

## AFCCC-POP8-2

### Post project research projects

#### Collection

Selected and converted. American Memory, Library of Congress.

#### July 1954 Outline for a book tentatively called FOLKSONG IN CALIFORNIA by SIDNEY ROBERTSON COWELL

PREFACE: data on field recordings, when made, how come, and where deposited. Some mention of previous Calif. collectors, (Lummis and Gordon). Reference to Folkways albums if any. Lacunas in coverage listed here, too: Chinese, Syrian, etc. INTRODUCTORY SECTION of some sort would define folksong in the broadest possible sense, as song circulated in the oral tradition and discoverable in 1938-40. "California" folksong is therefore traditional song of any culture, orally transmitted and sung within the state. Folk music has not been circulated here long enough [?] for California life to have put a characteristic imprint on it, and English-speaking people have been here a relatively short time, so they contribute only a part of the state's wealth of traditional music. (California life has made alight or parodied changes in song texts, of course. And the Spanish guitar has affected a lot of the music, but that is a southwestern thing, not just Californian. This is n't intended to be a hard-and-fast Californian book, exactly; but I do have to have some kind of a framework!)

A second general point is that since settlers do seem to come to the same kind of environment (work, climate, landscape) that they left wherever possible, a kind of ecological organization, to borrow a term, of this material seems to work out with surprisingly few left-overs. The mines were a special magnet for a time, strong enough to overcome this tendency, of course. But on the whole, Hebrides Islanders, and other peoples used to the sea, do not tend to settled in the San Joaquin Valley, nor are the Armenians drawn to the little coast town that the Portuguese Hebrides Islanders like. Finns stay in northern California, mostly; Texans prefer Los Angeles. And so on.

Therefore the following plan for chapters produces a kind of regional California grouping: what music has circulated along the west slope of the Sierra and in the mines; what one finds in the hot [inn#er?] agricultural valleys; and what music is sung up the arms of San Francisco Bay and down the Coast... And note on improvisation or contemp. songs EACH CHAPTER would then begin by making the connection between the place the singers left behind, the musical life there, and their location here-- enough of this to lead a reader to know what to expect. Then would come comment about a specific group and my relation to it and adventures in connection with it, -- followed by the songs that belong to that group, the singers comment on their songs if any, and/or further data on the

song. Insofar as I can, "immigrants" from Wisconsin would be treated in much the same tone as "immigrants" from Iceland or Italy.

2

## **FOLKSONG IN CALIFORNIA**Outline -- 2IMusic of the California Missions, of their Indians and on the ranchos ...

I can probably borrow some Calif. Indian music later on from Dr. Kroeber or somebody, if such a section seems desirable. But the Indian and the Spanish-Californian music merge in any form in which I have recovered them. It is scanty, -- true traditional music, that is; most Calif.-Spanish stuff I have recorded is in the form in 19th century popular serenades and musically uninteresting. But I do have a few gems:

Two Indian lullabies, one from Contra Costa County, one from the Lucias: Lo,lo,lo,lo tata and Lullaby of the Coyote. (Or these may be two parts of the same lullaby. Anyhow, a great treasure!)

Two chants recovered from Mission Indians, a Santo from Pala recorded for me by a group of Mission Indian women, and an Alabaio recorded for as by the Seminary choir at Mission Santa Barbara, as learned from a Santa Barbara Mission Indian named Fernalito. These are both Gregorian in nature, with Spanish words, and can only have come from the early Mission fathers. Their publication was reserved to a Franciscan priest I never met, at Santa Barbara, who did publish them, incorrectly notated and harmonized. So I think I will just publish them again as they really were.

Folk music from Spain is Mission San Antonio collection 1 or 2 - Songs from Indian women at Almaden... if I can make them out.

Spanish-Calif serenades from Mrs. DeSoto at Concord, Mrs. Espinosa at Pacific Grove and Mrs. Brown at Monterey... samples. They illustrate Italian operatic influence and drawing room music derived from Chile and Mexico, I think. The influence of the guitar and the popular, not folk, southern European music that went with the guitar throughout the 19th century (after about 1830) was strong in the 'social' music of California, and is found among the Indians of Spanish descent who lived at the Missions and on the Ranchos, as well as among [?] the later Spanish arrivals who can claim pure Spanish descent because they brought their women with them, unlike the first [?] discoverers, so we have Las MananitasEl Capotinsung in 3rds and 6ths, with guitar, such like the songs recorded by Spanish-Californians for Charles Lummis around 1901-1904.... a great many of his singers seem to have been Indians, but they were not singing for him what we think of as Indian (tribal) music at all.

For contrast, to point up what Spanish-Californian music [?] was not, one might give one Indian song here, and then one true Spanish folksong, recorded by Maria Garcia from the Asturias in Spain, who ran the restaurant in the First Brick House in California, i Monterey:La Paloma Blanca, a lullaby from Oviedo.

3

### **FOLKSONG IN CALIFORNIAoutline -- 3 --IMUSIC AMONG CALIFORNIA MINERS, in the Sierra Nevada**

All through the fifties Stephen Foster's popular songs were a reading, and his Camptown Races, Old Dan Tucker and O Susanna were sung at wagon-train encampments and along the route. Two other songs, about Lily Dale 'My long lost lily, [Swe?]-eet Lily Dale' and 'Gentle Annie', were recorded for me as 49--er songs by John McCready of Groveland, a miner whose father was a 49er and had told him of hearing these two songs rise from one covered wagon or another when he came across the plains driving an ox-team... These are all easily discoverable in print and need only be mentioned, I think.

Then another son of a 49er sang [?] 3 songs known at Sutter's Fort in the 50's: Her Sweet Sailor BoyAnother traditional one I forget titleThe Dark-Eyed Sailor -- fine song, much parodied in songsters

An old 49er diary quotes two lines of a song that by good luck I recognized as one of the shaped-note hymns, one for Easter called the Garden Hymn probably a traditional tune, with religious words and a singing-school master's harmonization, published in the Southern Harmony in [?] 1835; I also have a fine recording of it, sung by an old lady at Central Valley, Calif., who had learned it from her parents and never seen it written down... marvellously beautiful tune and perfectly singable words, unlike most or those old hymns. So: Garden Hymn

Songs found elsewhere; about the overland trip:Root, Hog or Die (several versions, words changed to fit various dates and circumstances) about the trip by sea, Humbug Stemship Companies

But one family had an argument and the man finally agreed to stay home: The Stone that Goes Rolling Will Gather No Moss

Songs about mining: The Days of Forty-NineDigging on the Lode, -- a remarkable song I never heard of before,could be a Welsh miner's song, requires some digging.

Could amplify this with songs from elsewhere about California miners; they played a lively role for quite a while in songs, as likely victims of murders and banditry generally -- the fine ballad from

Missouri about Cole Younger, for example. Prior to 1910 Mrs. Fanny Eckstrom wrote down around 20 miners' songs from California as sung by her father, a returned 49er, and his friends. She wrote me about this and said I could have them, but I would have to get them from the papers of Phillips Barry, who died shortly in main after she sent them to him and left all his papers to the Harvard Library. If I concentrate on this I could probably run then down as I've since made friends with Barry's literary executors. If they turn out to be good songs -- singable and with real character -- and not widely known, some, at least should go in here if I can arrange it.

Illegible paragraph 4 FOLKSONG IN CALIFORNIAoutline -- 4 --II, cont'dCALIFORNIA MINERS .....The paucity of truly traditional songs of fine quality surviving among miners in the Sierra, into the 20th century, is I think explained by the fact that so much money [?] drew theatrical trouper and all kinds of expensive and sophisticated entertainment that made musical self-sufficiency unnecessary musically. Far more stage and minstrel and operatic tunes are offered as "old songs" [?] by miners who are the sons of 49ers, than one finds elsewhere in mountain country among people of the same generation.STAGE SONGS

How this world was made -- a minstrel song, which requires a little emendation for singing, as the word "nigger" keeps cropping up; but it is a kind of an amusing and singable song. Also The Cab Came Back

Songs with accents, burlesquing German or Swedish or Chinese accents or habits, were fashionable in the mines; those I have include a hair-raising anti-Semitic one -- or at least maybe it is not anti-Semitic any more than the others are anti-German or anti-Chinese; they just make fun of different names, different customs, different speech. Unnecessary to reproduce, anyhow!

Gooseberry Pie, a kind of home-grown song for "plays of our own get-up", probably.... makes a good children's song today!

Bologny Sausage -- same as Gooseberry Pie, although it is widdly Freudian, and the way the singer sang the last verse makes it clear that he knew understood the symbolism, to my surprise. It is a good song, actually, to the tune of Sweet Betsy From Pike, with a fine nonsense refrain. The last verse could just be omitted, with a footnote. Now, now, now.

This miners' section would have a sort of 20th century part, to include similar songs: traditional (the Mehrtens family, beautiful English love songs) and later-than-British traditional (Mehrtens and others) and a couple of late 19th-century drinking songs to fine Irish tunes (Ford family) and a dull song about a mine from the Mehrtens... perhaps a dozen songs in this group, more than half of them quite short, all recorded by people [?] who arrived here after about 1890. +12

I have nothing from any foreign language group from this area but of course there were lots of Chinese, Italians, Mexicans and Chileans, among others.... passing mention is all I can give them, however. There is a Chilean harp in the museum at Sutter's Fort, left behind by a Chilean 49er.

Among the later songs from the Sierra should go two recorded by former medicine show men: The Keeley Cure Dr. Ridge's Food

The whole point of this section is its miscellaneous character, of course! Whether songs [?] are presented chronologically or by type will have to be decided later. I will list a number of titles with a phrase or two to illustrate [?] songs not worth printing. I am anxious to give an honest picture of the musical repertory of a time and place, (which necessarily includes a lot of what both folklorists & musicians properly consider nonsense--) instead of extracting gems alone

5

## **FOLKSONG IN CALIFORNIA outline - 5 - Music of SEA ISLANDERS WHO HAVE SETTLED AROUND SAN FRANCISCO BAY AZORE ISLANDS PORTUGUESE**

Azore Islanders believe that the first European music to be sung (and danced) on the North American continent was the Chamarrita -- supposed to have been taught by Cabrillo's men to [?] friendly Indians on their first shore-leave after Cabrillo discovered California in 1542. Cabrillo was Portuguese and so were his men, although he claimed California for Spain because he had hired out to the King and Queen of Spain (my informant's terminology). This bit of music and dance is still common in California, at every Port. party around SF Bay, Watsonville and Pescadero. The Chamarrita

I have 45 or so fine Portuguese things -- I thought about 10 of them in here, including some children's games, some adults' dance songs, a song or two for Christmas and for St. John's Day, and a fado or two (devilish to rite down, however!) These last are dialog or trio or quartet affairs in which men sing alternately against a string accompaniment; improvising the verses as they go along, apostrophizing the guitar or the moon or the fado itself as a fine song to sing, or complimenting or -- sometimes -- insulting one another. [?] San Judo [?] Noite de Rois O Laurentina As Carvoeilhas (The Coal-Selling Girls) Ladrao, a game [?] Kacolha par, a game Lylia, a dance Fado Corrido or Fado Portuguese PUERTO RIQUEÑO Madre querido, a lullaby Christmas songs: Si me dan pastoles Venid, pastores An Aguinaldo -- part spoken, part sung [?] Four children's game songs: Dona Anna San Serer in La Pajara Pinta Arroz con leche HEBRIDES ISLANDERS A sailor's song: O the wind... A sailor's love song: Put off your sleep and turn to me Two work-songs -- waulking songs, used by weavers when shrinking cloth Friends & country men! - a contemporary song. [Sicilians?]: O Marinaro! A facci

di San Paolo! (Darn it!) if printable and if I can get it translated! La Tabacchers -- The Snuffbag -- a sneezing song[Japanese?] fishermen a song?? if I can get one. All my Japanese are non-fishing ones so far. 6 FOLKSONG IN CALIFORNIAoutline -- 6 --IISEA ISLANDERS cont'dEnglish: One of Captain Robinson's chanties, or more -- he's a Cornishman who came into SF Bay in a sailing vessel in 1888 -- [as?] cabin boy. Now lives in Mill Valley -- worked around SFBAY for 40 years.Some of [?] Ford's sea ballads:Lowlands LowAndrew BatanLady LeRoy (a ship)The Flying CloudFrom George V. Graham:Down around the Coast of [Lee Barbarees?]Lord Bakeman (The Turkish Lady)From Mrs. [?]: or one of the Fords:Johnny's been on seaThe Broken TokenLowlands of Holland

7

### **Outline -- 7 --IVALLEY FARM PEOPLE [??] (!! or something!)**

JUGO -- SLAVSA little dance music on peasant instruments -- bagpipes, lyrics, etc. along with some [?] chants acc. by the [?], an instrument sacred to The Horse, in the style of the [Homeric?] bards (apparently authentically Homeric, according to some Harvard men who have spent their lives studying this music in Serbia.) Quite a thing, and not possible to give any idea of it by writing out the music; but nice anecdotes and pictures and people... around Cupertino in the Santa Clara Valley -- [?] and apricot orchards and vineyards.ASSYRIANSPictures, beautiful instrument, anecdotes but no music because the performer was in mourning.. Assyrians, real ones, are rare.PERSIAN3 songs from a waiter at Larry Blake's [record?] 1954 -- very shy type,[?]

Chanting of old Persian poetry to accompany physical exercises in the gymnasium, same idea as Walter Camp. If any Persian music survived the destruction of Persian culture by the Arabs, this just [might?] be it.

Chanting of more recent Persian poetry from the time of Mohammed.

A contemp. song to an old tune: A boy, exiled to an island in the Persian Gulf following recent riots in Teheran, sings: I was only walking along the street, hand in hand with my girl... why should I be sent here, separated from her...?BASQUE -- SPANISH NAVARRE2 songs, one about spinning wool. In the Basque language, Spanish folk-type tunes.Migrants from other/ agriultural parts of the US: Oklahoma, Indiana, Iowa, Texas, etc mostly from southern Calif: I'm going own this road feeling bad The Scary SongTexas CanyonBarbara AllenThe nightingales SingMrs. Scott's fiddling, from the Salinas Valley.

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HUNGARIANS -- Magyar music such as interested Bartok, very good stuff. Poor Hungary, a lament about her \*1 political troubles [recent,\*1] old tune... 2 Xmas songs1 lullaby1 dance song

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-2

ARMENIANS1 contemporary [songs?] Armenian girls, daughters of farmers though they be, are not satisfied to marry any but professional men, doctors, lawyers, etc, -- and go live in Boston, New York, etc. 8 outline -- 8 --IVVALLEY FARM PEOPLE cont'dARMENIANS, cont'dAndouni, a song about the homeless Armenian children after the Turkish massacres.... Alagaz Mountain --- a wonderful invocation of the loved mountains of distant Armenia The Soldier's SweetheartThe jan, jan Oh jan song, I forget its name, fine to sing.Two dancesTwo children's songs Armenians [I?] can go on with indefinitely, like the Azores Islanders and the Hebrides Islanders.

9

### **outline -- 9 --VWOODSMEN and others from the NORTH**

FINNSA sailor's drinking song (Finns are sailors not so much because of the neighboring sea as because the boys left home early to work at whatever a husky kid could, in order to avoid the 3 or 4 year obligatory service in the Russian army) (Plenty of other songs if this [confuser?] the earlier point! -- but seamen [turned into?] were woodsmen in the hardtimes and New England too actually.) The brother Murderer -- Finnish [form?] of our British balls! Edward. Isontalen Antti, a fine song to sing but I forget what it's about! Kesa ilta, lovely lyrical tune.ICELANDICRyma: an old Norse form, very interesting survival, stanzas traditionally improvised to fit a variety of rigid verse forms... I have dozens of these... Admiring the snuffbox is a good one.

Contemp. verses: A man trying to get a dog out of the church in Winnipeg. A perfectly serious matter, not intended to be funny particularly, but rather to criticize the ineptitude...

Boom-fa-la-la-la, wonderful bouncy song.

Lenten hymn. The 12 Apostles, one of a series of Lenten (Protestant) plays, enacted at remote Icelandic farms still. Sung by Mr. Einarson, a strong man in a circus, with whose father V. Stefansson boarded the year he lived in Iceland. Another ryma: Home to Iceland, 1930, composed and sung In Old Icelandic (Norse) by Otto Bardarson, late Superintendent of Schools in Carmel.NORWEGIAN:2 songs from the [?] Islands at the extreme northern tip of Norway. These lead into my Ford family singers who came to California 1930-40 from the Wisconsin woods.

Songs about Wisconsin lumberjack life, very different from anything in Calif., where lumbering never depended much on snow and rivers and was merchandized early -- perhaps these belong in some kind or appendix, or not at all in this book.

Very fine versions of Derby Ram, King John and the Bishop of Canterbury, Many Questions, Yorkshire Bite, Rosemary and thyme, the Farmer's Curst Wife, [?] from this family, along with other non-Child lyrical British songs...almost anything you can name.

Songs about drinking, pro and con.

Songs about bandits, Irish, English and American

War songs, land and sea...Monitor & Merrimac, Custer's Last [?]

I'll have to evolve some kind of principles for selection with these.... I'd say 20 songs, 4 or 5 very long, 16-20 [stanzas?], 10 with 8-10 tanzas. 5 or 6 with 4 stanzas or less.

I have one donkey-jammer's song, to the tune of Casey Jones, from the Yosemite Sugar Pine Lumber Co.'s camp No. 2 in Tuolumne Co.. not especially imaginative.

The Ford brothers all were loggers in Wisconsin and workers in heavy construction, road building, etc., on the San Gabriel, Boulder, Shasta and 2 other dams.. Grand Coulee and the big one in Idaho. But no revelant song.

[One?] [construction?] workers' song about SF Bay Bridge, however it 9 outline -- 9 --

So far the book is directed at people who want information about the character of traditional musical life and/or who like to sing, or who want to use the material to accompany various kinds of study units. To make it a real handbook of minority-group song in California is not the intention --- I would have to go far more deeply into the history of each culture than I have done or can do from New York where I mostly [?] live. Rather I am giving a picture of Calif. now (or as of 10-15 years ago) in a form that will encourage and make it seem natural for people interested in my Hebrides or Armenian or Portuguese songs to go to their neighbors to hear them sung and to find more of them, and get live singers to sing for children in schools, and so....at least, so I hope. The book represents what is going on just around the corner now, not the past history of some other people --- except with the mining songs, the emphasis is not on survivals.

I do not expect to provide English translations in poetic form for singing, either, as the songs lend themselves [?] different differently [to?] adaptation [?] to the translation problem: Some can be sung in the original language, perhas; or joining in the chorus with the recording; an occasional one might have singable English words, but if so it would be an accident. But there would of course always be a general outline of the subject of the text. And also a note on the moment in the development of the

history of music represented by a given piece, perhaps -- briefly, and leaning heavily on information from my husband!

I am inclined to feel that in this form the book will feel thin, in a certain way, the treatment of the foreign music will necessarily be superficial; yet, [?] is a collection from California, of all states, would seem superficial in another way. So I thought of making the following [bows?] to conventional folklorists' procedure; this would depend on the length of earlier chapters, however.VI

A chapter on Child ballads found in Calif...a descriptive list for the most part, but giving in full 6 or 8 of the best ones, perhaps, and omitting them from earlier chapters entirely. (They would mostly come in, if used earlier, among the Ford family songs in Chapter V, but they are unnecessary really, as the Fords can provide plenty of others, and so can Mr. Graham, another prolific source of fine though fantastically garbled Child items.) Two of these turned up among Barbary Coast dance hall entertainers; one version, [?] among several, of the Derby Ram is as wildly bawdy as anything I ever heard, but probably not unprintable, as the singer never uses the 4-letter word, only given the clue to it in the [rhythme?], so the audience roars it out while he goes on innocently into the refrain.

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[??]

VII

A chapter on melodic variation in the songs of the Ford family

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[???

VIII The Fate of Folksong

Different uses of folksong today and consequent changes

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[3300?]