

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Typed Narrative and Caption Notes

Bern and Franke Keating Collection

1953

Folk Singers

Bern Keating

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/keat_trscrp



Part of the [Photography Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Keating, Bern, "Folk Singers" (1953). *Typed Narrative and Caption Notes*. 15.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/keat_trscrp/15

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Bern and Franke Keating Collection at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Typed Narrative and Caption Notes by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Bern Keating - Folk Singers

Even in the mountain fastnesses of the Ozarks, last hideout of the unreconstructed hill billy, the voice of Milton Berle is being heard through the land the the centuries old folk songs imported from England and Scotland are in danger of dying out forever.

But before they go there is a small dedicated group of lovers of antiquities who are recording them for posterity on tape. And they are not content to record the jazzed-up juke box versions of the Tennessee Ernies. Instead they take their machines deep into the mountains, seeking out the log cabins so far from "civilization" that they don't even sprout the tell-tale antennae of the 24-inch screen.

Leader in the effort to nail the old songs down in the old time voices before their final passaging, is Mrs. Jack a. Carlisle, researcher in folklore for the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas. With microphone and portable unit in hand she drives as far as she can into the mountains around Fayetteville and walks until she gives out to find communities remote enough to persist in thinking that the old songs are the best songs.

On this expedition she found Booth Campbell, who admits to 84 years, of Cane Mill, Arkansas (with beard in all pictures). Wherever shown singing he is singing "I am a Good Old Rebel". His father was a sergeant under Nathan Bedford Forrest, cavalry leader of the Confederate Army of the West, a fiery southerner who iriginated the modern cavalry tactic of using horses to get there and then fighting dismounted. It was Forrest who first said that the secret of military success was to "get there fustest with the mostest".

Words of the ballad follow:

"I am a good old rebel,
Hat, boots, coat and all--
For this fair land of Freedom
I do not care at all.
I followed Ole Marse Robert
For four years nigh about
Got wounded in three places
And Istarved at Point Lookout.
I caught the reeumatism
A-camping in the snow
I killed a chance of Yankees
and I liked to killed some more.
I hate that Yankee nation
And all they say and do.
I hate them trifling Yankees
And I fit em all I could
Five hundred thousand Yankees
Now s leep in Southern dust.
We got five hundred thousand
Before the conquered us.
They died of Southern fever
And Southern steel and shot.
I wish'd we'd got three million
Instead of what we got.
I can't take up my musket
And fight 'em any more
But I aint gonna love em
Of that I'm sartain sure.

I am a good ole Rebel
And that's just what I am
And I won't be reconstructed
If I am, may I be damned".

The girl singer^s is Mary Jo Davis of Fayetteville, 16, who has learned two versions of each ballad, one from her Missouri mother and one from her Tennessee father. She is singing "A Gypsy Laddie".

" Black Jack Davy came a-riding
Through the woods singing his song so gaily
Sang so loud he made the wild woods ring
And charmed the heart of a lady.
Charmed the heart of a lady.
He said 'Pretty Miss, will you go with me
Will you be my honey?
And I swear by the sword that hangs by my side
You'll never want for money'.
The old man came home late that night inquiring for his lady
The servant spoke before he thought
'She's gone with Black Jack Davey
She's gone with Black Jack Davy'
'Go saddle me up my milk white horse.
Saddle him slow and easy.
I'll ride all night til the broad daylight
and overtake my lady.
and overtake my lady'.
He rode all night till the broad daylight
Till he came to the edge of the water.
There he looked on the other side
And there he spied his darling.
'Oh will you foresake your house and home

Will you foresake your baby.
Will you forsake the one you love
To go with Black Jack Davy.
" "
Etc.

The brothers playing fiddle, guitar, etc., are the Baker Boys.
Bill on guitar and Toby on fiddle. Welch Carroll from St. Paul,
Arkansas, plays the maddolin. They live in the Ozark State
Park which is a forestry reserve and extremely remote and wild. The
dancer with one leg is Ewell Napier of Lincoln. The old black felt
hat is Freddie Woodruff of Springdale who has slyly slipped his own
name into many own ballads of heroic highwayman.