



# RESOUND

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### Basing a Book on the Archives' Collections

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In 1985 I decided that the time had come to prepare a more comprehensive work concerning folk song in Indiana than had been published previously. This task was undertaken after I read or reread most of what I could find concerning this subject. I will first briefly review these publications.

The earliest of these collections, and one of the best, is Leah Jackson Wolford's *The Play Party in Indiana*, published in 1916,<sup>1</sup> and its revision and elaboration by W. Edson Richmond and William Tillson in 1959.<sup>2</sup> The 1916 publication was originally Wolford's M.A. thesis at the University of Chicago. It describes both the playing of the games and the milieu in which they were performed a generation before her time and at the period during which she wrote. She offers the texts of sixty-four of the songs plus the transcription of the tunes for fifty-four. In most cases, as had become customary by that time, only the tune of the first stanza of the song is transcribed, plus that of its chorus, should it contain one. In a section at the end of the book she briefly discusses the tunes and their possible British background. Wolford was a pianist and made her own transcriptions. Since no recordings are mentioned, it can be assumed that her transcriptions were notated from the singing of her informants. Unfortunately, Wolford died in childbirth two years after the book's publication. The amplified edition by Richmond and Tillson classifies the song games according to five categories (Wolford had arranged them alphabetically), and brings to bear much of the writing concerning the play party and its songs published between 1916 and 1959.

In chronological order, the next work is a 1926 M.A. thesis prepared at Indiana University by Mabel E. Neal: "Brown County Songs and Ballads."<sup>3</sup> This work is not only restricted to Brown County, but all the singing from which the transcriptions were made was apparently done by the author's mother, who had learned them from her father, the author's grandfather, with some texts supplied by the latter. A total of one hundred songs is offered, but the tunes are transcribed for only thirty-one. The singing was recorded, although the means by which this was done is not



*Dr. George List, Professor Emeritus of Folklore.  
Photo courtesy of The Herald-Times, Bloomington, Indiana*

indicated, and the author transcribed the tunes herself with the assistance of another individual, Harlan Stretchberry. Neal divides the texts provided into three categories, "Play Party Songs," "Traditional Songs and Ballads," and "Miscellaneous Ballads and Songs." Nowhere does she define what she means by "traditional." In her Introduction she briefly discusses the environment and circumstances under which the songs were performed and in her Notes, versions and variants of the songs as sung elsewhere. She writes in the Preface, "The author's original intention was to furnish the music for the whole collection. Since this has not proved feasible, it is to be hoped that in some future time the music may be adequately presented."<sup>4</sup> The recordings are not on deposit in the Archives of Traditional Music which was located at Columbia University in New York City from its founding in 1936 until it was brought to Indiana University in 1948. I assume they were cylinder recordings and I wonder what happened to them.

I next come to the publications of Paul Brewster, who was teaching high school at Oakland City, Indiana, at the



time of their writing, and a doctoral candidate at Indiana University. He later taught at several colleges. From 1935 through 1940 he published three articles and a book: "Traditional Ballads from Indiana,"<sup>5</sup> "Game Songs from Southern Indiana,"<sup>6</sup> "Folk Songs from Indiana,"<sup>7</sup> and *Ballads and Songs of Indiana*,<sup>8</sup> reprinted in 1981 with a new foreword by W. Edson Richmond.<sup>9</sup> "Traditional Ballads from Indiana" and "Game Songs from Southern Indiana" offer one strophe of the tune for most of the texts. "Folk Songs from Southern Indiana" gives only one tune.

*Ballads and Songs of Indiana* contains one hundred song types and, in most cases, a number of variants for each text. In some instances, however, Brewster lists only the title and informant, and does not provide the song text. Tunes are provided for only thirty of the song types and six variants. Fifteen of these are for Child ballads. As far as can be determined, all the tunes that Brewster prints were transcribed by Inez Lysle Johnson, who was herself a collector of folk songs, and who contributed some songs from her own collection. She taught public school music for some years in Mount Vernon, but at times is referred to as "of Bloomington." Since no mention is made of recordings, it can be assumed that all the tunes were taken down from the singing of the informants. The texts without tunes were not necessarily secured in this manner. Brewster set his high school students to collecting for him and advertised for material through columnists in newspapers. Many of the texts he reproduced he received through correspondence, and the folk poems, as he admits in *Ballads and Songs of Indiana*, are often garbled. In his notes to the songs he is much occupied with attempts to correct errors in them. His texts and tunes are offered under six classifications: English and Scottish traditional ballads; later ballads (both Old World and American); game-songs; folk-lyrics (chiefly English and American); songs more or less Hoosier in character; and carols.<sup>10</sup>

There is one article by Herbert Halpert, "A Group of Indiana Folk Songs," published in 1944,<sup>11</sup> which contains only texts. These come from Bloomington, Indianapolis, Rushville, and Marion. The Rushville texts were sent to him by an informant he had met previously in Bloomington, but the other texts seem to be of his own collection. The only work specifically concerned with the melodies of Indiana folk songs is Bruno Nettl's "The Musical Style of English Ballads Collected in Indiana," of 1955.<sup>12</sup> This is based on recordings made in 1938 in Indiana by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax, copies of which are on deposit in the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music (accession numbers 54-155-F and 54-156-F). Nettl transcribed twenty-seven of the British ballads but provided only six tunes in the article and did not identify them.

The last work which needs to be considered is Richard Reuss' "An Annotated Field Collection of Songs from the American College Student Oral Tradition," an 1965 M.A. thesis in Folklore at Indiana University.<sup>13</sup> This consists of songs recorded from students at De Pauw and Indiana Universities. He offers sixty-four songs plus many textual variants. There are music transcriptions for twenty songs by Judith McCulloh, a very competent transcriber. She was for a short period assistant director of the Archives of Traditional Music and has since been President of the American Folklore Society and a member of the Executive Board of the Society for Ethnomusicology. This is the only work mentioned of which the original recordings are on

deposit in the Archives of Traditional Music (accession number 68-017-F).

In my envisioned book I planned to use as much as possible only primary sources upon which to base the transcriptions, that is, documented recordings. These would be those deposited in the Archives, plus those of my own collection which I would later deposit in that institution. Transcriptions made from recordings, in which one can hear exactly the same performance played as often as is wished, are much superior to those secured by notating the actual singing of an informant. Some variations are usually found in repeated renditions of a song. Later, I found it impossible to offer a full representation of all the genres using recordings only from the Archives. Nine of the 103 transcriptions found in the book are not based on recordings.

Having been the director of the Archives of Traditional Music for twenty-two years, from 1954 through 1976, I had some familiarity with its holdings of Indiana folk songs. I knew that very little had been recorded in northern Indiana except for some blues in Indianapolis and ethnic music in the Calumet region. Most of the publications listed above also dealt with folk music in southern Indiana. Wolford's informants came from the southeastern part of the State, those of Brewster primarily from the southwest, Halpert's from south central, Reuss' from Bloomington and Greencastle, Neal's from Brown County, and my collections from Monroe County. Since there were very few recordings in the Archives of Traditional Music from northern Indiana, I decided that the proposed book should focus entirely on southern Indiana, that section of the state lying below the old National Road which ran from Richmond through Indianapolis to Terre Haute.

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Remnants of French and German song have been recorded in southern Indiana, but the French had been published and the German represented only Amish hymn tunes. The Archives of Traditional Music holds few recordings of black music from Indiana. Thus, I decided that the book would represent the folk song tradition of the English speaking European and of his English speaking descendants. Not all the English speaking descendants were necessarily of pure English blood. Usually there was a mixture of English and Scotch-Irish and often a further admixture of German and French.

I also decided to write a different type of book, one that would be directed as much to the general public as to the scholarly community. It would not be merely an annotated collection useful for comparative studies. Nor would I attempt to transcribe and discuss all the folk songs found in recorded form in the Archives of Traditional Music. Such a project would require many years of work, and its publication would run to several volumes. Rather, I would attempt to offer a representative sampling of all folk song genres sung in southern Indiana from the Civil War until 1988, the date I last recorded a singer.

It was my hope that I would be able to relate each song to its social and historical context, and to trace the general migration by which the ancestors of those who sang the songs came to Indiana. I also expected to describe the activities during which the songs were sung and the incidents or historical movements they reflected. I found it useful to emphasize this aspect of the book by providing photographs and short biographies of the individual singers and the histories of their families when these could be secured. To further give the reader a sense of the emotions, customs, and ideas expressed in the songs, I planned to reproduce the initial sections of old magazines and newspapers, broadsides of the song poems, and early editions of the songs with both words and music.

I began by selecting the recordings I wished to transcribe from those which had been deposited in the Archives of Traditional Music. Besides my general knowledge of the Archives' collections, there were particular items which I had already used. Some of these were included in a lecture which I had offered with some frequency entitled, "Folk Music in Southern Indiana," illustrated by a demonstration tape composed of recordings copied from the Archives' and my own collections. Others I had used in a group of television programs prepared for the IU Educational Radio and Television Center. Three of these, "Music in Infancy," "Music in Childhood," and "Music and Recreation," contained southern Indiana items which could be incorporated into the book. Songs from the first two programs were utilized in the chapter entitled "Childhood." The telecast, "Music and Recreation," dealt with the play party and formed the structural basis for a chapter concerning that custom.

I know of no truly logical method of classifying the genres of folk song. Certainly those employed by Neal and Brewster are not too successful. A song may belong to more than one category. The classification system I used was derived from the demonstration tape of my lecture concerning folk song in southern Indiana and is at least a little more comprehensive. The six chapters containing the transcriptions of the one hundred and three songs are headed: Childhood; The Play Party; Love, Courtship, Sex, and Marriage; Humor and Pathos; The Tragic Tradition:

The British Ballad; and the Tragic Tradition: The American Ballad.

The next step was to instruct my graduate assistant concerning what he or she should seek in the Archives' collections, mentioning specific recordings that I already knew I would be able to use. It was then his or her task to record these items onto cassettes which I could utilize both in making my choice and for transcription. The collections on deposit in the Archives are, in most cases, deposited under contracts with the collectors which specify what use can be made of the recordings outside Indiana University. I had, myself, drawn up these contracts in the early period of my directorship of the Archives as a means of protecting the collectors.

The oldest collection of folk songs from southern Indiana was that made by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax in 1938 for the Library of Congress. Since their field work was paid for by the Library of Congress, this material is in the public domain. The other collectors had signed contracts which required their permission before the material could be used for publication.

The following is a list of the collectors represented and the number of items from their collections which are transcribed or reproduced in the book. Since the cassette issued to accompany the book is only fifty minutes in playing time it contains only twenty-two items of the total number listed.

Alan and Elizabeth Lomax	30
Patrick Dunford and Arthur Rosenbaum	20
George List	18
Guthrie T. Meade	12
Leah Jackson Wolford	9
Bruce Buckley and Bruno Netti	4
Jean Kaplan Teichroew and Phyllis May-Machunda	3
Quentin Lotus Dickey	2
Herbert Halpert	2
Dale Schreiber	2
Isabel Saulman Hoskinson	1
Paul Brewster	1

To the above may be added one song from my own repertory which I transcribed from memory but did not record. The Dickey and Hoskinson songs were self-recorded at my request. The Archives had no songs collected in Indiana inspired by the temperance movement of the last century. I got in touch with Dickey, who lived on a farm near Paoli, through a friend and found that he had learned "The Drunkard's Dream" from his father. His father had sung the song to three different melodies and Dickey recorded all three for me. Two of the performances are transcribed and offered in the book,<sup>14</sup> and one is incorporated into the cassette. I found that another friend, Sarah Hoskinson Frommer, knew the song called either "Come Over Playmate" or "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard." She had learned it from her mother, Isabel Saulman Hoskinson, who in turn learned it as a child from her mother while living in Wadesville, Indiana. I asked Isabel Hoskinson to record the song so that I could prove that the item was originally a folk song and that the chorus of two published popular songs was based upon it.<sup>15</sup>

Of the 103 songs offered in the book, I transcribed the words and music of ninety-one. Nine of the others came



from published sources: eight from Leah Jackson Wolford's *The Play-Party in Indiana*, and one from Paul Brewster's article, "Game Songs from Southern Indiana." These were used in the chapter on the play party since there were only three recordings in the Archives of known play party songs sung in Indiana.

Jean Kaplan Teichroew and Phyllis May-Machunda recorded girls' singing games on videotape and May-Machunda prepared the actual transcriptions that included notations of the clapping and other motions made by the girls on the playground. Both these notations and the music represent a synthesis of what occurred rather than an exact replication of any section of the videotape. In checking cassette copies of the sound track of the videotape, I could find no sections of the recording which were sufficiently well performed in themselves to warrant transcription. I therefore reproduced the composite notations made by May-Machunda. Since Wolford apparently notated her transcriptions from the singing of her informant, as did Inez Lysle Johnson for Brewster's published transcription, it can be assumed that these also represent a synthesis of what occurred during several performances of the song. One of my transcriptions was made from memory rather than a recording, and thus may also be considered to represent such a synthesis. The remaining ninety were made from recordings and represent a particular time segment which I endeavored to transcribe by a similar method and with reasonable accuracy.

The words presented the greatest problem in transcription since at times they were not very intelligible. Unfortunately, most of the singers were no longer alive and could not be contacted to verify what they had sung. The problem presented often could be solved by reference to other published versions of the songs, in particular, to those in Brewster's *Ballads and Songs of Indiana*. Many of the singers recorded by Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress had previously sent written copies of the texts of some of the songs recorded to Brewster, who printed many of them in his volume. My transcriptions, however, represent what I could hear in the recording. The texts written down by the singer and sent to Brewster do not always duplicate in every particular the recorded performance.

Transcription of melody is, of course, a field in which I have specialized. In this case, however, I did not wish to make the transcriptions too complex so they could be read with reasonable ease. I therefore employed a minimum of special markings to indicate change of pitch and duration. All these are explained in the introduction.

The transcriptions are documented in the following manner: the title of the song as given by the singer, the singer or singers' name(s), the place of recording, and the date it was performed are offered immediately above the transcription. The source of the recording, that is, its accession number in the Archives of Traditional Music in the case of a recording, or reference to the book or article in which a published transcription is found, is offered in the list of transcriptions as is the name of the collector. Thus the reader is equipped to check what is published in the book with the original sound source in the Archives or against the previously published transcription, should he or she desire to do so. In the case of the texts of ballads, those readers who may wish to make comparative studies are referred to the titles and numbers of the different ballad

plots as given in four standard catalogues. These are the *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* by Francis J. Child;<sup>16</sup> his earlier collection, *English and Scottish Ballads*;<sup>17</sup> *American Balladry from British Broad-sides*, by G. Malcolm Laws, Jr.;<sup>18</sup> and *Native American Balladry*, also by Laws.<sup>19</sup> For those ballads transcribed in the book and cataloged in one of these four works, appropriate reference is given in parentheses following the singer's title above the transcription.

In investigating the history and social context of the songs, I followed the usual methods of research in the humanities. Through my graduate assistants I checked sources, bibliographies, the subject index in the Indiana University Library, and consulted reference librarians. I talked by telephone with colleagues who worked in the particular specialties in which I was interested at that writing. They often assisted me further by referring me to other sources or other colleagues. If I knew no one in the university with that particular specialty, I would call the department involved and ask the department secretary to refer me to a professor she believed possessed the knowledge I was seeking. Very seldom did anyone refuse to assist when receiving an inquiry concerning a field in which he or she specialized. When it seemed necessary, I also talked with administrators of the local school system who referred me to particular teachers. Everyone in the school system was equally cooperative.

Securing biographies and family histories of the singers was a more difficult task. It was not even easy to contact those who were still alive. I soon found that the best approach was to tap the resources of county, town, and city libraries which usually keep files of obituary notices from newspapers. Such notices usually gave the names of the nearest family members and their locations. The county historical and genealogical societies were also helpful. I did most of my interviewing by telephone and recorded what was said. First I would call a library or a society to see if they had an obituary notice for the person in whom I was interested. Armed with the names of relatives thus secured, I would call long distance information and try to secure their telephone numbers. Sometimes I reached the right individuals, sometimes not. Even when I did not, the effort could prove fruitful. In one case I contacted an individual in a rural county under the impression that he was a relative of the singer. He was not. However, as a genealogy buff, he volunteered to drive to the county seat to secure names of the relatives of the singer and mail them to me, which he did.

I had telephone conversations with individuals in Florida, Texas, and Iowa, among other places, and usually secured some information. One individual passed me along to another. A number of the families had members who were interested in genealogy. From them I received information concerning the singer's ancestors, sometimes going back as far as residence in Europe. In two cases I secured biographical data and histories of deceased singers from works published by county historical societies. This was the most interesting part of the research since it brought me into contact with individuals with different occupations, habits, and viewpoints.

The book is being distributed jointly by the Indiana Historical Society and the Indiana University Press. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of members of the staff of the Archives of Traditional Music: Dr. Ruth Stone, director;



Mary Russell Bucknum, associate director and librarian; and Marilyn Graf, archivist, in preparing this work. Nora Dial, technical specialist, was very patient in preparing the master for the accompanying cassette. Unfortunately, there is insufficient room here to list the dozens of other individuals who helped me in the furtherance of this project and the organizations and agencies which funded the study. For their names, see the acknowledgements section in the book.<sup>20</sup>

### Notes

1. Leah Jackson Wolford. *The Play-Party in Indiana*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916).
2. Leah Jackson Wolford, *The Play-Party in Indiana*, edited and revised by W. Edson Richmond and William Tillson. Indiana Historical Publications 20.2 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1959).
3. Mabel E. Neal, "Brown County Songs and Ballads," M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1926.
4. Neal 1.
5. Paul Brewster, "Traditional Ballads from Indiana," *Journal of American Folklore* 48.2 (October-December 1935):295-317.
6. Paul Brewster, "Game-Songs from Southern Indiana," *Journal of American Folklore* 49 (1936):243-62.
7. Paul Brewster, "Folksongs from Indiana," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 3 (1939):201-22.
8. Paul Brewster, *Ballads and Songs of Indiana*, Folklore Series 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1940).
9. Paul Brewster, *Ballads and Songs of Indiana*, foreword by W. Edson Richmond (New York: Folklorica, 1981).
10. Brewster, *Ballads and Songs of Indiana* (1981) 14.
11. Herbert Halpert, "A Group of Indiana Folksongs," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* 3.1 (March 1944):11-15.
12. Bruno Nettl, "The Musical Style of English Ballads Collected in Indiana," *Acta Musicologica* 27 (1955):79-84.
13. Richard A. Reuss, "An Annotated Field Collection of Songs from the American College Student Oral Tradition," M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1965.
14. George List, *Singing About It: Folk Song in Southern Indiana*, with accompanying cassette (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society and Indiana Council for the Humanities, 1991) 242-7.
15. List 94-101.
16. Francis James Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (1882-98; New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965).
17. Francis James Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*, 8 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1857-8).
18. George Malcolm Laws, *American Balladry from British Broad-sides: A Guide for Students and Collectors of Traditional Song* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957).
19. George Malcolm Laws, *Native American Balladry: A Descriptive Study and Bibliographical Syllabus* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964).
20. List xxiv-xxxiv.

*Singing About It: Folk Song in Southern Indiana* is available from the Indiana University Press, 10th & Morton Streets, Bloomington, IN 47405 (800-842-6796).

## NEH Awards Cataloging Grant to Archives

The National Endowment for the Humanities has recently awarded a \$140,000, two-year grant to the Archives of Traditional Music for the cataloging of 7,500 jazz and blues 78 rpm discs issued from 1920 through 1945. All the discs, selected from the Archives' nearly 30,000 78 rpm discs, will receive full-level cataloging in OCLC, and will also be included in Information Online—the Indiana University online library system.

Karen Jung, former employee of the IU Music Library and recent graduate of the IU School of Library and Information Science, was hired on September 1 as the librarian for this cataloging project. Terry Chasteen has been appointed as cataloging technician, and Mary Dart as bibliographic data entry specialist. Both will assist with discographical research and OCLC bibliographic and authority searching. A recently-appointed graduate assistant, Marie Flowers, will do data entry of the OCLC workforms. Ruth Stone, director, and Mary Russell Bucknum, associate director and librarian, will serve as project co-directors.

The Archives is fortunate to have many excellent recordings from the personal collections of Les Zacheis, Ralph Bowlby, Robert George, and Frank Gillis, a former director of the Archives of Traditional Music, and others. The collection features many important artists, including a number from Indiana, on such labels as Victor, Columbia, Decca, Gennett, Claxtanola, and Black Swan. Scholars, performers, discographers, and others will benefit from the availability of this historically important material which serves as the primary source of an aural improvisatory art form.



Black Swan began in 1921 as the first record company owned and run by black businessmen. Trixie Smith (1895-1943), who was often called the "Southern Nightingale," won first prize at a blues contest at the Manhattan Casino in 1922, explaining the reference to "winner" on the record label.



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