the recording, he learned the song through the singing of his brother Arnold and feels he was influenced by Arnold's style. In the process, Hutchinson's nine-stanza text was shortened and the knife-guitar accompaniment restyled. The late Frank Hutchison was a West Virginia artist and must have learned his repertoire and style from Negroes in railroad or mine camps. The song as a whole may be found on a blues recording unknown to me, but it is found in no printed collection I have seen. If the song is a "white blues," it was put together as others from Negro sources. White performers were recomposing songs from Negro sources before Jimmie Rodgers rocketed to fame using some of the same material. "Train That Carried My Girl from Town" is an eight-bar blues of the "Alabama Bound" group. In fact, the first verse which Doc omits from Hutchison's performance betrays--in usual folksong fashion--the model:

There she races, Alabama bound,
If my girl leaves me 'fore I move from town.

And of course one does not have to look long for parallels:

O! where was you when de old Titanic went down?
I was on de back of er mule singing "Alabama bound."

(White, p. 348)

Oh! where was you when the rolling mill burned down?
On the levee camp about fifteen miles from town.

(Scarborough, p. 243)

Standing on de corner, waiting for my brown,
First thing I knowed, I was jail-house bound.

(White, p. 332)

I've been to 'Bama and I just got back,
I didn't bring no money but I brought the sack.

(White, p. 285)

Ashes to Ashes, dust to dust,
I got a woman I can't trust.

(White, p. 332)

References:

White, pp. 276, 285, 306-8, 322, 335, 229, 248, 361, 369, 392

Scarborough, OT, p. 243

Discography:

Frank Hutchison, Okeh 45064; Okeh 45111

Wade Mainer--Zeke Morris, "Train Carry My Girl Back Home," Bluebird B-6801; Montgomery Ward M-7129

Side II, Band 1: DOWN THE ROAD

Doc Watson, guitar and vocal; Gaither Carlton, fiddle.

CHORUS:

Down the road, down the road,
I've got a sugar baby down the road.

Down the road a mile and a half
I swapped my horse for a cow and a calf.

Down the road, across by the shop,
My old hat's got a hole in the top.

Down the road till you come to the turn,
Rocks in the road as big as a churn.

There are probably a limited number of naming patterns for pieces of instrumental music in Anglo-Irish tradition, but in our present state of knowledge we can see only an almost infinite number of associations. A tune may be named for the alleged composer (often the person from whom a performer learned it) or for a place associated with the tune (where it was first heard or supposedly was composed). A tune is called in south-central Kentucky "Simpson County," but is also recognized by performers as "Bill Cheatum," from the composer who allegedly lived in the county. We find legends relating the name of a tune to incidents surrounding its composition or performance (e.g. "Great Big Taters in Sandy Land," Ford, pp. 179-180), but must always suspect that the legend originated in the traditional title itself. Then we have such titles as "Nell Flaherty's Drake," "The Snouts and Ears of America," "The Flitch of Bacon," and "Kiss the Maid Behind the Barrel" to consider. The titles have often suffered vicissitudes in their travels, as "Nigger Iches Long," for which the performer could give me no explanation, not knowing the standard title of "Nigger, Inch Along." That the titles relate to associated texts is sometimes true, but one may also suspect that a text can grow out of a traditional title.

At any rate "Down the Road" seems to be another name for "Ida Red" (Sulzer, p. 42). In this instance I prefer to consider that the tune "Down the Road" is a distinct form of the tune to "Ida Red," thus avoiding having to list all references to and recordings of the latter.

This was the second or third tune Doc learned from his father, who also was the source of the text.

References:

Bayard, *passim*
Ford, *passim*
O'Neill, *passim*
Roberts, Songs, No. 69
Sulzer, p. 42

Discography:

Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Mercury 6211
Oren Jenkins, Folkways FA 2314
Bascom Lamar Lunsford, AAFS 1802 A1,
New York, 1935
Sonny Osborne, Kentucky 564
Marion Rees, AAFS 837 B3, Zionville, N.C.
1936

Side II, Band 2: THE LONE PILGRIM

Doc Watson, Guitar and vocal; Gaither Carlton,
fiddle.

I came to the place where the lone pilgrim lay
And pensively stood by his tomb,
When in a low whisper I heard something say,
"How sweetly I sleep here alone.

"The tempest may howl and the loud thunder road,
And gathering storms may arise,
But calm is my feeling, at rest is my soul.
The tears are all wiped from my eyes.

"The cause of my Master compelled me from
home,
No kindred or relative nigh.
I met the contagion and sank to the tomb.
My soul flew to mansions on high.

"Go tell my companion and children most dear
To weep not for me now I'm gone.
The same hand that led me through scenes most
severe
Has kindly assisted me home."

"This was absolutely Dad's favorite," says Doc of this sacred song. Aunt Molly Jackson said that it was her grandfather Garland's favorite song, and Mrs. Dewitt H. Wilson of Floyd's Knobs, Indiana, wrote, "This song was my father's favorite." Its appearance throughout the United States testifies to its popularity and to the interdependence of print and oral tradition in American folk culture. Doc's father learned it from William Walker's Christian Harmony (1866 et seq.), which is but one of the shape note hymnals containing variants of "The White Pilgrim."

Legends of its origin and claims to its authorship are many. The "White Pilgrim" form has been attributed to B. F. White (The Sacred Harp, 1911); The "Lone Pilgrim" to William Walker (Southern Harmony, 1847; Christian Harmony, 1866). It has been "supposed to have been written about Roger Williams long after his exile from the early Massachusetts colony," or by "an old Negro, Methodist Episcopal Preacher," or by an Indian missionary. B. F. White is said to have written it "on the lone prairie in Texas" while standing "at the grave of a friend who once lived in Georgia." Another account is that the song was written by a brother of an unfortunate preacher who was "struck down by some contagious disease while ministering to the sick" in Virginia. Aunt Molly placed the grave in a foreign country and assigned authorship to the preacher who replaced "the lone pilgrim" in "that heathen country." And the legends have a kernel of truth.

The White Pilgrim was Joseph Thomas, a "New Light Christian" evangelist who dressed in white raiment and traveled through much of the area east of the Mississippi from July 6, 1815, to April 9, 1835, when he died of the smallpox in Johnsonburg, New Jersey. In the fall of 1838 a fellow preacher, Elder John Ellis of Dayton, Ohio, visited the grave of the Pilgrim and composed the poem which the author later said was "sung around the world." At any rate, the song appeared in various shape-note hymnals and on at least one broadside, gained three stanzas in its various appearances, and has been collected by folklorists from Vermont to California. It is a favorite at the annual Southern Harmony "Big Sing" in Benton, Kentucky, and has been developed into a "folk cantata" by Lewish H. Horton and Buell H. Kazee. In some Northern hymn books, including those edited by Elder Ellis, the text is set to "Lily Dale," but the more popular tune is the one Doc sings, a set of "The Braes of Balquhiddy," which, set to a different text, is now called "Lone Pilgrim," Doc sings four stanzas, in fine traditional "feathering," of the Christian Harmony's six, omitting in particular the final stanza always credited to J. J. Hicks of North Carolina.

"The White Pilgrim" belongs to a larger "voice from the grave" tradition. One of these possibly derived from the Pilgrim song is "Lonely Tombs," which seems to have been distributed in the Stamps-Baxter gospel hymnals as well as on records. Doc also sings a version of this, which he calls "Oh Those Tombs."

References:

Brown, III, 599-610; V 338-40
"Greetings," Courier-Journal, Oct. 23, 1952
Horton and Kazee
Jackson, p. 11
Jameson, p. 39
KFPM, II, No. 1, p. 13
Randolph, IV, 56-57
Roberts, Songs No. 35
Thompson, pp. 169-70
Wilgus, SFQ, XIV, 177-84

Discography:

Roy Acuff, "Oh, Those Tombs," Capitol 3209
Davey Branam and the Brandy Mountain Boys,
"A Voice from the Grave," Superior 125
Aunt Molly Jackson, AAFS 2580 B, New York
City, 1939
Buell Kazee, Folkways FS 3810
O. F. Kirk, AAFS 1726 B2, Oakland City, Ind.,
1938
Bascom Lamar Lunsford, "The Lone Pilgrim,"
AAFS 1826 A3, New York City, 1935
J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers, "Lonely Tombs,"
King 661; King LP 666
Wade Mainer and Sons of the Mountaineers,
"Lonely Tomb," Bluebird B-7424;
Montgomery Ward M-7480
Betsy Miller, "The Braes o' Balquither,"
Folk-Lyric FL 116
Hobart Smith, Texas Gladden, and Preston Smith,
"Lonely Tombs," Prestige/International 25011

Side II, Band 3: TEXAS GALS and BLACKBERRY
RAG

Doc Watson, mandolin; Ralph Rinzler, guitar.

Doc learned the first tune from local musicians--
but indirectly from their recorded version: The
Hillbillies (Al Hopkins), Vocalion 5021. "Black-
berry Rag" Doc says he heard on a Del Rio radio
station played by a fiddler he recalls only as
"Billy." He probably refers to XERA, the Mexican
border station that once blanketed the United States
with country music and the late Dr. John R.
Brinkley's goat gland sales pitch.

Side II, Band 4: DARLING COREY

Doc Watson, vocal; Gaither Carlton, fiddle;
Arnold Watson, banjo.

Wake up, wake up, darling Corey!
What makes you sleep so sound?
Them highway robbers are a-comin'.
They're a-ringin' around your town.

Well the last time I see darling Corey,
She's a-sittin' on the banks of the sea,
With a forty-four buckled 'round her
And a banjo on her knee.

Wake up, wake up, darling Corey!
What makes you sleep so late?
Them burglars they all are a-comin',
They're a-waitin' outside your gate.

Dig a hole, dig a hole in the meadow!
Dig a hole in the cold, cold ground!
Dig a hole, dig a hole in the meadow!

Wake up, wake up, darling Corey,
An' go and fetch me my gun.
Lord, I ain't no man for trouble,
But I'll die before I'll run.

"Darling Corey" is a test case for establishment
of a category of "blues ballads." Doc's variant

is one of a group which present implicitly the tale
of a death of a forthright female in defense of a
home or moonshine still. But excepting these few
variants this banjo song never quite achieved or
maintained even the loose consistency managed
by a blues ballad like "Wild Bill Jones" (Laws
E 10) out of many of the same commonplace
stanzas. The song of which "Darling Corey" is a
form appears as a warning song against revenue
agents, a moralistic goodnight, a lament for a
false-hearted woman--all at the same time. The
singer may be preparing for his grave, swearing
off liquor at the request of his sweetheart or wife,
and complaining of her carousing in the succession
of a few stanzas. Yet the song holds together,
largely through the character of the gun-totin',
booze-guzzlin', banjo pickin', hell-raisin' Corey-
Norey-Maggie-Lulie, and insofar as the blues
ballad emphasizes character and situation over
narrative, this song qualifies.

The history of the song is difficult to trace, particularly since songs of this sort tend to elude the folksong collector who concentrates on domestic tradition; these songs are not quite respectable even on some levels of folk culture. They belong to the rough frolics, the "groceries," the logging, mining, and railroad camps. One can place the origin of the song no earlier than the late nineteenth century not only because of its style, but--assuming the reference to illegal distilling to be original--because of the strong Federal action against moonshiners beginning in the late 1870's. The earliest notice of the song is on a Virginia ballet dated February, 1906 (Davis, p. 129). In the Western Kentucky Folklore Archive is a copy collected by Josiah H. Combs in Hindman, Ky., 1913. Both of these somewhat lengthy copies are of the "Hustling Gamblers" type (see also Henry, Fuson, Thomas, Clayton) in which the singer is a somewhat versatile rounder. The oldest text of the song may be surmised to have been a "Hustling Gamblers" form in which the girl is named "Cora." One early text refers to "Little Maggie," who thenceforth appears only (I have not seen the Davis text) in variants following in the wake of the Grayson-Whitter recording (Victor 40135) from Virginia. One cannot presume a western origin for the song, although the majority of texts are from Kentucky--and Doc learned his version from the April, 1927, phonograph recording (Brunswick 154) of the Kentucky singer, Buell Kazee. Although there are exceptions (e.g., Dock Boggs, Brunswick 131), the tune has been relatively stable and is another identifying element. But it should be mentioned that commonplace stanzas which may have fragmented from "The Hustling Gamblers" to form independent lyrics have accepted or evolved different tunes, which in turn help link the stanzas to other ballads. Such a link is "Just Kick the Dust over my Coffin" (Wetmore and Bartholomew, p. 28), joined in tune and slightly in text to "Bumblebee Joe" (Western Kentucky Folklore Archive), a Monroe County, Ky., blues ballad which is linked to and may be considered a form of "Wild Bill Jones." On the other hand, such commonplaces as "Pretty flowers were made to blossom, etc." have wandered into the "Hustling Gamblers" complex without linking the complex to the many lyrics in which they also appear.

References:

Adventure, July 10, 1924, p. 191: "Little Maggie," (Georgia) Cambiaire, pp. 23-5: "Hustling Gamblers," (Georgia) Davis, p. 139: "Come, All Ye Hustling Gamblers"; "Hustling Gamblers"; "Little Cora" (Virginia)

Fuson, pp. 134-5: "Little Cora" (Kentucky)

Henry, pp. 102-4 (same text and source as Cambiaire's)

KFR, IX (1963), 15

Kincaid, No. 3, p. 28: "Darling Corie," (Kentucky)

Laws, NAB, E 10

Lomax, OSC, pp. 302-3: "Darling Corey"
(Kentucky)

Ritchie, Garland, pp. 48-9: "Little Cory"
(Kentucky)

Roberts, Songs, No. 59: "Darlin' Cory" (Kentucky)

Sharp, II, 204: no local title given--a "Cora" text
(North Carolina)

Thomas, p. 122: "The Rustlin' Gambler" (Kentucky)

WKFA: "Hustling Gamblers" (Hindman, Ky., 1913);
"Darling Corie" (Martin, Ky., 1952); Bumblebee
Joe" (Tompkinsville, Ky., ballet dated Nov. 7, 1925;
Tape T-7-33, Aug. 26, 1959)

Wetmore and Bartholomew, p. 28: "Just Kick the
Dust over My Coffin" (North Carolina)

Williams, pp. 324-6: "Little Norie" (Lawrence Co.,
Ky.)

Discography:

AAFS: 8 recordings

"Dock" Boggs, "Country Blues," Brunswick 131;
Folkways FA 2953 Bluegrass Hillbillies, "Darling
Cora," ABC Paramount ABC 446

Homer Brierhopper, "Little Lulie," Decca 5615

Paul Clayton, "The Hustling Gamblers," Folkways
FP 2007

Bill Clifton, "Corey," Starday 45-431; SEP 150;
SLP 159 G. B. Grayson and Henry Whitter, "Little
Maggie with a Dram Glass in Her Hand," Victor
40135; Bluebird B-7072

Buell Kazee, "Darling Cora," Brunswick 154;
Folkways FS 3810

Louisiana Honeydrippers, "Little Maggie," Pres-
tige/International 13035

Wade Mainer, Zeke Morris, Steve Ledford,
"Little Maggie," Bluebird B-7201; Montgomery
Ward M-7309

Monroe Brothers, Bluebird B-6512; Montgomery
Ward M-7012; Victor 27493

Obroy Ramsey and Henry Gentry, "Little Maggie,"
Riverside RLP 12-610; Riverside S-2

Larry Richardson, "Little Maggie," Folkways FA
2314

Jean Ritchie, "Little Corey," Elektra EKL-2;
Elektra EKL-125

B. F. Shelton, "Darling Cora," Victor 35838

Stanley Brothers, "Little Maggie," Rich-R-Tone
423; Smash MGS 27016; Starday SLP 136; Starday
SLP 164; Starday SLP 201

Earl Taylor and His Stoney Mountain Boys, "Little
Maggie," United Artists UAL 3049

Harry and Jeanie West, "Little Maggie," Stinson
SLP 36

Rusty York, "Little Maggie," Bluegrass Special
EP 600

Side II, Band 5: YOUR LONG JOURNEY

Doc Watson, guitar and vocal; Rosa Lee Watson,
vocal

God's given us years of happiness here;
Now we must part.
And as the angels come and call for you,
The pangs of grief tug at my heart.
Oh my darlin', my darlin',
My heart breaks as you take your long journey.

Oh the days will be empty, the nights so long
Without you, my love.
And as God calls for you, "Come, welcome home"--
But we will meet in heaven above.
Oh my darlin' etc.

Fond mem'ries of heap of happy ways
That on earth we trod.
And when I come we will walk hand in hand
As one in heaven in the family of God.
Oh my darlin' etc.

Doc and Rosa Lee composed this a few years ago.
It is one of the finest country "heart songs" I
have ever heard.

Side II, Band 6: THE TRIPLETT TRAGEDY

Sophonie Miller, vocal

A horrible sight I'll now relate,
On Yadkin Elk it did take place,
On Christmas morning at nine o'clock,
The people met an awful shock.

At Marshall Triplett's this begun.
The brothers met it seemed in fun.
They drank together all as one,
And then this trouble it begun.

Then Marshall seemed to stand in the rear,
And struck Columbus with the chair.
"There is one thing that I do know
You drink only to save your own."

They met in combat near the barn.
Mrs. Triplett went to stop this wrong.
Columbus stabbed Marshall in the thigh,
And left him on the ground to die.

Then Marshall's wife in great distress
Stayed by her husband while in death.
The children's screams was heard around,
Which did produce a solemn sound.

Then Lum went off at to go away (?)
And met Gran Triplett on his way.
At Leroy Triplett's this was said,
Lum said to Gran, "Your father's dead."

Lum said to Gran, "I'll let you know,
I've killed your father at his home.
I'll now surrender up to thee.
You treat me kindly if you please."

Gran said to Lum, "One thing I'll do.
If you killed Father, I'll kill you."
He then beat Lum at a dreadful rate
And made bad bruises on his face.

Gran then took Lum to Watauga Jail.
He went behind the bars to stay.
Those beats and bruises they inflamed,
Which brought Columbus to his grave.

Those brothers sleep in the same graveyard,
Their wives and children's troubled hard,
Their resting place there sure must be,
Till they shall rise at Judgment Day.

At Judgment Day we hope they'll rise
To meet their Saviour in the skies,
To sing God's praises o'er and o'er,
And be with Christ forever more.

The sheriff then went on the round
To see if Granville could be found.
There at his home he did abound,
And at that place he was then found.

Sheriff Webb held court up in our town
And sent him on to the chain gang.
For eighteen months he there must stay,
Except the governor hear him pray.

Young men take warning by this case,
Don't use strong drink while in life's race.
Leave all such stuff then far behind,
And your kind parents you should mind.

This is a not unusual ballad treatment of a local tragedy, but is unusual in being recorded from the widow of one of the principals. In 1909 Sophronie, then about twenty-five years old, had been married to Columbus Triplett about four years. She had accompanied him to Texas, where she did man's work with him, cutting cord wood. When he refused to send her back to North Carolina, she left him and got a job in a hotel. He persuaded her to come back and help him "settle up," but after she had cooked three months for him, his son by a previous marriage, and a neighbor who was working with Columbus cutting cross ties, he still refused to send her home as he had promised. They finally returned to Elk, North Carolina, and had separated for the seventh time when he visited her at the home of her father, Mark Miller, on Christmas Eve, 1909, and asked her to go with him to the baptizing the next day. She agreed to go if he had not been drinking. He said that if he wasn't there by nine o'clock, she was to go on without him. When she arrived at church for the baptizing Christmas morning, she was told that Columbus had just stabbed and killed his brother Marshall.

Doc Watson recalls his grandfather Smith Watson telling him that on the day before Christmas, Columbus and Marshall had gone together "to a place where whiskey was being sold and bought themselves some whiskey with which to celebrate Christmas." Columbus went to Marshall's home Christmas morning and "gave Marshall's wife Ida a pint of whiskey as a friendly gesture. Then when she gave Lum a drink of the whiskey which he had given her, Marshall became very angry and struck Lum with a chair, knocking him off the porch. He then cursed Lum, saying, 'You are drinking my liquor to save your own.' Columbus, or Lum as he was called, then left the home of his brother and walked out by the barn which stood near the main road. When he had walked a little way down the road he suddenly decided to go in the other direction. Then when he came back past the barn his brother Marshall ran out and attacked him. He threw him to the ground, which was covered with snow at the time, and began strangling the life out of him. Then Lum panicked and, stabbing Marshall in the thigh, cut the main artery, causing his death. He died within three minutes from the time he was stabbed, so it was thought that he might have died of a heart attack before he actually bled to death." (There may be a confusion with the death of Columbus related below.)

As the song relates, Columbus surrendered himself to Deputy Sheriff Granville Triplett, his nephew and Marshall's son. In spite of Columbus's pleas and refusal to fight back, Granville beat and kicked him, filled him full of liquor, and marched him off to the Watauga County jail at Boone, where he died as a result of the beating. At Granville's trial, March 30, 1910, Sophronie testified that Columbus had been

subject to heart attacks and one might have caused his death. Because of her testimony and the judge's sympathy, Granville received but an eighteen month sentence and is said to have served but three months. (Ralph Rinzler has verified the dates by consulting Watauga County Court Records.)

Sophronie sang the ballad from a ballet copy and said that the song--text and tune--was made by Ed Miller, a composer of other local songs. The tune is, of course, traditional--is indeed a form of the tune to which Sophronie sings "Claude Allen."

Side II, Band 7: MUDDY ROADS

Doc Watson, lead guitar; Ralph Rinzler, guitar;
Gaither Carlton, fiddle.

Uncle Ben Miller--the outstanding singer, banjo picker, fiddler and comedian around home when Doc was a boy--used to play this tune on the fiddle. Doc also remembers his father sing some verses to the tune while dressing shingles:

The way is dark and the road is muddy,
Girls so drunk they can't stand steady.

Beans in the pot and the hoe cake a-baking,
Picking the banjo and the strings all a-breaking.

The tune is also known as "Seneca Square Dance."

Reference:

Ford, p. 122

Discography:

Fiddlin' Dave Neal, "Seneca Square Dance,"
Challenge 102, 301.

Side II, Band 8: THE LOST SOUL

The Watson Family.

What an awful day (bis)/ when the judgment comes
(bis)
And the sinners hear (bis)/ their eternal doom
(bis).
At the sad decree (bis)/ they'll depart for aye
(bis)
Into endless woe (bis)/ and gloomless woe and
gloom.

CHORUS:

"I'm paying now (bis)/ the penalty (bis)
The unredeemed, that the unredeemed/must ever
pay (bis).
Though for help I cry, (bis)/ It's now in vain, it
is all in vain,
For alas I'm doomed (bis)/ for aye, I'm doomed
for aye.

"If I could recall (bis)/ all the years now gone,
(bis)
For my Saviour's cause (bis)/ I would spend
each one, (bis)
But they never again, but they ne'r again/ can to
me return, (bis)
And the task is left, and my task it is left undone,
it's left undone.

(CHORUS)

"Oh I realize, (bis)/ but alas too late, (bis)
What a dark mistake (bis)/ all my life has been.
(bis)
I refused his love (bis)/ with a various heart,
(bis)
And I must pay the price (bis)/ of sin, the price
of sin."

(CHORUS)

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Band 1: GROUND HOG
Band 2: EVERYDAY DIRT
Band 3: BONAPARTE'S RETREAT
Band 4: THE HOUSE CARPENTER
Band 5: I'M TROUBLED
Band 6: YOUR LONG JOURNEY
(A. D. and Rosalee Watson)
Band 7: WHEN I DIE
Band 8: THE TRAIN THAT CARRIED MY GIRL
FROM TOWN

Recorded by Eugene Earle, Ralph Rinzler, Peter Siegel

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SIDE II



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Band 1: DOWN THE ROAD
Band 2: THE LONE PILGRIM
Band 3: TEXAS GALES and BLACKBERRY RAG
Band 4: DARLING CORY
Band 5: THE TRIPLETT TRAGEDY (T. S. Miller)
Band 6: MUDDY ROADS
Band 7: THE LOST SOUL

Recorded by Eugene Earle, Ralph Rinzier, Peter Siegel