THE FIFE COLLECTION OF WESTERN AMERICAN
FOLKSONG AND FOLKLORE

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The authors began their research and writing on the folklore of the Mormons and the West twenty-five years ago. Accounts of their collecting efforts, up to 1948, concentrated largely on Mormon folklore, have previously been published in the Bulletin of the University of Utah1 and Western Folklore Quarterly.2 Since then the authors have expanded their collections to encompass the folklore of the entire West, specializing to a large degree on folksongs and ballads—on what might well be called the primitive poetry of the American West. Although there has been no long term continuing support, during the past decade financial and other support for their collecting has been received in the form of a Guggenheim Foundation grant for a year of field research (1958-59) and, more recently, from the Division of Research, Utah State University.

Several years ago a systematic "American Collection," separate from the "Mormon Collection" previously described, was begun. This new archive, like the earlier one, is divided into three series:

I. Field recordings, or stenographic transcriptions of field notes
II. Manuscript materials
III. Items copied from published sources—esoteric or inaccessible publications such as old newspapers, highly localized pamphlets, and other items not usually accessible even in the best research libraries

In addition, significant integral collections made by other field researchers have been incorporated. There exists, in addition, another very important personal collection, consisting of several thousand newspaper clippings and hand-written texts, which is still to be integrated. It is also hoped that additional archival materials from California and the Pacific Northwest will soon be incorporated.
In making these collections of cowboy and Western popular verse, we have defined "cowboy" and "Western" in a very broad way:

- Migration, colonization, settlement, freighting, mining, and railroading
- Indian-Anglo-American and Mexican-Anglo-American relations
- Farming and ranching
- Cattle drives
- Tragedies and dramatic or humorous episodes in the development of the West
- Folk arts and crafts on the frontier
- Hero images, local characters, and bad men
- Reminiscences, complaints, and transcendental gropings

These and many other manifestations of the common man's first efforts to become at one with his new environment form the central core of interest in the collection. On the other hand, folksong and popular poetry not specifically Western in origin are not generally included, since these are shared by Westerners with other Anglo-Americans of North America and offer little if any insight concerning the popular image of the West.

Current scope of the collections is as follows:

**Collection I**

Seven volumes consisting of field recordings made by the authors or contributed from the field recordings of other collectors (Edith Fowke, Ray Browne, Ellen Stekert, J. D. Robb, Kenneth Goldstein, Rosalie Sorrels, S. J. Sackett, William Koch, Joan O'Bryant, James Lee, contributors to the Arizona Folklore Archives and the Library of Congress, and others). Texts are all transcribed by the authors of this article. Melodies have been transcribed, drafted professionally on ozalid masters, and reproduced for all copies of the collection. In addition to song texts, the collection contains oral interviews on various topics germane to the study of the songs and primitive poetry of the American West. An auxiliary collection of magnetic tapes is preserved in duplicate of all field recordings.

**Collection II**

Five volumes consisting of manuscripts, ballet books, and other unpublished texts collected during the authors' numerous field trips;
manuscripts of the WPA Federal Writers Project and other resources of the Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress; manuscripts from the Arizona Folklore Archives; manuscript materials from several professional collaborators (Richard Dorson, Herbert Halpert, Frank Hoffman, and others); extracts from unpublished diaries and journals; excerpts from unpublished M. A. and Ph. D. theses and dissertations. Melodies occurring in these materials are also reproduced.

Collection III

Eight volumes to date, comprised largely of published items which are not easily accessible: newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and other esoteric publications; printed collections of personal or local poetry; texts or fragments of texts appearing in regional fiction; sheet music, song folios, and broadsides. This collection also contains tapes and transcriptions of words and melodies of the 78 rpm commercial recordings in the D. K. Wilgus collection which are largely from the 1930's.

The music transcriptions in the above collections are of the melodies only and were made by Mrs. Becky Goodliffe, formerly of Logan, Utah, and by Mrs. Mary Jo Schwab of Cokeville, Wyoming. A number of students have assisted with clerical and other sub-professional work involved in developing the collections.

In addition to the above collections, there are four special collections:

1. One volume of extracts from the Edwin Ford Piper collection (University of Iowa, from about 1909 to 1915).


3. Three volumes of texts from the John A. Lomax dossiers at the University of Texas, consisting largely of song texts which came to him from about 1909 to the 1930's.

4. Three volumes of texts selected from the song and poetry files of the Pacific Northwest Farm Quad, publishers of The Idaho Farmer, The Oregon Farmer, The Utah Farmer, and The Washington Farmer. These consist of contributions made by readers of a regular column which started in these newspapers in the 1920's and which still continues.
One copy of all the collections described above will be housed with other restricted-use materials in the Utah State University Library. Rights to publish any materials from the collections will be reserved by the authors during their lifetimes or until they decide to release the materials to the public domain. Two other copies of the collections are preserved in the authors' home.

Each volume in the collections contains a preface, indices for title and for first or significant lines, a subject index for prose items, and an inventory of sources. A uniform format is maintained and all texts are reproduced exactly as received. Of the three copies which have been made, one will be preserved in loose-leaf form to facilitate collations and other critical or editorial work. New volumes will, of course, be added as significant texts are acquired. However, the authors are now reaching the point where major efforts must be brought to bear upon the classification and analysis of the materials in the collections rather than upon further collecting.

A 4 x 6 card file index is maintained of the entire collection and of "Western" items in published sources not transferred to the collection. Total entries are approximately 20,000 at this writing.

The authors have also worked intermittently on the material culture of the West. Several hundred slides and/or photographs have been preserved, together with field notes. These remain still to be systematically indexed or collated for permanent preservation.

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