

Notes

1 The Blood and Piegan nations of Alberta are known collectively as the "Blackfoot," recognized with that name by the Canadian government. They are culturally related to the Siksika "Blackfeet" of Montana in the United States. The difference is largely one of onomastics and dependent only on the whims of geography.

References Cited

Lowie, Robert. "Oral Tradition and History." *Journal of American Folklore* XXX (1917).

Montell, William Lynwood. *The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1970.

Howard Marshall and John Williams. **Fiddling Missouri**. Seattle: Voyager Recordings, 1999. Liner notes. \$15.00 compact disc, \$10.00 cassette.

Gregory Hansen
Florida Folklife Program

Matthew Guntharp wrote in *Learning the Fiddler's Ways* that fiddlers' repertoires reflect their life histories. *Fiddling Missouri* shows the richness of Guntharp's observation, as this recording is not simply a sampler of thirty-four tunes from the state. It is also a portrait of the fiddle tunes and life experiences of Howard Marshall and John Williams. Through well-written liner notes, Marshall documents the people with whom he has played, as well as some of the places where he has learned tunes. The reader and listener thus gain a snapshot of the place of the fiddling tradition within the fiddler's life.

Marshall recorded the CD to fill in a page of the local fiddlers' family album by presenting a portrait of fiddling in Missouri at the close of the twentieth-century. He explains that the tunes are all part of the repertoire of fiddlers from the "Little Dixie" region, located in the east-central part of the state. The recording primarily consists of tunes that continue to be commonly played in the area.

Marshall writes that the recording captures the mood more of a house party than a performance. This roughness shows up in an

occasional rhythmic glitch and a few slight problems with intonation. But the lack of polish is forgivable and well-compensated by powerful and spirited playing as well as by how the musicians occasionally call out key changes, sing jig couplets to a couple of tunes, and chant the call of an imaginary square dance to “Marmaduke’s Hornpipe.” In a sense, the CD sounds like an ideal version of the music created in an informal song circle. Throughout the entire recording the listener hears strong back-up playing and excellent production values that bring out a terrific blending of instruments.

The CD features a variety of types of tunes including reels, jigs, hornpipes, and waltzes, as well as a schottische and one blues tune. It includes fine versions of old stand-bys such as “Ragtime Annie,” “Soldier’s Joy,” “Red Wing,” “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” and “Over the Waves.” I enjoyed listening to Marshall’s and Williams’s versions of all of these tunes, and it was important for them to include these pieces in their documentation of popular local music. But I found their versions of popular local tunes such as “Hal Scott’s Special,” “Evansville, Missouri,” “Old Dubuque,” and “Talk to Dinah” to be especially pleasing, and the double stops on the last tune reveal a real mastery of the local fiddling tradition.

Marshall is backed by and occasionally backs John Williams, a high school student who lives on his family farm near Madison. Williams began with violin lessons but has picked up fiddle tunes from local musicians, fiddle camps, and an apprenticeship through Missouri’s traditional arts program. Upon listening to the recording, it is clear why Williams has won numerous contests and why Marshall included him on the recording. On numerous tracks, Marshall and Williams are also backed by Arkansas Red (a.k.a. Michael Breid) on guitar, banjo, and melodeon.

Fiddling Missouri is an excellent addition to the documentation of oldtime fiddle tunes. It is fortunate that Marshall decided not to simply study and research the tunes but learned to perform the music as well. *Fiddling Missouri* provides a lasting resource for future players, and Marshall is right when he notes that this recording places himself, Williams, and Arkansas Red back into their own community’s fiddling tradition.